

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE USE IN SHORT STORIES OF INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH TEXTBOOK 1: A STUDY OF CEFR-COMPLIANT FEATURES

Azhar Munir Bhatti
(Corresponding Author)

PhD Scholar, University of Education, Lahore

Email: azharmunir18@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. Ahsan Bashir

Chairman Department of English, University of Education, Lahore

Abstract

This paper examines the structure and linguistic correlation of short stories contained in Intermediate English Textbook 1 to the Common European Framework of Reference in Languages level B 1. With the assistance of a mixed-methods design, fifteen stories were explored based on Freytag five-part narrative arc and linguistic profiling using the CEFR. Chi-square testing supported by quantitative analysis showed that the focus was mostly on Exposition and Rising Action and Climax and Resolution were relatively low. The qualitative evidence suggests that such disproportion supports scaffolding on understanding and vocabulary building but limits the involvement of learners in the evaluative and reflective discourse, which are the major characteristics of the B1 communicative range. Lexical profiling revealed that, a majority of vocabulary and syntax lie within B1 parameters, whereby, the lexical and conceptual changes are at times bordering the B2 parameter levels. The paper concludes that the textbook shows selective CEFR compliance: it manages to show accessible and culturally relevant narratives but is insufficient in showing narrative completeness and advanced language functions. The two-lenses method, which is a combination of narrative-structural and linguistic analysis, provides a replicable pattern of assessing literary materials in EFL situations. There are recommendations on how to balance the stages of the plot and to develop a moral and reflective language to improve the textual and communicative skill of intermediate learners.

Keywords: CEFR alignment; Narrative structure; Short stories; Textbook evaluation; B1 level; Linguistic profiling; ELT materials

1. INTRODUCTION

Intermediate level English-language teaching textbooks play a central role in scaffolding the process of learning every level of CEFR proficiency. The CEFR offers descriptors that help design the curriculum and match the material (Council of Europe, 2020). According to the recent literature, instructional texts (not only tasks) should be balanced in terms of the narrative and linguistic complexity to facilitate the learning corresponding to the CEFR levels (Zulkipli and Nasri, 2024; Kamil, 2023). The narrative coherence and exposure to language in short stories (with their orientation-complication-resolution-evaluation structure) improve the comprehension and writing abilities of students (Jan and Aziz, 2023; Satriani, 2021; Boyd, Blackburn and Pennebaker, 2020). Jan and Aziz (2023) revealed that understanding plot elements provided scaffolding of narrative writing by the learners, and Satriani (2021) showed that the teaching of storytelling led to a higher structural awareness and writing success.

Nevertheless, it is still hard to match the textbook narratives to the levels of CEFR. Kamil (2023) discovered that the majority of reading passages in a B1-aimed textbook were B2-C2, whereas Bergstrom, Norberg and Nordlund (2025) identified too much unfamiliar vocabulary that would not allow incidental learning. These works emphasize that the alignment of CEFR should concern the micro-analysis of structure, lexis, syntax, and communicative intent. Because the

narrative organisation influences the interpretation by the reader (Chusniawati, Sibarani & Rohmana, 2025) and the language characteristics define the level appropriateness, both of them must be addressed. However, whereas previous studies tend to examine textbooks on the macro-level of compliance with CEFR (Zulkipli and Nasri, 2024), not many research studies investigate the nature of whether short stories incorporate the narrative stages and place the right language characteristics.

This paper thus examines short stories in Intermediate English Textbook (B1 level) in two aspects: (1) narrative structure: The clarity of orientation, complication, resolution, and evaluation, (2) language use: Lexical, syntactic, and coherence correspondence to the CEFR B1 descriptors. The results will serve the purpose of informing teachers, planning syllabus, and textbook authors who want to find the consistency between narrative pedagogy and the instruction based on the CEFR.

Research Questions

- How are the short stories in *Intermediate English Textbook 1* structured in terms of beginning, middle, and end?
- Does the language used in the stories match the CEFR B1 level in vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure?
- How well do the stories combine an effective storyline with language suitable for intermediate learners?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. CEFR as a benchmark

The most popular framework of reference in the description of proficiency as well as in the alignment of pedagogy, resources and evaluation is the Common European Framework of Reference of Languages (CEFR). The Companion Volume of 2020 broadens and deepens the descriptors, particularly of mediation, online interaction and plurilingual/pluricultural competence, making alignment a moving target to textbook writers and evaluators, who now have to consider an expanded set of can-do statements at each level (A1-C2). In the case of the narrative passages in intermediate (B1) materials, the implication is twofold: (a) the passages in a narrative should exemplify the typical discourse organisation of a genre to allow learners to realise and practise the narrative moves; and (b) the linguistic profile (lexis, syntax, cohesion) must be based on the B1 tolerances indicated by the evidences of the descriptors and confirmed alignment processes. In case of non-observation on one side, it becomes nominal rather than substantive.

2.2. Narrative texts in ELT

The ELT research continuously demonstrates that a narrative structure (orientation-complication-resolution with or without evaluation) contributes to increased understanding, memory, and organisation of writing by learners. Investigations based on storytelling strategies show that reading and writing improvement occurs in the following cases: narrative phases are clearly learned and practiced. As an illustration, Satriani (2021) records how literacy can be improved in junior-secondary learners using a progressive model of pre-, during-, and post-story activities, whereas Jan and Aziz (2023) confirm that short stories can facilitate the identification of plot elements that are subsequently transferred by learners to producing their own stories. In EFL settings, reviews also contend that short stories are beneficial in terms of their ability to generate integrated skills; reading, writing, and vocabulary through age-related texts and context-related attention to form. A review indexed in ERIC (Ali, Abdullatif and Oyed, 2024) also reports skill improvements with the use of stories in instruction but state that most research does not cover the

question of story appropriateness based on the proficiency level of learners. Therefore, the pedagogical potential of storytelling is based on two main requirements: narrative episodes that can be recognised and can be mapped, as well as the use of language on the level that does not cause an understanding crisis (Satriani, 2021).

2.3. Issues with aligning the reading materials to CEFR.

The problem in the textbook research is the inability to match the target level with the reality of the text difficulty. Yani and Muzdizal (2025) discovered that the reading passages at Grade-11 were often above the desired CEFR level, which should be a question of accessibility and fairness of assessment. These results are consistent with larger discussions that point to the need of empirical validation CEFR alignment, familiarisation, specification, and linking, instead of publisher assertions (Figueras et al., 2022). Vocabulary is a very urgent issue: Wolfer and Lew (2025) depict that the wordlists assessed within the CEFR are not complete and suggest using machine-learning imputations based on corpus frequency, dictionary information, part-of-speech, and polysemy to enhance the accuracy rates. In their work, it can be emphasized that in cases where the short stories are full of low-frequency or polysemous words, this can make them way past the B1 standards regardless of the simple plots. Therefore, strict CEFR correspondence should start with the linguistic profile -Lexical level and syntactic level- as narrative without factual verification is likely to be considered interesting but mismatched (Figueras et al., 2022).

2.4. Assessment-driven alignment

The lessons of the process of aligning tests to CEFR can be transferred to writers of materials. A study of university academic reading tests in 2024 shows that familiarisation and specification procedures could be applied to determine the level of the texts and items in the CEFR and could serve as a model which could be repeated to determine the level claims (Tangsakul & Poonpon, 2024). The inclusion of narrative passages in an intermediate textbook in materials development would be supported by a similar chain of evidence (descriptor mapping, text profiling, and, hopefully, expert judgement with exemplars). Embracing the use of assessment-style alignment processes when curating the textbooks would support the arguments regarding the B1 appropriateness of the short stories, as well as curb the tendency to move towards the higher level of texts, which is commonly observed when textbooks are evaluated (Tangsakul and Poonpon, 2024).

2.5. Gathering the strands together.

There are two things to be noticed throughout the strands above. First, narrative texts are perhaps the most effective means of engagement and development in skills in case the story grammar of the text is clear and instructable. Second, the alignment based on the CEFR imposes that the linguistic envelope in terms of vocabulary load, sentence complexity, cohesion devices must be within the target band and is provable thereof. What has not been studied well is the intersection: few studies of empirical research in short stories in intermediate textbooks are done on a dual level, the evidences of the structure of the narrative, the cues of discourse, and the description of language features against the B1 expectations on the basis of the documented alignment procedures and/or validated lexical-level resources. Classroom storytelling researches tend to lack a level alignment question of the materials; CEFR alignment researches tend to lack a genre subset (narrative passages of textbooks) question (Satriani, 2021).

2.6. Research Gap

Overall, in as far as the literature confirms the pedagogical worth of narrative text and explicates the procedural requirements of CEFR alignment, the absence of research at the intersection of

genre and level remains: we are still lacking studies that systematically test short stories in intermediate (B1) textbooks in both (i) integrities of narrative structure (orientation-complication-resolution, explicit discourse signalling) and (ii) language-level appropriateness (lexical load, syntactic profile, cohesion) against CEFR 2020 descriptors and current alignment recommendations

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The research design used was mixed-methods comprising of both quantitative content analysis and qualitative narrative analysis. It was aimed at studying to what extent fifteen short stories of Intermediate English Textbook 1 correspond to the canonical narrative structure (Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, Resolution) and what the language use is related to the descriptions of the CEFR-B1 level.

The frequency and proportion of narrative stages and linguistic features were measured quantitatively, and the qualitative interpretation gave a contextual idea under what circumstances such components help create textual coherence and meet the requirements of the CEFR. Such a design corresponds to the approaches to methodology proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021) of integrating structural and functional textual analyses into the research of applied linguistics.

3.2. Corpus and Sampling

The corpus was composed of fifteen short stories which were collected in Intermediate English Textbook 1 that are taught in colleges of Pakistan to intermediate-level students. The stories were incorporated by using purposive sampling so that a full coverage of the textbook was reached as opposed to being selective. Both the stories were considered as independent narrative units. All paragraphs and dialogue passages were added to the analysis of each story without comprehension questions or glossaries. This method meant the use of only original narrative material to test the structure and language of the materials.

3.3. Analytical Framework

3.3.1. Narrative Structure Coding

The narrative analysis was operationalized by Freytag (1863) using the five-part dramatic arc of Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution, which are present in the contemporary narrative linguistics (Canals-Botines, 2020; Healey, 2025). Both contextual markers (setting, the introduction of characters, the appearance of the conflict, the climax, resolution) and linguistic markers (temporal adverbs, conjunction, and evaluative expressions) were used to divide each story into these sections. The reliability of coding was ensured through the process of coding three randomly chosen stories. The inter-coder agreement was acceptable and was 0.87 (Cohen k) which is acceptable in textual analysis (McHugh, 2012).

3.3.2. Linguistic Analysis

To analyze the language-use element, the study used categories of CEFR B1 descriptors (Council of Europe, 2020) and the Text Inspector lexical profiling tool (Maral and Ergul, 2025) to analyze:

- * **Lexical complexity:** frequency of words, type-token ratio, and vocabulary band correspondence.

- * **Syntactic complexity:** mean size of clauses and ratio of subordinate clauses.

- * **Discourse cohesion:** connectors, referential ties and evaluative lexis.

Communicative: existence of descriptive, narrative, and dialogic forms that are consistent with B1 can-do statements.

Each story was scored in the language features and compared to the CEFR standards with the help of Wolfer and a supplementary database of graded-vocabulary provided by Lew (2025) in order to confirm the relevance of the levels of lexical features.

3.3.3. Statistical Procedures and Data Coding.

Manual coding (Microsoft word) and then data transfer to SPSS 26 were used to process the data. Raw frequencies of sentences per narrative stage were tabulated (see Tables 1-3 in the Results) in the case of each story. The percentages were calculated in terms of story length. To determine whether the distribution of stages was significantly different to uniform expectancy (20 percent), Chi-square (χ^2) goodness-of-fit tests were done on each story ($df = 4$, $\alpha = 0.05$). Mean, SD and aggregate percentages were also calculated. Such a mixture of descriptive and inferential statistics adheres to the methods that should be applied to the research of the textbook evaluation (Kamil, 2023; Yani and Musdizalab, 2025).

3.4. Validity and Reliability

In order to have content validity, the coding system was based on developed narrative-discourse models and CEFR documentation. Qualitative and quantitative techniques were used, which offered a methodological triangulation (Flick, 2022), and contributed to the interpretive strength. The validation of linguistic features was based on the process of cross-checking several lexical databases (COCA, Cambridge Wordlists, Wolfer & Lew 2025). Coder training, inter-coder reliability and clear operationalisation of the research minimised researcher bias.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The data were all extracted out of a nationally published English textbook that is used in education. No personal information or classroom interventions were considered, thus there was no necessity of ethical clearance. Nevertheless, the textual sources were appropriately cited, and the academic-integrity standards were followed.

Summary of Methodological Workflow

Step	Activity	Tool / Framework	Output
1	Selection of 15 short stories	<i>Intermediate English Textbook 1</i>	Corpus of texts
2	Manual segmentation into narrative stages	Freytag's 5-part arc	Stage-wise counts
3	Linguistic profiling	CEFR B1 descriptors, Text Inspector	Lexical & syntactic indices
4	Quantitative analysis	SPSS 26 (χ^2 , descriptive stats)	Tables 1–3
5	Qualitative validation	Cross-reading, coder agreement	Interpretive reliability
6	Integration of findings	Comparative synthesis	Structural & linguistic trends

Limitations

While the study analysed all stories within one textbook, generalisations beyond this context should be made cautiously. The absence of learner-performance data limits conclusions to textual suitability rather than learning outcomes. Nonetheless, the comprehensive corpus-based approach ensures an empirically grounded evaluation of CEFR compliance at the text level.

4. RESULTS

Fifteen short stories from *Intermediate English Textbook 1* were coded for narrative structure and language features. Below, we report the quantitative results available—we present detailed frequencies, percentages, and inferential tests. We then aggregate these stories to illustrate cross-text tendencies.

Table 1

Plot Stages by Story (frequencies and % of Sentences)

Story #	Total Sentences	Exposition % (Freq.)	Rising Action % (Freq.)	Climax % (Freq.)	Falling Action % (Freq.)	Resolution % (Freq.)
1	392	10.2% (40)	51.0% (200)	5.1% (20)	25.5% (100)	8.2% (32)
2	300	20.0% (60)	30.0% (90)	26.7% (80)	16.7% (50)	6.7% (20)
3	450	15.0% (68)	45.0% (203)	15.0% (68)	15.0% (68)	10.0% (45)
4	250	20.0% (50)	40.0% (100)	15.0% (38)	15.0% (38)	10.0% (25)
5	200	15.0% (30)	45.0% (90)	15.0% (30)	15.0% (30)	10.0% (20)
6	180	15.0% (27)	50.0% (90)	15.0% (27)	10.0% (18)	10.0% (18)
7	150	20.0% (30)	40.0% (60)	20.0% (30)	10.0% (15)	10.0% (15)
8	120	25.0% (30)	35.0% (42)	15.0% (18)	15.0% (18)	10.0% (12)
9	140	20.0% (28)	40.0% (56)	15.0% (21)	15.0% (21)	10.0% (14)
10	220	15.0% (33)	45.0% (99)	20.0% (44)	10.0% (22)	10.0% (22)
11	300	20.0% (60)	40.0% (120)	15.0% (45)	15.0% (45)	10.0% (30)
12	230	21.7% (50)	34.8% (80)	8.7% (20)	21.7% (50)	13.0% (30)
13	160	25.0% (40)	40.0% (64)	10.0% (16)	15.0% (24)	10.0% (16)
14	90	22.2% (20)	44.4% (40)	11.1% (10)	16.7% (15)	5.6% (5)
15	70	21.4% (15)	64.3% (45)	0% (0)	0% (0)	14.3% (10)

Across stories, plot-stage distributions are clearly uneven. Rising Action consistently receives the largest share of sentences (e.g., Story 1 = 51.0%; Story 10 = 45.0%), while Climax and Resolution are comparatively sparse in many texts. This pattern suggests authors allocate more space to build-up and aftermath than to peak events. Aggregated across stories, the distribution deviates strongly from uniformity, $\chi^2(4, N=3,255)=1,076.92$, $p<.001$, indicating a systematic emphasis on mid-plot development over other stages.

Table 2

Narrative Stages by Story (frequencies and % of Sentences)

Story #	Dominant Mode 1 (% / Freq. / Sub-Type)	Dominant Mode 2 (% / Freq. / Sub-Type)	Dominant Mode 3 (% / Freq. / Sub-Type)	Other Notable Modes (% / Freq.)
1	Action (38.3% / 150 / Physical: 25.5%, Emotional: 12.8%)	Dialogue (30.6% / 120 / Direct: 25.5%, Tags: 5.1%)	Description (15.3% / 60 / Setting: 7.7%, Character: 5.1%)	Reflection (8.2% / 32 / Internal: 5.1%); Exposition (7.7% / 30)
2	Descriptive (36.7% / 110 / Setting-Focused: 15.0%, Character-Focused: 8.3%)	Dialogue-Driven (33.3% / 100 / Explanatory: 18.3%, Questioning: 8.3%)	Action-Oriented (18.3% / 55 / Physical: 16.7%, Symbolic: 1.7%)	Reflective (15.0% / 45 / Memory-Based: 11.7%)
3	Descriptive (~60% / 270 / Environmental: 35%, Character: 25%)	Dialogue (~25% / 113 / Conflict-Driven: 15%, Family: 10%)	Internal Monologue (~10% / 45 / Fearful: 7%)	Expository (~5% / 23 / Contextual: 5%)
4	Dialogue (50% / 125 / Conversational: 30%, Emotive: 20%)	Action (25% / 63 / Physical Interactions: 15%)	Descriptive (20% / 50 / Character: 10%, Setting: 10%)	Reflective (5% / 13 / Moral: 5%)
5	Dialogue (40% / 80 / Accusations: 25%, Protests: 15%)	Descriptive (30% / 60 / Market Scene: 15%, Social: 15%)	Action (20% / 40 / Events: 10%, Flood: 10%)	Omniscient Narration (10% / 20 / Insights: 10%)
6	Dialogue (45% / 81 / Debates: 25%, Speeches: 20%)	Descriptive (25% / 45 / Ceremony: 15%)	Action (20% / 36 / Political Efforts: 10%)	Expository (10% / 18 / Career Summary: 10%)
7	Action (40% / 60 / Struggle: 25%, Examination: 15%)	Dialogue (30% / 45 / Instructions: 15%, Rebukes: 15%)	Descriptive (20% / 30 / Condition: 10%, Worry: 10%)	Internal Monologue (10% / 15 / Justification: 10%)
8	Dialogue (35% / 42 / Appeals: 20%, Advice: 15%)	Descriptive (30% / 36 / Journey: 15%, Fears: 15%)	Action (20% / 24 / Orders: 10%, Recovery: 10%)	Reflective (15% / 18 / Moral: 15%)
9	Action (40% / 56 / Cures: 20%, Beatings: 20%)	Descriptive (25% / 35 / Treatments: 15%)	Dialogue (20% / 28 / Pretenses: 10%)	Expository (15% / 21 / Lessons: 15%)
10	Descriptive (40% / 88 / Swarms: 25%, Destruction: 15%)	Action (30% / 66 / Fires: 15%, Crushing: 15%)	Dialogue (20% / 44 / Warnings: 10%)	Reflective (10% / 22 / Patience: 10%)
11	Dialogue (50% / 150 / Repetitions: 30%, Pleas: 20%)	Descriptive (25% / 75 / Discontent: 15%)	Action (15% / 45 / Gatherings: 10%)	Reflective (10% / 30 / Dream Vision: 10%)
12	Description (43.5% / 100 / Physical:	Dialogue (26.1% / 60 / Direct: 23.9%)	Action (17.4% / 40 / External: 13.0%)	Reflection (8.7% / 20 / Moral: 4.3%);

Story #	Dominant Mode 1 (% / Freq. / Sub-Type)	Dominant Mode 2 (% / Freq. / Sub-Type)	Dominant Mode 3 (% / Freq. / Sub-Type)	Other Notable Modes (% / Freq.)
	21.7%, Emotional: 13.0%)			Foreshadowing (4.3% / 10)
13	Descriptive (40% / 64 / Appearance: 20%, Collections: 20%)	Dialogue (30% / 48 / Implied Events: 15%)	Action (20% / 32 / Celebrations: 10%)	Reflective (10% / 16 / Contentment: 10%)
14	Descriptive (33.3% / 30 / Setting/Character: 20%)	Narrative/Action (27.8% / 25 / Events: 15%)	Dialogic (16.7% / 15 / Interactions: 10%)	Reflective (16.7% / 15 / Observation: 10%); Evaluative (5.6% / 5)
15	Dialogue (50% / 35 / Conversations: 30%)	Descriptive (25% / 18 / Dream Journey: 15%)	Reflective (25% / 18 / Deeds: 15%)	Action (0% / 0 / No Traditional Action)

Narrative modes are likewise imbalanced, with one dominant mode per story (often Dialogue, Description, or Action) and relatively fewer “Other” segments. For instance, Dialogue leads in several stories (e.g., Stories 4, 5, 11), whereas Description dominates others (e.g., Stories 3, 10). Pooled across texts, the mode distribution departs markedly from uniformity, $\chi^2(3, N=3,265)=830.82$, $p<.001$, showing a consistent stylistic preference for a single leading narrative mode rather than an even mix.

Table 3

Goodness-of-fit for Plot Stages

Story #	N (sentences)	Df	Chi-square (χ^2)	Critical $\chi^2(\alpha=.05)$	Significant?
1	392	4	284.327	9.488	Yes
2	300	4	50	9.488	Yes
3	452	4	179.704	9.488	Yes
4	251	4	67.984	9.488	Yes
5	200	4	80	9.488	Yes
6	180	4	103.5	9.488	Yes
7	150	4	45	9.488	Yes
8	120	4	24	9.488	Yes
9	140	4	38.5	9.488	Yes
10	220	4	93.5	9.488	Yes
11	300	4	82.5	9.488	Yes
12	230	4	46.087	9.488	Yes
13	160	4	52	9.488	Yes
14	90	4	40.556	9.488	Yes
15	70	4	97.857	9.488	Yes
Overall	3255	4	1076.925	9.488	Yes

Plot Stages (5 categories; $df=4$; $\alpha=.05$, critical $\chi^2=9.488$)

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test compared each story's plot-stage distribution to a uniform model (20% per stage). For nearly all stories, the distributions significantly deviated from uniformity, $\chi^2(4, Ns \text{ per story}) > 9.49$, $p < .05$ (see Table 3A). Pooled across stories, the imbalance was large, $\chi^2(4, N=3,255)=842.6$, $p<.001$, reflecting consistently elevated Rising Action and Falling Action shares relative to Exposition/Climax/Resolution. Practically, the narratives allocate more sentences to build-up and aftermath than to setup or peak moments.

Table 4

Goodness-of-fit for Narrative Modes

Story #	N (sentences)	Df	Chi-square (χ^2)	Critical $\chi^2(\alpha=.05)$	Significant?
1	392	3	60.49	7.815	3
2	300	3	40.323	7.815	3
3	452	3	331.466	7.815	3
4	251	3	103.789	7.815	3
5	200	3	40	7.815	3
6	180	3	46.8	7.815	3
7	150	3	30	7.815	3
8	120	3	12	7.815	3
9	140	3	19.6	7.815	3
10	220	3	44	7.815	3
11	300	3	114	7.815	3
12	230	3	50	7.815	3
13	160	3	32	7.815	3
14	90	3	5.556	7.815	3
15	70	3	34.521	7.815	3
Overall	3255	3	830.822	7.815	3

Narrative Modes (4 categories; $df=3$; $\alpha=.05$, critical $\chi^2=7.815$)

A chi-square Goodness-of-fit test was conducted to compare the mode mix in each story to an equal parts model (25% per: Dominant Mode 1, Dominant Mode 2, Dominant Mode 3, Other). There were great variations in uniformity across most stories, $\chi^2(3, Ns \text{ per story}) > 7.82$, $p < .05$ (see Table 3B). With a large deviation, $\chi^2(3, N=3,265)=710.1$, $p<.001$ across stories, accelerated by a high tilt to Dominant Mode 1 (average of Dialogue, Description or Action, depending on story), with relatively fewer of the Other segments. This implies that both stories have a tendency of favoring one dominant mode of telling instead of equitably dividing parts.

5. DISCUSSION

An examination of fifteen short stories in Intermediate English Textbook 1 also provides a highly intricate but well-patterned image of the interrelationship between narrative structure and linguistic design in a CEFR-based teaching scenario. Quantum The data shows that the textbook puts high weight on Exposition and Rising Action, which constitute over 60 percent of the entire narrative. This preeminent quality is manifested qualitatively by foregrounding information about the background, characterization, and narrative buildup, and condensing the Climax and Resolution into the smaller textual units. This trend is indicative of a pedagogically conservative practice, i.e., it is concerned with establishing a contextual familiarity and a gradual accumulation of plot rather

than sudden changes in tension, thus beneficial to the understanding of intermediate learners and the acquisition of vocabulary in small steps.

These results are consistent with earlier studies on the pedagogical utility of narratives that offer learners in B1 courses extended orientation and predictable framework (Canals-Botines, 2020; Jan and Aziz, 2023). Nevertheless, the extent of the exposition coverage in Intermediate English Textbook 1 is higher than it has been noted in other similar EFL textbooks in other contexts (Suhartini, 2022; Yani and Musdizalab, 2025). In contrast to the report by Yani and Musdizalab (2025) that showed that the balance between the phases of orientation and complication was nearly the same in the Indonesian textbooks, the current corpus indicates that the first scenes are longer, and the conflict is introduced gradually. This literary restraint could be due to the fact that textbook authors are trying to ensure that stories become cognitively and linguistically manageable by learners at A2 to B1 learning levels.

Meanwhile, the fact that Climax and Resolution stages are underrepresented has pedagogical implications. Students whose reading material is mainly stories involving little to no climax/denouement or brief termination might have a hard time assimilating the discourse markers and the evaluation language that are commonly linked to narrative resolution and denouement (Healey, 2025). A comparative lack of the sentences with the cause-effect or reflective resolution may limit the possibilities of the students to practice inferencing, summarizing moral consequences, and expressing personal judgments-skills that are explicit references in the CEFR descriptors of B1 writing and speaking writing and speaking, respectively, Can describe experiences, reactions, and events, Council of Europe, 2020).

Linguistically, the textbook vocabulary and the CEFR lexical bands show some agreement in their results, which the language-use analysis supports as well, with Kamil (2023) and Maral and Ergul, (2025) stressing partial agreement in their previous results. The majority of the stories have a basic lexis of 2,000 words in frequency, which students at the B1 level can use, although some of the stories have low-frequency adjectives and complex nominal groups that are typical of B2 level texts. That proves the point of Wolfer and Lew (2025), that CEFR alignment appears to be asymmetrical quite frequently on a micro-text level, particularly with multi-author textbooks. The syntactic usage of simple and compound sentences, which constitute the majority, is indicative of deliberate readability simplification but the use of relative clauses and embedded subordination are some evidence of limited stretching towards upper-intermediate proficiency, an asset that transitional learners could use.

Structural intentionality is further brought out by the chi-square analysis. The distribution of the sentences in each of the stories is not equal among the narrative stages, all of them show statistically significant skewness to one or two of the stages. Instead of characterizing editorial inconsistency, this variability is an indication of diversity in genres and intention of authors. So the narrative space of stories like Button, Button" is given over more to falling action so that moral reflection and the release of tension can be permitted, and the narrative space of "The Reward" is more devoted to rising action and the resolution of that action is squeezed into one closing line. Such asymmetries confirm that the compilers of the textbooks were interested in modeling various narrative shapes, as they wanted the learners to be aware of various story progressions and not just one formulaic curve.

The structural profile of Intermediate English Textbook 1 when considered as a whole justifies a number of pedagogical benefits. The very long exposition provides the learners with long input to build reading fluency, vocabulary recognition and cultural schemata; the wide range of rising-

action patterns stimulates prediction and generation of the plot; the brief resolutions allow classroom follow-up exercises like rewriting the endings or furthering the dialogues. In this respect, the textbook satisfies, in an indirect way, the functional descriptors of CEFR productive skills, especially, the capacity to describe coherent chains of events and present responses using simple cohesive strategies.

However, some restrictions are apparent. The absence of the balance between the narrative and linguistic scaffold implies that the alignment of the CEFR is not complete. Although the syntactic simplicity of the stories matches the B1 level, the conceptual density of topics moral dilemma, irony, and social satire crosses the communicative range outlined in the B1 level at times. This is reminiscent of the results of Yani and Musdizalab (2025) who found the same thematic and linguistic discrepancies in Asian secondary textbooks. Furthermore, little attention to interactive or multimodal narratives (i.e. dialogues on several pages) decreases the exposure to natural patterns of spoken discourse, which CEFR correlates with mediation and interaction competencies. Methodological insights are also uncovered in the course of the study. The integration of narrative-stage coding with CEFR linguistic profiling was found to be effective in the revealing of overt and latent gaps in textbook design. The given dual-lens analysis builds upon the earlier research that viewed structure and language as distinct entities (Kamil, 2023; Zhang, 2023). The combination of the structural model proposed by Freytag and quantitative chi-square testing lends empirical credibility to what is otherwise a descriptive process of evaluation and offers more empirical evidence of the story telling as a pedagogical tool.

Curricularly, these outcomes provoke the consideration of the development of textbooks and teacher mediation. The authors of textbooks might think about the redistribution of narrative phases to enable more comprehensive coverage of discourse functions associated with the CEFR B1 descriptors with the introduction of more intensive climactic and reflective passages. The patterns observed can in turn be used by the teachers to create specific interventions, e.g. exposition-heavy story as the source of vocabulary and comprehension activities, short-resolution stories as the source of writing extension activities, practicing closure and evaluation.

In curricular terms, these results lead one to think about the textbook development and the mediation of the teacher. Textbook authors can also think of rebalancing the balance of the narrative stages to incorporate more of the climactic and reflective ones so that discourse functions related to the CEFR B1 descriptors are covered more exhaustively. In the meantime, the observed patterns can be utilized by teachers to create specific interventions, e.g. exposition-intensive stories can be used in vocabulary and comprehension activities, and short-resolution stories can be used in writing extension exercises that train closure and evaluation.

Lastly, the implications are also in the wider application of CEFR aligned materials design in non-European settings. The Pakistani textbook examined in this paper illustrates the implicit alignment strategy: it alters the well-known literary material and puts it into the context of linguistically-regulated prose. This local adaptation helps the learner to understand but sometimes limits the scope of styles. According to Hamid et al., (2025), effective CEFR localization presupposes not only the lexical fine-tuning but also the realistic genre heterogeneity which reflects the cultural and communicative reality of learners.

Overall, the discussion highlights that Intermediate English Textbook 1 is a good introduction of narrative discourse to the intermediate learners, yet the textbook is partially aligned to the CEFR and structural balance is not balanced. This study brings together the narrative and linguistic approaches to examine the role of text as a tool of language learning in textbook ecosystems.

Future studies may be used to expand the corpus to several textbook series and match text characteristics to the performance of learners in order to confirm the pedagogical effect of narrative structure on the CEFR-level development.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper aimed at considering the extent to which the fifteen short stories contained in Intermediate English Textbook 1 meet the structural and linguistic requirements of the Common European Framework of Reference to Languages (CEFR) at the B1 level. The combination of narrative-stage analysis and CEFR-based linguistic profiling in the research gives a qualitative perspective of storytelling as a literary and pedagogical tool in educating English at the intermediate level. Mixed-methods method, i.e. quantitative analysis of frequencies, chi-square test, and qualitative interpretation, allowed conducting two-dimensional evaluation of both the narrative coherence and the language appropriateness.

The results indicate that the Exposition and Rising Action are regularly focused in the stories provided in the textbook and that more than half of the textual space is devoted to the contextual build-up and character introduction. This front loading assists in understanding, repetition of lexicons, and slow conceptual participation of B1 learners. The comparative shortness of Climax and Resolution phases, however, limits the chances of using higher order discourse markers, including evaluative expressions, moral reasoning, and reflective language, which both play vital roles in the creation of a conclusion in a story and critical thinking. These findings indicate that though Intermediate English Textbook 1 does manage to create easily readable and interesting narratives, it still falls somewhat within the lines of the expectations of the CEFR in terms of communicative range, and text completeness.

Linguistically, the stories tend to use vocabulary and syntax that correspond to intermediate level structure but sometimes, they have lexical and conceptual elements that are beyond the B1 levels of difficulty. It proves earlier researchers who observed uneven CEFR calibration in EFL textbooks (Kamil, 2023; Wolfer & Lew, 2025). The prevailing presence of high-frequency lexis, plain clause construction and cohesive sequencing however offers an efficient framework to learners gaining textual fluency and comfort with the longer reads.

It has significant implications in the field of pedagogy and materials design. To have complete portrayal of the plot resolution and moral reflection, the authors of textbooks ought to balance the phases of the narration to enrich the exposure of the learners to complete discourse cycles. Teachers in their turn may employ the detected patterns to create stage-specific learning exercises e.g. the ability to foresee outcomes in rising action or reformulate expanded endings in truncated resolutions. These practices will ensure the gap between comprehension and production is narrowed down to make the outcome of the classroom more aligned with CEFR communicative competencies.

Methodologically, the research proves that the structural narrative analysis plus the use of CEFR-type of linguistic measures provides a replicable framework of assessing the literary materials. The dual-lens method may be used as a diagnostic instrument by curriculum designers to find empirical support of the level appropriateness of national textbooks.

To sum up, Intermediate English Textbook 1 shows a serious intention to correspond the literary pedagogy with the requirements of CEFR-B1 due to the use of simple language and cultural-based stories. Its stories succeed well in the modeling of sequencing, coherence and the descriptive clarity albeit it fails to capture the entire narrative resolution as demanded at the intermediate level. The work also adds to the extensive discussion on textbook assessment and implementation of the

CEFR by providing empirical evidence as well as guidance to the methodology, to more balanced, linguistically calibrated, and story-based learning resources, which can be used to promote both linguistic and literary literacy among English learners.

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