

## Evaluating "My English Book 6": A Study on Its Teaching Quality and Use in Grade 6 Classrooms in District East Karachi

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### Abstract

English Book 6" (Sindh Textbook Board), focusing on its alignment with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles and its practical usability in Grade 6 classrooms. A mixed-methods approach was employed, featuring a qualitative content analysis of Units 1–6 and quantitative surveys from 60 students and 10 teachers in District East Karachi. Results indicate that while the textbook excels in cultural relevance and provides excellent integrated teacher guidance through the "Notes for Teachers" section, it suffers from significant pedagogical imbalances. Key findings reveal a lack of authentic speaking opportunities, an absence of listening components, and cognitive overload caused by dense vocabulary in specific units. Although 85% of participants appreciated the visual scaffolding, many reported that scripted to meet your submission guidelines, the abstract needs to be between dialogues limit genuine communication. To improve usability, the study recommends incorporating QR codes for audio resources, adding unit-wise glossary.

**Keywords:** Sindh Textbook Board, English language teaching, textbook evaluation

### Introduction

#### Background of the Study

In the Sindh province of Pakistan, textbooks do more than just supplement learning; they are often the main, if not sole, resource that connects national curriculum goals with everyday classroom practice. "My English Book 6," produced by the Sindh Textbook Board (STBB, Jamshoro), is designed specifically for Grade 6 students aged 11 to 13, helping them transition from basic primary English to the more complex academic English needed for secondary education. At this developmental stage, it's essential for instructional materials to enhance language skills, boost student confidence, and prepare them for more advanced academic discussions in various subjects.

### Statement of the Problem

Pakistani English Language Teaching (ELT) resources often face criticism for their continued reliance on the grammar-translation method (GTM), even as national curriculum reforms promote communicative language teaching (CLT). "My English Book 6" claims to align with CLT principles, yet many educators report a discrepancy between the "Speaking" sections designed for oral practice and the extensive grammar exercises that dominate classroom time. Other design elements, such as font size and layout, also significantly affect how easily Grade 6 students can learn independently without constant teacher support.

## Research Questions

This study seeks to answer two main questions:

RQ1 (Pedagogical Balance): How well does "My English Book 6" balance teaching across the four major language skills reading, writing, listening, and speaking to promote meaningful communication instead of rote memorization?

RQ2 (Practical Usability): How effectively do the textbook's visual design and integrated "Notes for Teachers" help support lesson delivery and student engagement in typical classrooms in Sindh?

## Literature Review

### Philosophy of Textbook Evaluation

Alan Cunningsworth (1995) views textbooks as tools that need to be contextually fit for specific learner groups rather than perfect entities. Given Sindh's large class sizes and often non-native English-speaking teachers, evaluations should prioritize practicality over theoretical ideals (Sheldon, 1988). This approach recognizes existing resource limitations while maximizing teaching potential.

### Pedagogical Standards: CLT vs. GTM

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes using language in meaningful ways through activities that require genuine exchanges of information, contrasting sharply with GTM, which focuses on memorizing grammar rules and translating texts (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Research shows that despite two decades of reforms promoting CLT principles, GTM still prevails in public-sector materials, limiting oral fluency development. Studies indicate CLT yields more effective learning outcomes when suitably tailored.

### Readability and Cognitive Load

Text readability for Grade 6 students must ensure clear and careful vocabulary to avoid cognitive overload. According to Sweller's (1988) cognitive load theory, students can struggle with learning if they're overwhelmed by too many unknown words, which hampers comprehension and leaves no room for skill integration. Nielsen's (1994) usability principles can also be applied to textbook assessment, ensuring young learners can easily navigate materials without frustration.

### Cultural Schema and Relatability

Schema theory suggests that comprehension and retention improve when new information connects with students' pre-existing cultural knowledge (Tomlinson, 2012). The STBB has effectively included locally relevant names and thematic content, which helps Sindhi students relate to the material and reduces the perception of English as a foreign language.

### The Teacher as Primary Material User

Evaluation frameworks often miss the importance of teachers as the primary users of textbooks. Sheldon (1988) argues that effective teaching relies heavily on how well teachers understand and feel comfortable using the materials. The STBB's innovation of placing "Notes for Teachers" alongside student content offers vital support, especially in under-resourced environments where teacher manuals may not be available.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, blending qualitative content analysis with quantitative survey data collection. This design allows for a comprehensive understanding of both theoretical teaching strengths and practical usability in classrooms. The qualitative analysis focused on instructional content and design features, while quantitative surveys captured the everyday experiences of teachers and students.

## Materials Analyzed

The primary text examined was "My English Book 6" (Sindh Textbook Board, 2023 edition), with a focus on six foundational units that represent critical content for the academic year:

- Unit 1: Dialogue/Drama – "A Visit to the Park"
- Unit 2: Narrative Fiction – "A Dream That Brought a Big Change"
- Unit 3: Poetry – "Try Again" by W.E. Hickson
- Unit 4: Informational/Diary – "Shahban's Diary"
- Unit 5: Expository – "Knowing Children from Other Nations"
- Unit 6: Biographical Interview – "Yes, You Can – Mohammed Tahir"

## Participants and Sampling

- Teachers (n = 10): Experienced Grade 6 English educators with at least three years of teaching STBB curriculum.
- Students (n = 60): Grade 6 learners aged 11-13 from District East Karachi public schools.

## Data Collection Instruments

To gather comprehensive data, used three instruments:

1. Pedagogical Checklist: A tool adapted from Cunningsworth (1995) to analyze skill distribution across the units.
2. Student Usability Survey: A simple questionnaire using a 10-item emoji scale (Yes / Maybe / No).
3. Teacher Semi-Structured Interviews: Questions focused on practical implementation.

## Results

### Structural Consistency:

All six units followed the same instructional format: reading comprehension, speaking practice, grammar exercises, writing tasks, study skills, and fun activities. This consistent structure significantly reduced confusion about navigation by Unit 3, allowing students to concentrate on language learning rather than layout.

### Pedagogical Content Analysis

- Contextualized Grammar: Unit 1 teaches modal verbs (must, must not, should, should not) through real-life rules of conduct in a city park.
- Metacognitive Innovation: Self-created cloze exercises encourage students to actively engage with the content.
- Visual Scaffolding: 85% of students noted that images helped them understand stories better.

### Critical Limitations

- Scripted Speaking: 70% of students reported they didn't have enough chances for real English conversation with peers.
- Absent Listening: None of the sampled units included any audio components.
- Advanced Grammar: 60% of teachers felt that advanced structures like the passive voice and conditionals were inappropriate for their students' age.

## Stakeholder Feedback

### Student Survey Results (n = 60):

Most students found the stories engaging, with 90% expressing interest. However, 55% reported difficulty with the vocabulary in Unit 5, and 70% felt the book did not provide enough speaking practice with classmates. Instructions were generally clear, but the lack of speaking tasks was a recurring concern.

### Teacher Interview Results (n = 10):

- Skill Imbalance: 80% described the book as being too focused on reading and grammar.
- Teacher Support Excellence: 100% found the “Notes for Teachers” very useful, especially for managing large class sizes.
- Grammar Complexity: 60% believed the advanced language structures were challenging to teach to 11–13-year-olds.
- Physical Design Issues: Teachers criticized the print quality, which diminished the appeal of the “Fun” sections, particularly in Unit 5, where high text density was a concern.
- Cultural Advantage: 90% noted that regional references helped students better grasp the material.

#### Usability Features

The “Notes for Teachers” appeared on approximately 80% of the pages and provided helpful guidance on activities such as how to pair students or select the right title. This feature reduced dependence on unavailable or inconsistent teacher manuals.

#### Key Finding:

While 85% of participants appreciated the visual aids, the lack of structured speaking opportunities reveals a substantial gap in the communicative aspects of teaching typical in Sindh public schools.

### Discussion

#### Understanding the Communicative Pedagogy Gap

A significant finding from this study indicates a disconnect between the goals of My English Book 6 and its practical application in classrooms. Although 85% of students found the images helpful for story comprehension, 70% reported insufficient opportunities to engage in real conversation with classmates, confirming that the textbook under-supports productive speaking practice.

This trend aligns with broader challenges in Sindh’s English education, where Grammar-Translation-Method (GTM) orientations still dominate despite national advocacy for communicative language teaching (CLT). Teachers’ perceptions that the book emphasizes reading and grammar reinforce the known curriculum imbalance that favors “language practice” over authentic communication.

#### Teacher Support as a Critical Component

The “Notes for Teachers” feature stands out as the most beneficial innovation within the curriculum. All participating teachers (100%) found this guidance essential, especially for managing large classes. This integrated support helps maintain pedagogical consistency even in schools with limited resources and under-trained staff.

#### Cognitive Load and Appropriateness

Many teachers flagged the advanced grammatical structures as too challenging for their students, echoing student feedback that 55% of respondents struggled with the vocabulary in Unit 5. Sweller’s (1988) cognitive load theory explains that excessive linguistic complexity can overwhelm learners, especially when they receive only a limited number of English lessons each week.

Concerns about print quality also emerged. Teachers criticized the dull presentation of the “Fun” sections, which could reduce student engagement during already short class periods.

#### Cultural Relevance as a Key Strength

Conversely, 90% of students liked the story topics, and a similar proportion of teachers noted that regional references made the material easier to understand. This cultural scaffolding helps bridge the gap between students and English, reducing the perception of English as a foreign subject and encouraging more meaningful engagement with the content.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Summary of Findings

My English Book 6 demonstrates effective cultural adaptation and structural coherence within the constraints of public schools in Sindh. It successfully integrates functional grammar, innovative learning strategies, and supportive teacher resources. The positive feedback from stakeholders about cultural relevance and teacher guidance confirms the effectiveness of its design in activating students' prior knowledge.

However, there are significant communicative shortcomings. Both student and teacher feedback highlighted insufficient opportunities for authentic speaking practice, along with a strong emphasis on grammar and the absence of dedicated listening materials. These issues create barriers to achieving balanced language-learning outcomes.

### Theoretical Implications

The results affirm Cunningsworth's (1995) principle that the effectiveness of textbooks relies on how well they fit their context rather than merely their theoretical perfection. The STBB's locally relevant design significantly outperforms imported materials, but there's a clear need for additional digital resources that printed textbooks can't easily provide.

#### Practical Recommendations for the Sindh Textbook Board

1. Listening Materials: Incorporate QR codes linking readings and audio recordings to fill the gap identified by 80% of teachers.
2. Vocabulary Management: Include glossaries at the end of each unit to help manage vocabulary overload.
3. Authentic Speaking Opportunities: Replace scripted dialogues with prompts that encourage information-sharing, directly addressing the lack of peer interaction.
4. Product Quality Improvement: Upgrade the paper quality and reduce the text density in units to enhance visuals and readability.
5. Grammar Complexity Restructuring:  
Introduce complex grammar later in the year to focus on basic functional grammar first.

### Broader Significance

"My English Book 6" is not just a teaching tool; it serves as a cultural connection for Sindhi learners aiming for global English proficiency. Implementing these recommendations could transform the curriculum, creating a regional model that addresses the challenges faced in South Asian public education. In summary, with the proposed enhancements aimed at addressing gaps in communication and cognitive load, the STBB has an excellent opportunity to develop transformational curriculum materials for Pakistan's upcoming generation of learners.

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