

Recontextualising English, Regulating Thinking: Bernsteinian Framing and Higher-Order Thinking Possibilities in Pakistan's Secondary Curriculum

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Abstract

In more recent curriculum reforms, English language education increasingly sees itself as a medium for the development of critical thinking skills, creative capacities, and self-reliance. In order to fulfill these imposed objectives, school textbooks are recontextualised through selection, organization of knowledge, and pedagogic control. This qualitative document analysis focuses on 9th and 10th Grade English textbooks published by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, under the Revised National Curriculum of Pakistan 2023. Using Basil Bernstein's sociology of education (e.g., the pedagogic device, classification, and framing) in combination with a social realist knowledge approach, the article examines the construction of higher-order thinking (HOT) and the distribution and control of pedagogical agency. Inconsistent patterns emerged from the analysis. On one level, the textbooks expand students' horizons for intellectual development and creativity by way of activities designed for analysis, evaluation, and reflection, yet on another level these are highly controlled within strong framing (through highly sequenced, tightly organized, and explicitly defined tasks and teacher instructions). The analysis demonstrates that while disciplinary knowledge is widely circulated and access is established for students, students' involvement and pedagogical agency remain constrained within tight pedagogical frameworks of framing and classification. I contend that even though the textbooks offer students copious opportunities and intellectual resources to exercise and hone HOT, strong framing restricts affordances and constraint teacher pedagogic judgement to some extent. This essay avoids claims of revealing the actual teachers' agency in their work; instead, it outlines what constitutes pedagogical possibilities to serve as a baseline for classroom enactment studies.

Keywords: Higher-Order Thinking, Secondary English Curriculum, Bernstein, Recontextualization, Framing, Social Realism, Textbook Analysis, Pedagogical Affordances

I. Introduction

The connection between language education and cognition is one of the most important topics in the field of education. Increasingly, in the current global context, English language education has been seen not just as a language to learn but as a medium through which critical thinking, creativity, and independent learning can be cultivated (Li, 2020; Zhang & Zhang, 2021). It may be observed that the status of English language learning at all levels is influenced by the prevailing pedagogical concerns and policy focus across educational systems to nurture higher-order thinking (HOT) as capabilities needed to actively participate in knowledge economies and democratic society (Bezanilla et al., 2019; Vincent-Lancrin et al., 2019). The context of Pakistan's recent educational system reforms has been put forward through the Revised National Curriculum of Pakistan 2023 (RNCP 2023). The aims described in RNCP 2023 indicate an attention to promoting learners' critical thinking, creativity, and independent learning skills through the learning of English as a second language (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2023). The translation of these policy visions into pedagogical text seems to have been executed by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB), which has created textbooks for Grade 9 and 10 English language. Nevertheless, the

translation of educational intentions into pedagogical text is never neutral (Bernstein, 1990; Bernstein, 2000). According to Bernstein, the study of education as the transfer of knowledge from its production in different disciplines to the field of education involves a complex process of recontextualization in which pedagogical devices work with different rules guiding how knowledge is selected, arranged, transmitted, or communicated (Bernstein, 1990). Understanding the ways in which this process of knowledge recontextualization is operationalized in a specific socio-educational context becomes important to examine how far the policy objectives are realized. Drawing on Bernstein's sociology of education (especially theories relating to the pedagogic device, classification, and framing, supplemented with social realist theories of knowledge (Maton & Moore, 2010; Wheelahan, 2010)), this qualitative document analysis focuses on a systematic examination of two questions which are closely related:

1. How is higher-order thinking represented in the PCTB English textbooks for Grade 9 and Grade 10?
2. Through whose framing is pedagogical discourse in these textbooks organized and controlled?

The study seeks to investigate "the limits of the pedagogically possible" (Apple, 1999) within the contemporary Pakistani textbooks and offer an empirical foundation for studies of classroom implementation and scholarly discussions on the relationship between educational policies and pedagogy in the post-colonial context.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Higher-Order Thinking in Language Education

The framework of higher-order thinking originates from Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives, which differentiates higher (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) and lower-order cognitive skills (knowledge, comprehension, and application), and has since developed through various levels of cognitive processing (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), which include the use of metacognition. In language education, higher-order thinking consists of the ability to analyze, interpret, synthesize, and evaluate (Ennis, 2018; Paul & Elder, 2019). Currently, the acquisition of higher-order thinking is seen as one of the main objectives in the teaching of English, particularly in contexts where English is the language of instruction for subject learning and employment (Hyland, 2019). Pedagogical conditions that promote higher-order thinking include ample opportunities for enquiry, collaboration and reflection, as well as an integration of language learning with subject learning (Coyle et al., 2010; Linares et al., 2012); nonetheless, these conditions can only be achieved through how curriculum materials enable teaching to happen.

2.2 The Sociology of Education by Basil Bernstein

Basil Bernstein's work on the sociology of education can provide powerful frameworks for analysing a nexus formed by curriculum, pedagogy and knowledge (Bernstein, 1971, 1990, 2000). At the heart of Bernstein's theory is the notion of the pedagogic device; namely, a complex of rules to control the transformation of knowledge from its production in disciplines to its recontextualization and reproduction in schooling practices. There are three rules of the pedagogic device: the distributive, recontextualizing, and evaluative rules.

The distributive rules define "who has rights to what form of knowledge"; the recontextualizing rules specify the selection and organisation of the knowledge, and the evaluative rules explain what counts as valid educational knowledge. Classification refers to the degree of boundary between categories and the level of segregation between groups which exist in and through pedagogical context, while framing refers to control over "selection, sequencing, pacing, choice and assessment of the message presented" in pedagogic practice (Bernstein, 1971). We can talk about "strong framing" and "weak framing". Strong framing "can be realized through the explicit programming of the teaching, the specification of particular pathways and the prescribed speed of teaching". By contrast, weak framing can be made more flexible and allow more choices, so a teacher's, or students', room for manoeuvre can be greater. So far, Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing have been broadly applied by curriculum researchers in various contexts (Moore, 2013; Singh, 2002). However, there is a scarcity of literature on their application to language textbook analysis in post-colonial contexts.

2.3 Social Realism and Knowledge in Curriculum

The social realist perspective of knowledge, originating from Maton and Moore (2010), Wheelahan (2010), Young (2008), defines disciplinary knowledge as possessing its unique property, namely being "systematic, generalisable and explanatorily adequate", and capable of "giving individuals the intellectual and cognitive resources which are required both to know the world better and to change the world" (Wheelahan, 2010: 15). According to social realists, the recontextualization of disciplines knowledge can both realize the opportunities in terms of granting access to students of this subject knowledge, or, instead, create risks since an effective access to discipline knowledge should not degenerate into the reduction of disciplinary knowledge to isolated facts or recipes for particular techniques (Wheelahan, 2010). Social realism insists on the way curriculum materials shape a way of access for students to discipline knowledge and "how and what they are taught" is about "what counts as knowing" (Wheelahan, 2010).

2.4 English language education in Pakistan

The position of English language education in Pakistan is complex and controversial; while English is a symbol of status based on its inheritance from the British colonial period concerning administration and higher education, it is also seen as essential in gaining access to global economic opportunities and knowledge (Manan et al., 2015). Curriculum reform has consistently sought to respond to this dilemma by embracing English as a tool for both instrumental and intellectual purposes; the National Curriculum for English Language (2006) made communicative competence and thinking skills the focal points of curriculum design (Govt. of Pakistan, 2006); the revised National Curriculum of Pakistan 2023 also holds high hopes for the development of higher-order thinking through English Language Education (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2023).

However these policies have continued to be a challenge to implementation, as shown by research that has repeatedly indicated characteristics of classroom instruction that are teacher-centred, based on rote learning, and examination-oriented pedagogy (Shamim, 2011; Halai, 2013); these are part of wider problems that persist across the system and involve constraints such as larger class sizes of classes, shortage of resources, as well as a system of testing that is highly high-stakes (Ali, 2011).

Analysing curriculum materials is therefore essential to the task of deconstructing these ambiguities of reforms to curriculum; these textbooks serve as crucial mediators between curriculum and policy and thus provide insights to pedagogic possibilities available or absent to teachers and students (Apple, 2000; Fuchs and Bock, 2018). The analysis presented herein of how textbooks constitute higher-order thinking and regulate pedagogic control is intended to offer clues regarding the pedagogic limits within the current reforms.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Bernstein's Pedagogic Device

In this study, I make use of Bernstein's concept of the pedagogic device, which represents "the rules, discourses and practice which shape and order the transformation of knowledge into communication" (Bernstein 1990, p. 180). He proposes three orders of rules:

Distributive Rules: The distributive rules regulate "what kind of knowledge is distributed to what kinds of people" (Bernstein, 1990, p.180). Distributive rules for this study relate to what kinds of English language knowledge and ways of knowing are being distributed to students.

Recontextualising Rules: Recontextualizing rules establish the "rules by which the field of knowledge, in academic discourse, is selected and transposed into another text...a pedagogical text" (Bernstein, 1996, p.3). These rules determine what are valuable forms of knowledge in an academic discipline. Analysing textbooks for this research study means analysing the recontextualising process that has transformed the selected knowledge in different ways into the textbooks that are provided to students in Punjab.

Evaluative Rules: Evaluative rules define and construct "legitimate performance" in education (Bernstein, 1990, p. 180); the study of evaluative rules in textbooks indicates what is accepted as success and worth being shown to be achieved by students.

3.2 Classification and Framing

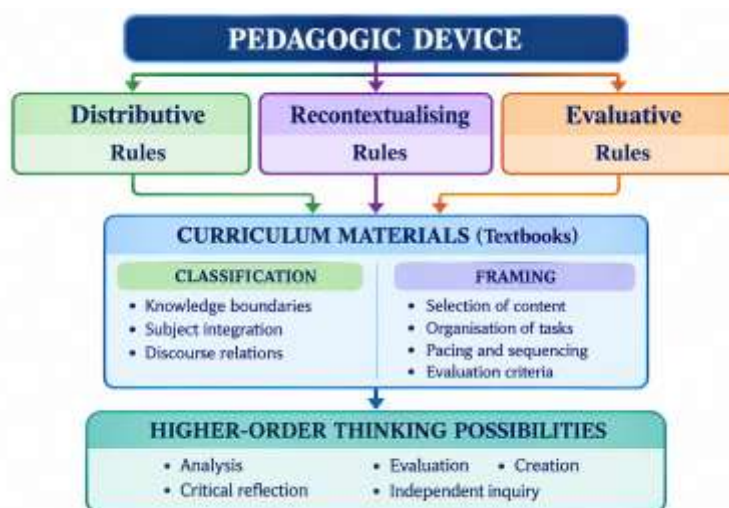
In order to investigate pedagogic possibilities offered by the materials examined I draw on Bernstein's notions of classification and framing as these help in describing the relation among pedagogic relations and pedagogic discourse.

Classification: Describes "the degree of boundary maintenance between different fields of discourse, knowledge or curriculum subject... Strong classification is characterised by definite boundaries... Weak classification is characterised by blurred boundaries..." (Bernstein, 1996, p.17). This implies the analysis of the separation or connections among areas of knowledge or between language skills and content; or between general and special English language knowledge, and articulation between those kinds of knowledge domains.

Framing: Refers to the degree of control "over the selection, organisation and sequencing, pacing and reception of the pedagogic discourse" (Bernstein, 1996, p.17); teacher controls all these aspects of discourse in strongly framed systems; in contrast, the curriculum and teachers or students enjoy wide scope and flexibility in weakly framed systems. In examining textbooks, Framing can be classified by looking at the task requirements in terms of specification and sequence of activities or by regulating the teacher's or students' control of the subject matter and task accomplishment criteria.

Figure I presents a conceptual framework that synthesises these theoretical resources for analysing higher-order thinking in language textbooks.

Figure I: Conceptual Framework for Analysing HOT in Language Textbooks



3.3 Social Realism Knowledge Perspective

The social realist viewpoint expands Bernstein's concepts by foregrounding the epistemological aspect of the recontextualization of curriculum knowing. In a social realist frame, disciplinary knowing "possesses distinctive attributes-coherence, complexity, and explanatory power-critical to cognition" (Wheeler, 2010, p.32). Recontextualization brings opportunities (access) to knowing as well as risks (distortion, fragmentation). The social realist concept will enable us to focus on what PCTB Grade 9&10 English textbooks allow and restrict students' access to knowledge in English language and literature, and their positioning relative to this knowing. This theory will draw our attention to an analysis of the extent to which the textbooks provide access for students to learn the kinds of knowing critical for real higher-order thinking, or whether the higher-order thinking has been reduced to ritual knowing.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

A qualitative document analysis research design (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2003) was adopted in this study to explore how the PCTB Grade 9 & 10 English textbooks portray higher-order thinking, and how pedagogical control has been regulated in the books. Document analysis is suitable for this study as textbooks are the primary mediators between the curriculum policies and classroom teaching, reflecting and encoding recontextualised procedures which give shape to pedagogical possibilities (Fuchs & Bock, 2018). The research design is theoretically grounded in Bernstein's theoretical frameworks, which guided us in selecting the analytical categories and interpreting the findings, and proceeded through cyclical interpretations of the coded data derived from reading and rereading (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.2 Data sources

Data are obtained from the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) English textbooks for Grades 9 & 10 as prescribed under the Revised National Curriculum of Pakistan 2023. These textbooks were chosen because they are the latest version of the curriculum in Punjab and claim to aim at the promotion of higher-order thinking.

Table 1: Overview of Analysed Textbooks

Textbook	Publisher	Year	Total Pages	Number of Units
English 9	PCTB	2024	198	12
English 10	PCTB	2024	186	11

The analysis utilizes, in addition to textbooks, additional relevant documents such as The Revised National Curriculum of Pakistan 2023 for English Language and the Curriculum Development Guidelines for textbooks by The Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board. These provide important background for interpreting the textbook analysis.

4.3 Analytical Framework

A theory-driven coding scheme (Boyatzis, 1998) informed the design of the analytical framework for the current study; combining deductive categories from Bernstein's theoretical work and inductive categories generated from the data, this three-dimensional analytical framework includes:

Dimension I: The Construction of Higher-Order Thinking

* Types of cognitive demand (Analysis, Evaluation and Creation)

* Opportunities for Critical Reflection

* Opportunities for Creative Expression

* Linking Thinking Skills and Language Teaching

Dimension 2: Framing the Pedagogical Discourse

* Selection of Content

* Organization of Tasks (sequencing, flow, format)
 * Teacher Directions (prescriptive, rather than open)
 * Role of the Student (active or passive)

* Criteria of Evaluation (explicit or implicit)

Dimension 3: The Classification of Knowledge
 * Boundaries between language skills and content

* Interconnections across units and activities

* Connection to the discipline

4.4 Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeds as follows;

Stage 1: Immersion and Familiarization

The two textbooks were read in their entirety to establish a frame for the in-depth analysis of the components at a higher-order thinking level in relation to pedagogical discourse.

Stage 2: Coded Systematic Description

Each unit of analysis (individual activities, questions, instructions, or assessment task) was coded using the analytical framework. Coding was performed manually in a detailed coding matrix.

Stage 3: Pattern Identification

From the analysis of the coded items categories and patterns were identified across the two textbooks. In identifying the patterns careful consideration was given to the way that higher order thinking is constructed as well as to the framing of pedagogical discourse, looking for similar and different themes across the text books.

Stage 4: Theoretical Interpretation

The identified patterns were interpreted using Bernstein's theoretical framework; by applying the social realist stance toward knowledge the analyses proceed moving from empirical work in the data to theory in the analytical framework and back again.

4.5 Trustworthiness

Several strategies were used to meet the trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) standard of research; Firstly the credible structure of the framework through sustained theoretical engagements increased the trustworthiness of the study. Secondly an explicit and exhaustive record of coding decisions was made providing an audit trail. Thirdly the findings are discussed with colleagues with an expertise in Bernstein and Pakistani education providing external validation of the interpretations. Moreover extensive quotation is given so readers will have the opportunity to assess the trustworthiness of interpretation for themselves.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

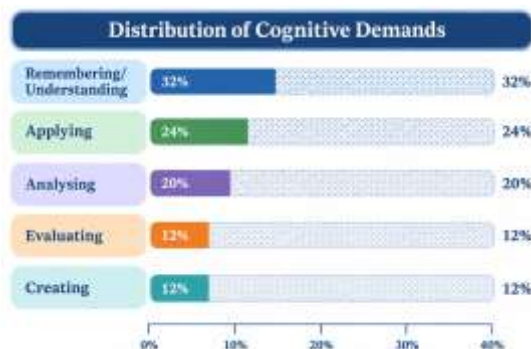
The study does not involve human subjects, rather an investigation of publicly available curriculum documents. This necessitates considerations surrounding the ethical representation of the textbooks analyzed and caution against unintended overgeneralization; this analysis of the textbooks is presented as interpretation, not definitive interpretation or the impacts of the texts used.

5. Findings

5.1 Higher-Order Thinking Construction

Higher-order thinking was found to be explicitly promoted across the two PCTB English textbooks, with a considerable number of explicit learning tasks and activities being devised to incorporate this construct in students. Across the two books, 247 distinct tasks or learning activities were identified, and these were categorized.

Figure 2: Distribution of Cognitive Demands in Textbook Activities



According to Figure 2, approximately 44% of activities required higher-order thinking (analysis, evaluation, creation) and 56% of activities required lower-order thinking (remember, understand, apply) skills, which means that although textbooks indeed afforded higher-order thinking tasks, they were not adequately or equally integrated across the curriculum.

Analysis Activities

Activities that required analysis asked the students to analyze relations between ideas, make patterns, or contrast different views. For example, an activity from Unit 3, the Grade 9 textbook provided this task:

> "Read the two letters to the editor on page 45. Compare the arguments presented by each writer.

What evidence does each writer use to support their position?

Which argument do you find more convincing and why?"

(PCTB English 9, p. 47)

This required the students to analyze the logical construction of arguments, make judgments about arguments' strength, and evaluate evidence, which all belong to higher-order thinking processes, especially language learning (reading comprehension, vocabulary) combined with critical thinking that could be integrated into teaching.

Evaluation Activities

Evaluation activities required the students to evaluate based on criteria. Based on the requirements, teachers should assess and judge arguments, texts, or work itself. For instance, in unit 7, the Grade 10 textbook offered:

> "Work in pairs. Read the sample essay on page 89. Using the assessment criteria provided, evaluate the essay.

Identify two strengths and two areas for improvement.

Share your evaluation with another pair and discuss your findings." (PCTB English 10, p.91). It requested that students make a judgment of an essay using explicit assessment criteria and communicate and discuss their evaluations, which indicates characteristics of higher-order thinking, such as the metacognitive process of knowing what has to be evaluated and how to evaluate it in accordance with certain rules.

Creation Activities

Activities with a creation component required students to produce something original. They involve higher-order thinking from multiple sources of information and generate innovative ideas. For instance, the activity presented in unit 5 of the grade 9 textbook was like this:

> "Imagine you are a journalist investigating the impact of social media on teenagers. Conduct research using the sources provided. Write a news article presenting your findings.

Include at least three different perspectives and use evidence to support your claims."

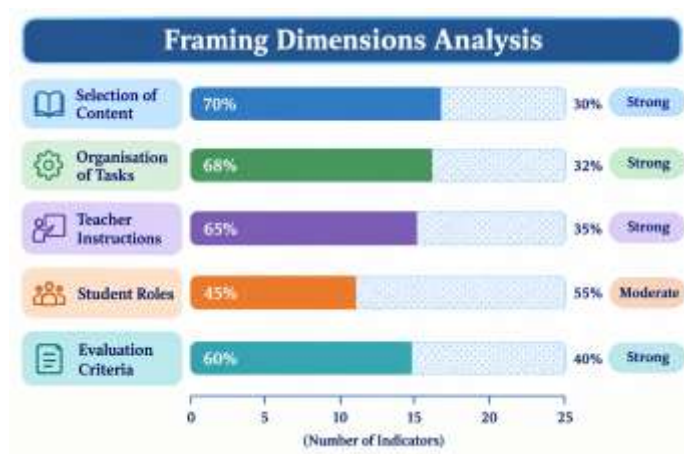
(PCTB English 9, p.78)

This asks the students to analyze information and synthesize it in a written article including multiple viewpoints that reflect the real journalistic endeavour in presenting different perspectives. It clearly requires critical thinking combined with communication skills (writing and verbal), which would develop an integrative teaching strategy for multiple skill instruction.

5.2 Framing of Pedagogical Discourse

While higher-order thinking was abundantly present in the tasks presented in the textbooks, these tasks were framed within a rigidly structured system of pedagogical discourse, examined across five components: selection of content, organisation of learning tasks, pedagogical instructions, role of the student, and evaluation.

Figure 3: Dimensions of Framing in Textbook Activities**



Here's a rephrased version of your text, aiming for a more natural, human-like flow:

Content Choice

One of the most notable features of these textbooks is the strongly framed selection of content. Every unit follows a definite theme, with all the reading material and activities specifically chosen to suit that theme. While this structure provides a certain sense of cohesion, it offers students little to no space for personal choice or negotiation.

In Unit 2 for Grade 9, "Media and Society," for instance, all of the texts and activities relate directly to this single theme.

Students are not given any opportunities to select topics of independent interest or explore their own emerging curiosities.

This highly framed content selection is illustrated well by this directive from the Grade 10 textbook:

> "Students will read and complete the reading comprehension activity pages 34-36 prior to responding to the writing activity on page 37. The writing activity will Center on the specified topic: ." (PCTB English 10, p. 33)

Here, the sequence of learning tasks, as well as the precise topic of the writing piece, are all predetermined, leaving little room for teacher or student discretion.

Task Sequencing

In addition to content selection, the sequencing of tasks is also highly framed. Each activity is designed to lead to the next one in a predetermined sequence, creating scaffolding. However, this approach limits the flexibility teachers have in adapting activities to the specific needs of their students or allowing students to discover alternative ways of tackling a task.

The strongly framed nature of task organisation is evident in the granular, step-by-step instructions provided for numerous activities. For example, the Grade 9 textbook includes the following directions for a group discussion:

> "Step 1: Divide into four student groups. Step 2: Assign each group member a specific role: discussion leader, note-taker, timekeeper, or presenter. Step 3: Students are expected to read the article on page 56 quietly and individually.

Step 4: In their groups, students should take turns responding to the prompts on page 57.

Step 5: The group must reach a consensus in developing a summary. Step 6: Present your summary to the class." (PCTB English 9, p. 55) While this detailed guidance may be beneficial for novice teachers, it greatly restricts the opportunities for teachers and students alike to exercise their pedagogical judgment and make on-the-fly modifications based on the local context and individual student responses.

Teacher Instructions

The textbooks include detailed and directive instructions for teachers. These guidelines are indicative of a strongly framed pedagogical discourse, detailing not just what teachers need to do, but exactly how they are to proceed. For example, the Grade 10 textbook states:

> "Teacher's Note: Engage students in a discussion of the pre-reading questions on page 42 before allowing them access to the text. Give all students an equal opportunity to answer. After students have completed reading the text, lead the comprehension check questions in the prescribed order, ensuring adherence to the specified sequence."

(PCTB English 10, p.

41)

These detailed instructions not only prescribe specific teaching strategies, but explicitly prohibit teachers from deviating from the planned sequence of activities. While such comprehensive guidance can be helpful for new teachers, it greatly limits the autonomy and professional expertise of more seasoned educators who are likely to have developed successful alternative strategies based on their students' specific learning styles and backgrounds.

Student Roles

The student role framing varies more so than the other categories, with certain activities encouraging proactive participation and others casting students in the role of passive information absorbers. The kinds of tasks that tend to involve active participation are group discussions, peer assessments, and individual research projects. Conversely, reading comprehension drills, vocabulary worksheets, and grammar exercises, on the other hand, cast the students as receivers of information rather than creators or discoverers. The ambiguously framed student roles are noticeable when looking at these instructions in the Grade 9 textbook:

> "Activity 1: Please read the reading selection on page 23 silently and individually, then respond to the ensuing reading comprehension question: _." (Individual practice)

> Activity 2: Please work in pairs to brainstorm the key ideas in the reading selection, using the discussion questions on page 24 to guide your conversation. Are you able to agree with the author's argument? Why? (Paired work)

> Activity 3: Please synthesize the key ideas and create a concluding paragraph that encapsulates the text and expresses your personal stance. (Individual practice)" (PCTB English 9, p. 22)

This sample reflects mixed framing; where Activity 2 promotes student active and thoughtful engagement, the instructions in both Activity 1 and Activity 3 lead the students to become passive learners and mere recipients of

information. This inconsistency suggests that the textbooks are not reliably advocating for student involvement, even though one of the instructional objectives of the curriculum document in question involves the development of higher-order cognitive abilities among learners.

Evaluation Criteria

In the area of evaluation criteria, the textbooks also tend to have strongly framed choices. Specific rubrics and scoring guidelines for assignments are plentiful, detailing precisely what needs to be included in student work in order for it to receive a certain score. Though these clear parameters may assist both learners and teachers, they unfortunately eliminate room for student creativity and discourage students from developing their own critical evaluative judgements.

These strongly framed evaluation criteria are visible in the rubric provided in the Grade 10 textbook:

> "Writing Task assessment rubrics

> Content. 5 points - Information in the writing activity demonstrates that learners have sufficient understanding of subject content by incorporating relevant details, facts and examples and by supporting the response.

> Organization. 5 points - A coherent progression of ideas which supports a logical order. Introduction, body, and conclusion have been developed; transitions and linking phrases connect pieces of writing fluidly.

> Language. 5 points - A reasonable range of vocabulary appropriately used. The text exhibits correct grammar and mechanics, varied and complex sentence structures (although not an absolute necessity for basic grade).

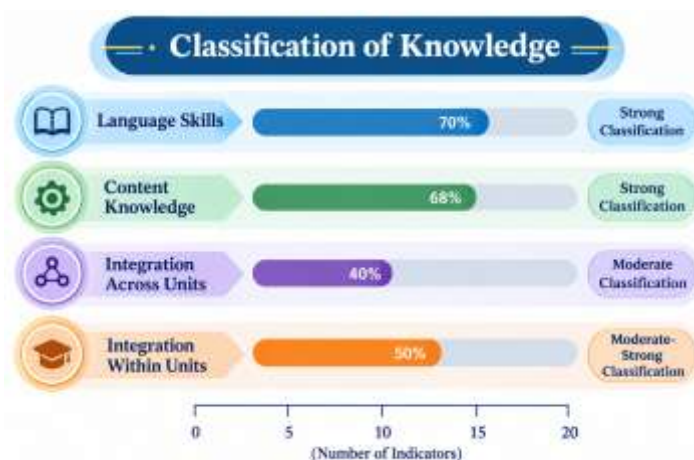
> Presentation. 5 points – neat handwriting, legibility, format, correct spelling..." (PCTB English 10, p. 67)

This rubric clearly delineates the expectations of both the student and the teacher. Yet, with "correct" vocabulary and grammar and strict rules, it represents one definite and standard idea of 'writing' which cannot effectively embrace culturally or rhetorically distinct perspectives or discourage a restriction in creativity.

5.3 Classification of Knowledge

Analysis of the textbook shows strong classification of knowledge. The disciplines, subjects, and content areas, like reading, writing, and listening, are not presented together but are treated separately. Unit content matter focuses on individual topics and themes, separating the teaching and learning of particular subjects in a clear structure, e.g.,

Figure 4: Classification of Knowledge in Textbook Units



The strong classification of knowledge can be observed through the organization of textbooks into discrete units where each focuses on one aspect of knowledge in hand. For example, the Grade 9 textbook is organized under the following headings.

1. Reading and Thinking
2. Media and Society
3. Letters and Communication
4. Stories and Narratives
5. Research and Inquiry
6. Poetry and Expression
7. Drama and Performance
8. Language and Identity
9. Technology and Change
10. Environment and Sustainability
11. Health and Well-being
12. Global Perspectives

Although such an organization provides focus, opportunities for integrated learning across subjects remain relatively absent. The strong classification of knowledge could hinder higher-order thinking that relies on the integration of different forms of knowledge. The strong classification of knowledge is also clearly seen through the separation of language skills and content. While reading activities focus on meaning-making and comprehending texts, writing tasks concentrate on the language that students should adopt. Opportunities where both forms of knowledge are combined are generally rare. The following task in the Grade 10 textbook offers evidence of the aforementioned statement. "In this unit you will develop skills in reading by analysing the texts critically to evaluate their arguments. You will also develop writing skills in the analysis by carrying out the tasks to generate an argument in essay form." (PCTB English 10, p. 72) Here, reading and writing are being presented as separate abilities, where critical literacy development has only been applied to the reading texts and its utilization to the essay generation. The separate treatment and usage of two seemingly interlinked forms of knowledge may also limit the possibility of higher-order thinking due to lack of synergy in the practice.

6. Discussion

6.1 A Contradictory Situation for Higher-order Thinking:

The analysis of the PCTB textbooks for Grade 9 and Grade 10 revealed that the books presented a somewhat contradictory situation regarding higher-order thinking skills (higher-order thinking) for both teachers and students in many areas. On one hand, the textbooks were filled with reading and writing tasks that required analysis, interpretation, evaluation, synthesis, and generation. These tasks reflect the stated intent of the RNCP23 regarding higher-order thinking skills and an earnest desire to foster them in students. On the other hand, the books strongly framed pedagogic discourse, limiting students' autonomy and teachers' agency to select curriculum materials, devise tasks, specify teachers' instructions, and establish evaluation criteria. This, in turn, provided the teachers and students with affordances but also constrained possibilities for the actualization of higher-order thinking. This contrasting scenario can be interpreted through Bernstein's (2000) conception of the pedagogic device and recontextualization rules, which bring forth a discipline as pedagogic practice through specific rule processes. For the PCTB textbooks, the recontextualising rules seem to allow both the opening and closing of opportunities for higher-order thinking: the books provide access to disciplinary contents (affordances) while restricting pedagogical discourse to allow its usage (constraints).

6.2 Teacher and Student: Affordances and Constraints of Strong Framing

The strong framing that governs the pedagogic discourse within PCTB textbooks in some cases provides opportunities in and of itself. It also results in many constraints from teachers' and students' perspectives in realizing higher-order thinking. Affordances and constraints are described in Table 2.

Affordances of strong framing could potentially be very beneficial:

Clarity and structure: the precise specifications given in the pedagogic instructions in the PCTB offer clear expectations to all teachers and students and help maintain uniform teaching across all classes and locations. This could be beneficial for new teachers and students.

Scaffolding: The strongly framed pedagogic context that provides well-sequenced steps, instructions, and criteria benefits students, especially for complex tasks such as generating argumentation or conducting investigations, potentially especially for English language learners.

Consistency: The clear rules and standards of instruction given in the books can lead to consistency in teaching of the subject, and consequently prevent significant discrepancy and inequality in students' exposure to the curriculum content (RNCP23:7). Constraints that originate from the strong framing can restrict the actualization of higher-order thinking and teacher agency:

Limited teacher agency: The strict guidelines present less space for teacher autonomy to make adjustments to pedagogic discourse and content to fit students' needs, prior knowledge, and current context (RNCP23:9). As the pedagogical instruction strictly defines teaching, fewer opportunities are created for the teachers to make their practice responsive to students' interests and local relevance, which is the core of learner-centered pedagogy (RNCP23; Shamim, 2011; Halai, 2013; Akbari, 2005).

- Limited student agency: Students become mere transmitters who simply follow instructions in producing certain forms of pedagogic practice instead of active construers of knowledge. Hence, opportunities are not available for self-exploration of learning, exercising freedom of selection, and conducting independent research (RNCP 23). This is in opposition to what higher-order thinking represents, i.e., knowledge constructed independently through student agency.

- Reduced opportunities for integration: The classification of knowledge into discrete parts as seen in the distinct subject boundaries, hinders students from integrating two or more forms of knowledge into a structured holistic discourse of a topic or task. As we saw in the previous points, this division limits the scope of higher-order thinking application across different genres.

6.3 Knowledge and Higher-order thinking in social realist perspectives

The social realist perspective on knowledge offers additional lenses through which we are able to interpret the data. This perspective is characterized by the identification of specific qualities inherent within disciplines-systematicity, connectivity, and explanatory power that are crucial for the development of intellectual abilities (Wheelahan, 2010). With disciplinary knowledge, particularly English language and literature that students learn in the textbooks, knowledge about genres, their rhetorical features and conventions, students are equipped with conceptual tools that they can employ while realizing higher-order thinking skills.

However, the division into subject streams that implies fragmented treatment of genres within separate books that the textbooks follow may not help students build a coherent framework of knowledge concerning English language and literature as a subject, thereby limiting the possibilities of constructing the knowledge that higher-order thinking necessitates by involving different aspects and dimensions.

It must be identified how textbooks position students towards disciplines: it is not merely about the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge but also in terms of whether students become its active constructor, or a recipient or agent of this discourse of knowledge that is constructed in prescribed directions and in expected ways (Wheelahan, 2010). This supports and adds to existing critiques that in such contexts policy ideals do not truly transform pedagogy when the discourse that takes place inside schools reflects more towards traditional, teacher-centred approaches rather than the ideal of student-centered ones, which the RNCP23 calls for (Shamim, 2011; Halai, 2013).

6.4 Suggestions for curriculum reform

The results produced in this research are indicative of the dire need to re-examine textbooks as not only texts to disseminate content, but as primary sites of influence that mediate between the policies drafted at the Center and the practices undertaken in classrooms (Sánchez, P. 2016). Second suggestion, that flows from this research that higher order thinking needs to happen through reducing pedagogic constraints, instead of more specific instructions being provided to teachers and students about not only content and methods but also learning processes themselves, which limit teacher agency. Third, the data suggests that supporting teacher professional judgement during curriculum material implementation is critical. Whilst strong framing may support the least experienced teacher by offering a framework and support, it is important not to constrain experienced teachers' professional judgement, and Curriculum reform must aim for a balance between prescribed and a degree of flexibility.

6.5 Limitations and Future Research

Some important limitations to this study must be addressed. Firstly, this is a text-level document analysis and therefore defines the parameters of that which is pedagogically feasible to construct through a particular text. It makes no comment upon the implementation and use of the text within a classroom nor student engagement with the material. Future studies should address the enactment of the curriculum within a classroom setting, examining how teachers mediate the strong framing of textbooks and the opportunities and constraints it affords students. Secondly, the textbooks examined were developed within one Pakistani context; although the materials were developed for the most populous province with considerable widespread use, they cannot automatically be assumed to be generalizable. Future studies should examine contexts to explore the contexts and similarities.

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