

Humanizing English Textbooks Evaluation at the Higher Secondary Level in Pakistan

Kazim Shah (M.Phil.), Rashda Majeed (M.Phil.), Salman ul Waheed (M.Phil.), and Muhammad Asif Ikram Anjum (M.Phil.)

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Abstract

Textbook plays an important role in the second language classroom. It occupies a central position in language teaching to teach every feature such as grammar, reading, listening, speaking and writing present in any prescribed language course. Textbooks are an essential element of language programs and are used to provide systematic lesson plans, content and guidelines both for the learners and teachers. There are many issues regarding textbooks such as the design of textbooks, suitability, practicality, innovational role of textbooks, presentation of language skills, etc. All these aspects are important in any well designed language textbook and these should be considered very important to judge textbooks on the basis of their ability to improve language skills.

The present study is aimed at examining how much effective the textbooks are in promoting learning and teaching English at higher secondary level in Pakistan. Textbooks are being evaluated through the use of the checklist criteria. In the present research study an effort is made to humanize textbooks evaluation by involving both learners and teachers. In this research both qualitative and quantitative methods of research were used. Responses of both learners and teachers were collected and analyzed.

Finally it brings out as the finding, that textbooks in Pakistan at higher secondary level are not designed according to the needs and requirement of learners. Textbooks are helpful in passing exams and getting good marks through the cramming of the materials. There is no direct involvement of learners in improving the basic language skills like speaking, listening, reading,

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writing etc. Teachers also pointed out some drawbacks of textbooks and gave suggestions to improve them.

Keywords: Textbooks, Evaluation, Humanizing, Curriculum, Attitude, Motivation.

1.1 Statement of Purpose

The importance of teaching the English language in Pakistan is a crucial phenomenon. English language is being taught as a second language in Pakistan. In Pakistan like the rest of world English is considered as the language of progress and development. The importance of English language cannot be denied; so English has been given special privilege since partition. It is being taught as a compulsory subject in Pakistani schools and colleges.

In the process of teaching the English language, the roles of the teacher, the learners and the teaching aids are considered very important. In Pakistani classrooms textbooks are considered the main pillars of teaching and the learning process of the English language. The textbooks prescribed by the government are used in the teaching and learning process. Teacher trainings are conducted to improve the process of the English language teaching. As far as the general purpose of the present research is concerned, the effectiveness and usefulness of textbooks is the focus of the research study. The present study focuses on the improvement of textbooks by humanizing the process of textbooks evaluation.

This research study is conducted for the betterment of the evaluation process and for the improvement of the quality of textbooks. The research questions were asked from the learners and teachers about the different aspects of the English language textbooks. The aspects under consideration are the physical make up of textbooks, language skills, activities, grammar rules, vocabulary, contents and organization of material, cultural elements etc. These mentioned aspects are considered important in every language textbook. So this research has tried to reveal how much effective the existing textbooks are in fulfilling the needs of the learners. Furthermore, it tries to show how textbooks can be created according to human interest by including humanistic activities. Along with the evaluation of the textbook with respect to its

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shortcomings or weaknesses, suggestions were also taken from teachers to improve the status of textbooks at higher secondary level.

1.2 Background of the Study

In Pakistan English is being taught as a compulsory subject from grade one onward at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. In spite of many language policies, amendments and reforms in education the English language teaching situation in Pakistan is unsatisfactory. At higher secondary level it does not produce the desired results due to some integral problems, which are the causes of the present condition. According to Abbas (1998) (cited in Sabiha 2004, p, 65) despite the massive inputs into the teaching of English, the national results are abysmally poor.

There are many factors which directly or indirectly affect the process of English language teaching. The situation of learning and teaching English is in very bad condition due to inapt textbooks, teaching materials, faulty methods, inexperienced teachers, faulty examination system, lack of supervision etc. Every year during board exams hundreds of students of colleges and higher secondary schools do not pass in the subject of English. Sabiha (2004) describes the passing percentage of learners of English language at college level as 18-20% in English although it is a compulsory subject. Even after the completion of 10 years of English language education students do not show as much proficiency which is the need of present learners.

In Pakistan, many studies have been done on textbooks evaluation at different levels, but nothing has been done in humanizing the process of textbook evaluation. For example, generally textbooks are being evaluated only by teachers, curriculum developers, policy makers, and the participation of learners in the evaluation process of textbooks is not considered up to the mark. In the present study the old concept of evaluation in which usually checklists are being used has been changed into humanizing the textbook evaluation by making it more efficient with the full participation of both teachers and learners. This study had an aim to look at how learners and teachers in Pakistan perceive the use of the English language text books. The study investigated

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how much effective are the text books for learners to enhance their English proficiency levels. The study also investigated whether and to what extent teachers are satisfied with the text books as an English language teaching material.

1.3 Definitions of Key Terms

These are the definitions which are used in the whole study. It will be helpful in this study.

Foreign Language

A language which is not normally used for communication in a particular society
(Tomlinson, 1998, p. x)

Second language

This term is used to refer to a language which is not a mother tongue but which is used for certain communicative functions in a society. (Tomlinson, 1998, p. xii)

Textbook

Textbook is an area in which a language material is presented, prescribed for teaching and learning English. (Jain & Patel, 2008, p. 68)

Evaluation

“The process of seeking to establish the value of something for some purpose” (Brown & Rogers, 2002, p. 289)

Attitude

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An attitude represents an evaluative integration of cognition and affects experienced in relation to an object. Attitudes are the evaluative judgments that integrate and summarize these cognitive/affective reactions. These evaluative abstractions vary in strength, which in turn have implications for persistence, resistance and attitude - behavior consistency (Crano & Prislin, 2006 as cited in Prislin. & Crano, 2008, p. 3).

Motivation

The term *Motivation* means referring to the extent to which the individual works to strive, to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity (Gardener, 1995, p.10).

1.4 Significance of the Study

The use of English language textbooks in second language classroom is very crucial. The importance of textbooks in teaching and learning of the English language cannot be denied. Textbooks not only provide the framework both for the teachers and learners in accomplishing the aim and objectives of the course. They are the source of knowledge for the learners and guide for the teachers for planning, preparing and conducting their lessons in classrooms. It is a reality that eye-catching textbooks create a center of attention for learners in the learning process. (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994)

The textbooks are the only source of attraction for the learners in Pakistani English language teaching classrooms, along with many other developing countries. Here in Pakistan the textbooks are the materials which are prescribed, designed, evaluated by educational policy makers with the collaboration of textbooks boards. Learners and the teachers are the stakeholders and primary users of textbooks in language classrooms, but their role in selecting and evaluating the textbooks are considered secondary. Both the learners and teachers have the right to participate in the process of evaluation so that they could choose the best books for their English language course. On the other hand learners' opinions about ELT course books are not

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considered as significant as their teachers. They can evaluate which books appeal, are sound according to their preference, likeness and interest. As the learners are primary users of textbooks and their role in evaluating textbooks is invaluable.

However, in the process of evaluation, it is tough task to get the opinion of both the learners and teachers particularly “in the countries where the syllabus is set centrally and where an officially approved course book is prescribed for use” (Cunningsworth, 1995, p.11) as in Pakistan. Once the textbooks are selected by the government or state, it is the duty of teachers to evaluate the textbooks to identify the shortcomings or weaknesses of prescribed textbooks, keeping in view the teaching and learning environment.

The English textbooks at higher secondary level are prescribed by the Ministry of Education, Punjab. The three prescribed textbooks at higher secondary level were selected for the process of evaluation.

The result of this study will be useful in identifying the attitudes of both learners and teachers toward the English language text books. The study and its results might suggest better ways of selecting textbooks at higher secondary level.

1.5 Research Questions

The current paper intends to humanize the textbooks evaluation at higher secondary level in Faisalabad. It studies the effectiveness of existing textbooks in language learning and the teaching process. It also focuses on the weaknesses or shortcomings of textbooks which cause obstruction in the process of learning. It suggests ways to improve textbooks evaluation and eliminate the insignificant material in textbooks. The key questions for this research study are following:

- How much effective are present textbooks in developing basic language skills?
- What are the areas in textbooks which need improvement?
- How important are learners and teachers in humanizing textbooks evaluation?
- What are the attitudes of learners towards English language text books?

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- What are the absurdities learners and teachers find in textbooks?

1.5 Methodology

The main focus of our research is humanizing English language textbooks evaluation. The concept of humanizing here points towards the need to make the process of evaluation better by the full participation of both learners and teachers. The word humanizing means the making of something better or improved (Kerr 2007). We have used the random sampling paradigm to establish the above concept for our population at higher secondary level in Faisalabad.

In order to investigate answers to our research questions, two questionnaires were designed based on Cohen, Manion & Morrison's (2007) argument on questionnaire propose. The questionnaires designed for the learners were divided into three parts: part one consisted of the demographics data of learners; part two focused on the needs of learners with respect to learning English; and the third part consisted of questions related to general and specific aspects of textbooks. On the basis of those aspects evaluation was done. The second questionnaire was designed for teachers to get their responses about the present textbooks as how much helpful the present textbooks are in teaching language at higher secondary schools.

A pilot study was conducted by using tentative questionnaires in the first week of March 2011. Questionnaires were modified and certain amendments were done on the basis of results produced in pre-test. Finally the modified version of questionnaires was used in collecting the final data.

The results of questionnaires were analyzed by using SPSS 15.0 software. We studied the teachers' responses towards the usefulness of present day textbooks at higher secondary level. In humanizing textbooks evaluation every aspect of textbooks was included in the questionnaire so that both learners and teachers could judge textbooks. The results were presented in tabular form to interpret our data quantitatively.

In this study three aspects, such as learners' need, textbooks as language teaching material and attitudes of learners and teacher towards textbooks were studied. The results of the findings of our research are presented in the section below.

Literature Review

Language is the way to give expression to our thoughts, or for exchanging information or knowledge; and to communicate with each other, it is the best tool. So the best tool in the world now is the English language which is common all over the world. English language is taught as a second or foreign language in non-native English speaking countries. English language teaching is the need of the present era in every society and tremendous changes have occurred in the development of English language teaching all over the world. There are certain factors which are related to the process of English language teaching like teaching methods, teaching styles, socio economic factors, teaching materials, etc. In these factors, teaching materials in the form of textbooks are frequently used in teaching and learning process. The textbooks are an integral part of every language teaching classroom in many countries including Pakistan. So the purposes of textbooks are to provide assistance, knowledge, well prepared activities and guidance to both learners and teachers. To achieve these purposes textbooks are designed, keeping in view the needs or requirement of learners. As the learners blindly follow the textbooks in achieving their goals like getting good marks in exams and so on, textbooks are as crucial as oxygen is for life.

Before discussing further we need to throw light on the collective objectives of English language teaching in Pakistan at different levels. The most important and main objective of the English language is to encourage the learners to be proficient in basic language skills like speaking, writing, listening etc. Furthermore, learners become enabled to learn different linguistic and literary concepts with their applications. The English language proficient persons become employable in various fields of life like media, teaching, communication, commerce and other related fields.

As the importance and objectives of the English language are mentioned above, so English is taught as compulsory subject from grade one to graduate level. In spite of its importance there is

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a very less progress done in the field of English language teaching with respect to methods of teaching, materials, material evaluation, English language curriculum, pattern of learners' evaluation etc. So we are just following the old methods of teaching and learning which were gifted us after the partition of the sub-continent as English was being taught via grammar and translation methods. In this method of teaching, the role of textbooks is considered very important. Furthermore, English language is being taught to the learners through traditional ways. In schools and colleges English is being taught through grammar translation method (Anwar & Behlol 2011), in this method of teaching, textbooks are considered very important In this mode of teaching learners are made to cram textbooks to pass the exams and to get good marks; they are not encouraged to use their own mental abilities to comprehend the English language at all levels.

2.1 Theoretical Background

In the English language teaching process different factors are involved, like teaching methods, learners' attitude and motivation, teaching materials etc. Learners, teachers and teaching materials are the main pillars of any educational setting (Graves, 2000, p.175). The teaching materials are commonly of two types: print material in the form of textbooks, teachers' guides, workbooks and non-printed material such as audio-videotapes, computers, etc. These materials are very common in language classrooms. Among these materials mentioned above, the most reliable and easily available material is in the form of textbooks. So, we see the most important pillar of teaching materials is in the form of textbooks. Jain & Patel describes the characteristics of good English language textbooks:

- 1) The books should be according to the objectives of English language teaching.
- 2) Exercise work and practical work should be given at the end of the chapter.
- 3) It must develop moral qualities in the students.
- 4) The subject matter should be well graded
- 5) There should be no printing mistakes.
- 6) It must not be very expensive.
- 7) The paper should be qualitative.
- 8) The cover should be attractive and qualitative. (2008, p. 68-69)

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The text books are the most commonly used material in teaching English language. Textbooks are prepared as material both for learners and teachers. Textbooks provide the variety of activities for learners (Tomlinson, 2008). Textbooks provide the materials in the form of activities which can be used in the classroom to enhance the basic language skills of learners. They not only provide the materials for learners, but also a reasonable source for teachers in getting the objectives of the prescribed course of action put into practice. Similarly a learner heavily relies on textbooks for his/her academic growth in English language learning. As the textbooks influence learners' attitude and enhance their motivation in learning language, it is a reality that learners become active towards learning if the material provided is leaning toward their interests. So in language classrooms textbooks are the major source of input which pushes the learners to correspond in the target language in classroom settings.

As it is discussed above that both learners and teachers are the main users of textbooks in their classrooms, they should be participating in the process of textbooks evaluation. Azizifar, Mansour and Reza (2011:87) conclude that the evaluation of textbooks is an activity which comes under the field of applied linguistics in which participation of scholars; material developers and teacher make the books more effective for their users. Evaluation of textbooks helps us in making books more effective.

Textbooks evaluation is a complicated phenomenon. There are different ways and criteria mentioned by the theorists and researchers about the selection of textbooks. In the past theorists depicted different theories, approaches and models for evaluation of textbooks. The most prominent theorists like Sheldon (1988), Cunningsworth (1995), Brown (1995) et al. agree that evaluation checklists should have criteria related to physical and logistical characteristics of textbooks.

We evaluate the textbooks by humanizing this process by involving both learners and teachers. As both learners and teachers are users of textbooks and their participation is inevitable. In the recent past, a lot of emphasis has been given to humanizing English language teaching and in this situation the role of teachers and learners are considered very important (Tomlinson, 2008). In this regard, Tomlinson (ibid) further describes the factors involved in humanizing textbooks as

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those which respect its users as human beings. Humanizing textbooks consist of those activities which involve the learners according to their interests and ages in learning the English language. Textbooks usually contain the grammar translation method and there is no communicative approach in language teaching. To make the textbooks interesting and as close to the needs of learners as possible, there must be humanistic activities in language teaching. The humanistic activities are those activities which develop interest among learners and involve them in learning the English language.

So to bring about the humanizing of textbooks the needs, interests and requirements of learners must be kept in mind. So to make textbooks humanistic the role of teachers and learners are very important. Humanizing textbooks evaluation plays a vital role to make textbooks effective and close to the needs of learners. So an effort is made to humanize textbooks evaluation by the participation of both learners and teachers.

2.2 Pakistani Scenario

In Pakistan the situation of English language teaching is facing some problematic areas. In Pakistan English language education is restrained just to cram the materials to pass in the examinations and there is no concept of the practical or real life use of the textbooks. So textbooks are prepared for examination purposes and there is no concept of practical use of English inside or outside the classrooms. As textbooks are designed for examination purposes the interest or needs of learners are not kept in mind. It is a great tragedy of Pakistani educational system that in the selection of textbooks, the role of learners and teachers is neglected. The curriculum development is a Federal subject in Pakistan and selection of textbooks is done by the Ministry of Education and Curriculum Wing. Along with the Federal curriculum wing the provincial curriculum wings also participate in the textbooks selection. These curriculum wings are responsible for the development and selection of textbooks up to the higher secondary level.

As the importance of textbooks are universally acknowledged and recognized as fundamental teaching learning tool, so the importance of textbooks is understood in every period by **Language in India** www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 13:8 August 2013
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every Govt. In this regard it is admitted time and again by the Government of Pakistan as “textbook is the only available learning material in most of the schools” (Government of Pakistan, 2006, p.53). In spite of all these efforts by the Government of Pakistan, the standard of textbooks is not up to the mark. Mostly textbooks are boring and material in textbooks does not develop the productive skills among learners. Furthermore, textbooks are unable to motivate learners for the learning process.

The present research pointed out the needs of learners with respect to English language learning and their requirements to make their learning more effective and feasible. It suggested the syllabus which enhances the basic language skills of learners and helps the teachers in facilitating the process of English language teaching. It argued that although textbooks are not too intricate, yet they are unable to attract learners and teachers at higher secondary level in Pakistan. To make the textbooks more efficient the process of evaluation must be done before and after the selection of textbooks. Furthermore, in the process of textbooks evaluation both learners and teachers must participate. In the same way textbooks should contain such material which not only help in improving language learning, but also reflect social and cultural environment of learners. Pursuing this further, involvement of learners in classrooms can be enhanced by humanizing textbooks in which the learner is responsible for his/her own learning. Humanism in language teaching is very common now in the language teaching process. In humanizing the language classroom, learners are effectively engaged in the learning process. As Tomlinson (2008) described humanistic textbook as one which values the learner as a human being and helps learners in the learning process and activities in textbooks connect the mind with what is in textbooks. Such materials must be included in textbooks which involve learners in learning the English language.

To sum up, to improve the teaching and learning process the role of both learners and teachers cannot be neglected. As the textbooks are designed by the policy makers and commonly the role of learners and teachers is neglected in selecting textbooks. The textbooks should be chosen by the shared consent of both teachers and learners. So that textbooks should be according to the need and requirement of learners. The textbooks should contain such a material which will appropriate for improving their language skills. The shortcomings and drawbacks of textbooks are

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erased through the process of evaluation. If both learners and teachers participate in process of textbooks evaluation, then textbooks will be more useful in the teaching learning process.

So it is the dare need to pay concentration while selecting textbooks for learners. In textbooks their must be balance activities and materials so that learners can become proficient in language.

We investigated the attitudes of both learners and teachers about the existing textbooks at higher secondary level in Punjab. On the basis of learners and teachers responses judgment was made about the suitability of textbooks along with their improvements.

3. Research Findings

This chapter presents the findings of our result which intend to judge the effectiveness of ELT textbooks in teaching learning context.

3.1 Needs analysis

The investigation of the needs or wants of the learners is the major issue for second language learners because need analysis tells us about the reasons why they want to study English. Need analysis is a process of gathering information about learners' needs. The need analysis of learner is based on the role of English, importance of English in the future, learning styles, importance of language skills, learners' strengths and weaknesses, their like and dislike about English. Furthermore, there is no restriction whether need analysis is done for specific purpose or general purpose of English language education. The intention of need analysis is to make the language program more appropriate to real life needs of learners.

Richards (1990, p.2) considered need analysis as “fundamental” in planning language course. The need analysis is helpful in determining a number of different functions.

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The result shows that majority of respondents want to learn the English language to get higher education and to communicate with others. So the overall responses show that learners need to improve their communicative skills and speaking activities to improve their language skills. Furthermore, learners are not satisfied with listening, grammar and creative writing abilities at all.

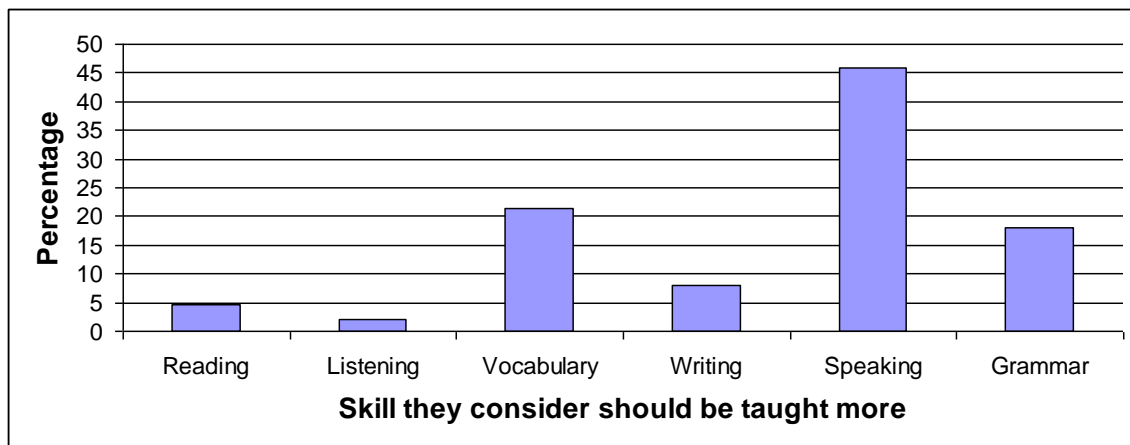


Figure1: Language skill which should be taught more

Furthermore, learners consider this factor that knowledge of grammar should be given at their levels so that they can be proficient in grammar and syntax structure. In this respect learners are not satisfied with their textbooks as they are not fulfilling the basic skills of language. The overall results show that textbooks are needed to be changed according to the needs of learners at higher secondary level.

3.2 Learners' Responses towards Textbooks

The layout and design of textbooks play an important role in developing the motivation level of learners. An eye-catching cover of textbooks attracts the attention of learners to open them. So the very first research question was asked about the layout and design of textbooks. The responses of learners about textbooks show that they are not fully satisfied with the physical

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outlook of textbooks. As for the inner look of textbooks are concerned, textbooks are not designed according to the interests of learners as there are no proper diagrams, pictures for learners to illustrate things. In this regard the present textbooks do not contain graphical representation of ideas.

On the other hand the grammar and vocabulary items are also part and parcel of any language textbook. The overall response of learners shows that the textbooks contained enough vocabulary items, but the grammar items were not sufficient to enhance the grammatical capabilities of learners. As far as the needs of the learners are concerned they must give high priority to the learning of grammar and speaking skills.

Along with the learning of language skills, the contents and subject matter of textbooks also play an important role in the language learning process. So the subject matter and contents in textbooks help the learners by motivating them towards the learning of language. Furthermore, the contents and subject matters of textbooks let the learner know about the happenings around them. In this regard the role of the contents and subject matter in textbooks helps a lot in creating interest among learners to know about the surrounding world. However, the present textbooks at higher secondary level are composed or organized by local bodies, but materials in textbooks are written by native writers. In this way materials in textbooks represent the culture and environment of foreign culture, and so the response of learners shows they are unsatisfied with textbooks. They consider that textbooks do not show the culture of their locality in general and of Pakistan in particular.

Pursuing this further some questions about the likability or dislike of textbooks are asked. The responses of learners show that they do not take interest in opening books and reading them time and again. The textbooks are not interesting and do not motivate the learners in opening textbooks. The final overview which can be given as conclusion about the textbooks is that learners think that their textbooks are not helpful in improving their basic language skills.

3.4 Responses of Teachers

In language classroom the role of teacher cannot be denied. A teacher in the language classroom works as a guider or facilitator. In humanizing the process of textbooks evaluation teachers of higher secondary schools also participated through interviews. Interviews were conducted with teachers to get their opinions about existing textbooks for language teaching. Teachers were asked about the suitability and appropriateness of textbooks with respect to learning. The responses of teachers show that the textbooks are literature based and the participation of learners in classroom is not satisfactory. Mostly teachers have ideas that these textbooks are made for examination purposes and not for the practical use of the English language teachers.

The further analysis of the questionnaires shows that the textbooks are boring and not put together according to the needs and requirement of learners. The learners are not too much interested in language learning via textbooks. Furthermore, the material included in textbooks does not represent the culture of learners' environment. So the learners do not focus on material as they are not the representative of their culture. In this regard the responses of teachers show that they want changes in textbooks with respect to the inclusion of cultural element in textbooks.

The responses strongly agree with the statements that there must be changes in textbooks for the betterment of the English language teaching situation in Pakistan. In this regard teachers consider that material in textbooks should be skilled based and not for the examination purposes. So the textbooks should contain such material which helps the learners in developing their language skills and improving their basic language skills. And some teachers suggested that textbooks should contain functional English which helps the learners improve basic language skills.

Conclusion

Humanizing is a word which means to make humane, kind or gentle. So, humanizing textbooks means making textbooks gentle to read, enjoy and use. Evaluation is a process in which

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textbooks are being evaluated by teachers and learners. To make the textbooks helpful and useful for the learners, the participation of both learners and teacher should be ensured since they are the primary users of textbooks.

The finding of this research shows that textbooks are the only source or material for teaching English in Pakistan. The attitudes of both teachers and learners are not satisfactory towards textbooks at this level. Despite the negative attitudes of teachers and learners the role of the textbooks cannot be denied.

By taking into account the ideas and responses of learners and teachers, textbooks were analyzed. It was found that the contents in textbooks are just for academic learning so as to pass the examination. There is no such material in textbooks which help the learners in developing their critical thinking, comprehension skills and enhancing their productive skills. As far as the materials in textbooks are concerned, these are helpful just for improving learners' receptive skills like listening and speaking. According to the opinions of teachers, the material in textbooks should invoke the thinking and creative power of learners.

It is the mutual agreement of both learners and teachers that textbooks should be according to the present needs of learners. There must be some changes in textbooks so that there may come some improvement in the English proficiency of learners. Along with the change in textbooks, the method of teaching must also be changed. In this regard there must be refresher courses for the teachers about the teaching methods on how to teach with the textbooks. When the higher authorities want to make amendments in textbooks both the teachers and learners opinions must be collected. So that in future there might not be more problems.

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Kazim Shah (M.Phil.)
Lecturer
Department of English Linguistics
Govt. College University Faisalabad
Pakistan
kazim.shah@iiu.edu.pk

Rashda Majeed (M.Phil.)
Department of English Linguistics
Govt. College University Faisalabad
Pakistan
rashdamajeed@yahoo.com

Salman ul Waheed (M.Phil.)
Govt. Post Graduate College Kot Addu
Pakistan
slmn@hotmail.co.uk

Muhammad Asif Ikram Anjum (M.Phil.)
Minhaj University Lahore
Pakistan
asif4605@gmail.com