A comparative analysis of assessment schemes in Secondary School Certificate and Cambridge O Level English examination papers in Pakistan: Need for reform

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Abstract
This article attempts to analyse the relationship between the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and evaluation systems of two simultaneously existing examination systems in Pakistan: Secondary School Certificate (Matriculation) and Cambridge O Level system. The major concern of the paper lies in observing the targeted outcomes of the two types of examination systems in the light of the aims and objectives specified by the two systems. One paper from each testing system has been analysed and the prospective outcomes have been matched with their exclusive aims provided by their respective boards. Results show that both the systems, in their own distinct syllabi, aim at making the students proficient in the learning of English as foreign language through a system that involves skills which are incorporated into the learners and then tested so as to make them proficient in the language. The evaluation system, however, differs widely in both. Matriculation assessments are purely a test of memory and assess the students' ability on the basis of discrete implementation of skills in the questions while the Cambridge O Level system offers as process-based learning of the language by keeping in view a holistic approach of applying various modes of skills in to its question papers. Hence, a reformation in the system of evaluation as well as that of teaching needs to be promoted to meet the prescribed outcome mentioned in the syllabus of Punjab Board.

Keywords: Assessment; Matriculation Exams; Cambridge O Level exams

Introduction
Assessment involves the use of empirical data on student learning to refine programs and improve student learning (Allen, 2004); the process of gathering

and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning (Huba & Freed, 2000); Assessment is the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. It is the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analysing, interpreting, and using information to increase students' learning and development (Erwin, 1991). All these definitions focus on the direct relation of assessment with paradigm of learning and its subsequent backwash impact on teaching and educational program. If assessment tools, whether formative and summative, are not formulated appropriately, the whole scheme of curriculum implementation may go in vain.

According to Brown (1996), there are three movements of language testing approaches: the psychometric-structural movement, the integrative socio-linguistic movement, and the communicative movement. Djiwandono (1996) states five approaches of language testing: the traditional approach (based on grammar translation method); discrete approach (knowledge of language as mastery of language components as system); integrative (integrate knowledge of systematic components of language); pragmatic (language used within context); and communicative approach (language used in real communication). Since the popularity of communicative language teaching approach, the focus of second language assessment also shifted to communicative language testing. Fulcher and Davidson (2007) put forward that the most popular frameworks for communicative language testing are postulated by Canale and Swain's communicative competence (1980), Bachman 's Components of communicative language ability in language use (1990) and Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell's model of communicative competence (1995). Any country or education system may vary in its choice of teaching/learning and testing approach but in any case, they have to be interrelated to impart the holistic sense of curriculum.

The relation between teaching, learning and assessment in the context of Punjab
Rind and Mari (2019) argue that Pakistani public examination has long been criticised for putting too much pressure on students, who are then forced to have private tuition in addition to formal schooling in preparation for their examinations; students are encouraged to refer to past exam papers and mostly to memorise the concept for better results. They further argue that public

examination guides teaching and learning in schools and institutions where examinations are conducted by external examination boards and whose performance is associated with the results, usually promote examination-oriented teaching practices (2019). Keeping in view the significance and affinity between teaching-learning and testing, the situation in Pakistani Examinations system needs to be critically examined whether the question papers/assessment schemes are really constructed to evaluate the relevant competencies and therefore catering the aim of national curriculum or they promote the rote learning of text books and consequently damaging the dynamic process of teaching-learning and intended outcomes of curriculum? This is a natural concern because after scoring a huge number of marks in board exams e.g., two girls from Multan and Gujranwala scored 504/505 marks in 9th grade board result declared in 2016; Pass percentage was also more than 50% in all the 9 educational boards of Punjab. Teachers and learners approach the syllabus from the perspective as it is supposed to be assessed in summative assessment. Moreover, when it comes to communicative competence of these learners, the situation seems to be disappointing because when these learners enter college or university, they lack command in 4 basic skills and other sub skills of language; consequently, most of them fail to perform with the same standard as exhibited earlier. Punjab Education sector plan (2013-17 pp.69-70) points to the situation in the following words.

> "The internal school assessments conducted by teachers continue to be on the more routine style that encourages rote learning. The secondary and higher secondary examinations conducted by the BISEs also follow a similar pattern and, in fact, drive the teaching-learning process in the classroom. Both need to change. With 9 BISEs in the province, standardisation continues to be a concern despite reforms to the exam paper development process." (Punjab Education sector plan 2013-17, p.69)

Thus, the need to evaluate the assessment schemes in board exams is a dire need of hour. The concern of this article is to analyse the 10th grade English Language question paper and compare it with the alternative O Levels exams from the following perspectives:

1. What are the skills assessed in Matriculation board exams and Cambridge O Level exams of English Language?
2. Does the assessment scheme match with the objectives/expected outcome of the curriculum?

3. Do they assess language from product oriented vs. process oriented; norm referenced vs. criterion referenced; subjective vs. objective and discrete point vs. integrative approaches? How these approaches affect the relation between curriculum and assessment scheme?

Education systems in Punjab

In Punjab, the two school systems, running parallel i.e., public and private, utilize different forms of summative assessment at school terminal level in tenth grade i.e., Matriculation and Cambridge O Level exams. Matriculation is the mostly opted choice by Pakistani learners used in all the government and government board affiliated private schools. Cambridge O Level exams are usually conducted in elitist high level independent private school systems administered by Cambridge examination system. Though the educational level and age of learners are roughly the same; yet, a stark difference can be seen in the English Language assessment schemes and the skills required at this level directly reflecting the variance in teaching systems too. For Matriculation, the national curriculum implementation framework (2006) adopted by government of Punjab in its Education sector plan (2013-2017) follows the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) as guiding framework and so assessments are to be designed accordingly to meet the objectives of the curricula. The purpose of ushering in the curriculum of English as a subject from grade I-XII is as stated:

> *"The new curriculum aims to provide holistic opportunities to the students for the language development and to equip them with the competencies in using the English Language for communication in the academic and social contexts, while enabling them to be autonomous and lifelong learners as better adapt to the ever changing local and world society and to knowledge advancement." (National curriculum implementation framework, 2006, p.1)*

Contrary to this, *The Cambridge approach* (2016) works on the following footsteps:

> *"Cambridge Assessment emphasizes the importance of curriculum coherence – both the integrity and interaction between elements of the education system (pedagogy, assessment, materials, and so on) and the integrity of progression through the education system. The link between materials at different stages of education should be considered, as well as materials which recognize and support the transition from one phase of education to another. It can be important to ensure that materials are not*

seen as totally isolated elements of a specific phase, but are located in a specific part of overall educational progression" (p. 22)

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for Matriculation
The very comprehensive SLOs for this level (National curriculum implementation framework, 2006, pp.97-119, see Appendix-A) are built around 5 basic competencies (C, henceforth), further divided into standards, bench marks and specific expected outcomes. These vital competencies and the summarized outcomes are:

Reading and thinking skill: Analyse patterns of text organizations e.g., theme, order of ideas, supporting details and function of various devices e.g., cohesion, parts of speech, anecdotes etc. within and beyond a paragraph in a text; pre-reading strategies like predicting the theme, skimming and scanning the text, understanding the context; post-reading strategies like critical thinking, deducing implied meaning; understanding the question types as literal, evaluative, close and open ended; use dictionary and library skills; understand poetry, short story and essays to extract information, ideas, enjoy and to make connections of literary texts with their own lives, understand the features of any genre, figurative language, style, point of view, plot, setting etc.

Writing skill: produce academic, transactional and creative writing developing fluency and accuracy; use pre-writing strategies e.g., brainstorming, mind mapping and outlining etc; write topic sentence and provide supporting details; write a variety of expository, persuasive, analytical essays and personal narratives for different purposes and audiences; use summary skills to write précis; analyse and write story book review; analyse questions to write effective and focussed answer of required length etc.

Oral communicative skills: Use extended linguistic exponents to communicate appropriately for various functions and co functions of advice, fear, hope queries in extended social environments; the social and academic dynamic conventions to communicate ideas through formal talks, group oral presentations and informal interviews; understand and use the verbal and non-verbal means, tone, style, express point of views and reciprocal ability; and exhibit etiquettes to interact with audience etc.

Formal and lexical aspects of language: Recognize and use widely acceptable pronunciation, intonation and stress patters; enhance vocabulary for effective communications, understanding and usage of connotations, denotation,

transitional devices, contextual clues, figures of speech and semantics literal and figurative meaning in translation from English to Urdu; recognize, analyse and use grammatical functions, parts of speech, types of sentences, narration, voice, cohesive devices, tenses and punctuation etc.

Appropriate social and ethical development: Recognize, understand, develop, portray, practice and evaluate ethical and social attributes and values relevant in a multicultural and civilised society

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for Cambridge O Level students
According to the syllabus provided by Cambridge International Examination (CIE) for the examination of June and November, 2016, Cambridge programmes aim at making their students:

• **Confident** in working with information and ideas–their own and those of others.
• **Responsible** for themselves, responsive to and respectful of others.
• **Reflective** as learners, developing their ability to learn.
• **Innovative** and equipped for new and future challenges.
• **Engaged** intellectually and socially, ready to make a difference.

Further qualities that are enhanced by providing such curriculum are:

- **Communicative competence**: the ability to communicate with clarity, relevance, accuracy and variety.
- **Creativity**: the ability to use language, experience and imagination to respond to new situations, create original ideas and make a positive impact
- **Critical skills**: the ability to scan, filter and analyze different forms of information
- **Cross-cultural awareness**: the ability to engage with issues inside and outside owns community, dealing with the familiar as well as the unfamiliar.

Cambridge O Level English Language teaching is based on an objective to enhance the linguistic ability and understanding of the students. The Cambridge O Level English Language syllabus (2016, p. 6) encourages a student to develop lifelong skills, including:

- The ability to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively.
- The use of a wide range of vocabulary and correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- A personal style and an awareness of the audience being addressed.

Furthermore, the students are also encouraged to read widely, both for their own enjoyment and to further their awareness of the ways in which English can be used. This caters to not only the leaning of English as a language but also the pragmatic approach through which students can practically implement the language in context. Cambridge O Level English Language study also develops more general analysis and communication skills such as synthesis, inference, and the ability to order facts and present opinions effectively. This is done through the questions based on summary writing, reading for understanding part which includes factual and narrative comprehensions, directed writing techniques and essay writing for creative abilities.

	Writing to:	Reading to:
Communicative competence	Communicate precisely and appropriately	Understand exact and implied meaning
Creativity	Develop ideas effectively	
Critical skills		Identify and respond to main ideas
Cross-cultural awareness	Reflect on the familiar	Have strategies to deal with the unfamiliar

Figure: 1 various skills tested through distinct forms of question types.

The speaking and listening skills are not evaluated in the assessments however, these vital skills are a part of the curriculum and encouraged to be an essential fraction of the classroom lessons.

Summative/End of term assessment scheme for matriculation

The assessment scheme is illustrated in detail in National curriculum implementation framework (2006, pp.153-159, see Appendix-B) stating the purposes, methods, types and kinds of assessment alongside with instructions for marking as well. In the methods of assessment (section 6.4, pp.154-156), certain question types are itemized to be selected from for the construction of question paper for summative assessment alongside the concerns of validity and reliability for test scoring:

Malik, S., Khan, A., & Sadiq, U. (2020). JHSS. XXVIII (1).

Selected Response (Objective type): Multiple choice questions; Binary choice items; Matching items, interpretive exercises

Constructed response (semi objective and subjective type)
Brief constructed response items (Semi-Objective): Fill in items; Short answers
Constructed Restricted/extended response (Subjective): Essay type questions
Performance task

From the aforementioned competencies, C3, C5 and some SLOs of C4 are to be assessed as formative assessment within the classroom setting through a rubric (p.159). For the assessment of language skill competencies C1, C2, and rest of SLOs of C4, the recommended pattern says (p. 158) that English Language will be examined through a board examination at the end of grade X and XII.

- There will be two papers, paper A/1 and B/2.
- Paper A/1 to consist of reading comprehension and critical thinking
- Paper B/2 to consist of writing skill, grammar and sentence structure.
- Each paper to have objective and subjective sections
- It is recommended that 60% marks should be allocated to knowledge and understanding: 40 % marks should be allocated to application

The scheme of studies decided by Punjab Board Committee of Chairmen notified for 2015-2017 by BISE Lahore Punjab Government vide notification no. 05/2015 reports about the assessment parameters and scheme in the following words:
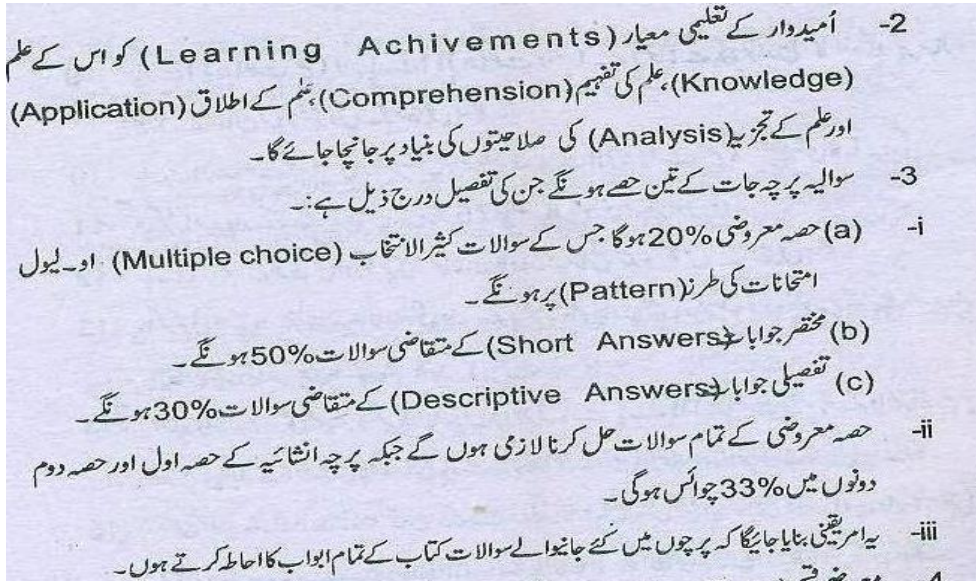
Figure: 2   Scheme of studies/assessment for Matriculation for session 2015-2017

It can be seen that all the board papers of matriculation follow the abovementioned same pattern.

Summative/End of term assessment scheme for O Levels

The paper patterns of the assessments, whether class assessments, mock exams or CIE, the pattern remains unchanged throughout any type of evaluation. The following major sections have been designed by the CIE syllabus for the exams in 2016.

Section	Focus	Writing	Reading
1	Task	Directed Writing	Reading for Ideas
2	Language	Creative Writing	Reading for Meaning

Figure: 3 Parts of an assessment exam reflecting the communicating skills

	Paper 1: Writing 1 hour 30 minutes		Paper 2: Reading 1 hour 45 minutes	
Marks	60 weighted to 50		50	
Weighting	50%		50%	
Candidate response	On the question paper		On the question paper	
Focus	Task	Language	Task	Language
Section title	Directed Writing	Creative Writing	Reading for Ideas	Reading for Meaning
Mark allocation	30 marks (15 marks for task fulfilment and 15 marks for language)	30 marks (combined language and content)	25 marks (15 marks for content points of notes, 5 marks for language of summary; 5 marks for main ideas questions)	25 marks (content only)
Weighting for writing skills: 50%	20%	25%	5%	-
Weighting for reading skills: 50%	5%	-	20%	25%
Assessment objectives	W1, W2, W3, W4	W1, W2, W3, W4	R3, R4	R1, R2

Figure: 4 Scheme of Assessment for O Levels for 2016

The CIE English paper (1123) consists of two papers, Writing and Reading. The Writing paper is further divided into two parts: Task-based questions and a language-based question. The task-based question contains a technical question such as report, letter, or an article with some directions provided along with the word limit. "Paper 1 is Directed Writing, where communication of key information is required to achieve a specific purpose for a certain audience in a particular situation. Language (as well as content) is tested in the Creative Writing section, where candidates have an opportunity to display their English language skills in order to express their opinion, experience or imagination" (CIE Syllabus, 2016, p. 11). The task for the Reading paper is rather more challenging. It requires a great deal of vocabulary and understanding of the text and the ability to synthesize and summarize the given information. The passages are divided into two major parts: Reading for Ideas and Reading for Meaning.

Through these skills, which are evaluated according to the curriculum objectives, help further the communicative abilities of the students through which they can better express their work in other subjects and meet their communicative aims in their future endeavors.

Methodology and data
For the current research, two latest English papers are selected from Matriculation (2016) and Cambridge O Level (May/June, 11 and 12, 2016)

examination system to be compared from different aspects of assessment schemes i.e., what skills do they assess and how? Through the content analysis of both the question papers, the strengths and weaknesses of subjective vs. objective; discrete point vs. integrative and norm referenced vs. criterion referenced testing of language in these papers are explored. On the implication of these aspects, the relation of assessment schemes is discussed with curriculum objectives/intended outcomes as having positive or negative backwash effect on teaching-learning situation.

Analysis of data

In the following section, Matriculation and Cambridge O Level English question papers are analysed individually regarding their nature of questions, skills assessed and time factor.

Analysis of Lahore board 10th grade/Matriculation English Paper 2016

The 75 marks question paper is divided into two sections i.e. Objective (Q.1 of 19 marks making up the 25% of paper) and Subjective (Q. 2-8 of 56 marks making up 75% of paper). The division of question paper is as follow:

		Nature of Q.	Marks	% of QP	Time allotted	Focus of Question
Objective	Q. 1	Mcqs	19	25 %	20 min	Grammar & Vocabulary
Subjective Section I	Q.2	Short questions 5 out of 8	10	17 %	16.25 min	Content of text book
Subjective Section II	Q.3	Translation into Urdu or rewrite in simple English	08	10 %	16.25 min	Content of text book/ Grammar Translation Method
	Q.4	Summary of poem/paraphrase the selected lines	05	06 %	16.25 min	Content of text book
	Q.5	Write an essay or a paragraph	15	20%	16.25 min	Writing skill
	Q.6	Convert 5 sentences into indirect form	05	06%	16.25 min	Grammar/narration
	Q.7	Use any five pair of words in sentences	05	06%	16.25 min	Grammar/vocabulary
	Q.8	Translation into English/write ten sentences about given topic (For students with English medium background)	08	10 %	16.25 min	Translation/Grammar/ Grammar Translation Method

Table 1. A tabular analysis of questions in Matriculation Lahore Board English Paper (2016)

It becomes very clear by above given table that matriculation assessment scheme completely contradicts with the SLOs as stated in curriculum implementation framework. 47% of the question paper focuses on grammar; 33 % on text book in a tailor-made way; and just 20 % on writing skill and that, too, is in quite traditional style of testing. The creative and communicative aspects of reading and writing skills alongside with contextual and integrative use of grammar are completely ignored. An in-depth negative analysis (i.e., absent elements) of question paper is given below:

Questions about grammar

Q.1 focuses on the five aspects of grammar i.e., tenses, spelling, preposition, parts of speech and vocabulary. 1 min/ 1 answer/1 mark makes it quite mechanical and all the grammatical aspects are completely isolated and out of context; consequently, testing the knowledge and cramming of rules, not the understanding and its usage as they just have to identify the correct option which can promote the trend of cheating too in the examination. SLOs assessed in these questions correspond to only standard 3 of Competency 4 Formal and Lexical aspects of Language given in National curriculum implementation framework (2006, pp.111-118) in its simplest form ignoring the rest of the standards, benchmarks and the element of application and illustration of these rules in this competency completely; thus, a product-oriented approach is operational behind the construction of this question.

Q.6 and 7 also assess the same standard 3 of competency 4 but here students have to convert the direct language into indirect one and make sentences of pair of words given as a list in a very orthodox manner as students usually reproduce the sentences learnt from the guidebooks available from the market. For the narration, the exact SLO is assessed but as an isolated sentence makes it too impractical.

Questions from the textbook

Q.2 focuses on the content of text book by asking very short all 'wh' questions from different short stories based on different events or definitions. The comprehension, reading and thinking skills of students are not challenged as learners have just to memorize when, how, why, what and where something happened in a particular short story. No implied meaning, inference, opinion, ideology, style, figures of speech, genre, cohesion, coherence, organization of text based questions, are posed to learners as processes of reading strategies to let them think beyond the textual world to relate it with their own lives or other real life situations, e.g.,

❖ *When does the Chinese year start? / What is meant by right profession? / What kind of boy was Pip? /Why did the non-Muslims trust the Holy Prophet (SAW)?*

SLOs assessed in these questions correspond to only standard 2 of Competency 1 Reading and critical thinking given in National curriculum implementation framework (2006, pp.97-102). The 10 marks for 5 short questions from the

already taught text makes it very easy for the learners to cram the information and reproduce as it is, therefore, making this question product oriented one.

Q.4 is also from poetry section of text book where students are asked to write a summary of a poem or paraphrase the lines with the reference to the context. The question does not indicate that how long the summary or paraphrase should be worth 5 marks; moreover, it asks them to reproduce the information about a literary genre as a product what they have already learnt in the classroom.

Q. 3 and 8 of Translation into Urdu and Urdu into English completely follow the Grammar Translation Method Approach towards Language Assessment. SLOs assessed in these 2 questions correspond to only standard 2, Bench mark 1 of Competency 4 Formal and Lexical aspects of Language given in National curriculum implementation framework (2006, p.113). Translating Urdu Text into English (Q.8) is nowhere mentioned in SLOs and in the question paper it just assesses the knowledge of tenses.

8. Translate the following paragraph into English: 8

میری والدہ مجھ سے بہت محبت کرتی ہے۔ وہ میری صحت کا ہمیشہ خیال رکھتی ہے۔ ایسی خوراک پکاتی ہے جو میں پسند کرتا ہوں۔ لیکن مجھے زیادہ کھانے سے روکتی ہے۔ مجھے اچھے اچھے کپڑے دیتی ہے۔ زیادہ قیمتی کپڑوں کے خلاف ہے۔ مجھے باقاعدہ کتابیں پڑھاتی ہے۔ مجھے روزانہ پڑھنے کی تاکید کرتی ہے۔

The passage for Translation into Urdu (Q.3) is always taken from the textbook that is already taught in the classroom implicating that assessment through GTM reinforces the classroom practices to apply GTM instead of communicative approach. It is mentioned in SLOs that the purpose of translating English into Urdu is to 'use literal and figurative meaning, grammatical gender and syntax, and understand that most phrases and idioms do not translate literally from one language to another' (p.113) but the below given very brief paragraph does seem to serve the whole purpose of assessment of desired SLOs as it demands literal translation.

❖ *Q. 3. Another popular custom is to hang up signs and posters on doors and windows with the Chinese word fu written on them, which means luck and happiness. Buying flowers for the home is also commonplace since they symbolize the coming of spring and a new beginning.*

These two questions also imply that translation from L1 to L2 or vice versa is a kind of product which students must reproduce after rote learning of the rules of grammar and the translation of text book.

Question about writing skill

Q. 5 about writing an essay or paragraph with 3 options in each category is the only question that is about writing skill that is too conventional because SLOs of Competency 2 with 4 benchmarks (pp. 103-107) demand students to exhibit a process oriented approach towards writing by focussing on different types of essays like expository, personal narrative, persuasive or analytical essays integrating all the other skills of grammar, vocabulary, lexis, punctuation, pre-writing (brain storming/ mind mapping/outlining) writing and post-writing (proof reading and editing) strategies. But the choice of the topics without any contextual descriptions and time constraint restrict the students to convert the active writing skill into a passive one i.e., essay or paragraph as a product, which they learn by heart as suggested to them by their teachers on the basis of assessment scheme.

- ❖ Options for Essay writing: *A visit to a Hill Station/My House/Boy scouts*
- ❖ Options for Paragraph writing: *A visit to a Museum/ A street quarrel/ A dream*

All the above given topics are just personal narratives or descriptive in approach and more like a piece of cake for the students of this level and age. Heaton (1975, p. 128) calls such titles as 'poor ones which provide no guidance as what is expected of him (the student)'. Ironically, due to lack of creativity in construction of question paper, this notion is also prevalent that going through and memorizing the question papers of past 5 years is the best formula because the topics and questions repeat.

Analysis of O Levels English Paper (May/June 1123/11 and 12), 2016

The division of the components of the English papers for Cambridge O Level as given by CIE Syllabus 2016 is as follows:

Paper 1: Writing

Paper 1 is titled as the Writing paper. The time duration allotted to the students is 1 hour 30 minutes, and the total marks for the paper are 60.
This paper has two sections and candidates answer on a separate answer sheet.

Section 1: Directed writing

This section is of 30 marks. The instructions as per the CIE syllabus are as follows:

"Candidates are presented with a **task**, e.g. write a letter, speech, report, article, fit for purpose and relevant to the world of study, work or the community.

• Candidates should write 200–300 words to inform or persuade a particular audience.

• 15 marks are allocated for task fulfillment and 15 marks for language" (2016, p. 13).

Task

1   Your school has built a new sports centre. A former pupil of your school, now a famous sports star, has been invited to open the new centre. Your Principal has asked you to make a speech at the official opening to welcome the sports star and introduce the centre to teachers and pupils.

Write your **speech**. You must include the following:

- an introduction to the sports star **and** his or her achievements

- a description of the new centre and its facilities

- the benefits to the school that the centre will bring **and** an expression of thanks to the sports star.

Cover all three points above **in detail**. You should make sure your speech is polite and informative. Start your speech 'Teachers and fellow students,...'.

Section 2: Creative writing

This carries 30 marks. This contains essay writing, which aims at testing language and content combined. Candidates have to answer one question from a choice of five narrative/descriptive/argumentative essay titles **a**nd are supposed to write 350–500 words. Both sections test Assessment Objectives W1, W2, W3, and W4.

Paper 2: Reading

It is a 1 hour 45 minutes paper which carries 50 marks. This paper has two sections and candidates answer on the question paper.

Section 1: Reading for ideas

It carries 25 marks. Candidates scan a factual communication (or communications) of approximately 700 words–e.g., report(s), article(s), advertisement(s), email(s), letter(s). They identify and note down required information – e.g., similarities and differences, or causes and effects, or advantages and disadvantages, or problems and solutions, or actions and consequences. Only one example content point will be given as guidance to candidates. 15 marks are allocated for content points. Candidates use these notes to write a summary of 160 words. 5 marks are allocated for language. This task tests Assessment Objective R3 (also implicitly R1, R2). Candidates then answer questions on the main ideas in the communication(s) – e.g., follow an argument/sequence or identify a conclusion, distinguish fact from opinion, give a personal response to a theme in the passage. These will be short answer questions worth 5 marks. This task tests Assessment Objective R4 (also implicitly R1, R2).

Section 2: Reading for meaning

It carries 25 marks. Candidates read a narrative passage (e.g., report, article or a story) of approximately 700 words. They then answer short answer questions testing their ability to understand the language (both explicit and implicit meanings). The questions contain answers implicitly hidden in the passage and demand a sheer understanding of the passage. The vocabulary section also demands meanings according to the context. This section tests Assessment Objectives R1, R2.

Findings

The findings can be summarized by revisiting the research questions which are:

1. What are the skills assessed in Matriculation board exams and Cambridge O Level exams of English Language?
2. Does the assessment scheme match with the objectives/expected outcomes of the curriculum?
3. Do they assess language from product oriented vs. process oriented; norm referenced vs. criterion referenced; subjective vs. objective and discrete point vs. integrative approaches? How these approaches affect the relation between curriculum and assessment scheme?

It can be clearly seen that the assessment pattern of Matriculation does not correspond with the expected SLOs of curriculum implementation plan in its spirit which is in a sharp contrast with that of the Cambridge O Level English

paper. It focuses more on language as a product to be learnt in the classroom during the whole academic year and reproduced in the examination; thus, permeating the tendency of rote learning and memorization as its backwash effect. Every question examines a particular aspect of language as a discrete one, completely isolated from other elements of language; consequently, impacting the performance of communicative competence of second language learners who cannot integrate these discrete points as a whole in their real-life language use. In the context of discrete point testing of language, Rea (1985, cited in Weir, 1990) expresses that discrete-point test may result in artificial, sterile, and irrelevant types of items which have no relation to the use of language in real life situations. Similarly, Morrow (cited in Weir, 1990) suggests rather than to test knowledge of language elements alone, it will be useful to combine the discrete knowledge of the elements in appropriate contexts or situations. However, the discrete-point tests are that the data can be quantifiable and can cover a wide range of representative samples (Weir, 1990, p.2).

The major focus on grammar in objectified form results in very high scores achieved by the learners; yet, it affects their ability to master L2 from communicative perspective as a holistic one. To explain and compare objective testing vs. subjective testing in language assessments, Hughes (1993) comments that the difference lies on the level of judgement needed on the part of the scorer. If the scorer does not need judgement in scoring, the test is objective; on the other hand, if the judgement is called for, the test is said to be subjective. The objective testing is preferred in psychometric-structuralist era in which the reliability (consistency of the score), validity (the representativeness of the sample) and objectivity (of test format) become the main concern. However, along with the development of language teaching and testing principles, the subjective testing is preferred in language testing, especially if the purpose of testing is to know one's ability in communication. The subjective testing has beneficial wash back effects on teaching and learning, but it may arise problems on reliability and validity. Grammar is a sub-skill which must be integrated into help in the assessment of 4 primary skills; but, the deductive approach to teach and test grammar is reflected through these tests.

The communicative spirit of Writing, Reading and critical thinking skills are completely ignored. Heaton (1975, p.128) comments that 'writing task should be such that it ensures he (the student) has something to say and the purpose for saying it. He should also have audience in mind when he writes.' But paradoxically, the situation is opposite. Reading, translating and learning a few 'wh' questions and summaries from the text book and memorizing a few essays

are key strategies of success in matriculation exams. On the contrary, the Cambridge O Level exam is successful in implementing the syllabus by meeting its objectives through its effective evaluation system. Reading and writing skills are implemented in the evaluation questions and the outcome brings in the communicative ability of students which matches with the CIE prescribed syllabus outcomes.

The following table suggests the usage of standard approaches for assessment in curriculum implementation framework (2014) comparing it with traditional approach but the situation is vice versa as the existing assessment scheme is based on traditional approach.

Traditional approaches	Standard approaches
Based on contents & topics	Based on standards
Focus on objectives	Focus on SLOs
Focus on teaching	Focus on learning
Teacher centred	Student centred
Reading, writing, speaking and using arithmetic (skills)	Interpersonal, communication, team work and problem-solving skills
Promote memorization	Promote thinking
Assessment of content knowledge & simple understanding	Assessment of content skills, deeper understanding, reasoning and application
One way approach	Variety of approaches

Table: 2 A comparative perspective of Approaches towards assessment in curriculum implementation framework (2014, p.17)

This much reliance on traditional assessment approach makes Matriculation exam a norm-referenced assessment test (NRAs) where a learner is assessed according to how well s/he achieves in relation to other examiner; whereas, in criterion referenced assessment (CRAs) the examiner is assessed according to what s/he can do or achieve as in the case of CIE examination. Since the purpose of language testing is to describe a learner's language proficiency, the tester should obtain obvious evidence of what the examiner is able to do rather than just providing test scores (Brindley, 1991, p.139). The positive aspects of CRAs, according to Hughes (1992) are, among others, they set meaningful standards in relation to *what students can do* without being influenced by other student's scores; and they motivate the learners to achieve the defined standards. Therefore, in testing language proficiency there must be a clearly defined

standard of the expected language ability. Brindley (1991) suggests that the easiest way to define criteria and descriptors for language assessment is by using the already existing criteria such as rating scales, band scales, and performance descriptors.

The Punjab Board Committee of Chairmen's recommended parameters of Knowledge, Comprehension, Application and Analysis as key criteria for assessment of a candidate's learning achievements taken from Bloom' taxonomy of cognitive development (1956) is explained by Hall and Johnson (1994 cited in Fulks, 2004) are also violated by setting such a question paper which judges only the knowledge; rest of the elements are not incorporated in matriculation assessment schemes.
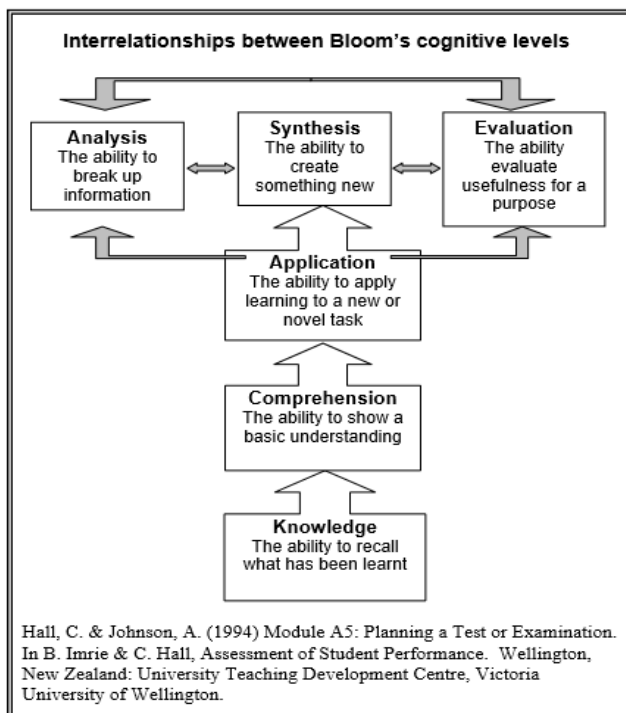

Figure: 5 Explanation of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive levels of assessment (1956)

Time and length of the paper are two other crucial factors in this assessment because within three hours 8 different questions i.e., all the aspects of grammar; summary, paraphrase, essay and paragraph writing; text book knowledge and translations skills are to assessed. Although, the questions are too short; yet, this

flood of discrete items poses a cognitive constraint and pressure on learners' memory at the cost of his communicative ability. Indeed, quality is compromised on the altar of quantity; competence is bargained for the race of marks.

As compared to that of Matriculation system, Cambridge O Level English paper focuses on the major two skills while incorporating other grammatical elements such as expression, vocabulary, ability to write clear and crisp answers and other elements which are not discrete in nature, but rather have a holistic impact on the learners. All abilities and skills are merged into one another. Number of questions are limited and time allotted is adequate. This is evident in the marking scheme of the paper analysed, gives a highest of mark 5 with the following criteria:

• "Apart from very occasional slips, the language is accurate.
• Any occasional errors are either slips or minor errors. There is a marked ability to use original complex syntax outside text structures.
• Punctuation is accurate and helpful to the reader" (CIE marking scheme for the paper May/June, 2016, p.7).

Conclusion
Based on our findings, we conclude that the Punjab board examination for the subject of English does not synchronize with that of its curriculum as specified by the board. It focuses on the reading and writing skills of the students but by giving questions easily found in the already studied texts, it becomes a test of memory and not skills. Students lag behind in their communicative ability to incorporate those skills in other subjects or even in speaking. Matriculation is based on a product- oriented approach with a norm-referencing style and purely objective in its nature of evaluation. Skills are incorporated discretely. Hence, the curriculum objectives are not met with the evaluation criteria and students ultimately suffer in their ability to perform better as learners of English language.

Cambridge international examination approaches the evaluation system with an entirely different lens. The syllabus aims match with the assessments and the marking schemes are based on criterion- referenced approach. Language is taken not as product but as a process in which major skills are merged with one another and create a holistic effectiveness of the language learned. This approach makes students capable of being more communicative and becomes fluent in his/her ability to further the other two skills: listening and speaking.

Hence, the learner becomes proficient in learning English as a foreign language through the CIE system.

Recommendations

Our research has paved way for further research in the field of learning and evaluating systems where English is taught as a second or foreign language. Reforms need to be made in the evaluation systems as well as the teacher-training programs need to be conducted so as to furnish the teacher with the skills required to teach English. The incumbent Education Minister Shafqat Mehmood claims to bring about a unanimous curriculum for all school types but will that mean uniformity in the testing and evaluation systems? Third-world South Asian countries like Pakistan need to make an endeavour to bring out reforms in the evaluation systems so that the young learners are capable for competing in today's globalised world where English has marked itself as a ruling language.

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