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The Influence of Policies and Challenges in Adopting Multiliteracies in TESOL Textbooks of Pakistan

Imran Hussain

Department of English Language & Literature, The University of Lahore, Pakistan

Email: Imranhussain.uol@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5950-843X>

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ABSTRACT

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The concept of multiliteracies has extended language education beyond basic reading and writing; it has emphasised TESOL learners' ability to produce and interpret meanings across various layers i.e., cultural, visual, digital, linguistic, and critical. This paper aims to evaluate the influence of instructional policies regarding the integration of multiliteracies, particularly in secondary-level TESOL textbooks in Pakistan. It examines both policy frameworks shaping ELT and the key elements of multiliteracies embedded in secondary TESOL textbooks. Furthermore, the paper identifies obstacles that hinder the proper incorporation of multiliteracies within the Pakistani context. The study highlights technological and infrastructural constraints, pedagogical barriers, and policy limitations as primary challenges. It also notes that despite the trend towards broadening literacy skills, their practical relevance in textbook development remains inconsistent and largely reliant on traditional skills. This is compounded by teachers' lack of preparedness, uneven resource distribution, and technological challenges in effectively implementing multiliteracies. The study concludes that there is an urgent need to align educational policies, curriculum design, textbook development, and teacher training to foster an inclusive multiliteracies-based TESOL culture. This aims to enable young TESOL learners in Pakistan to be sufficiently competent to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Corresponding Author:

Imranhussain.uol@gmail.com

Introduction

Despite an accent being placed to reform curriculum, policies and pedagogical practices in Pakistan, research studies derived across various vital glitches and challenges with respect to the TESOL textbooks in public schools, specifically at the secondary level. The key critical concerns and problems are relevant to out-dated contents, texts centric approach, teachers' centric approach, over emphasis on grammar instruction, passive learning, and narrow concentration on dynamic skill development. For instance, in a study, Fazal et al. (2024) reckoned out that the TESOL textbooks are profoundly under the influence of grammar translation methods and rote learning. The outcome of this is that the centre point of instruction residues on memorisation and learning facts and rules, with very marginal concentration on authentic communication.

Due to such instructional practices, mastery in grammatical culture is somewhat urbanized among English language learners, but the oral and functional competencies remain underdeveloped (Khan & Shah, 2024). Fazal et al. (2024) also illustrated the notion that due to the conventional approach, text centred TESOL textbooks, and the TESOL classrooms in practice adhere to teacher

centred instructional avenues in line with conventional mode of teaching. For instance, the lecture mode of instruction is the dominant mode, with recitation of passages along with grammar translation method and grammatical drills. Due to these practices in the TESOL classrooms, peer introduction, group discussion, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills are neglected, which are the core skills to navigate in the digital age of the 21st century.

Policies' Influence on TESOL Textbooks in Pakistan

Comparable to all over the world, it is the national educational policies which prominently influenced the development of TESOL practises, curriculum and textbooks in Pakistan. In 2021, a Single National Curriculum (SNC) was launched, which accentuated the objectives and contents for all the school subjects, including English, all through the country. According to the SNC, the medium of instruction will be English, which supports the countrywide consciousness of "English fever", which is directed due to the social and economic constraints. Channa et al. (2025) pointed out that SNC directives are evidently to impart four major subjects comprising Science and Mathematics from grade I in English. Similarly, SNC set forth the learning upshots and unified essentials for English as a subject for lower grades (Ahsan, 2021).

It was destined to minimise the disparities of the schooling system i.e. elite, public schools, private schools and low fees private schools, but it is meant "one size fits all" without considering other dynamics (Ahsan, 2021). All provincial educational boards were bound to implement SNC in light of their local cultures and linguistic contexts. Hence, all provincial boards approved TESOL secondary school level textbooks, i.e. grades IX and X. However, Fatima and Qureshi (2024) underscored that the public schools, i.e. state-run schools, costume textbooks prescribed by boards, whereas Elite English medium schools, i.e. private schools, count on foreign textbooks, i.e. Oxford University Press.

This is suggestive of the breach that exists in policies despite standardized uniformity; flexibility is endorsed at the official level. It is not the policy development rather, most prominently, the enactment of policy that outlines textbooks. Recent research, such as Ahsan (2021), highlights the gap between curriculum reforms and actual ground state. Channa et al. (2025) noted that teachers or TESOL practitioners, despite being the vital agents, are not involved in policymaking, which fallouts in the collapse of policies in attaining their objectives in true spirit. Malik et al. (2023) talked about how teachers' inadequate partaking and lack of readiness to address inequalities severely upset SNC goals to materialise.

It is also concluded that policymakers are conscious of these barriers, limited resources, and the requisite for flexible pedagogy, but as far as the enactment of those policies is concerned, these are uneven. To sum up, national policies especially SNC have specified due weightage to amplify English language competency through uniform curricula. It is complemented by provincial boards to develop TESOL textbooks. These initiatives, on the one hand, have revitalised TESOL practises by moving behind conventional literacy grounded on rote learning and grammar-translation methods. But on the other hand, it advances the tension between uniform standards and regional diversity.

Secondary Level TESOL Textbooks of Pakistan

The secondary level denotes towards the classes of grades IX and X in Pakistan. Under SNC provincial textbooks outline TESOL textbooks, keeping in view language skills, which are in line with the conventional approach, along with the preferment of national ideology. These dynamics frequently disregard the skill sets compulsory to navigate the challenges of the 21st century, i.e. multiliteracies. Research studies in Pakistan have featured wide-ranging variations in terms of textbooks' contents and their alignment with SNC. Bhutto et al. (2022) compared the TESOL textbook "Exploring English" by the Agha Khan Board with the Sindh Textbook Board "Secondary Stage English" and discovered that Exploring English met about 75% aligned with the benchmarks of the national curriculum while Secondary Stage English allied only 25 to 30% of the said goal. This disparity was pertaining to speaking, reading, writing and grammar instruction.

It is also recognized by way of research studies that secondary level state textbooks are repeatedly considered drifting away from curriculum goals. Primarily concentrating on the conformist approach, weighed out-dated drills and neglected broader literacies, i.e. multiliteracies (Bhutto et al., 2022; Channa et al., 2025). However, it is recurrently underscored by researchers that ideological considerations are well modelled in TESOL textbooks across contexts in Pakistan. Ghaffar et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative content analysis of all provincial English textbooks and established that each of these textbooks prioritises local context, culture, social norms, and religious practices. To them, each of these English textbooks, through a hidden curriculum, standardizes the wide-

ranking ideology predominant in each province, which is revealing of the conception that English textbooks are in authority for sponsoring local beliefs, perspectives, historical narratives and accustomed context.

On the other side, it specifies that the TESOL textbooks in Pakistan prioritise indigenous norms and contents at the expense of global and intercultural perspectives. Local narratives are sponsored, but critical competencies and creative persona are limited or neglected. These textbooks are intended to transport “the culture of the people who represent them” (Fatima & Qureshi, 2024). The outcome of all this is derived out as oblivion of multiliteracies which are spotted under representative in the contents and tasks of the current TESOL textbooks. Bhatti and Abdullah (2024) pointed out by means of analysis of grade VIII English textbook of Punjab province that it is heavily under the influence of translation methods and rote learning exercises, while there is no or minimal consideration towards communicative and creative competencies or tasks. The teacher involved in their study mentioned it was “mainly reading and translation” focused and “do not focus on communication”.

Alfadda et al. (2020) dissimilarly concluded that grade IX and X English textbooks in Punjab province have some critical thinking connected activities, but teachers are perceived either overlooking them or omitted them to spot on. According to the researchers, most of the teachers were deemed to be “unaware of the critical thinking perspective” during this study. In the specified situation, it is not astonishing to determine that TESOL textbooks of Pakistan mainly centre on the conventional approach and grammar drills along with comprehensive passages which reinforce rote learning and memorization. The outcome is the disregard of tasks and project-based activities that are more aligned with modern pedagogical practice, i.e. multiliteracies.

Additionally, numerous research studies from Pakistan have confirmed that TESOL textbooks in Pakistan are deficient in multimodal and multimedia contents; rather, their principal concentration is on static contents and activities. They project indigenous or native context, culture and ideology but are deemed undersupplied in promoting collaboration, global standpoint and cross-cultural perspectives. Most importantly, Pakistani textbooks are exceptionally inadequate to foster critical, creative and communicative competencies among English language learners. Though textbooks for each province are dissimilar in terms of quality and content coverage, they share the deficiencies in common at a broader level. Elite private schools are found satisfying these gaps through the integration of modern skills by means of using foreign authored textbooks, which is indicative of a wider gulf between policy, market demands and content design at the national level (Fatima & Qureshi, 2024; Anderson, 2023).

Multiliteracies Constituents in TESOL Textbooks

Critical Literacy

The review of literature recommends that contemporary TESOL textbooks of Pakistan do not nurture critical analysis or thinking among ELLs, though tip-offs or fragments are there in the existing textbooks with relevance to critical analysis of the contents. Alfadda et al. (2020) concluded that though some components that are relevant to Paul and Elders’ critical thinking approach, teachers are figured out oblivion to the drive for which these are assimilated. It is also derived in the study that TESOL textbooks incorporate prompts such as “correct answer” rather than fostering deep thinking, understanding and critique. Mahmood et al. (2024) summarised that there is a gender bias that subsists in the contents as well as in the imagery within the texts of textbooks, which is a genus of critical thinking alert as it projects how societal inequalities are encoded through the text of the textbooks. However, it is sad to note that textbooks do not instigate English language learners to critique such biases, which is a significant indicator of developing critical literacy. So, in textbooks, ideologies are anticipated, but seldom do these foster critiques or critical thinking among English language learners; why do these biases occur in the textbooks? And how these can be inferred and even redressed to generate cooperation and collaboration in the society?

Visual Literacy

Multimodality is a vital pointer of multiliteracy, which is pertinent to the integration of various visuals and semiotic modes of instruction, i.e. layout, graphics, images, colour, charts and info-graphic illustrations. Though it is realized that multimodal features do exist in Pakistani TESOL textbooks, research suggests that these are conventionally integrated. Mushtaq et al. (2022) conducted a multimodal analysis of primary school level English textbooks and summed up that though images are there instead of fostering multi-modality, they incline to cultivate “traditional contents”. They spotted out that visuals denote cultural, religious and social subjects through conventional scenarios. For instance, images and visual supports of these textbooks project local context and stereotypes gender roles, and the daily lifestyle of Pakistani people. Mohammad et al. (2024) moved toward a similar outcomes

grounded on the secondary school level English textbooks. As to them, secondary school level textbooks' visuals and pictures merely project societal biases.

The outcomes of the study applicable to visuals advocate that males are presented as leading figures through their portrayal in public places, while women are constrained to household duties. Hence, textbooks and visuals endorse just social norms rather than challenging English language learners to critically appraise those images. In this way, the pedagogical costume of visuals and images is deemed to be limited. In the current TESOL textbooks of Pakistan, only a limited prompts are there that nurture English language learners to either analyse visuals or generate new visuals. In this way, the prospective function of visuals, images and illustrations in terms of mounting visual literacy by means of inferring media, and critiquing biases is not entirely incorporated into the current TESOL textbooks (Mohammed et al., 2024; Mushtaq et al., 2020).

Cultural Literacy

The drive of multiliteracy is to empower learners to grasp and employ multiple cultural modes or approaches to sponsor intercultural dynamics. However, Pakistani TESOL textbooks are principally concentrated on a "monoculture" approach, context and themes and are locally positioned. Ghaffar et al. (2023), through the analysis of all the provincial English textbooks, encapsulated that only local contexts, cultures and narratives are anticipated through textbooks. Global perspective and intercultural approach are largely missing. Elite public school textbooks, which are written by foreign authors, have global and intercultural dynamics, but at large public sector schools, textbooks are very inadequate in terms of endorsing global and intercultural literacy among English language learners of Pakistan.

Even if global issues or prompts are there they are rendered through local or Pakistani lens. To sum up, current TESOL textbooks are overloaded with local norms, societal standards, historical happenings, and national distinctiveness. But these are at the price of disregarding global and intercultural communication, which is the requisite of the time to think efficiently and navigate the challenges of the 21st century. The static form of current textbooks also hampers linguistic and global varieties of English as a language and as a culture. In addition, the prevailing cultural contents are also not projected in a contemplative or dialogic way, English language learners infrequently negotiate with other cultures, which is a strategic indicator of intercultural competence (Ghaffar et al., 2023).

Multimedia Literacy

The current TESOL textbooks cohort in Pakistan is chiefly reliant on text or print-based literacy with very limited multi-modal or digital avenues. This is reinforced by the conclusions of Bhatti and Shah (2024), where the teacher pointed out the absence of multi-modal assistance in the English Textbooks of grade VIII. The study figured out that teachers lamented over the "lack of multimedia, advanced technology and audio-visual CDs" to increment textbooks to foster multi-modality among English language learners. They endorsed that textbooks should be transformed into e-books so that audio-visual utilities can be integrated to equip English language learners of the modern and digital age to better cope with the prerequisites of the time and learning. It is indicative of the fact that current TESOL textbooks are operating in isolation without digital or multimedia provision, i.e. apps, audio, video and online research.

Contrastingly, Djamdjiri et al. (2021) sponsored that e-books escorted by multi-model support, i.e. sound, visual, animation, and interactivity, augment engagement and critical enrichment among learners In Indonesian context. But Pakistani TESOL textbooks devoid of digital and multimedia sustenance specify English language learners' incompetence to navigate integrated or interactive texts that are crucial indicators to nurture multiliteracies and 21st century skill sets. With the intention to equip English language learners of Pakistan to steer the challenges of the digital age, the TESOL textbooks must be aligned with the "foundation for developing new literacies...namely human data and technology literacy" as proposed by Djamdjuri et al. (2021).

Multiliteracies' Adoption Challenges in Pakistan

Various challenges situate a hurdle in integrating multiliteracies in TESOL textbooks at the secondary school level in Pakistan. These problems range from policy to infrastructural level issues.

Policy Limitations

There is a gap that subsists between policies and enactment, and that is the most prominent challenge that hampers multiliteracies integration in true essence. Policies like SNC anticipated slotting in modern skills, i.e. critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving (Fatima & Qureshi, 2024). However, curriculum and textbooks are misaligned in terms of the goals of SNC. Textbooks are still under the stimulus of conventional approaches, which are destined for archetypal read-write competency, and these turn a deaf ear to digital and multimedia essentials. In the opinion of Bhutto et al. (2022), present-day textbooks were intended to “place greater emphasis on understanding and using English in different academic and social contexts”, but in reality, the state is otherwise. Furthermore, the assessment and evaluation systems of exam boards also predestined to uphold conventional skills, i.e. writing and grammar instruction. The contemporary assessment mechanism has nothing to do with analytical, critical and creative new undertaking either at written, spoken or visual levels. This assessment orientation also tenancies textbooks are strict to the conventional approach. Medium of instruction, too, has adversative effects, though contents have been transported into the English language, but basic skills’ makeover in language textbooks has been disregarded, and these are still out-dated (Ahsan, 2021).

Technological vs. Infrastructural Barriers

The Pakistani context in general and TESOL in specific is severely deficient in terms of the supply of multimedia resources. Bhatti and Abdullah (2021) anchored the absenteeism of digital and multimedia, i.e. internet access, computer and audio-visual kits to supplement textbooks to assimilate multiliteracies. This digital disparity is in worse costume in rural schools, which are poorly resourced. Despite the digitalization and globalisation, most of the public sector schools stick to ensuing timeworn and archetypal material for teaching. Even basic conveniences, like library, computer, and projector and in some areas, even electricity is unprovided. Under such a state, the vision of integration of multiliteracy through projects, group discussion, audio-visual tools, and online discussion seems improbable and impractical. Though SNC visualizes modern outfits and methodology to get started, in reality, many of the classrooms are still deprived of simple digital media, i.e. online libraries, CDs websites, and apps.

Pedagogical Barriers

A review of the literature predominantly arguments out the absence of resources to implement multimodal instruction, yet if the resources are accessible, teachers are either not ready or are not fully equipped to practice multimodal fundamentals since their approach and drill are conventional and exam-centred. And that, too, is due to the state-level policies relevant to out-dated modes of assessment. In the valuation of Alfadda et al. (2020), many of the TESOL practitioners in Pakistan are unconscious of digital, multimodal tools and critical and creative facets of teaching. Channa et al. (2025) pointed out that TESOL practitioners were not consulted for the SNC transformation agenda, which has resulted in discrepancies between policy and classroom practices. Teachers adhere to the conventional approach and consider task-oriented teaching challenging. Exam pattern too forces teachers to go with “objective content” rather than practising creative, critical and analytical skills among English language learners. Typically, translation drills and exam preparation are done in classes with minimal interaction, group discussion, and creative prompts (Bhatti & Abdullah, 2021). Human dynamics such as willingness, readiness, skill, and attitude are also significant barricades to putting multiliteracies into practice.

Conclusion

The study concludes that, to equip TESOL learners in Pakistan to communicate effectively and face the challenges of an interconnected world of the 21st century, it is essential to integrate multiliteracies within the educational framework. Therefore, it is crucial to prepare learners to be competent and proficient not only linguistically but also culturally and digitally. The study summarises that although there is growing concern about the necessity to expand literacy competencies at the policy level, their realisation in curriculum and textbook development remains inadequate. It also observes that various components of multiliteracies such as visual, cultural, critical, and multimedia are included at different levels but lack systematic and structural coherence. The study emphasises that obstacles such as inadequate infrastructure, uneven technological access, policy limitations, and pedagogical challenges are significant barriers to the effective integration of multiliteracies in Pakistan’s TESOL context. The study recommends a coordinated effort among all stakeholders namely policymakers, curriculum designers, content developers, and teachers to promote a multiliteracies culture that moves beyond policy and into practice. Such reform is essential not only to improve linguistic competence among TESOL learners but also to develop proficiency in cultural, visual, critical, and digital skills, enabling them to participate fully in the modern, interconnected world.

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