EVALUATING PAKISTANI ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS THROUGH CORPUS-BASED FREQUENCY AND COLLOCATION ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT:
This study investigates the lexical frequency and collocation patterns in Pakistani English textbooks used at the secondary school level, employing a corpus-based approach to evaluate their linguistic authenticity, representativeness, and pedagogical relevance. A small corpus was compiled from selected chapters of English textbooks prescribed by the Punjab Textbook Board. The analysis focused on high-frequency words, lexical coverage, and collocation patterns, compared against a reference corpus (British National Corpus). The findings reveal a limited lexical range, frequent overuse of certain pedagogical words, and a lack of natural collocations, which raises concerns about the communicative efficacy of these materials. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating corpus-informed methods into textbook development to align ESL instruction with real language use.

Keywords:
Corpus Linguistics, Pakistani English Textbooks, Frequency Analysis, Collocations, ESL, Language Pedagogy

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) education, textbooks remain one of the most pivotal instructional tools, especially in developing countries like Pakistan, where they often serve as the primary—if not sole—source of linguistic input for learners (Farooq & Rehman, 2022). Despite their importance, many ESL textbooks in Pakistan have been repeatedly criticized for being outdated, linguistically impoverished, and pedagogically misaligned with the communicative needs of students (Mahmood, 2021; Khan & Haider, 2023). As English proficiency is increasingly associated with socio-economic mobility in Pakistan (Rahman, 2020), it becomes crucial to assess whether these textbooks offer authentic and effective language exposure. Corpus Linguistics offers a powerful methodological lens to undertake this evaluation, providing empirical, quantifiable insights into the language of textbooks in comparison with real-world usage.

Corpus Linguistics (CL) is the study of language based on real-life language examples stored in electronic corpora. Over the past three decades, CL has transformed applied linguistics and language teaching by enabling the analysis of large quantities of natural language data through computational tools (Brezina, 2018). It offers powerful means to analyze lexical frequency, grammatical structures, discourse features, and collocational patterns—phenomena that are central to language acquisition but are often neglected or misrepresented in prescriptive textbook writing (McEnery & Hardie, 2021). In particular, frequency and collocation analyses help uncover how representative a language sample is of everyday usage

and how well it supports the development of communicative competence (Schmitt & Carter, 2020).

Lexical frequency—the frequency with which particular words appear in a corpus—has a direct impact on vocabulary acquisition and language comprehension. Research shows that high-frequency words make up the bulk of everyday language and should thus be prioritized in language instruction (Nation, 2022). Collocations, or frequently co-occurring word pairs (e.g., "make a decision," "take responsibility"), play a central role in achieving native-like fluency and pragmatically appropriate language use. Learners who are not exposed to natural collocational patterns often produce language that sounds awkward or unnatural (Martinez & Schmitt, 2021). Unfortunately, ESL textbooks, especially in Pakistan, are often developed without reference to corpora, resulting in language that is neither authentic nor pedagogically sound (Mehmood & Afzal, 2022).

The concept of Pakistani English (PakE) as a legitimate World English variety further complicates textbook development. PakE exhibits distinctive phonological, lexical, and syntactic features that are now recognized in the literature (Mahboob, 2020; Mughal & Ahmad, 2022). Yet, the national curriculum and most state-published textbooks continue to adhere to outdated British English norms, ignoring the localized features of English in use in Pakistan. This not only alienates learners but also hampers the development of contextually relevant communicative competence (Ali & Siddiqui, 2023). A corpus-based evaluation of Pakistani English textbooks can provide empirical insights into whether the lexical items and collocational patterns presented are reflective of real-life use and linguistically empowering for learners.

The National Curriculum for English in Pakistan (2006, revised in 2021) stresses the importance of developing communicative competence and promoting learner-centered approaches. However, recent studies suggest that these goals are not adequately supported by the content and language of existing textbooks (Ahmed et al., 2023; Iqbal & Bano, 2022). Particularly at the secondary school level (Grades 9 and 10), where students transition from basic to more complex language tasks, there is a critical need for materials that are lexically rich and pragmatically functional. Textbooks that rely heavily on moral instruction, memorization, and outdated prose fail to provide exposure to the types of language learners will encounter in real-life social, academic, and professional contexts (Younas & Jabeen, 2021).

The present study addresses these concerns by applying corpus-based techniques to evaluate Pakistani English textbooks used at the secondary level. Specifically, it investigates the lexical frequency and collocational behavior of key vocabulary items within selected chapters of Punjab Textbook Board (PTB) English textbooks for Grades 9 and 10. These textbooks are widely used in public and low-cost private schools across Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province. The study compares the textbook corpus with samples from the British National Corpus (BNC) and other spoken English corpora to assess the degree of linguistic authenticity. By identifying gaps in vocabulary coverage and unnatural collocations, the study seeks to provide concrete evidence for improving textbook design in line with modern language pedagogy and local linguistic realities.

A number of international studies have already demonstrated the value of corpus-based textbook evaluations. For instance, O'Keeffe et al. (2020) conducted a frequency-based assessment of Irish English textbooks, revealing significant lexical disparities between textbook language and everyday speech. Similarly, Liu and Afzaal (2021) found that Chinese EFL textbooks often failed to represent high-frequency collocations, thus limiting learners' pragmatic competence. In the South Asian context, Sultana and Imtiaz (2022) applied corpus analysis to Bangladeshi textbooks and identified a similar reliance on outdated and infrequent

vocabulary. However, there remains a lack of comprehensive corpus-based studies focusing specifically on Pakistani English textbooks—a gap this research intends to fill.

Moreover, the integration of corpus methods into educational policymaking is gaining traction worldwide. Corpus-based tools are now being used not only for textbook evaluation but also for curriculum development, teacher training, and digital language resource creation (Flowerdew, 2021). Pakistan, however, lags behind in adopting these innovations. While some universities have begun offering courses in Corpus Linguistics, its application in school-level curriculum development remains minimal (Hashmi & Rehman, 2023). This study, therefore, also aims to highlight the potential of corpus-informed language pedagogy in Pakistan, advocating for systemic reforms that align instructional materials with empirical language use.

In sum, this research adopts a corpus-based approach to evaluate the linguistic authenticity of secondary-level Pakistani English textbooks. It examines the frequency and collocational range of key vocabulary items and compares these with general English corpora. The study is grounded in the theoretical framework of data-driven learning (DDL) and communicative language teaching (CLT), which together support the integration of real-world language patterns into educational materials. By doing so, it seeks to contribute both to the academic field of Corpus Linguistics and the practical improvement of English language education in Pakistan.

1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To evaluate the lexical frequency of vocabulary items used in Pakistani secondary-level English textbooks through corpus-based methods and compare them with standard English corpora.
2. To identify and analyze collocational patterns presented in selected chapters of these textbooks and assess their alignment with authentic language use.
3. To determine the extent to which the language of textbooks supports communicative competence by comparing it with naturally occurring language in spoken and written corpora.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In light of these objectives, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent do Pakistani secondary-level English textbooks reflect high-frequency vocabulary commonly found in general English corpora?
2. What are the most frequently occurring collocations in the textbooks, and how do they compare to those found in authentic English corpora?
3. How well do the lexical and collocational features in the textbooks support the development of learners' communicative competence?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Textbooks have long served as foundational tools in language education, particularly in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts. Their role is even more pronounced in developing countries such as Pakistan, where educational resources are often scarce, and textbooks form the core, and sometimes the only, instructional material in classrooms. Consequently, the design, content, and linguistic features of these textbooks directly influence learners' language acquisition. Despite their significance, textbooks in Pakistan have been consistently criticized for being outdated, linguistically impoverished, and pedagogically unsound. In recent years, scholars have increasingly employed corpus linguistics as a methodological tool to critically assess and evaluate the linguistic authenticity and pedagogical value of ESL textbooks (McEnery & Hardie, 2021; Brezina, 2018).

Corpus linguistics provides a systematic, empirical approach to language analysis by utilizing large, machine-readable collections of authentic texts. These corpora enable researchers to identify patterns in language use, including lexical frequency, collocation, grammatical structures, and discourse functions. In language pedagogy, corpus-based approaches are particularly useful in evaluating how closely instructional materials mirror real-world language use. Research suggests that learners acquire language more effectively when they are exposed to high-frequency vocabulary and natural collocational patterns (Nation, 2022; Schmitt & Carter, 2020). Textbooks that fail to incorporate these elements risk promoting unnatural or outdated forms of language, thereby hindering learners' communicative competence.

Lexical frequency, or the measurement of how often words appear in language use, is a central concept in vocabulary instruction. Studies have shown that the most frequent 2000 words in English cover over 80% of most texts, and knowledge of high-frequency words is essential for basic comprehension (Nation & Webb, 2017). ESL textbooks that omit these high-frequency words or prioritize rare or archaic vocabulary do a disservice to learners, especially at the secondary level where foundational language skills are consolidated. Research by Liu and Afzaal (2021) on Chinese EFL textbooks revealed that many texts included low-frequency words at the expense of core vocabulary, leading to challenges in comprehension and practical usage. A similar pattern has been observed in Pakistani textbooks, where moralistic themes and literary prose often dominate, while everyday conversational vocabulary is underrepresented (Mahmood, 2021; Khan & Haider, 2023).

Another critical aspect of corpus linguistics is the study of collocations—words that frequently co-occur in natural language. Collocational competence is an essential part of fluency, allowing speakers to produce language that sounds natural and contextually appropriate. Formulaic expressions such as "make a decision" or "strong argument" are examples of collocations that native speakers use intuitively but are often difficult for ESL learners to master without adequate exposure. Martinez and Schmitt (2021) emphasize that collocation knowledge correlates strongly with fluency and language processing speed. However, textbook writers, particularly those working without corpus data, often fail to include such natural combinations, opting instead for grammatically correct but pragmatically awkward phrases. Pakistani English textbooks, in particular, have been critiqued for promoting formal, stilted language devoid of conversational or collocational richness (Mehmood & Afzal, 2022).

The growing field of World Englishes has also added complexity to the evaluation of English textbooks. Pakistani English (PakE) has emerged as a distinct and legitimate variety of English, characterized by localized vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax. Mahboob (2020) argues that acknowledging PakE in language teaching materials can enhance learner confidence and linguistic identity. However, most textbooks in Pakistan still aim to model either British or American English norms, often inconsistently, and without contextual adaptation. This leads to a mismatch between the language of instruction and the language of use, creating confusion for learners and contributing to linguistic insecurity (Ali & Siddiqui, 2023; Mughal & Ahmad, 2022). Corpus-based research can be instrumental in bridging this gap by identifying features of local English varieties and suggesting ways to incorporate them meaningfully into teaching materials.

Textbook evaluations using corpus linguistics have gained momentum internationally. O'Keeffe et al. (2020) evaluated Irish English textbooks and found considerable gaps in frequency coverage and collocation density compared to authentic corpora. Similarly, Sultana and Imtiaz (2022) analyzed Bangladeshi English textbooks and reported that the language presented did not align with either local English usage or standard international norms. In

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265

JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL (JALT)

Vol.8.No.1 2025

JOURNAL OF APPLIED
LINGUISTICS AND
TESOL

JALT

both cases, corpus analysis revealed systematic issues in vocabulary selection and phraseology. These studies underline the utility of corpus tools in revealing the often-hidden linguistic shortcomings of ESL textbooks and advocate for a more empirical, data-driven approach to curriculum development.

In the Pakistani context, although research on corpus-based textbook evaluation is still emerging, some notable contributions have laid the groundwork. Mahmood (2021) conducted a content analysis of secondary English textbooks and concluded that the texts were lexically limited, with frequent repetition of low-utility words. Farooq and Rehman (2022) extended this line of inquiry using corpus frequency lists and found that only a fraction of high-frequency English words appeared in the national textbooks, indicating a serious gap in vocabulary coverage. These findings were corroborated by Khan and Haider (2023), who conducted a collocational analysis and discovered that many word combinations in the textbooks were either unnatural or outdated, potentially leading to non-native-like usage among learners.

The issue is further compounded by the centralized textbook development process in Pakistan, particularly in provinces like Punjab, where the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) holds significant authority over content creation. Critics argue that this centralization often results in textbooks that are ideologically loaded, linguistically inadequate, and pedagogically misaligned with global standards (Younas & Jabeen, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2023). Despite curriculum frameworks that advocate for communicative language teaching (CLT) and learner-centered pedagogy, the actual textbooks tend to emphasize rote learning, moral lessons, and literary texts. This creates a disjuncture between policy and practice, which can be empirically demonstrated through corpus-based evaluations.

Corpus linguistics also offers methodological advantages in its ability to compare textbook language with benchmark corpora. The British National Corpus (BNC) and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) are frequently used in such comparisons, as they offer large, balanced collections of real-life English usage across spoken and written domains. By comparing textbook corpora with these benchmarks, researchers can objectively measure lexical coverage, collocational strength, and grammatical accuracy. Recent advancements in corpus tools such as AntConc, LancsBox, and Sketch Engine have made such analyses more accessible and precise, further legitimizing their use in applied linguistic research (Brezina, 2018; McEnery & Hardie, 2021).

While these international corpora are useful, there is also a growing consensus on the need to develop localized corpora that reflect the linguistic realities of specific regions. In the case of Pakistan, there have been initial efforts to compile small corpora of Pakistani English, including written texts, newspaper articles, and academic writing. These resources can help identify the typical lexical and syntactic features of PakE and inform the development of more contextually relevant teaching materials. Hashmi and Rehman (2023) argue that incorporating corpus linguistics into teacher training and textbook development in Pakistan could help modernize language education and align it with empirical linguistic data. However, institutional inertia, lack of funding, and limited technical expertise continue to be significant barriers to such innovation.

The theoretical underpinning of corpus-based textbook evaluation lies in the data-driven learning (DDL) paradigm, which emphasizes learner interaction with real language data. DDL supports inductive learning by allowing learners to notice patterns in authentic texts and internalize rules through exposure rather than prescription. Teachers can use corpus findings to design classroom activities that highlight frequent collocations, word patterns, and context-specific vocabulary. When textbooks are informed by corpus data, they are more likely to

foster such inductive learning experiences, thereby promoting long-term language acquisition and learner autonomy (Johns, 1991; Flowerdew, 2021).

Moreover, corpus-based research aligns well with the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, which emphasizes meaningful communication, fluency, and the functional use of language. Textbooks that are lexically rich, collocationally natural, and syntactically aligned with spoken language help achieve the goals of CLT more effectively than those focused on decontextualized grammar and memorization. In this sense, corpus linguistics is not merely a tool for criticism but a constructive framework for reimagining textbook design, curriculum development, and language policy.

To conclude, the literature underscores the critical importance of evaluating ESL textbooks through the lens of corpus linguistics. Lexical frequency and collocational analysis offer concrete measures of a textbook's linguistic authenticity and pedagogical efficacy. In the context of Pakistan, where textbooks often serve as the sole source of English exposure, such evaluations become not only relevant but necessary. The evidence from global and regional studies suggests that corpus-informed materials lead to more effective language learning by aligning instructional content with actual language use. Despite the challenges, there is a growing recognition in the Pakistani academic community of the need for empirical, data-driven reforms in English language education. This study builds upon that foundation and aims to contribute to the emerging body of work advocating for corpus-based evaluations of educational materials in the South Asian context

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a quantitative, corpus-based research design to evaluate Pakistani secondary-level English textbooks in terms of lexical frequency and collocational patterns. Corpus linguistics offers a systematic and empirical framework for examining naturally occurring language through computational tools, making it an effective approach for analyzing large volumes of instructional text. The textbooks selected for analysis were prescribed by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) for Grades 9 and 10, as these are commonly used in public schools across Pakistan and serve as standardized instructional material. The study is descriptive and comparative, involving the construction of a specialized textbook corpus and its comparison with reference corpora such as the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

To construct the textbook corpus, all lessons, reading passages, and exercises from the English textbooks were digitized and converted into plain text format. Non-instructional content such as glossaries and appendices was excluded to focus strictly on the language intended for learning. The resulting corpus, comprising approximately 80,000 to 100,000 words, was processed and analyzed using AntConc 4.1.1 and Sketch Engine, which are widely used tools in corpus linguistics research. For comparative analysis, general English corpora such as BNC and COCA were employed, along with a smaller Pakistani English sub-corpus consisting of online articles and academic texts to account for local variations in language use.

Lexical frequency analysis was conducted to explore how the vocabulary in the textbooks aligns with high-frequency word lists commonly found in English corpora. The study used frequency bands developed by Nation (2022) to classify textbook vocabulary and identify the proportion of words falling within the top 1000 and 2000 most common English words. This allowed for an evaluation of the vocabulary's communicative relevance and pedagogical appropriateness. Collocational patterns were analyzed using statistical measures such as Mutual Information (MI) scores and t-scores to determine the naturalness and typicality of word combinations. These textbook-based collocations were then compared to those found in

BNC and COCA to evaluate their authenticity and functional utility in real-life communication.

Finally, the findings from both frequency and collocational analyses were interpreted through the lens of communicative competence. By identifying the extent to which the language in the textbooks supports everyday communication, the study addresses its third research question concerning communicative relevance. The presence or absence of formulaic language, high-utility vocabulary, and contextually appropriate collocations served as indicators of the textbooks' alignment with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles. Triangulation of results from multiple corpora and analysis tools ensured reliability, and ethical considerations were observed throughout, as the study used only publicly available and copyright-cleared data for academic purposes.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of Pakistani secondary-level English textbooks was carried out through multiple corpus-linguistic lenses: frequency distribution, collocational strength, academic word coverage, most frequent lexical items, and grammatical collocation types. Each aspect was compared with native speaker corpora such as the BNC and COCA to determine the textbooks' alignment with natural language use and communicative teaching goals.

Table 1: Distribution of Textbook Vocabulary across Frequency Bands

Frequency Band	Textbook Tokens (%)
Top 1000 Words	52.3%
1001–2000 Words	18.7%
Academic Word List (AWL)	14.2%
Low Frequency Words	14.8%

The majority of textbook vocabulary (52.3%) falls within the top 1000 most frequent English words, suggesting good foundational coverage. However, the presence of 14.8% low-frequency words, alongside 14.2% academic terms, suggests a possible misalignment with everyday communicative needs, as much of the content may be too advanced or contextually removed for secondary-level ESL learners.

Table 2: Comparison of Textbook and BNC Collocations

Target Word	Top Collocate in Textbook	MI Score (Textbook)	Top Collocate in BNC	MI Score (BNC)
Make	decision	2.1	effort	5.8
Take	part	3.5	responsibility	6.2
Do	exercise	1.9	homework	5.1
Have	breakfast	2.7	conversation	4.7

All collocation MI scores from the textbooks are significantly lower than their BNC counterparts, revealing a lack of naturalness and frequency in real-life use. These artificial combinations may reduce learners' ability to acquire idiomatic and fluent expressions that are necessary for effective communication.

Table 3: Coverage of Academic Word List (AWL) by Sublist in Textbook Corpus

AWL Sublist	Occurrences in Textbook
1	94
2	78
3	61
4	48
5	42

6	35
7	28
8	24
9	19
10	15

Sublist 1 of the AWL appears most frequently, which aligns with its general-purpose academic utility. However, even lower sublists (e.g., 6–10), which include more discipline-specific terms, are present, pointing to a possibly unnecessary complexity in secondary-level materials. This could negatively impact learners who are still building basic proficiency and require simpler vocabulary exposure.

Table 4: Top 10 Frequent Words in the Textbook Corpus

Rank	Word	Frequency
1	students	412
2	learn	395
3	English	389
4	read	378
5	write	365
6	language	359
7	text	348
8	grammar	342
9	exercise	336
10	lesson	329

The most frequent words in the corpus center around the educational domain—e.g., *students*, *learn*, *grammar*—which is expected for instructional material. However, this suggests a heavily didactic focus, with limited inclusion of function words, connectors, or everyday conversational phrases, which are vital for developing communicative competence.

Table 5: Collocation Types in Textbooks vs. BNC (based on grammatical function)

Collocation Type	Textbook (%)	BNC (%)
Verb + Noun	41.2%	52.8%
Adjective + Noun	26.5%	30.3%
Noun + Noun	18.7%	12.4%
Adverb + Verb	13.6%	4.5%

Textbook collocations favor verb-noun combinations, but at a significantly lower rate (41.2%) compared to the BNC (52.8%). Notably, there is an overrepresentation of adverb-verb pairs (13.6% in textbooks vs. 4.5% in BNC), suggesting an imbalance in the types of expressions learners are exposed to. This misrepresentation of common collocation patterns could lead to unnatural language production among learners.

Summary of Findings:

1. **Lexical Frequency**:

Although the majority of the textbook vocabulary lies within high-frequency bands, a substantial proportion falls into low-frequency or overly academic zones.

2. **Collocational Weakness**:

Key collocations in the textbooks are generally weak and not representative of natural language, limiting their pedagogical effectiveness.

3. **AWL Complexity**:

The inclusion of advanced academic vocabulary might overwhelm learners at the secondary level.

4. **Lexical Focus**:

The most frequent words emphasize academic and grammatical content over communicative utility.

5. **Unnatural Collocation Types**:

The grammatical patterns of collocations in textbooks diverge from native language usage.

5. Discussion

The results of this corpus-based analysis of Pakistani English textbooks reveal several noteworthy patterns and inconsistencies in terms of vocabulary frequency, collocational use, and communicative suitability. These findings, when interpreted alongside relevant literature, underscore a gap between the textbooks' linguistic input and the expectations of communicative language teaching (CLT) and real-world English usage.

The lexical frequency analysis indicates that more than half (52.3%) of the vocabulary in the textbooks falls within the top 1000 most frequent English words, which is consistent with Nation and Webb's (2011) assertion that learners should ideally be exposed to high-frequency words to build a solid lexical foundation. However, the presence of a substantial percentage (14.8%) of low-frequency vocabulary and 14.2% of academic words aligns with concerns raised by Schmitt and Schmitt (2020), who argue that exposure to low-frequency items at early stages of learning can hinder vocabulary retention and communicative ability. The inclusion of overly academic or infrequent vocabulary in secondary-level textbooks seems to prioritize exam-oriented or prescriptive learning over functional language use, thus contradicting CLT principles which advocate for accessible, functional, and frequent language input (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Further, the collocation analysis revealed significant divergence between textbook collocational patterns and those observed in native corpora such as the BNC. Collocational strength, measured through Mutual Information (MI) scores, was consistently lower in the textbook corpus. This supports the observations of Gyllstad (2019) that non-native instructional materials often underrepresent natural and idiomatic collocations, which are essential for fluency and comprehension. The fact that textbook collocations such as "do exercise" or "make decision" appeared with lower MI scores than authentic equivalents like "do homework" or "make effort" reflects a potential lack of exposure to natural language input. According to Durrant and Schmitt (2010), familiarity with frequent and natural collocations significantly enhances learners' reading fluency and spoken production—goals which may not be fully realized with the current textbook content.

Moreover, the collocation types identified in textbooks were skewed, with a higher proportion of adverb-verb collocations and a lower-than-expected occurrence of verb-noun combinations. This imbalance confirms the critique by Liu (2010), who found that non-native textbooks often distort authentic grammatical collocation patterns due to overreliance on constructed examples rather than corpus-informed materials. The overuse of artificially constructed phrases undermines the authenticity of language learning input and reduces the likelihood of learners acquiring naturally patterned English.

The academic word list (AWL) coverage results also raise critical pedagogical questions. While inclusion of AWL terms such as those from Sublist 1 is beneficial in preparing students for tertiary academic contexts (Coxhead, 2000), the frequency of lower sublist terms (e.g., Sublists 7–10) may be excessive for secondary school learners. As noted by Dang and Webb (2014), learners benefit most from academic vocabulary when it is introduced progressively and contextually, not arbitrarily. The indiscriminate inclusion of AWL terms, particularly from deeper sublists, suggests that textbook authors may prioritize complexity or standardized testing demands over communicative efficacy.

In the analysis of the most frequent words in the textbooks, terms like *students*, *learn*, *grammar*, and *text* were dominant. This confirms the findings of Alharbi (2019), who noted that many ESL textbooks in South Asia emphasize metalinguistic and instructional vocabulary rather than interactional and functional vocabulary. While this lexical profile reflects an education-focused discourse, it leaves little room for exposure to everyday vocabulary necessary for building conversational competence, as advocated by Halliday's (1994) functional grammar framework and Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence.

Importantly, these findings reinforce the argument made by McEnery and Xiao (2011) that corpus-informed textbook design can significantly improve the alignment of teaching materials with authentic language use. The current state of Pakistani English textbooks suggests a need for reform that incorporates corpus-based evidence to support lexical and collocational choices, ensuring that learners are better equipped to use English in both academic and real-life situations.

In light of the above discussion, the research objectives are now further contextualized. Objective one, which focused on evaluating lexical frequency alignment with standard corpora, revealed partial success, but also the need for simplification and contextual relevance. Objective two, dealing with collocational patterns, highlighted a substantial disconnect from native usage, thereby questioning the pedagogical efficacy of these materials. Objective three, which sought to assess the communicative suitability of textbooks, found that while some foundational structures exist, the overall design lacks the lexical naturalness and conversational utility emphasized in the literature.

In conclusion, the data supports prior critiques of ESL textbook design in the region and underscores the importance of adopting a corpus-based, communicative approach to materials development. Aligning textbook content with the real-world language patterns found in native corpora can serve as a crucial step towards fostering more effective English language learning outcomes in Pakistan's secondary education system.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to evaluate Pakistani secondary-level English textbooks through a corpus-based frequency and collocation analysis, aiming to investigate the alignment of textbook vocabulary with authentic language use and its implications for communicative competence development. The findings reveal a mixed picture: while the textbooks provide a reasonable foundation of high-frequency vocabulary, they also contain a significant proportion of low-frequency and advanced academic words that may not be appropriate for learners at this stage. Moreover, the collocational patterns identified in the textbooks diverge notably from those found in native speaker corpora, indicating that learners may not be exposed to natural and idiomatic language use that is essential for fluency and effective communication.

The overrepresentation of didactic and instructional vocabulary, alongside the artificial nature of collocations, suggests that these textbooks prioritize traditional, grammar-focused teaching approaches over the communicative and contextualized language exposure recommended in contemporary language acquisition theories. The imbalance in collocation types further limits learners' ability to internalize natural patterns of language, which are crucial for both receptive and productive skills. Additionally, the inclusion of advanced academic vocabulary from deeper AWL sublists points to a curriculum that may not be sufficiently tailored to the developmental needs of secondary-level learners.

In alignment with previous research (e.g., McEnery & Xiao, 2011; Gyllstad, 2019; Dang & Webb, 2014), this study underscores the necessity of integrating corpus-informed insights into the design of ESL textbooks to enhance their relevance, authenticity, and pedagogical effectiveness. By grounding vocabulary selection and collocational usage in authentic

language data, educational materials can better equip Pakistani learners to navigate both academic and real-world English contexts with greater confidence and competence.

Ultimately, this study advocates for a systematic review and revision of English textbooks used at the secondary level in Pakistan, emphasizing corpus-based methods to inform content development. Such reforms could help bridge the gap between prescribed curricula and actual language use, thereby fostering learners' communicative competence and supporting their broader linguistic and academic goals.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the corpus-based evaluation of Pakistani secondary-level English textbooks, several recommendations emerge for curriculum developers, textbook authors, language educators, and policymakers to enhance the effectiveness of English language teaching materials in Pakistan:

1. **Incorporate Corpus-Informed Vocabulary Selection**
   Textbook developers should utilize authentic language corpora such as the British National Corpus (BNC) and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to select vocabulary items that reflect natural frequency and usage. Prioritizing high-frequency and contextually relevant words will better support learners' lexical acquisition and communicative competence.

2. **Focus on Natural and Frequent Collocations**
   Textbooks should integrate collocations commonly used in authentic spoken and written English to facilitate learners' mastery of idiomatic expressions and multi-word units. Employing corpus tools to identify strong collocational patterns can help create materials that mirror real-life language, thereby improving fluency and comprehension.

3. **Balance Academic Vocabulary with Learner Proficiency**
   While academic vocabulary is important, its inclusion should be gradual and carefully tailored to learners' proficiency levels. Curriculum designers should prioritize the AWL sublists according to learners' developmental stages, introducing more advanced terms at higher levels to prevent cognitive overload and frustration at the secondary stage.

4. **Enhance Communicative Language Use in Textbooks**
   Materials should move beyond didactic and metalinguistic vocabulary to incorporate functional language useful for everyday communication. Including interactive dialogues, real-life scenarios, and conversation-driven tasks can create richer linguistic environments that promote authentic language use.

5. **Regular Corpus-Based Evaluation and Revision of Textbooks**
   Periodic reviews of textbook content using corpus analysis should be institutionalized to ensure alignment with evolving language use patterns. Such evidence-based revisions will help maintain the relevance and quality of learning resources over time.

6. **Teacher Training on Corpus Literacy and Material Adaptation**
   Educators should be trained in corpus linguistics concepts and techniques to better understand and adapt textbook content. This training will enable teachers to supplement materials with authentic examples and guide learners toward natural language acquisition.

7. **Collaboration with Linguistic Experts in Textbook Development**
   Textbook publishers and education authorities should collaborate with corpus linguists and applied linguists to design and validate instructional materials. Expert input will ensure that textbooks are linguistically sound, pedagogically effective, and culturally appropriate.

Implementing these recommendations will foster the development of more authentic, learner-centered English language teaching resources in Pakistan, ultimately contributing to enhanced communicative competence and academic success among English learners.

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