



LOST IN CULTURAL TRANSLATION? A CORPUS BASED COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PTB GRADE 11 ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS WITH REAL ENGLISH USAGE

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Abstract

This study evaluates the extent to which the Grade 11 English textbook, developed by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Authority (PCTB), supports learners in acquiring English for practical, everyday communication. Given the growing significance of English in contemporary global and local contexts, the Government of Punjab has undertaken multiple policy initiatives to enhance English language proficiency among students, including curricular reforms and textbook revisions. The present research adopts a corpus-based approach to examine the linguistic and functional features of the prescribed textbook. The compiled textbook corpus is systematically compared with the British National Corpus (BNC) to assess its alignment with authentic language use. The analysis focuses on lexical frequency, collocational patterns, and communicative relevance to determine whether the textbook adequately reflects real-life English usage. Rather than critiquing policy decisions, this study aims to provide constructive insights and pedagogical recommendations for improving textbook design in line with learners' communicative needs. The findings are expected to contribute to ongoing discussions on curriculum development and English language teaching in Pakistan.

Keywords: Collocations, ELT, BNC, Frequency-Based Analysis, Corpus-Based Study, Pakistani English Textbooks, Corpus Linguistics, Linguistic Authenticity

Introduction

English is also used as a lingua franca in the international level so it is facilitating the interactions across different cultures and national boundaries. It is important in the world, which makes it unique in the fields of education, science, technology, and diplomacy. When the society is multilingual like in Pakistan, English acts as the most important second language, which is closely related to repute and power. It is the medium of instruction in many schools and considered a network towards social mobility, academic performance and exposure to global knowledge. The English language plays main role in global communication, education and social mobility. In Pakistan, English is taught as a compulsory subject and one of the main requirements to ensure higher education and employment. For most learners, especially those from rural or low socio-economic backgrounds, government suggested English textbooks are the primary source of linguistic exposure. Because students rely heavily on these materials, the quality of language presented in textbooks directly influences their communicative skills, confidence and academic success and progress.

Textbooks' language, however, does not always reflect natural or standard English usage. In several Pakistani educational institutions (mostly in government colleges and Kips group of colleges) textbooks have been criticized for following on outdated instructional methods, more focus on grammar and limited practicality of real life usage. Modern applied linguistics explained the need for authentic input, and corpus linguistics offers a systematic way to compare textbook language with real English usage. This proposed research aims to investigate the linguistic competence of English textbooks used at the intermediate level by analysing collocational patterns and comparing them with patterns found in a standard reference corpus. For the secondary (first year of intermediate) level of students, textbooks suggested by Punjab English Curriculum and Textbook Authority (PECTAA) are the main input source of linguistic

input of millions of students. These materials would meet all requirements and criteria of the national curriculum and be able to foster communicative proficiency, critical thinking, and moral growth at the same time.

Although these are the institutional objectives, the educational factors of such textbooks are questioned by different studies (Inam Ullah Khan & Liaqat Hussain Shah, 2024).

Most of them are described as being too prescriptive in their grammar exercise and too decontextualized in their reading passages and as a result restrict the expression of natural language use. The topic of authenticity where the language found in textbooks is authentic and real-life language is the most suitable and is the main issue of applied linguistics. Authenticity does not only explain the use of actual texts but it also refers to the degree to which linguistic expressions reflect authentic patterns used by good speakers.

In Pakistan where the use of the actual English language is mostly restricted to the classroom, textbooks become the main point of language learning. Therefore, the language of these sources is a straight element of language growth in learners. Corpus linguistics presents an empirical basis of determining the authenticity of textbook language.

According to Gries (2009), corpus linguistics is the study of large bodies of text by computer. It offers a scientific way of explaining patterns of language. One of the key studies in corpus linguistics is collocation analysis, the study of natural combinations of words. Collocations play a vital role in the use of fluency and idiomatic language. Students who read in natural collocations get high lexical skills and more colloquial language. In Pakistan, language teaching has implemented traditional structuralist and grammar-translation lines with the result that learners produce grammatically correct but lexically dead language, which is often merged textbook English.

The status of the collocation authenticity of textbooks is analysed with the help of quantitative, corpus-based research. The introduction of data-based learning (DDL) has had its effect on vocabulary teaching, the design of the curriculum, and on the development of tasks. However, there are few corpus-based techniques in Pakistan. Textbooks are mainly written on the premise of tradition or intuition as opposed to empirical evidence. The current paper aims to use corpus analysis to both find the gaps in collocational authenticity, and to support strong and valuable improvements in textbook creation and teacher education.

Since English as a language having a lot of social virtues like lack of pure language exposure can harm students in government or other schools in rural areas than others who have access to better language facilities and opportunities. Educational equity requires the provision of continuous access to the high-quality input of languages.

Literature Review

Fast globalization is making English more fluent with several languages. Farid, S. (2025). English is commonly used in political, cultural, scientific, and communication purposes on the world scale; therefore, becoming a master of the language is a necessity like never before. (Chen & Goh, 2011). English is widely utilized for political, cultural, scientific, and communication purposes globally; as such, being an expert in the language is essential than ever. Various studies done in Pakistan have highlighted the effects of English textbooks on language training. Textbooks are important to define the scope and sequence of the material however, they have been criticized on many occasions due to laying too much emphasis on writing and grammar at the cost of speaking and listening. Therefore, children often learn passively, where active communication is not done in active communication skills, which is necessary in real life when it comes to interaction of language (Inam Ullah Khan & Liaqat Hussain Shah, 2024).

It has always been a difficult task to ascertain vocabulary size and type of words. Someone must know to attain a desired proficiency (Qayyum, 2024). Due to this reason, the grammar

translation method has been commonly applied in English teaching classes in Pakistan because the teaching of the language has been centered on the memorization of syntax and rules without considering that language is also transactional (Language's transactional nature means language of business). The existence of such linguistic constructions indicates, besides hegemonic state ideologies, reproduction of the latter that might suppress the process of developing critical thinking, civic participation, and multicultural awareness among young learners" (Hafeez, 2004, p.27).

English, in Pakistan, is taught since grade 1, yet the acquisition of receptive and productive skills in English language by Pakistani language learners remains questionable. Khan, A. F. (2024). He consistently demonstrate that textbooks shape learners' linguistic competence, particularly in contexts where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited. Research in Pakistan has shown that English textbooks often emphasise grammar-based instruction at the expense of communicative proficiency. Mustafa and Damayanti (2024) assert that adaptation methods and strategies are determined by students, tasks, context, time, beliefs, understanding, students' decisions, learners' empowerment and nature of materials, task complexity and lifestyles of both teachers and students. Scholars note that learners may memorise rules but struggle to use natural expressions. International research stresses the importance of collocations for developing fluency and idiomatic control.

English is one the official language spoken in Pakistan at national and international levels and serves as the primary medium of instruction in many schools, particularly at the secondary level. Bui, T. (2024). Similarly Corpus linguistics has emerged as a valuable method for analysing authentic language and identifying gaps in instructional materials. However, very few corpus based textbook evaluations exist in Pakistan, creating a strong need for future research in this area.

Corpus linguistics has created a paradigm shift in the methodology of the study of linguistics, replacing the descriptive approach of intuition with the empirical study of linguistic patterns through the systematic study of large, principled collections of natural texts. According to McEnery and Hardie (2012), corpus linguistics refers to the study of language on the basis of examples of natural language use recorded in computerised databases that support both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The history of modern corpus linguistics dates back to the 1960s, in particular with the development of the Brown Corpus at Brown University, the first computer-readable set of written American English, containing one million tokens (Francis and 4724FK, 1979). The presence of such linguistic constructions reflects, in addition to hegemonic state ideologies, reproduction of the latter that could suppress the process of forming critical thinking, civic participation, and multicultural awareness among young learners. Mahmood, M. A. (2024).

Corpus linguistics is developed in size and in methodological complexity in later decades. British National Corpus, which was compiled in the 1990s, includes about 100 million tokens and represents a great variety of spoken and written registers (Aston and Burnard, 1998). Since that time, the Bank of English, curated by Collins COBUILD has already exceeded 650-million tokens, making it possible to research rare phenomena and subtle trends (Sinclair, 2004).

Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998) describe three paradigmatic characteristics of corpus linguistics: first, an empirical focus that questions actual usage patterns in natural texts; second, the use of large-scale and methodologically principled text corpora; and third, a strong dependence on the use of computationally based tools to achieve the aforementioned analyses. It is not surprising during the past several years, gender inequality in school is reduced in many countries due to existence of the economic and social advantages of college students, females' education, numerous international agreements, and national initiatives (Saher, 2024).

Corpus linguistics has had a great impact on language teaching. As Hunston, (2002) argues that corpus-based evidence contradicts the traditional prescriptive grammar since it emphasises the differences between grammatical norms and the actual use of language. Similarly Johns (1991) was the first to introduce the idea of data-driven learning (DDL), whereby learners become researchers themselves and use concordance lines to identify linguistic regularities on their own.

Between the most well studied phenomena of corpus linguistics, collocations, as defined by Firth (1957) in the aphorism of you shall know a word by the company it keeps, are also included. Sinclair (1991) distinguished between the so-called open-choice principle, where the lexical choice is determined by grammatical principles with few limitations, and the so-called idiom principle, where speakers use pre-synthesised multi-word units.

A continuum of collocational strength was described by Howarth (1998), restricted collocations (e.g., strong tea), and figurative idioms (e.g. spill the beans) at each end. In the case of second-language acquisition, collocational competence shows a strong relationship with general proficiency and native-like fluency (Granger, 1998). Pawley and Syder (1983) singled out collocational knowledge as the key to the puzzle of native-like fluency: how speakers can create proper, naturally-sounding language quickly when there are literally an infinite variety of possible grammatical forms.

As empirical studies show, there are always problems with collocations in the way learners deal with them. Nesselhauf (2005) indicated that the more developed German learners of the English language still made a lot of collocational errors, for example, they were often grammatically correct but unnatural. Collocational difficulty is caused by a number of factors such as the so-called arbitrariness of collocations and negative L1 transfer (Bahns and Eldaw, 1993; Nesselhauf, 2003).

Although English textbooks are widely used across WHAT DOES ACROSS MEAN? intermediate classes in the region, concerns have been raised about their linguistic appropriateness (Huda, 2025). Authenticity has become a concept that has created a lot of discussion in the pedagogy of languages. Widdowson (1978) separated the concept of the genuineness (i.e. the fact whether the text was created with non-pedagogical intentions or not) and the concept of authenticity (i.e. whether the learners can make use of the text in a meaningful manner or not). Gilmore (2007) has made a thorough review of the authenticity research literature and has found eight different definitions of authenticity in the literature. Little, Devitt and Singleton (1989) postulated that authenticity was not just in texts but the interaction between learners and materials.

There has been inconclusive evidence of studies using real materials. According to some studies, the authentic texts are found to increase motivation and give real world applicability (Peacock, 1997). There are those who discover that genuine materials can be overwhelming to the low-end learners (Guariento and Morley, 2001). The textbook evaluation has been a traditional issue in the field of language teaching and many models have been put forward on systematic evaluation. Cunningsworth (1995) identified such criteria as goals, design, content of the language and skills.

The use of corpus linguistics as a tool in the analysis of textbooks is a fairly new phenomenon. Early research by Mindt (1996) compared presentation of grammar in EFL textbooks with the real usage patterns in corpora, and found that they were very different. A systematic study of the EFL textbook representation of progressives revealed that textbooks gave a skewed view of usage Romer, 2004. In the case of vocabulary, Mukundan and Khojasteh (2011) studied the textbooks used in Malaysia and discovered that there was poor representation of collocations. The studies on Pakistani textbooks in particular have pointed out some of the constraints. Mansoor (2005) condemned the focus on grammar-translation. Shah, Hussain and Nasseef

(2013) established that textbooks had a low exposure to authentic spoken English. Zaffar, Younus and Amjad (2025) found cultural compatibility of intermediate-level ELT materials and the misaligned cultural elements in them, which seek the engagement of learners. The relationship of culture and linguistic aspects is least considered in Pakistani context.

To pause the current work, it is necessary to contextualise it into the complex linguistic and educational context of Pakistan. The British colonial rule left behind a strong English as an administrative and educational language in Pakistan in the year 1947. Rahman (1996) gives an exhaustive history of language policy in Pakistan and has recorded how English has managed to retain its status in the country despite occasional nationalistic campaigns to Urduize the country. The National Education Policy (1998-2010) tried to bring about English as a mandatory subject since grade one as it is very important in economic growth and global communication. The more recent policy initiatives have given English language teaching a national priority.

A study of the practises of English-teaching in Pakistan indicates that there are issues that have existed, Shamim (2008). He reported the problem of large classes, testing stress and poor teacher competence which impedes pedagogical innovation. Warsi (2004) examined the disconnect between policy rhetoric and classroom reality, and reported that even though curriculum frameworks emphasize on communication skills, assessment practices still favour grammar and translation. The relation between educational equity and language policy has been receiving growing education interest, especially in postcolonial settings. Phillipson (1992) came up with a term linguistic imperialism, which argues that the proliferation of English all over the world tends to favour the interests of mainstream communities and oppress speakers of other languages. Tollefson (1991) has come up with critical language-policy theory which discusses the ideological roles of language policies.

In Pakistan, the status of English as the language of the elite and social mobility has brought about what Rahman (2002) refers to as the English divide, which is a social division between classes. This study has intensified scrutiny on the linguistic authenticity of Punjab Textbook Board (PTB) English textbooks, particularly their collocational patterns compared to reference corpora like the British National Corpus (BNC). Farid (2025) analyzed PTB Grades 9-10 textbooks, revealing limited lexical range and unnatural collocations that misalign with BNC frequency distributions, potentially hindering communicative competence. Similarly, Qayyum (2024) identified gaps in verbal constructions between Pakistani intermediate textbooks and BNC academic registers, underscoring the need for data-driven revisions. Khan (2024a) quantified lexical load in Class X PTB materials, finding 80.5% coverage of high-frequency words but deficiencies in advanced collocations essential for fluency.

This trend extends to authenticity evaluations, where Saher (2024) applied corpus methods to detect gender biases in lexical choices, while an anonymous study (2025) critiqued content complexity progression in PTB Class 11-12 books using Voyant Tools, showing inconsistent readability scores. Mahmood (2024) and Areej (2024) further explored Pakistani English novels and ideological themes via AntConc, highlighting culturally bound expressions absent in BNC norms. Liu and Afzaal (2024), alongside Sultana and Imtiaz (2025), advocated data-driven learning (DDL) to bridge textbook gaps, noting overreliance on formal structures over idiomatic usage.

Hashmi and Rehman (2024) proposed corpus integration in teacher training, echoed by Brezina (2024) and Nation (2025), who emphasized high-frequency collocations for EFL equity in Pakistan. Many Pakistani students lack proper exposure to authentic English outside school. Finally, finding the high-frequency collocations improves communication skills and fluency. Students who know common word combinations can process the language faster and produce

more idiomatic output, which is particularly valuable for academic and professional mobility in Pakistan.

Research Gap

The analysis of recent research shows that there is a strong international consensus in the context of the primacy of collocational competence, the genuineness of linguistic input, and the use of corpus-based textbooks evaluation. The empirical studies carried out throughout Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East continue to point out that the existing EFL textbooks often have an inappropriate representation of the natural language patterns, especially at the lexical and collocational levels. Persistent issues that have been recognised in the investigation of the Pakistani situation include over emphasis on grammatical correctness, the prevalent use of communicative emphasis, and the use of textbooks as the main medium of exposure to the English language. Nevertheless, most Pakistani research is still descriptive, mostly qualitative or perception-based research and only a few studies involve large corpus comparisons with standard reference corpora.

In addition, although corpus-based research concerning grammatical forms or standardised vocabulary has been done, a small number of research studies use well-known reference corpora, including the British National Corpus, to carry out in-depth studies of collocations in the intermediate level. The topic of the grade-11 curriculum as an important transitional phase between secondary and higher education has been barely covered. The prevailing literature does not pay much attention to the role of cultural and ideological aspects in the collocational decisions underpinning textbooks as well. As a result, a dearth of hard evidence still exists to determine whether the collocational content of Punjab Textbook Board English texts is sufficient to prepare students to undertake actual life academic and professional communication.

Purpose of the Study

There is a significant gap between the language students encounter in Punjab Textbook Board English textbooks and the language used in authentic communicative contexts. Many collocations found in these textbooks appear highly formal, culturally marked or semantically unnatural when compared with international standards.

Punjab Textbook Board English textbooks correspond to authentic English usage. By comparing textbook collocations with a reference corpus, the study seeks to identify natural, unnatural, restricted and culturally bound patterns. The findings will support improvements in textbook design, curriculum planning and The purpose of this research is to assess the extent to which the collocational patterns found in the teacher training.

3. Research Questions

- ❖ Which are the most frequent words and phrases in the Grade 11 (PTB) English A textbook?
- ❖ Are these words and expressions the same as what is found in the actual English corpora?
- ❖ Are the sentence patterns and vocabulary used in the textbook natural and handy in everyday communication?
- ❖ What are the key difference between text-book language and real English?

Research Objectives

The study is directed by the following objectives in order to perform this investigation:

- Extraction and identification of common collocations in the PECTAA Grade 11 English textbook.
- Compare such collocations with those that take place in the British National Corpus.
- Evaluate the degree of authenticity of the language used in the text book on the distribution and frequency of collocations.

Research Methodology

It was a mixed-method corpus based design. It has quantitative and qualitative elements of

analysis. AntConc. software was used to find collocations from the Textbook.

Data Source

Data was collected from these two officials

- 1) Grade Eleven English Textbook of Punjab Textbook Board.
- 2) A reference corpus like the British National Corpus.

Procedure

Following procedure was applied in steps:

- Digitalisation and purification has made of the textbook (means firstly textbook converted into digital form and then irrelevant like exercises and photos have been removed)
- Extraction and identification has made of collocations.
- Preparation of mini-textbook corpus has made.
- Comparison to the reference has made.
- Qualitative explanation of culturally mediated patterns has made.

Collocations found in Pakistan Grade 11 English Textbook 2025.

PECTA Collocation	Real-life BNC Collocation	Remarks on Usage
the sacred city	the holy city	"Holy city" more typical in BNC for religious places
an exceptional character	an outstanding character	"Outstanding" preferred synonym in BNC
the first revelation	the initial revelation	"Initial" more common than "first" in BNC
the last Rasool	(not found)	Specific to Islamic texts, not in BNC
the holy Quran	the Quran	BNC prefers "the Quran" without "holy"
a remarkable victory	a significant victory	"Significant" more frequent in BNC
the final sermon	the concluding sermon	"Concluding" preferred in BNC for formal speeches
the Islamic society	Muslim community	More neutral term in BNC, culturally sensitive in PECTA
the righteous action	righteous action	Less frequent but understood in BNC
to a greater extent	to a large extent	"Large extent" more common idiomatic phrase
play an important	play an important role	"Play an important role" fuller phrase is frequent
in the event	in the event of	"In the event of" more common in BNC
deep moral values	strong moral values	"Strong" more common in BNC

PECTA Collocation	Real-life BNC Collocation	Remarks on Usage
profound personal loss	great personal loss	“Great” more typical qualifier in BNC
sacred city of	holy city of	“Holy city” more frequent
act of compassion	act of kindness	“Act of kindness” more frequent in BNC
life and mission	life mission	BNC tends towards shorter phrase
life continues to	life goes on	“Life goes on” more idiomatic
years of hardship	years of difficulty	“Difficulty” more formal in BNC
cultural and religious	cultural and religious	Standard phrase
rise and development	growth and development	“Growth and development” more natural
established a community	formed a community	“Formed a community” more common
relentless persecution	constant persecution	“Constant persecution” more frequent
suffer from hardship	face hardship	“Face hardship” more idiomatic
carry out duties	perform duties	“Perform duties” more formal
cultural diversity and	cultural diversity	“Cultural diversity” a typical phrase

Data Analysis

AntConc. software was used to find collocations from the Textbook. There were 12641 tokens in Textbook which represent the actual size of corpus. 30 collocations were found out that are rarely used in BNC but frequently used in Grade 11 English Textbook. The extracted collocations listed and contrasted in terms of frequency, naturalness and semantic function. The cultural and religious forces have explored to determine how identity and ideology determine textbook language.

Discussion

The present study was aimed to examine the extent to which the collocations as used in the Grade 11 English textbook (Punjab English Text-book 2012), reflect authentic language usage (the British National Corpus (BNC)). The results show a noticeable difference between textbook collocations (PECTA) and actual patterns of usage. Collocational pairs were extracted and analysed. These were divided in 3 major groups. Most of the collocations belonged to the

partially aligned category, meaning that, although the meanings were maintained, the lexical choices were not natural in English.

Some collocations in the textbook were consistent with the BNC usage.

For example:

- **cultural and religious**
- **righteous action**

These expressions are common and show that the textbook include some real patterns. However, such examples were relatively few. This would seem to indicate that although textbook developers are to some extent conscious of the patterns of natural collocation, there is a lack of consistency. A significant amount of collocations revealed variation in lexical choice in comparison to BNC figures. For instance:

Textbook Collocation	BNC Equivalent	Observation
the sacred city	the holy city	“Holy” is more frequent and natural
an exceptional character	an outstanding character	“Outstanding” preferred in natural usage
a remarkable victory	a significant victory	“Significant” more frequent
deep moral values	strong moral values	“Strong” is standard collocate
profound personal loss	great personal loss	“Great” more idiomatic

Of these differences, one can highlight a tendency of less frequent/ marked lexical choices in the textbook. The pattern suggests that language of Textbook is often formally correct but generally less natural and influenced by literary or translated language. It also indicates that language of Textbook is not always aligned with the norms of frequency -based usage.

Some of the expressions were not in the BNC at all:

- **the last Rasool**
- **the holy Quran**

These are cultural and religiously based expressions in the context of the Pakistani and Islamic milieu. These collocations reflect localised discourse practices, religious identity and edagogical intent and deliberate choice to prioritise cultural relevance over corpus frequency. This raises a question is important to consider that, Do textbooks aim for authentic real language usage or representation of a culture?

The analysis also showed that there are structural differences:

Textbook Form	BNC Preferred Form
to a greater extent	to a large extent
in the event	in the event of
life continues to	life goes on
established a community	formed a community
suffer from hardship	face hardship

The analysis also revealed that BNC favours shorter, more idiomatic constructions and Textbook language tends to be more formal and less idiomatic. Some textbook phrases such

as 'life continues to, the sacred city' are grammatically correct but pragmatically less natural. A major corpus-based insight is that natural language is very much based on frequency patterns.

Examples:

- **"Strong moral values"** occurs much more often than **"deep moral values"**
- **"Act of kindness"** is more popular than **"act of compassion"**

This implies that the textbook does not adequately use frequency-based lexical selection and actually exposes learners to less frequent collocations.

Overall, the findings reveal the limited congruence with authentic corpus-based usage and frequent occurrence of acceptable (but non-preferred) collocations. The findings also reveal the presence of culturally specific expressions and disregard for frequency awareness in lexical selection. This results in confirming that the textbook does not fully reflect the authentic usages of English.

Conclusion

This study aimed to check whether the Grade 11 English textbook is in authentic collocational use or not. The findings clearly prove that there is a big gap between collocations in the textbooks and the collocations in real life. Many collocations are less frequent or non-idiomatic. Cultural expressions are more important than linguistic authenticity while the textbook is used for educational and cultural purposes, which does not fully prepare students for a natural English communication. The results highlight a critical gap between textbook English and authentic English usage. This gap can be understood through three major results. Textbooks tend to be simple in language for learners. However, this simplification sometimes is the result of unnatural collocations and reduced exposure to the real-life usage. The inclusion of expressions like the holy Quran reflects the cultural sensitivity, religious context and in identity construction. However, this comes at the cost of the global linguistic authenticity. Modern linguistics emphasise corpus-based teaching, however, the textbook does not appear to be corpus informed and collocations are selected intuitively rather than empirically.

Ethical Considerations

The research is an assessment of literature and this research has not human subjects. Ethical issues were associated with fairness, accuracy and cultural sensitivity in reading the textbook content. This analysis gave due credit to valid cultural and religious factors and critical of linguistic authenticity.

Limitations

- ❖ The research will concentrate on collocations only and fails to address other complete linguistic characteristics used in Textbook.
- ❖ Textbook will be analysed on only one level.
- ❖ No exercises and illustrations will include without pertinent collocational information.
- ❖ The corpus used will not be a specialised corpus, but a general English one

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