

REEVALUATING TEXTBOOKS ORGANIZATION: A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF CONTENT COMPLEXITY IN PTB ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FOR INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS

Huda Noor¹, Ali Raza Siddique², Nimra Noor³, Tuba Latif⁴

¹MPhil Scholar (Applied Linguistics), Department of English, National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad Campus. Email: hudanoor2112@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, University of South Asia, Lahore. Email: ali.raza@usa.edu.pk; aalimalik381@gmail.com

³MPhil Scholar (Applied Linguistics), Department of English, National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad Campus. Email: nimranoor1105@gmail.com

⁴MPhil Scholar (Applied Linguistics), Department of English, National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad Campus. Email: tubalatif77@gmail.com

Abstract

This study critically reevaluates the organization and progression of content complexity in the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) English textbooks for intermediate learners (Book I for Class 11 and Book II for Class 12) using a corpus-based methodology. Guided by the Text Complexity Framework (2010), it integrates quantitative measures from the framework with corpus linguistics tools to assess linguistic and structural complexity objectively. Voyant Tools and Text Analyzer were employed to examine lexical density, sentence length, word and sentence counts, syllables, characters, and readability scores such as the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level. The analysis reveals inconsistencies in the progression of textual complexity across chapters, which may hinder learners' cognitive and linguistic development. By focusing solely on intrinsic textual features, this study provides a replicable and objective method for textbook evaluation. The findings highlight the need for a systematic reorganization of textbook content to ensure logical progression in difficulty. Such improvements can support deeper learning, inform curriculum development, and guide educators, policymakers, and textbook designers. This study ultimately calls for moderation in content difficulty and improved readability to enhance English language instruction in Pakistan.

Keywords: Textbook Organization, Text Complexity Framework (TCF), Lexical Complexity, PCTB, Intermediate Learners

1. Introduction

English textbooks play a vital role in language learning, especially in countries where English is taught as a second language. In the Pakistani education system, these textbooks are considered the backbone of classroom instruction, particularly at the intermediate level. Designed and published by PCTB, they follow the guidelines of the National Curriculum (Saher, 2020). Despite their central role, many studies suggest that the content of these books may not always meet students'

learning needs in terms of readability, vocabulary, and cognitive demand (Baig et al., 2021; Karamouzian et al., 2014; Jamil et al., 2024).

One important aspect affecting students' understanding is readability. If the reading material is too complex or linguistically dense, learners may struggle, leading to limited comprehension and reduced motivation (Allington et al., 2015; Hiebert & Pearson, 2014). In a multilingual society like Pakistan, where learners come from various linguistic backgrounds, the suitability of English textbooks must be carefully considered (Amer & Baarah, 2021). Research further indicates that these books often contain vocabulary and sentence structures that do not match the age or academic level of the students (Jahan et al., 2019; Lodhi et al., 2019).

With the growing global interest in corpus-based and data-driven approaches to material evaluation, scholars now recommend analyzing textbooks using readability formulas, lexical profiling, and text complexity frameworks (Gedik & Kolsal, 2022; Chan, 2021). This study, therefore, seeks to examine the readability and lexical density of intermediate-level English textbooks used in Punjab, Pakistan, through empirical methods.

Although English textbooks are widely used across intermediate classes in the region, concerns have been raised about their linguistic appropriateness. Prior research indicates a possible mismatch between students' reading levels and the language used in textbooks, which may hinder learning outcomes (Baig et al., 2021; Karamouzian et al., 2014). However, few empirical studies have focused specifically on the linguistic features of PCTB textbooks. This gap calls for a more in-depth analysis to determine how suitable these materials are for learners at the intermediate level.

The main aim of this study is to evaluate the readability and lexical density of English textbooks prescribed for Grades XI and XII. The goal is to assess whether the linguistic features of these textbooks correspond to the cognitive and language abilities of students at this level. Specifically, the study seeks to measure readability levels, analyze lexical density in reading passages, evaluate the texts' appropriateness for student comprehension and vocabulary development, and compare the results with international benchmarks and related research.

To guide this investigation, the study addresses the following research questions:

- **What are the readability levels of the English textbooks prescribed for intermediate classes in Punjab?**
- **What is the lexical density of the reading passages included in these textbooks?**
- **To what extent are these textbooks linguistically appropriate for intermediate-level learners in terms of readability and lexical complexity?**
- **How do the readability and lexical features of these textbooks compare with international benchmarks and findings from previous studies?**

The findings of this research are expected to benefit curriculum developers, textbook writers, policymakers, and English language teachers in Pakistan. By offering evidence-based insights into the linguistic appropriateness of current textbooks, the study aims to highlight areas that may need revision or improvement. This can help promote better comprehension, foster more effective instruction, and ensure that learning materials are better matched to students' needs. The study also contributes to the growing field of international research that applies corpus-based methods to textbook evaluation (Gedik & Kolsal, 2022; Yang & Coxhead, 2022; Chan & Cheuk, 2020).

While the study offers valuable insights, it is limited to English textbooks published by PCTB for Grades XI and XII. The focus is restricted to prose and non-literary reading texts, excluding other

components like poetry, grammar exercises, and translation tasks. Moreover, the study does not measure actual student comprehension but instead evaluates the textual features that influence it, such as readability and lexical complexity.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definitional Perspective

Textbook complexity significantly influences students' comprehension and learning engagement, making it essential to assess texts for readability and linguistic density. Studies argue that overly complex materials hinder understanding, while accessible texts promote effective learning (Hiebert & Pearson, 2014; Allington et al., 2015). To address this, scholars have developed robust evaluative models, such as the Common Core's Text Complexity Framework, which integrates qualitative, quantitative, and reader-task dimensions (CCSS, 2010). Furthermore, the adoption of corpus-based methods enables a more objective analysis of lexical and syntactic features (Chan, 2021; Gedik & Kolsal, 2022). These frameworks underscore the argument that measuring textbook complexity is not merely academic—it is vital for ensuring that instructional materials align with learners' cognitive and linguistic capabilities (Yang & Coxhead, 2022; Amer & Baarah, 2021).

2.2 Historical Perspective

Over the years, several models have tried to explain how text complexity can be measured. Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), for instance, was developed by Sweller to highlight how instructional design affects learners' mental processes. Although CLT is widely respected, it does not focus on the actual text structure, making it less suitable for this study. Another influential framework is the revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl, which classifies learning into various cognitive levels. However, it is mainly used to assess learning outcomes rather than evaluate linguistic features of texts.

Other models like the Lexile Framework, developed by MetaMetrics, use sentence length and word frequency to determine readability levels. Yet, this method overlooks important features like coherence and genre, which are essential in understanding how information is organized (Chan & Cheuk, 2020; Gedik & Kolsal, 2022). Similarly, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), proposed by Halliday, offers great insights into how language functions in different social contexts. It helps understand text through cohesion, coherence, and genre analysis but lacks quantitative indicators needed for this study (Yang & Coxhead, 2022).

2.3 Theoretical Background for the Study

Among all these frameworks, TCF stands out as the most suitable for evaluating English textbooks used in intermediate classes in Punjab, Pakistan. Developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers (2010), TCF integrates three key elements:

1. Quantitative Measures (e.g., sentence length, lexical density)
2. Qualitative Measures (e.g., cohesion, clarity, text structure)
3. Reader and Task Considerations (e.g., students' prior knowledge, reading skills, and cognitive ability)

This holistic approach makes TCF highly appropriate for exploring both the readability and lexical complexity of the Punjab Textbook Board's English textbooks. Moreover, the use of corpus tools like Voyant Tools and Lexical Tutor aligns well with the TCF's criteria and enhances the precision of the analysis (Yang & Coxhead, 2022; Chan, 2021).

Studies such as those by Jahan et al. (2019) and Baig et al. (2021) have already highlighted that many Pakistani textbooks include texts that are too difficult for students. Similarly, Amer and Baarah (2021) have noted that sentence complexity and word difficulty can create barriers to learning. These insights further support the relevance of using TCF in the present research.

2.4 Rationale for Selecting Text Complexity Framework (TCF)

TCF is selected for its comprehensive scope, which surpasses traditional readability models by addressing multiple dimensions of textual difficulty. Its quantitative component aligns seamlessly with corpus-based tools for measuring readability and lexical density, while its qualitative and reader-task dimensions offer critical insights into textual structure and learner appropriateness (Gedik & Kolsal, 2022). Unlike surface-level readability formulas such as Flesch-Kincaid, TCF captures deeper linguistic and cognitive demands. To enrich this analysis, SFL is integrated, providing a contextual lens on how meaning is constructed. This dual-framework approach ensures a nuanced evaluation of English textbooks tailored to the needs of intermediate learners in Pakistan.

2.5 Empirical Framework

2.5.1 Past Studies Across Other than Pakistani Context

In recent years, an increasing number of studies have been devoted to the linguistic analysis of textbooks, reflecting a growing recognition of the role textbook language plays in shaping educational outcomes. Together, these studies form a cohesive argument for re-evaluating textbook content, structure, and pedagogical underpinnings to better align with learners' linguistic needs, cognitive development, and real-world communicative competence.

A foundational aspect of this discussion revolves around the lexical choices and vocabulary profiles present in textbooks. Norberg and Nordlund (2018) set the stage by highlighting inconsistencies between word frequency and teaching objectives in L2 English textbooks, urging better alignment between vocabulary content and learners' proficiency levels. Complementing this lexical focus, Yang and Coxhead (2020) examined vocabulary repetition in the *New Concept English* series and found inadequate recycling of mid-frequency words—an essential practice for retention—thereby reinforcing the need for more deliberate lexical scaffolding. Similarly, Bergström, Norberg, and Nordlund (2023) confirmed that while vocabulary selection may appear appropriate, incidental learning opportunities are weakened by limited recycling.

The challenge of lexical density and syntactic complexity is also frequently foregrounded. To (2018), using a Systemic Functional Linguistics lens, identified a non-linear progression in complexity across textbook levels, suggesting that text difficulty does not consistently match learners' stages. Gedik and Kolsal (2022) provided a national perspective by comparing Turkish textbooks with university entrance exams, finding that the former underprepared students in both lexical diversity and syntactic demand—an insight that echoes Rokhmawati's (2018) discovery of mismatched syntactic structures in Indonesian high school worksheets.

Readability, a closely related issue, has been a central concern across multiple contexts. Issaka and Aidoo (2019) and Amer and Baarah (2021) found that both Ghanaian and Arab region textbooks are either too difficult or too simplistic for their target audiences, often due to a mismatch between intended and actual readability levels. Likewise, Brkić et al. (2018) and Rosemarie et al. (2023) highlighted that legal and literary texts require simplification and contextual support, respectively, to enhance accessibility and comprehension.

The analysis of pedagogical orientations further nuances the discussion. Chan (2020) compared textbooks from Hong Kong and Mainland China, revealing divergent focuses: the former promotes genre-based, contextualized learning while the latter retains a more traditional, grammar-translation method. Chan and Cheuk (2020) extended this by showing a shift towards constructivist strategies, particularly in listening and speaking. Georgievna (2020), meanwhile, advocated a balanced integration of traditional and modern methodologies, emphasizing interdisciplinarity and technological engagement.

Beyond language mechanics and pedagogy, content-related concerns—especially regarding critical thinking and cultural representation—have garnered attention. The underrepresentation of Higher-Order Thinking Skills emerged as a recurring theme. Erdiana and Panjaitan (2023), Sainyakit (2023), and Kaldirim and Tavsanli (2024) all concluded that cognitive rigor is often limited, with an overreliance on lower-order tasks. Similarly, Demirkaya (2022) pointed to a lack of complexity and outcome-based learning in EFL tasks, signaling a missed opportunity for developing deeper intellectual engagement.

Cultural content, as explored by Rahmawati (2020), showed a dominance of source culture in the Indonesian textbook *Bahasa Inggris*, which could hinder students' intercultural competence. Rosemarie et al. (2023) also observed the importance of cultural context in story comprehension, suggesting a need for better integration of diverse perspectives and clarification strategies.

Taken together, these studies construct a multidimensional critique of textbook design. They collectively argue that despite intentions to support learner development, many textbooks fall short due to lexical misalignment, uneven difficulty, insufficient pedagogical depth, and inadequate cultural and cognitive representation. This growing body of research calls for an evidence-based redesign of educational materials that harmonizes linguistic simplicity with cognitive challenge, contextual relevance with cultural inclusivity, and static content with dynamic learning strategies.

2.5.2 Past Studies across Pakistani Context

There is compelling evidence that English language textbooks used at the secondary and intermediate levels in Pakistan are failing to meet their pedagogical, linguistic, and global objectives. A growing body of research underscores systemic flaws in curriculum design, content selection, and instructional coherence—suggesting that the current materials are not only misaligned with national educational goals but also ill-equipped to foster 21st-century competencies.

Jamil et al. (2024), drawing on Tavanti's (2010) sustainability framework, argue that the marginal inclusion of global themes in Grade XII textbooks reflects a broader curricular insularity that hampers the development of globally responsible citizens. This failure is compounded by findings from Khan et al. (2020) and Baig et al. (2021), who demonstrate that both teachers and students perceive the textbooks as inadequate in promoting productive skills like speaking and writing—core components of communicative competence.

Moreover, Kausar et al. (2016) assert that the content lacks logical organization and contextual relevance, undermining student engagement and comprehension. This structural weakness is further magnified by Jahan et al. (2019), who use corpus tools to reveal alarming deficiencies in lexical density and academic vocabulary—key indicators of a text's ability to support higher-order learning.

The problem extends to cognitive rigor and curriculum alignment. Saher and Najam-ul-Kashif (2020) present quantitative evidence of significant misalignment between curriculum standards and textbook content, especially at Grade XII, where lower-order thinking tasks dominate. Hussain et al. (2020) reinforce this argument by exposing a disproportionate focus on literary content, which fails to meet the functional language needs of students preparing for academic and professional contexts.

Finally, Shah et al. (2022) challenge the validity of traditional readability metrics and advocate for the adoption of CEFR descriptors to more accurately assess and improve textbook complexity. This recommendation encapsulates the central argument shared by all these studies: Pakistan's English textbooks urgently require comprehensive reform. To be effective, these materials must integrate global themes, enhance lexical and cognitive richness, balance language skills, and align with internationally recognized standards like CEFR and sustainability frameworks. Without such reform, the promise of equitable and meaningful English education remains unfulfilled.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Model

This study employed a quantitative, corpus-based method to analyze the structural and linguistic complexity of PCTB English textbooks for Grades 11 and 12. Guided by TCF but focusing only on quantitative elements like sentence length and word frequency, it excluded reader-task variables. Using digital tools—Voyant Tools and Text Analyzer—the study assessed syntactic and lexical complexity. Voyant provided word frequencies and visual data, while Text Analyzer delivered sentence and word statistics used to compute Flesch-Kincaid readability scores. Texts from Book I (Short Stories), Book II-Part I (Modern Prose), and Book II-Part II (Heroes) were analyzed. The approach enabled a systematic, reproducible evaluation of linguistic patterns and structural variation across the textbooks.

3.2 Data Collection

The data collection process involved selecting chapters from the PCTB English textbooks for Intermediate level (Grades 11 and 12). The textbooks used were Book I (Short Stories) and Book II (divided into Modern Prose and Heroes sections). These texts represented a variety of genres—short fiction, prose essays, and biographies—offering a balanced sample for assessing linguistic difficulty and conceptual density.

The full content of the selected chapters was digitised and collected for analysis. The goal was to evaluate how chapters were organised and how their cognitive and linguistic demands progressed across the books.

3.3 Corpus Compilation

The corpus was compiled by extracting and digitising the selected chapters using **Google Lens**. The digital texts were cleaned by removing formatting issues, footnotes, exercises, and other irrelevant content. Each chapter was saved as a separate .txt file, forming a clean and analysable corpus.

The corpus consisted of:

- 15 short stories from Book I
- 10 modern prose chapters and 6 hero biographies from Book II

Each chapter served as an independent unit for linguistic analysis. The total word count and unique word count for each file were recorded to evaluate lexical richness and complexity.

3.4 Sampling Technique

This study used **purposive sampling**, as it focused on specific chapters from key PCTB textbooks. These textbooks were selected because they form the official syllabus for intermediate students and include various genres and themes.

- **Sampling Unit:** Each chapter from Book I and Book II served as a sampling unit.
- **Sample Size:** The study included all 15 chapters from Book I and all 16 chapters (10 prose, 6 heroes) from Book II. This ensured comprehensive coverage of the content.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis followed a structured, four-step procedure:

Step 1: Corpus Preparation

1. The selected chapters were digitised and converted into plain text format using Google Lens.
2. Unnecessary text elements were removed.
3. Each chapter was labelled with its title and number and stored as a separate file.

Step 2: Application of Text Complexity Framework (TCF)

1. Quantitative TCF measures were applied, focusing on:
 - Sentence length (as syntactic complexity)
 - Word frequency (as lexical difficulty)
2. Results were interpreted in light of the study's research questions.

Step 3: Corpus Analysis Using Voyant Tools

1. Each .txt file was uploaded to **Voyant Tools**.
2. The following features were analysed:
 - Token count and unique words
 - Average sentence length
 - Vocabulary density
 - Most frequent words
 - Readability index
3. Results were compared across chapters and books to identify recurring patterns.

Step 4: Readability Assessment Using Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level

1. Readability values were computed using sentence length and syllable data.
2. These values were matched against the Common Reference Framework for Reading (CRFR) levels.
3. Based on the scores, chapter arrangements were evaluated and suggestions were made for textbook improvement.

This methodology aimed to offer a systematic and transparent approach to analysing textbook content. It also intended to inform curriculum developers and language educators on how to improve textbook design based on linguistic complexity.

4. Findings and Discussions

Book I – Short Stories

This textbook was part of the Class 11 curriculum at the intermediate level and consisted of 15 chapters, mainly short stories. The analysis of this PCTB English textbook for intermediate learners revealed important insights into the structural complexity and chapter-wise organization of its contents.

Table 1: Book I: Lexical Analysis Results by Voyant Tool

Serial No.	Title	Token Words	Unique Words	Vocabulary Density	Readability Index	Avg. Words per Sentence
1	Button, Button	2150	654	0.304	6.154	7.3
2	Clearing in the Sky	2224	606	0.272	5.489	13.9
3	Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed	1867	690	0.370	6.000	7.6
4	Thank You, M'am	1355	422	0.311	5.123	12.7
5	The Piece of String	1005	414	0.412	6.928	13.6
6	The Reward	1253	451	0.360	7.490	17.2
7	Use of Force	1266	467	0.369	5.948	12.2
8	The Gulistan of Sa'di	845	360	0.426	7.256	15.9
9	The Foolish Quack	839	325	0.387	7.318	15.8
10	A Mild Attack of Locusts	985	406	0.412	7.689	12.8
11	I Have a Dream	764	259	0.339	7.913	19.1
12	The Gift of the Magi	1539	474	0.308	4.382	10.1
13	God Be Praised	3099	1032	0.333	8.534	12.8
14	Overcoat	1849	678	0.367	7.417	14.0
15	The Angel and the Author – and Others	948	394	0.416	6.531	14.8

The analysis of the PTB English textbook revealed a clear and structured progression in linguistic complexity, aligning effectively with the pedagogical principle of scaffolding. In the initial chapters, the use of simpler vocabulary and shorter sentence structures eased learners into the reading process. As the textbook progresses, lexical density and syntactic complexity gradually increase. For example, *The Gift of the Magi* records a Flesch-Kincaid score of 4.38 with an average sentence length of 10.1 words, whereas *I Have a Dream* reaches a score of 7.91 and an average sentence length of 19.1 words. This steady rise in complexity allows learners to develop reading skills incrementally, avoiding abrupt difficulty spikes (Hiebert & Pearson, 2014).

This trend is further supported by patterns in chapter organization. Lexical and syntactic features follow a deliberate upward trajectory. For instance, *Clearing in the Sky* shows a low lexical density of 0.272, while *The Gulistan of Sa'di* reaches 0.426, reflecting a richer vocabulary. Similarly, sentence lengths increase from 7.3 words in *Button, Button* to 19 in *I Have a Dream*, indicating heightened cognitive demands. However, certain anomalies disrupt this progression. For example, *The Reward* features lengthy sentences (17.2 words) but a comparatively lower readability score (7.49), suggesting that syntactic length alone does not always determine overall text difficulty (Allington, McCuiston & Billen, 2015).

Despite these inconsistencies, the overall sequencing of the chapters demonstrates pedagogical coherence. The textbook provides a logical learning trajectory, enabling students to gradually strengthen their comprehension, vocabulary, and syntactic awareness. This approach minimizes cognitive overload in the early stages and supports deeper engagement with advanced texts as learners progress (CCSS Initiative, 2014; Hiebert & Pearson, 2014). Furthermore, the variation across chapters accommodates differentiated instruction, allowing teachers to tailor reading tasks according to student proficiency.

The Flesch-Kincaid grade level results, derived using the Text Analyzer tool, confirm this upward trend in complexity. The early chapters align with CEFR levels A2–B1, while later chapters correspond to B2–C1 levels. These findings reinforce the textbook’s potential to support learners at intermediate proficiency stages. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that readability formulas, while useful, do not capture cultural references, text cohesion, or reader engagement. Therefore, qualitative classroom-based evaluation remains essential to ensure that the materials effectively meet the learners’ linguistic and cognitive needs (Allington et al., 2015).

Table 2: Book I: Applying Flesch-Kincaid Formula on results taken by Text Analyzer tool

Serial No.	Title	Total Words	Total Sentences	Total syllables	Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	CEFR Approximation
1	Button, Button	2150	340	3081	3.79	A2
2	Clearing in the Sky	2224	164	2849	4.81	A2
3	Dark They were, and Golden-Eyed	1867	274	2603	3.52	A2-B1
4	Thank you, M'am	1355	117	1759	4.24	B1
5	The Piece of String	1005	102	1420	4.93	B1
6	The Reward	1253	77	1787	7.59	B1
7	Use of Force	1266	106	1710	5.01	B1
8	The Gulistan of Sa'di	845	53	1202	7.41	B1-B2
9	The Foolish Quack	839	58	1161	6.38	B1
10	A Mild Attack of Locusts	985	78	1343	5.42	B1-B2
11	I have a Dream	817	40	1069	7.82	B2
12	The Gift of the Magi	1539	159	2003	3.54	B1-B2
13	God be Praised	3099	258	4670	6.88	C1
14	Overcoat	1849	133	2588	6.35	B2
15	The Angel and the Authors - and Others	948	65	1321	6.54	B2-C1

The analysis of PTB English Book I using Flesch-Kincaid Grade Levels reveals significant variation in text complexity, with scores ranging from 3.52 to 7.82—corresponding to CEFR levels

from A2 (elementary) to C1 (advanced). While this range suggests inclusivity of diverse proficiency levels, the sequencing of texts lacks pedagogical coherence, potentially undermining learners' gradual language development.

Chapters like *Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed* (3.52) and *Button, Button* (3.79) are suitable for A2-level learners due to their simple vocabulary and sentence structures, and their early placement is instructionally appropriate (Aziz et al., 2020). However, subsequent chapters such as *Thank You, M'am* (4.24) and *The Piece of String* (4.93) move into B1 territory, reflecting a moderate increase in linguistic complexity. This progression continues with *Use of Force* (5.01) and *The Reward* (7.59), though the latter's unusually high grade level for its CEFR classification signals internal inconsistencies (Siddiqui, 2019).

Texts like *The Gulistan of Sa'di* (7.41) and *A Mild Attack of Locusts* (5.42) bridge the B1–B2 range, offering richer vocabulary and deeper cultural content that support advanced comprehension and interpretive skills. The final chapters, such as *I Have a Dream* (7.82), *Overcoat* (6.35), and *The Angel and the Authors – and Others* (6.54), shift toward B2–C1 complexity, demanding the ability to analyze abstract ideas, rhetorical strategies, and complex syntax. *God Be Praised* (6.88), rated at C1, stands as the most linguistically challenging text in the collection (Rashid & Asghar, 2016).

Despite this breadth, the erratic placement of chapters—mixing elementary texts with advanced-level content—disrupts a logical learning curve. This uneven progression can hinder reading fluency and linguistic growth by failing to scaffold skills systematically (Aziz et al., 2020; Siddiqui, 2019).

For more effective language acquisition, the textbook requires a revised structure guided by CEFR-aligned progression and Flesch-Kincaid readability scores. A gradual increase in text complexity would support learners' cognitive and linguistic readiness, as recommended by Rashid and Asghar (2016), ultimately fostering stronger comprehension and analytical abilities among intermediate-level students.

Book II – Modern Prose and Heroes

This textbook, used at the intermediate level (Class 12), is divided into two parts. Part I, titled *Modern Prose*, includes ten chapters, while Part II contains short biographical chapters under the title *Heroes*, along with a dialogue. The focus here is on the *Modern Prose* section, analyzing content complexity through lexical and readability metrics to evaluate sequencing and suitability for learners.

Table 3: Lexical Analysis Results of Book II – Part I (Modern Prose)

Sr. No.	Chapter Title	Token Words	Unique Words	Vocabulary Density	Readability Index	Avg. Words/Sentence
1	The Dying Sun	1032	376	0.364	8.559	24.0
2	Using the Scientific Method	1269	497	0.392	10.974	18.1
3	Why Boys Fail in College	1662	561	0.338	8.013	25.2
4	End of Term	892	418	0.469	9.907	35.7

5	On Destroying Books	1194	532	0.446	8.103	19.3
6	The Man Who Was a Hospital	1150	416	0.362	6.091	17.2
7	My Financial Career	899	338	0.376	4.747	9.6
8	China's Way to Success	2241	932	0.416	10.828	21.3
9	Hunger and Population Explosion	1577	590	0.374	8.748	18.3
10	The Jewel of the World	2256	882	0.391	11.498	22.1

The data indicate significant inconsistencies in the progression of content difficulty across the textbook. For instance, *My Financial Career* is highly accessible, with a Flesch-Kincaid readability score of 4.747 and an average sentence length of 9.6 words. In contrast, chapters such as *The Jewel of the World* (readability: 11.498; sentence length: 22.1) and *End of Term* (9.907; 35.7) exhibit much higher complexity. This irregular distribution of difficulty disrupts the principle of scaffolded learning, potentially hindering students' ability to develop reading skills gradually and confidently (Aziz et al., 2020; Rashid & Asghar, 2016).

Further analysis reveals that the arrangement of chapters does not follow a pedagogically coherent sequence. Simpler texts like *The Man Who Was a Hospital* (readability: 6.091) are placed adjacent to more complex selections such as *Using the Scientific Method* (readability: 10.974), resulting in abrupt shifts in difficulty. Additionally, lexical density fluctuates unpredictably, ranging from 0.338 to 0.469 across chapters. These inconsistencies can challenge learners' cognitive readiness and interfere with the intended learning progression (Siddiqui, 2019).

The current sequencing does not reflect foundational principles of language acquisition. The lack of a gradual increase in linguistic complexity may pose challenges for teachers attempting to design developmentally appropriate lessons. Moreover, learners who have not yet developed sufficient syntactic or lexical proficiency may experience cognitive overload when encountering advanced texts prematurely. A more logically ordered structure—progressing from simple to complex texts—would better support effective teaching strategies and learner outcomes (Aziz et al., 2020).

To evaluate the suitability of the chapters, Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level scores were mapped to CEFR levels, offering a more nuanced view of the textbook's appropriateness for learners at various proficiency stages. For example:

- Chapters scoring below 6.0 correspond to CEFR A2 (e.g., *My Financial Career*),
- Scores between 6.0–8.0 align with B1 (e.g., *The Man Who Was a Hospital*),
- Scores of 8.0–10.0 indicate B2 complexity (e.g., *The Dying Sun*),
- Scores above 10.0 suggest a C1 level (e.g., *The Jewel of the World*).

This mapping, supported by automated readability tools, helps clarify the linguistic demands of each chapter. However, it also reinforces the need for a more deliberate sequencing strategy to

ensure the material supports students' progressive language development (Rashid & Asghar, 2016).

Table 4: Book II – Part I: Flesch-Kincaid Readability Scores and CEFR Levels

Sr. No	Title	Total Words	Total Sentences	Total Syllables	Flesch-Kincaid Grade	CEFR Level
1	The Dying Sun	1032	43	1443	9.88	B2
2	Using the Scientific Method	1269	70	2014	10.95	B2–C1
3	Why Boys Fail in College	1662	66	2407	11.02	C1
4	End of Term	892	26	1372	12.48	C1–C2
5	On Destroying Books	1194	63	1715	10.69	B2–C1
6	The Man Who Was a Hospital	1150	69	1596	10.33	B2–C1
7	My Financial Career	899	99	1230	8.19	B1
8	China's Way to Success	2241	110	3656	11.61	C1
9	Hunger and Population Explosion	1577	94	2346	10.62	B2–C1
10	The Jewel of the World	2256	102	3702	11.59	C1

The readability scores suggest that the textbook leans toward advanced reading levels, with only one chapter (*My Financial Career*) aligned with the B1 level, suitable for intermediate learners. The rest of the chapters fall between B2 to C2 levels, indicating upper-intermediate to proficient level complexity.

The most accessible chapter, *My Financial Career* (Grade 8.19), uses short sentences, simpler grammar, and basic vocabulary—ideal for students with limited command of English. On the other hand, chapters like *Why Boys Fail in College* (Grade 11.02) and *China's Way to Success* (Grade 11.61) involve abstract ideas and complex sentence structures that demand higher-order comprehension skills (Green, 2012). *End of Term* is the most linguistically demanding (Grade 12.48), possibly suitable for C1–C2 learners, which is beyond the expected level of most intermediate students.

These findings align with McNamara *et al.* (2014), who emphasized the importance of text readability in supporting reading development. A logical progression in reading difficulty, from B1 to C1/C2, supports learners' language growth and prevents cognitive overload.

Currently, the textbook lacks this pedagogical scaffolding. Chapters of mixed difficulty appear without sequencing—e.g., *My Financial Career* is placed beside chapters like *End of Term* or *The Jewel of the World*, which are much harder. This arrangement makes it difficult for teachers to structure lessons according to students' needs and hampers smooth reading development.

The analysis shows that while the book includes content from B1 to C2 levels, the sequencing is not systematic. A more thoughtful organization—starting from B1 texts and moving towards C1/C2 content—would allow students to build comprehension and language skills gradually. Without such a structure, weaker learners may struggle, while stronger learners may not be sufficiently challenged early on.

Reorganizing the chapters based on readability and CEFR alignment can enhance teaching outcomes, improve reading engagement, and foster better language acquisition among intermediate learners (McNamara et al., 2014; Green, 2012).

Part II – Heroes

The analysis of Part II of the PTB English Book II shows several issues regarding the progression, organization, and teaching suitability of the chapters. The results of lexical and readability analysis using Voyant Tools and the Text Analyzer are presented below:

Table 5: Book II – Part II: Readability and Lexical Complexity (Voyant Tool + Text Analyzer)

Serial No.	Title	Token Words	Unique Words	Vocab Density	Readability Index	Avg. Words/Sentence	CEFR Level*
11	First Year at Harrow	774	355	0.459	8.45	15.8	B1
12	Hitch-Hiking at the Sahara	3979	1152	0.29	8.70	18.3	B2
13	Sir Alexander Fleming	2762	846	0.306	10.01	17.5	B2-C1
14	Louis Pasteur	3501	1154	0.33	10.88	30.2	C1
15	Mustafa Kamal	2933	1017	0.347	10.85	22.4	C1
16	A Dialogue	2455	750	0.305	11.17	14.5	C1

*Estimated CEFR levels based on readability and syntactic complexity (cf. Green, 2012; Gillis et al., 2021).

The textbook lacks a logical progression in difficulty, with easier texts like *First Year at Harrow* (B1) placed near advanced ones like *Louis Pasteur* (C1), disrupting learners' ability to build skills gradually (Cunningsworth, 1995; Nation & Webb, 2011). Additionally, chapter organization is inconsistent, showing no clear pattern in vocabulary or syntactic complexity—for example, simpler chapters like *Hitch-Hiking at the Sahara* appear next to highly complex ones without transition, undermining scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978; Gilmore, 2007). This unpredictability hinders lesson planning, limits vocabulary recycling, and challenges both students and teachers (McGrath, 2002; Littlejohn, 2011). Furthermore, CEFR mapping shows that most texts range from B2 to C1, with only one at B1, making the content unsuitable for lower-level learners (Gillis et al., 2021).

Table 6: Book II – Part II: Flesch-Kincaid Grade Levels and CEFR Mapping (*Based on Text Analyzer tool results*)

Serial No.	Title	Flesch-Kincaid Level	Grade	CEFR Approximation
11	First Year at Harrow	10.5		B2
12	Hitch-Hiking at the Sahara	10.98		B2–C1
13	Sir Alexander Fleming	10.78		B2–C1
14	Louis Pasteur	12.89		C1–C2
15	Mustafa Kamal	12.45		C1–C2
16	A Dialogue	11.42		C1

The CEFR alignment shows that the textbook chapters mainly fall between B2 (Upper-Intermediate) and C2 (Advanced-Proficient) levels. The simplest chapter is *First Year at Harrow* (B2), understandable for learners with strong basic reading skills. On the other hand, *Louis Pasteur* and *Mustafa Kamal* (C1–C2) demand high-level proficiency, almost close to native competence. Mid-level chapters such as *Hitch-Hiking at the Sahara* and *Sir Alexander Fleming* fall between B2 and C1, acting as transition texts.

However, the sequence of chapters does not follow this gradient. A simpler chapter like *First Year at Harrow* is followed by much more demanding ones like *Louis Pasteur*, which may overwhelm learners who have not yet developed the required proficiency. This disrupts the learning flow, causing difficulty for intermediate learners and boredom for advanced learners. As Littlejohn (2011) and Cunningsworth (1995) suggest, graded sequencing of texts is crucial for supporting both teacher planning and student progression.

Although the textbook includes a good range of challenging texts from B2 to C2, the non-sequential organization negatively affects the development of reading and comprehension skills. A rearrangement of chapters from easier (B2) to more difficult (C1–C2) would help learners develop gradually and confidently. This would also support more consistent learning outcomes and reduce learner frustration (McGrath, 2002; Gillis et al., 2021).

Text analysis using vocabulary density, sentence length, and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Levels shows considerable variation in chapter complexity, with most chapters aligning with CEFR B1 to C1. However, the current textbook sequencing lacks pedagogical structure, potentially hindering learners' lexical, syntactic, and inferential growth. Research supports a progression from simpler to more complex texts to enhance comprehension and vocabulary acquisition (McGrath, 2002; Nation, 2009).

Book I: Short Stories

In Book I, chapters are arranged without regard to readability. For example, simple texts like *Dark They Were*, and *Golden-Eyed* (3.52) and *Button, Button* (3.79) appear alongside more difficult ones like *God Be Praised* (7.76). This disrupts the scaffolding process and may challenge lower-level learners (A2–B1). A structured, gradual progression in text difficulty is essential for effective reading development.

Table 7: Book I: Proposed Chapter Arrangement Based on Flesch-Kincaid Grade Levels

Sr. No.	Title	Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	CEFR Level	Difficulty Level
1	Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed	3.52	A2–B1	Easiest
2	Button, Button	3.79	A2–B1	Easiest
3	Thank You, M'am	4.24	A2–B1	Easiest
4	Clearing in the Sky	4.81	A2–B1	Easiest
5	The Piece of String	4.93	A2–B1	Easiest
6	The Reward	5.12	B1	Moderately Easy
7	Use of Force	5.31	B1	Moderately Easy
8	The Foolish Quack	5.31	B1	Moderately Easy
9	The Gulistan of Sa'di	5.89	B1	Moderately Easy
10	A Mild Attack of Locusts	5.84	B1	Moderately Easy
11	I Have a Dream	6.59	B2	Moderate
12	The Gift of the Magi	6.17	B2	Moderate
13	Overcoat	6.34	B2	Moderate
14	The Angel and the Authors – and Others	6.83	B2–C1	Advanced
15	God Be Praised	7.76	B2–C1	Advanced

The proposed sequencing ensures a pedagogically sound reading path that progresses from basic narrative structures to linguistically dense and thematically abstract texts. This scaffolding approach aligns with Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) and helps maintain learner motivation and comprehension.

Book II – Part I: Modern Prose

Similar irregularities are noted in *Modern Prose*, where chapters are not organized in accordance with readability complexity. For example, *My Financial Career* (Grade Level: 8, CEFR B1) is interspersed with complex chapters such as *End of Term* (Grade Level: 12.48, CEFR C1–C2). This lack of progression challenges both learners and instructors.

To foster gradual skill development, the following reordering is proposed (example continues below):

Book II – Part I: Modern Prose

The sequencing of chapters in *Modern Prose* is not aligned with readability and cognitive load progression. Simpler chapters such as *My Financial Career* (Grade Level: 8.19, CEFR B1) are followed by significantly more complex texts such as *End of Term* (Grade Level: 12.48, CEFR C1–C2), without any intermediate scaffolding. This non-linear arrangement may result in abrupt transitions, cognitive overload, and reduced learner engagement.

To address these concerns, a revised sequencing has been proposed below:

Table 8: Book II – Part I: Proposed Chapter Arrangement Based on Flesch-Kincaid Grade Levels

Sr. No.	Title	Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	CEFR Level	Difficulty Level
1	My Financial Career	8.19	B1	Easiest
2	The Dying Sun	9.88	B2	Moderately Easy
3	Using the Scientific Method	10.95	B2–C1	Moderate
4	The Man Who Was a Hospital	10.33	B2–C1	Moderate
5	Hunger and Population Explosion	10.62	B2–C1	Moderate
6	On Destroying Books	10.69	B2–C1	Moderately Difficult
7	Why Boys Fail in College	11.02	C1	Advanced
8	China's Way to Success	11.61	C1	Advanced
9	The Jewel of the World	11.59	C1	Very Advanced
10	End of Term	12.48	C1–C2	Most Difficult

This arrangement ensures a gradual progression from B1 (intermediate) to C1–C2 (advanced) content, enabling students to incrementally develop reading comprehension, academic vocabulary, and analytical thinking. This sequencing aligns with CEFR-aligned curriculum standards and is grounded in principles of cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1994), ensuring students are not overwhelmed by premature exposure to high-complexity texts.

Book II – Part II: Heroes

The *Heroes* section also lacks coherent gradation in terms of chapter difficulty. Readability analysis shows that some of the most linguistically and cognitively demanding chapters, such as *Louis Pasteur* (Grade Level: 12.89), are placed alongside more accessible texts like *First Year at Harrow* (Grade Level: 10.05). This abrupt alternation does not facilitate the step-by-step language development required for effective instructional design.

A more structured reordering, as shown below, would provide the necessary scaffolding to support student progress.

Table 9: Book II – Part II: Proposed Chapter Arrangement Based on Flesch-Kincaid Grade Levels

Sr. No.	Title	Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	CEFR Level	Difficulty Level
11	First Year at Harrow	10.05	B2	Easiest
12	Hitch-Hiking in the Sahara	10.98	B2–C1	Moderate
13	Sir Alexander Fleming	10.78	B2–C1	Moderate
14	A Dialogue	11.42	C1	Advanced
15	Mustafa Kamal	12.45	C1–C2	Challenging
16	Louis Pasteur	12.89	C1–C2	Most Difficult

By following this proposed order, learners are guided through increasing levels of lexical density, syntactic complexity, and abstract content, thereby enhancing comprehension and retention. Such

a progression also aligns with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, facilitating scaffolded learning where each new text is within reach of the learner's developing linguistic competence.

5. Conclusion

This study highlights the need for a regular and systematic review of English textbooks at the intermediate level to ensure alignment with students' cognitive and linguistic development. By using the Text Complexity Framework (2010) and corpus-based tools, the research provides a structured way to organize chapters based on difficulty. This helps in achieving a smooth progression in language learning, making texts more accessible and supporting comprehension (Greenfield, 2004; Crossley et al., 2007).

The reordering of chapters, as shown in Tables 8 and 9, suggests how content can be organized from easier to more complex texts. This structured approach can support teachers in lesson planning, help students build their reading skills gradually, and guide textbook designers in developing better materials. It also contributes to educational research by showing how theoretical frameworks and computational tools can work together (Nation, 2001).

Book Part	Theme	Proposed Order	Pedagogical Outcome
Part I	Modern Prose	Gradual B1 → C2 increase	Builds comprehension and analysis progressively
Part II	Heroes	B2 → C2 sequence	Enhances readability and maintains learner interest

Overall, the findings address gaps in current textbook structure and advocate for a more learner-centered design. This approach may also support future improvements in teaching practices and language education policies in Pakistan. Future research can include learners' feedback and socio-cultural factors to deepen the impact of such studies.

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