

## Unpacking the 4C's: Evaluating the Integration of 21st Century Skills in Pakistan's New Undergraduate Curriculum

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### ABSTRACT

This article presents a critical review of the recent undergraduate curriculum reform in higher education in Pakistan, focusing specifically on the integration of 21st-century skills into the new curriculum. This initiative emphasizes the 4C skills—critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration—as central to the revamped courses. The article explores the effectiveness and potential impact of incorporating these 21st-century skills into the curriculum, as well as the challenges that may arise during their practical, on-the-ground implementation. Diverging significantly from Pakistan's traditional English as a Foreign Language teaching model, which is largely based on the grammar translation method within a teacher-centric, delivery-based classroom, the new courses adopt a Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach. This approach aims to prepare students for effective participation in today's world by engaging them in authentic language use and project-based activities. The review examines the integration of the 4C skills into the curriculum and compares this with global contexts reported in current research literature to identify common difficulties. Overall, this review contributes to the critical research literature on educational reform in language education at the tertiary level, providing insights into the potential benefits and significant challenges of implementing a curriculum that includes the 4C skills.

**Keywords:** 21st century skills; curriculum; communication; collaboration language education; 4Cs; critical thinking; creativity.

### INTRODUCTION

The layout of classrooms in the contemporary teaching and learning environment has changed significantly from the traditional classroom setups that many language teachers were educated in during their own education. Professional development programs and teacher training seminars usually focus on the subject of 21st-century skills and "new literacies" (Halverson, 2018). Educators encounter challenges when incorporating these concepts into their lesson plans because they understand that students require a distinct set of abilities to thrive in an increasingly interconnected society (Salybekova, 2023). However, many teachers who are overwhelmed by the demands of daily classroom instruction may find it impossible to understand and apply new literacies and 4Cs abilities (Stronge, 2018). The current study seeks to shed light on the incorporation of 21st-century skills education in higher education in Pakistan with a specific focus on the 4Cs—critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration.

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### Background of the Study

In early 2020, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) initiated a comprehensive reform in the undergraduate education policy across more than 200 universities in the country, both governmental and private. This policy overhaul aims to shift the educational focus towards students and communities, with a specific goal of aligning undergraduate courses with the needs of the 21st century. A key component of this reform is the development of three new entry-level undergraduate English language courses:

- Introduction to Expository Writing
- Cross-cultural Communication and Translation Skills
- Critical Reading and Academic Writing

The HEC, Pak-TESOL, and the Regional English Language Office (RELO Pakistan) of the US Department of State worked together to design these courses. These courses are based on global curriculum expectations and key constructs such as:

- Project-based learning
- Community-centered language acquisition
- 21st-century skills

These courses are unique due to their emphasis on native language instruction. Since the majority of Pakistanis speak more than one language, they need bilingual education and strong connections to the social reality of multilingualism (Khan et al., 2022). Therefore, the courses are based on valuing local forms of knowledge construction and the multilingual repertoire of the students. This is a significant departure from the traditional emphasis on rote memorization and the teacher-centered learning approach. This adjustment is reflected in the following ways:

- Making instructive materials that are relevant to the lives of the students
- Providing active opportunities to students to interact with and build upon local knowledge and community resources
- Encouraging students to team up for activities that promote local networking

The twenty-first century provides a unique setting for promoting globalization, interconnection, and innovation. In modern times, taking English language courses helps pupils get ahead in the modern interconnected and hyper mobile world. In order to provide students the tools they need to successfully traverse the complexity of today's academic and social contexts, critical thinking and problem-solving abilities are stressed in the curriculum. The focus on encouraging growth and innovation exemplifies the fundamental traits required to prosper in a world that is changing quickly. These courses aim to provide students with the language proficiency necessary for both

local and international communications. They also emphasize the development of other soft skills necessary for success in the 21st century.

The recently formed English language program adopts a comprehensive strategy that respects Pakistan's vast linguistic diversity—as there are more than 70 official languages—and acknowledges the importance of local languages in students' education. A key objective is the incorporation of the multilingual resources of the country through using local language for acquiring a foreign language. This objective is achieved by incorporating several strategies throughout the courses including translation between local languages and English, encouraging a strategic use of the local languages, accommodating regional language use in completing homework and assignments, and using local resources like books and magazines in the classroom. It is crucial for authentic community integration in the language classroom to adopt a multilingual policy outlook in societies like Pakistan where there are a large number of local languages operating in the social and academic milieu of the students (Khan et al., 2023). If properly implemented, a multilingual language policy nourishes strong bonding between the students and their cultural heritage at the same time facilitating their acquisition of a linguistic repertoire scaffolding by their existing linguistic resources in the local language(s).

### **Significance of the research**

The current study focuses on an important nationwide revamping of the undergraduate curriculum that also includes changing the English language curriculum taught to the entry level university students during their first two years of study. The article analyzes the new courses from the perspective of how they incorporate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into English language instruction. The study's goals were to draw attention to how intricate the curricular approach is and to how crucial community engagement is to the development of these critical abilities. The primary goal is to conduct a critical analysis of the benefits and challenges in incorporating 21st century skills and community service into the recently updated undergraduate curriculum. Secondly, the paper examines the long-term repercussions of the current curricular revision process and points out key potential hurdles to its implementation related to the preparedness level of the higher educational institutes in Pakistan, teachers' professional preparedness to practice the new approach to teaching language, and the potential resistance toward the reform because of long-practiced traditional methods of language teaching.

### **Rationale for the study**

The necessity to comprehend the revolutionary changes in Pakistani higher education, especially in the area of English language instruction, provides the justification for this study. The goals of the study are deeply ingrained in this investigation; they aim to determine the methods used to

integrate 21st-century skills into the curriculum as well as the degree to which undergraduate English language courses prioritize community participation. In order to offer insightful information on the dynamics of curricular reform, this study acknowledges the need of identifying the opportunities and difficulties related to this integration.

### **Research aims and objectives.**

The principal aim of this study is to methodically examine the subtleties of the recently revised undergraduate curriculum in Pakistan, with a particular emphasis on the incorporation of 21st-century competencies within the context of English language instruction. The study is directed by the following four particular research topics in order to accomplish this overall goal:

**RQ1:** How is English language teaching incorporated with the 4Cs—critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration—into the recently updated Pakistani undergraduate curriculum?

**RQ2:** How much is community engagement and participation stressed in undergraduate English language courses in relation to 21st-century skills?

**RQ4:** What possibilities and obstacles are there for integrating 21st-century skills into Pakistan's recently revised undergraduate curriculum?

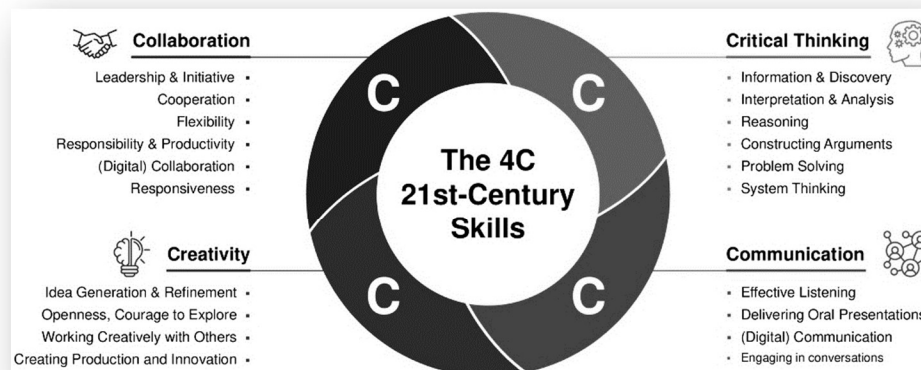
### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The competencies and qualities that are necessary for success in the quickly evolving modern environment are known as 21st century skills (4Cs). These abilities encompass a variety of "soft skills," such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, in addition to academic knowledge and abilities. Halverson (2018) emphasizes how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms are changing and so are the need for new literacies and 21st-century skills. He recognizes the difficulties educators encounter in comprehending and using these ideas. The main goal is to examine the basic shifts in education, especially the 4Cs, and how they affect English language instruction worldwide, with a particular emphasis on Mexico. 4Cs are crucial in higher education for a variety of reasons. They aid in preparing pupils for the challenges of the workforce in the twenty-first century. Strong 21st century skills are in high demand from employers as graduates, since they are necessary for success in a wide range of careers. Lamb et al. (2017) highlight the changing landscape of work influenced by technological advancements, suggesting a shift from routine tasks to more strategic, people-focused roles. They emphasize the need for students to acquire a diverse set of skills, including creative and critical thinking, to thrive in the evolving job market. Despite this consensus, the article acknowledges the lack of agreement on specific 21st-century skills, their measurement, or assessment. The report modestly aims to consolidate current thinking on the topic,

acknowledging the uncertainty while contributing to the ongoing dialogue on shaping education to better prepare young people for the future.

Research literature also emphasizes how difficult it is to create exams and other evaluations that accurately gauge students' learning of soft skills like problem solving in curriculum focused on 21st century skills. According to Funke et al. (2018), issue solving is viewed holistically as a collection of cognitive and non-cognitive abilities required to handle challenging circumstances across a range of disciplines. He emphasizes that non-cognitive traits like motivation and social skills are underrepresented in evaluations, but he admits that existing tests and theories incorporate cognitive elements like causal reasoning. The chapter ends, reflecting the challenges in addressing this wide notion, that there is no one evaluation method that fully reflects problem-solving ability. Additionally, citizens in the modern society need to be capable of critical thinking about complex issues, deliberative decision-making, and good interpersonal communication. People with these talents may learn new things throughout their life and adjust to changes. In his analysis of the need for 21st-century learning models, Scott (2015) places a strong emphasis on the essential skills for lifelong learning and active citizenship. This emphasizes how important it is to change traditional education in order to provide students the essential abilities like creativity, teamwork, and communication. It highlights critical social, cognitive, and personal skills—like initiative, resiliency, collaboration, and metacognition—that are necessary for a changing workplace.

On the other hand, Bell (2016) contends that the focus on employability in 21st century education overlooks crucial challenges, even in light of sustainability concerns. Using statistics from the World Business Council on Sustainable Development, he raises doubts about the sustainability of the existing global economy. The integration of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into 21st-century educational discourse is the topic of this article. Through promoting strategic planning and forward-thinking, ESD seeks to equip students for issues in the social, environmental, and economic spheres. In order to address the pressing demand for a more sustainable global economy, this article contends that traditional educational techniques must change and emphasizes the need for creative educational models.



**Figure 1.** Model of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills in education (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2011)

Recognizing the importance of 4Cs competencies, educational institutions aim to equip students with multifaceted abilities essential for success in complex and interconnected environments. *Critical thinking* is the ability to think independently and analyze information critically. It involves the ability to identify and evaluate arguments, make inferences, and draw conclusions based on evidence. Hitchcock (2017) argues that an ideal critical thinker is open-minded, seeks evidence, is well-informed, and considers alternatives. The process includes problem identification, evidence assessment, and making reasoned judgments. Critical thinking extends beyond logical appraisal, involving creativity and comprehensive evidence assessment. Education should cultivate critical thinking through knowledge, skills, and fostering the right attitudes, either infused into subject courses or through stand-alone courses. Both approaches have merits, and a combination is ideal, emphasizing goals, motivation, practical examples, and guided practice.

*Creativity* is the ability to generate new ideas and innovative solutions to problems. It involves the ability to think outside the box, come up with new perspectives, and take risks. According to Binkley et al. (2012), the shift to knowledge services in advanced economies emphasizes the importance of specialized knowledge and information technology. Work is now centered on decentralized decision-making, teamwork, and innovation, requiring adaptability and the ability to solve complex problems. Success in contemporary occupations relies less on routine skills and manual labor, which can be automated. Instead, individuals need strong creative capacity, communication, information utilization, and problem-solving skills. *Communication* is the ability to exchange information and ideas effectively with others. It involves the ability to listen effectively, speak clearly and concisely, and write persuasively. Cyphert et al. (2019) argue that to enhance undergraduate instruction, a business faculty adopts a customer service perspective



and revises goals based on employer expectations. Through interviews with professionals, they identify 10 communication activities with subtasks that define entry-level competencies for business graduates. The findings emphasize the necessity of reevaluating curricular organization and instructional focus across the business curriculum to cultivate effective communication skills.

*Collaboration* is the ability to work effectively with others to achieve common goals. It involves the ability to share ideas, resolve conflict, and compromise. Kereluik et al. (2013), argues that while 21st-century knowledge frameworks emphasize foundational and humanistic knowledge, collaboration remains crucial in the context of evolving educational goals. The authors highlight the need for conveying how technologies impact all three types of knowledge and recommend specific conclusions and recommendations for teacher education to address these changes effectively. Analogously, Laal (2012) defines Collaborative Learning (CL) as an educational approach where learners in small groups work together to achieve a shared goal. It identifies five essential elements of CL: Positive interdependence, Individual and group accountability, Interpersonal and small group skills, Face-to-face interaction, and Group processing. While not explicitly framing these elements as 21st-century skills, the emphasis on collaborative problem-solving and interpersonal skills aligns with the broader notion of fostering collaboration as a valuable skill in the current century.

The brief literature review in this section underscores the significance of 21st-century skills, particularly the 4Cs, in education. It emphasizes the evolving nature of EFL classrooms, the changing landscape of work, and the need for students to acquire a diverse set of skills to thrive in the job market. The consensus on the importance of these skills is juxtaposed with challenges in defining, teaching, and assessing them. This literature review also illustrates difficulties in the designing and implementation of innovative transformative education initiatives, aiming at incorporation of the 4Cs.

## METHODOLOGY

This study thoroughly examines recent undergraduate curricular changes in Pakistan using a qualitative methodology. The process of gathering primary data involved closely examining the activities and assignments in the revamped courses, reviewing the course goals, and doing a thorough study of the new curricular materials. Deconstructing the revised curriculum material in order to pinpoint important components pertaining to the incorporation of 21st century skills (4C) is the main objective of the analysis. This entails a methodical examination of the document's goals, structure, and explanations or recommendations about the incorporation of critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and communication skills. This research looks at the particular goals that were established for each of the reorganized course's learning components.

This research looks at the many assignments and activities that are part of the curriculum. Information on the 4Cs and community involvement was categorized using a thematic approach as part of the data analysis process. Themes develop as a result of recurrent coding and categorization, which offers a thorough grasp of curriculum methods and how well they support specific skills. Importantly, this review is carried out paying close regard to ethical guidelines. It makes sure that references to other works are correctly made by acknowledging the original author. Integrating other people's concepts and frameworks requires a dedication to moral application along with honesty and openness when working with outside advice. The purpose of this ethical framework is to uphold responsible conduct and encourage academic integrity throughout the research process.

Although thorough and ethically sound, the review methodology adopted in the current study has some inherent limitations. As it is based on document analysis and drawing inferences, it may only partially capture the actual changes in the curriculum reform experience and teachers' and learners' insights as they interact with the new course contents. Second, the analysis of 4Cs incorporated into the curriculum is influenced by the subjectivity of the researchers and their views about what a good curriculum means. Finally, although every possible care has been taken to observe all ethical demands of using data from the curriculum documents, the article's findings cannot be triangulated for validation as it is not based on analysis of empirical data.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Writing is thoughtfully incorporated into the curriculum together with the fundamental knowledge and abilities required for self-directed learning and intellectual growth. Although there are additional subject areas such student-centered teaching, project-based learning, process pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, translation, intercultural awareness, and evaluation, this part focuses on curricular structure and objectives. The goal is for students to acquire fundamental skills. Students' language skills will be developed by exposing them to community participation and the four Cs of 21st century abilities.

### **Curriculum Goals Related to 21st-Century Skills**

Pakistan's new undergraduate curriculum has been intricately tailored to fit the evolving demands of this century through needs assessments carried out by Halvorsen and Pashby in 2019 and Eubanks in 2020, as well as consultation workshops with academics and specialists in English language education. A precise characterization of 21st century skills forms the foundation of the curricular objectives. Critical thinking, creativity, communication, and teamwork are some of these abilities. In the framework of this curriculum, these 4Cs are essential for both thriving in the contemporary times and meeting the demands of contemporary



language courses. In expository writing classes, the curriculum aims to advance these abilities as fundamental to youth education. To help educators properly incorporate the 4Cs into lesson plans, consider the following teacher's guide:

*Focus Question 1: What are 21st century skills? How does it seem in a contemporary workplace? Or are you taking a course in current languages?""*

The course's "backward design approach" matches goals with a choice of resources that symbolize a paradigm change in Pakistani curriculum design method. In order to introduce innovative teaching approaches, project-based learning (PBL) represents a dedication to integrative, experiential, and collaborative learning. Additionally, students' skill development is ensured by the lesson unit's concentration on 21st century abilities. As the introduction to Courses II describes:

This course includes themes and activities that develop 21st century skills, self-reflection, and active community engagement in order to preparing undergraduates to become successful writers and readers of English. The course helps students develop their fundamental language skills with a focus on writing, so that they can gain the confidence to communicate in oral and written English outside the classroom. Divided into 5 units, the course adopts PBL (Project-based Learning) to immerse students in achieving language-related tasks. The objectives of the unit target enhancing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and encourages students to be reflective writers and actively engaged community members. (HEC, 2020)

A significant feature of the new course is the incorporation of service learning and community engagement activities into English as a foreign language learning, which is a new approach in Pakistan. These aspects of the curriculum help in inculcating critical thinking and self-reflection among the students and engenders qualities of responsible citizenship and autonomous learners among them. The new courses also promote cultural legacy of Pakistani society as it explicitly uses local folklores and indigenous language translation strategies to foreground multilingualism and cross-cultural communication. Further, as the students engage in authentic language<sup>3</sup> use and reflection over real-world application of the target language, it builds their confidence as new language users.

### **Analysis of how the curriculum incorporates 4Cs**

#### **Critical thinking**

The new curriculum's approach to English language learning demonstrates a strategic intertwining of English writing skills development with the cultivation of reflexivity, critical thinking, and self-reliance among students. This is evident within the framework of project-based learning (PBL), which serves as a cornerstone of the curriculum. The curriculum's focus on

academic integrity and responsible behavior during small-scale projects encourages students to engage in reflective practices and critically evaluate their own work. By requiring students to generate their own ideas and strictly avoid plagiarism, the curriculum instills a sense of reflexivity and positions students as active participants in their learning journey. As the learning objectives state:

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss language learning experiences in English;
- produce a short essay describing language learning and writing experiences; 3. provide feedback to peers on the content of their writing;
- revise writing based on feedback from peers;
- develop strategies for improving focus and support of ideas in essay writing.

(Expository Writing, Course I, Unit 1)

**Table 1:** Assessment of Learning Objectives

Learning Objective	Assessment
Learning experiences in English (discussion)	Small group discussions, class participation, reflective journal entries,
Describing language learning experiences (produce a short essay)	Essay-based assignment
Provide feedback to peers on the content of their writing.	Peer review activity
Revise writing based on feedback from peers.	Revised essay assignment
Develop strategies for improving focus and support of ideas in essay writing.	Self-reflection exercise, essay writing rubric

In Unit 1, PBL fosters critical thinking and collaboration by assigning students to work on small but meaningful projects that require them to assess their own abilities, limitations, and areas for improvement using critical thinking strategies. PBL also helps students develop their critical thinking skills, fosters cooperation, and encourages them to explore a variety of ideas and points of view.

The learning goals of Unit 1 align with the curriculum's emphasis on promoting independence. Students must investigate their language learning experiences to come up with strategies to back and reinforce their views, revise their writing in response to peer criticisms, and write a concise

essay centered on self-reflection and offering peer feedback. The curriculum promotes a habit of self-efficacy through incremental improvement and uses it to enhance students' critical writing skills. By integrating the English language skills of the students with their critical thinking and reflexivity, it immerses students in language learning that builds their confidence for authentic communication. As such, the new curriculum is helpful in developing autonomous reflexive thinkers who can draw meaningful lessons from for life from their language learning experience. In terms of pedagogical implications of the curriculum, it sets language learning goals in a PBL environment in the teacher is a helpful collaborator for the students to achieve their language learning goals. By encouraging feedback and engagement in reflective learning, the teacher helps foster cooperation and critical thinking in the classroom.

### **Creativity**

The complexity of the modern global world demands creativity as an essential skill that is contingent upon several competencies technology literacy and media literacy, flexibility, leadership qualities, initiative taking and social skills. The new curriculum recognizes the importance of fostering creativity as a key 21<sup>st</sup> century skill in this age of technology where traditional language teaching models may not prepare students to meet the demand of the real world. It focuses on students' skills development that are relevant to their future lives and career and are transferable from one context to another. It prepares learners to meet the demands of a complex and knowledge-based competitive economy. Project-Based Learning (PBL) engages students in actual situations where they need to think creatively and resourcefully to complete their projects. It encourages community involvement and sensitizes students to the actual lives of the people in the community.

Unit 2 of Course II targets critical thinking and creativity using translation practice for social media biographies and profiles. The course encourages students to use the preview questions to engage with the learning objectives of the unit creatively:

#### **Preview Questions:**

- What kinds of profile are familiar to you in online media? Where did you read them?
- Who are some popular celebrities from TV, movies, or social media right now in Pakistan?
- How would you analyze their profiles? What makes them effective?
- Is it difficult to translate from your first language (Urdu or another language you speak in the home) to English? Why or why not?

- When you translate something from your first language to English, what are some challenges you experience? (Course II, Unit 2)

The unit tasks students with creating translations passing through thick translations, glosses, and revised translation drafts. The emphasis on exploring appropriate vocabulary and grammar serves as a platform for students to infuse their individual skill into the translation process. By practicing writing and translating online biographical profiles, students are not merely engaging in a linguistic exercise; they are given the opportunity to express their creativity in crafting engaging and meaningful narratives.

To promote the overall aim of the curriculum around developing creativity and resourceful, the unit asks students to point out the key components of specific genres of writing, such as profile and biography writing, and critically reflect upon the process of using translation in biographical writing. Activity 2.2 asks students to draw on their creative capability to write about a well-known person. In pairs or in small groups, students work together to gather key information about the person, draw a sketch of the profile, and develop the profile. Activity 2.4 goes a step further by encouraging students to combine creativity with online research about the subject person of their profiling. They are required to search online authentic description of the person they have chosen and compare their own description with the online version to critically evaluate their own writing. The students are also asked to mix their imaginative writing with the factual information found online to synthesize a realistic fictional writing about the subject of the profile writing. Activity 2.5 directs students toward social media to pull out and analyze biographies. They select their favorite biographies, identify and list specific elements of the biography that makes compelling. In sum, the Unit 2 offers various opportunities for students to exercise their creative and creative thinking for translation, creation of profiles, and analysis of biographies. This is meant to make language learning grounded in the actual surroundings of the students and to encourage them to be aware of the nuances of language use in the real world.

### **Communication**

The new curriculum is based on a practice-based approach toward language learning that recognizes that production of language in real-life situations is dynamic and unpredictable. The learner is therefore expected to use language for authentic communicative purposes in a student-centered environment. Through purposeful interaction and engagement in communicative acts, the students acquire the ability to respond to the changing needs of situations involving language use. This is different from the more traditional approach in Pakistan that is teacher-centered, allowing the teacher to be the primary language user and communicator in the classroom. The traditional teacher-centered model gives students limited opportunities to practice language use. The new curriculum recognizes the limitations of such an approach and seeks to redefine the

learning environment by embracing a more student-centered model. As Course II states regarding the aim of student-centered communicative language learning:

In a communicative language classroom, teachers need to focus their attention on giving students the opportunity to practice meaningful communication with one another. In a traditional teacher-centered model, where the teacher is in control and doing most of the talking, students will clearly have little opportunity to develop their communication skills. A student-centered model, on the other hand, puts a higher priority on student interaction and student talk time in the classroom, thus aligning well with a general communicative approach. (Course II, Introduction)

As the course states in the above abstract, communicative language teaching approach sees language as a tool for effective communication and not as a set of isolated skill sets that need to be learned in isolation. This approach is conducive for developing student's language competence in a holistic and organic manner. This curriculum recognizes that linguistic competence is not discrete from situational competence in language use. It, therefore, places a premium on emphasizing the use of language in context through recognizing social aspects of the language use situation and the cultural nuances of communication. To this end, practice-based language learning is adopted in the curriculum to enable students to use language in real-life situation confidently. Through discussions, group projects, interactive exercises, and language use activities, it ensures that students not only acquire a theoretical understanding of the language structure but are also able to engage in actual communicative acts.

Course II, Unit 1, for instance, adopt an immersive approach to teach cross-cultural communication and translation skills that sensitizes students to the cultural elements of English use in a multilingual context. It aims for the students to explore cultural nuances and challenges in communication in cross-cultural communication using the context of advertising as a practice ground. By critically examining advertising media, the students are tasked to retain the cultural nuances of the text as much as possible while using translation to adopt the text to the local languages. In the modern times of rapid globalization, these tasks aim to develop student's skills for being effective communicators in diverse social and cultural contexts. Further, by using a task-based approach, it builds students confidence to use language in unforeseen actual situations in the real life. The unit also builds students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills by developing constructs such as cultural awareness and flexibility for effective communication. This intercultural competence is a key aspect of effective communication as people from different cultures are now living closely with each other or interacting virtually in this era of globalization.

In line with the above mentioned aims of the curriculum, Activity 1.2 provides an example of how authentic language use can be used for developing students' linguistic ability with a specific focus on discourse markers. In this activity, the students learn how to express and understand

cultural differences. Analogously, Activity 1.4 is based on an analysis of online language resources from cross-cultural perspective and what challenges are encountered in online communication involving cultural differences of expression and constructs. This activity aims to develop students understanding of symbolic use of language and promotes their ability to be self-directed independent learning using online resources. Activities 1.5 and 1.6 concentrates on matching vocabulary items and the chances of miscommunication, respectively. Both activities accentuate the importance of taking into account and having an understanding of the context of language use for effective communication.

**Table 2:** Understanding cultural differences through taglines of advertisements

Taglines of the Advertisements of Pakistani Tea Brands	Taglines of the Advertisements of Foreign Brands
Brooke Bond Supreme: <i>zaaiqa apne pan ka</i>	Dilmah: The finest tea on earth.
Lipton Tea: Drink Positive.	PG Tips Tea: We all need a PG moment.
Tapal Danedar: <i>har lamhe ki chah</i>	Kericho Gold Tea: A matter of Good Taste.
Tapal Family Mixture: <i>mukammal chaae, mukammal ghar</i>	Twinings Tea: Gets you back to you.
Vital Tea: <i>Vital pio zindagi jio</i> (for strong and perfect cup of tea)	Victorian Tea: It's romance...of a different kind.

Following the same curricular goals, Activities 1.7 and 1.8 uses collaborative tasks and discussions for students to share their cross-cultural communication insights from the other activities. It gives students collaborative translation tasks to foster teamwork and collective development of language proficiency. Overall, the unit aims to develop student's communication skills within a collaborative framework and asks them to consciously think about the cultural aspects of language and intricacies involved in cross-cultural communication and translation.

### Collaboration

The new curriculum encourages students to engage in collaborative projects for language learning and community service. It adopts practical hands on approach and emulates actual life situation to immerse students in collective goals. To prepare learners for working in a rapidly changing world, the curriculum inculcates flexibility and resourcefulness as key components of the collaborative spirit of learning a new language. Unit 4, Community Engagement (Course I) states:



The current unit aims to weave together formal language learning with real-life language use. The students will utilize critical thinking and problem-solving that involves actually going into your community and utilizing local languages. It also aims to inculcate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills by encouraging and fostering teamwork and collaboration and effective intercultural communication. The actual activities involve students in identifying community projects, collecting empirical data from the community, analysis of the data and presenting findings in before the teacher and classmates to get feedback. (p. 35)

From identifying the problem, to exploring solutions in a collective environment, to presenting the findings of the projects, the process immerses students in language skills and other essential competencies that are part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. To promote effective communication and collaborative working, the projects depart from traditional assessment through high stakes tests. The students are required to present their key findings in from of the classroom and get their feedback, thus encouraging effective communication skills and public presentations skills.

Starting from warm-up group discussion leading to structured and progressive immersion in activities, Unit 4 systematically engages students in community work to explore the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic background of the team members. This can lead to a collaborative environment in the class conducive for expressing diversity and difference among the class students. To strengthen and make explicit the community collaborative focus, vocabulary-building exercises require students to focus on “community” and “engagement” as key themes around which they are asked to build vocabulary items. Secondly, comparing and contrasting vocabulary items builds awareness regarding the social origin of languages and how they are similar to one another or different from each other. Defining words such as "engagement," "stakeholders," "scope," "context," "impact," and "implementation" serve the above both function of enhancing collaboration and raising awareness about social aspects of English.

By assisting students in choosing and describing a community issue they wish to address, the curriculum takes a big step toward promoting collaboration. The activities include wandering around to see other groups' replies, having group discussions to identify obstacles, and finally choosing a theme for their community project. In addition to encouraging teamwork, this multi-step method forces students to evaluate and select the most engaging topic for their participation as a group. The activities that follow take a closer look at community development. These activities include reading case studies, organizing information gathering, and conducting practice fieldwork. Students must collaborate to choose observation sites, interview topics, and data gathering techniques, especially during the fieldwork. As they present their findings to the group, they clearly emphasize teamwork, which encourages a team approach to research and information collection.

The collaborative spirit continues with activities like group discussions and presentations on the selected community issue. Students work together to articulate their understanding of the issue, discuss its challenges, impacts, and potential causes, reinforcing teamwork and shared problem-solving. This collaborative learning process extends to the final stages of the unit, where students work in groups to present research proposals, incorporating visual tools to support their proposals. The unit ends with reflective thinking and writing to ask students to engage in individual contemplation of their communal experiences. The students later share and discuss their reflective responses to make sense of them. In total, Unit 4 encourages collaborative community engagement and reflective practices encouraging students to work with one another and aspire for collective achievement of common goals in a language learning classroom.

## **CONCLUSION**

The current article reviewed the HEC revamped national undergraduate curriculum in Pakistan that includes incorporation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as a core construct in the curriculum. Focusing on the enhancement of students' English proficiency in higher education, this curriculum transformation project aims to bring fundamental changes into how language is taught and learnt in the entry-level university courses. The article thoroughly reviewed how the 4Cs are integrated into the assignments and activities in the units of the new courses and incorporated into the learning objectives of these units. It also illustrated how the curriculum shuns a narrow approach to language teaching that is traditionally based on lexico-grammatical teaching and adopts a broader holistic understanding of language learning as a socially situated practice. A key component of the curriculum is cooperative learning based on teamwork and establishing good rapport with fellow students to enhance language learning and achieve learning outcomes together. Analogously, this article shows how critical thinking is incorporated in a meaningful manner through language analysis and interpretation providing impetus for innovation and expressive flexibility to the students. As a whole, the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills incorporated into the revamped curriculum are interconnected in the new courses providing a basis for meaningful learning of English as a foreign language.

Based on practice-based communication and the development of spontaneous production in a foreign language, the curriculum trains the students how to be effective in communication, collaborate across persons and contexts, and how to engage meaningfully in conversation according to the context of communication. These aspects differentiate this curriculum from traditional language-specific teaching of a foreign language and prepares students to meet the demands of the modern world where communication is not predicated solely on language proficiency but also on being able to engage with the context and the participants in appropriate manner. The diversity of contexts where the students will need to apply their linguistic skill

encompass interpersonal, academic and non-academic, and professional domains. Equipping students with broad-based skills is conducive for their success in career and community lives and can determine their success in real-world complex and multifaceted situations.

Integration of the 4Cs into the new curriculum represents innovative thinking and progressive outlook about English language education in Pakistan. However, implementing the curriculum in the current context of the country can bring several challenges. In most public sector universities and some private universities, the EFL teachers are not familiar with project-based learning in a student-centered approach. The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are also a new addition in the education system in the country. Developing the four competencies can be challenging and may lead to uneven development of the 4Cs in different classroom. Comprehensive professional development and training programs are needed to cater to the needs of skills upgradation of the existing teachers. Analogously, for future foreign language educators, there is a need to incorporate relevant skills development in teacher training curriculum. Teachers need to understand the theoretical underpinnings of the new curriculum and understand the professional methodology and pedagogic practices needed in a revamped classroom.

The current article provides a review of the key aspects of the new undergraduate curriculum, focusing specially on the 4C skills. Through analysis of curriculum documents, learning objectives, and pedagogic approach to teaching English as a foreign language, the article connects the local implementation of a new curriculum with global discussion around 21<sup>st</sup> century skills education. As such, it can provide valuable points for consideration of educator, policymakers, and teachers in education contexts analogous to the current study context. However, some limitations of the article are in order to be made explicit. The article is based on analysis of specific sections of curricular documents and does not include diverse viewpoints of stakeholders in the on ground implementation of the curriculum. There is need for further empirical research after the implementation of the new curriculum in a nationwide rollout in universities in Pakistan.

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