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Comparative Perspectives on TESOL Textbooks and their Implications for Pakistani TESOL

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: December 16, 2025 Revised: January 08, 2026 Accepted: January 29, 2026 Available Online: February 16, 2026 Keywords: TESOL Textbooks, Comparative Perspectives, Implication for Pakistan, Revitalising TESOL Practices, Modernise Curricula Corresponding Author: Imranhussain.uol@gmail.com	The TESOL textbooks' contents play a pivotal role in shaping and transforming learners' linguistic competencies, as well as preparing them to communicate effectively in both academic and social contexts. This study aims to conduct a comparative evaluation of the integration of multiliteracies within TESOL textbooks in South Asia, alongside global trends and TESOL practices in Pakistan. It reviews the incorporation of multimodal literacies in selected TESOL textbooks to assess their relevance in contemporary ELT culture. The paper also analyses current trends related to TESOL textbook practices in Pakistan by identifying their strengths, limitations, and disparities in comparison to regional and global practices. The comparative analysis reveals that, although global trends in TESOL textbooks are increasingly adopting multiliteracies- based approaches, South Asian textbooks show uneven adoption, and Pakistani TESOL textbooks face noticeable limitations in integrating multiliteracies. The study suggests that, despite being responsive to local needs and constraints, it is crucial to enhance ELT practices in Pakistan by aligning with global standards. The study concludes with practical recommendations for curriculum designers, policymakers, and teachers to effectively incorporate multimodal learning within the Pakistani TESOL context.

Introduction

Comparative Perspectives Regarding TESOL Textbooks

Multiliteracies have prolonged singular notion of literacy to a plural form that has gone beyond mere linguistic competency. It has encompassed other coatings of literacies, i.e., visual, cultural, critical, and creative. This conception of multiliteracies has turned out to be a pivot point of modern TESOL practises. It is augmented by Ryan (2020) when he pointed out that multiliteracies have prolonged the notion of conventional print, i.e., read-write literacy, to encircle multiliteracies, multilingual and multicultural diversity. In the light of extended literacy, textbooks are not restricted to emerging vocabulary and grammar, but are also taking into consideration interpreting visuals and understanding varied cultures and contexts, asking queries about biases, and expressing ideas creatively.

Multiliteracies among South Asian TESOL Textbooks

Boss and Gao (2022), in Indian context, reconnoitred ten ELT textbooks of secondary school level from various boards and states and revealed a specific “Anglo-centric bias” by reporting “a general domination of cultural representation originating from British”. Most of the characters and contexts being portrayed in those textbooks are either Irish or British, generally ‘white.’ Gender biases are noticeable with the minimum “in-depth cultural engagement.” To Boss and Gao (2022), ELT textbooks are loaded with UK-based culture without taking into account the cultural and multilingual multiplicity of Indian context that hampers the critical competency of English language learners as they find diminutive engagement with the contents and contexts.

An analogous study was steered by Mostafa and Jahan (2022) in Bangladesh and figured out that ELT textbooks forefront Western culture at the price of the regional context, culture, and diversity. According to them, the textbooks at the secondary school level are “prevalence of Western culture... whereas Asian and African cultures are largely absent.” Gender stereotype is also found manifest in Bangladeshi English textbooks, as women are anticipated merely restricted to domestic or household roles, whereas Western women in the same textbooks are shown as “graceful” and free. Hence, English textbooks of Bangladesh merely scheme a monoculture orientation without taking into account the broader global diversity and local context of Bangladesh.

In contrast, English textbooks in Pakistan designate local culture, content, and identity as a substitute to glorifying foreign or Western culture. Sundaram and Qureshi (2023) sightsaw six different English textbooks from the Pakistani context and pinpointed the supremacy of local or source culture and national identity. Hence, foreign or Western cultures and contexts are outweighed in those English textbooks. Local identity is fashioned through the transmission of local geography, history, local norms, and Islamic values. This approach of the analysed textbooks aligned with local culture predestined for linguistic and cultural diversity, but it has neglected other perspectives, i.e., global. Pakistani culture, identity, and value are portrayed in the textbooks, but multicultural and global perspectives are omitted, which are the fundamental indicators of multiliteracies to navigate the challenges of the global digital age of 21st century.

To recapitulate, TESOL textbooks from other Asian countries, i.e., India and Bangladesh, project Western culture and context at the cost of local culture and context, whereas TESOL textbooks from Pakistan have stressed local content and culture at the cost of global perspective and voices. All three countries’ textbooks exhibit gender biases and stereotype gender roles. Neither of the textbooks from the above mentioned country sponsors visual, critical, and creative literacy explicitly among ELLs. Typically, TESOL textbooks from South Asian contexts are destined to stress linguistics literacy, and that, too, is limited to reading and writing practices. The glory of either local culture or foreign culture is also manifested in South Asian TESOL textbooks, but these textbooks hardly surround activities and prompts that are destined to foster or nurture critical, creative, and multimodal expression among English language learners, thus underlining the gap in existing literature from the South Asian context.

Global Perspectives on the TESOL Textbooks

The tendency to deal with adaptation is fundamental to textbook analysis, as pointed out by Rathert and Cabaroglu (2022) that localised English textbooks frequently follow the trajectory set or positioned by curriculum despite being local are low-priced, but the concern is that such textbooks are deficient to incorporate innovation. In contrast, textbooks which are written by foreign authors are called “global textbooks” and are intended “for everyone and therefore for no one” and are fashioned to urge or satiate for cultural and contextual adaptation (Rathert & Cabaroglu, 2022). In other words, it is up to TESOL practitioners to adopt and modify “imported textbooks” to align them with their local needs. It also denotes that Pakistani practitioners who were consuming global series will have to adopt and modify those textbooks to brand them aligned with the English language learners’ context and culture as hinted out by Rathert and Cabaroglu (2022). These correspondingly requisite to be aligned with the approach suggested by Boss and Gao (2022) for the Indian context, i.e., adopting and aligning global textbooks in the local context to nurture multiliteracies.

Zhang et al. (2024) undertook a scoping review of the global studies steered between 2012 and 2022 and pointed out that the textbooks project significant specific cultural perspectives. They put their analysis that textbooks have “a tendency for some cultures to be either overlooked or misinterpreted.” This conception of Zhang et al. (2024) corresponds with the South Asian studies such as (Sandaram & Qureshi 2023; Boss & Gao 2022; Mostafa & Jahan, 2022) who exemplified through their studies that cultures are very rarely balanced and that English language learners came across with a very “skewed” view or perspective of other cultures. Consequently, it highpoints another research gap that subsists in existing literature, i.e., to bridge the gap between the local and foreign cultures on one hand and between curriculum ideals and actual classroom practices on the other hand.

Keeping in view the pace of the time and age, restructuring in the curriculum has exemplified the facade and essentiality to incorporate multiliteracies in the Western context; such as, the “Ontario Curriculum” of Canada, which was reviewed in 2019, was destined to uphold and advance critical literacy among learners. According to Ontario (2019), learners must be “critically literate” to “thrive in an ever-changing global community.” Critical literacy is intended to equip learners to amalgamate content centred information, communicate resourcefully, and brand informed decisions. Hence, assimilating critical literacy is suggestive of a robust impulse to incorporate multiple literacies in the curriculum or in the textbooks. Jang (2023) supplemented this argument through the injection of “co-developed supplementary materials” to substitute a critical lens in speaking tasks among South Korean English classrooms at the high school level. The outcomes designate that even standardised textbooks lack critical competencies, and teachers requisite to enterprise activities to supplement the gap.

It is exceptionally pertinent in the Pakistani TESOL context that if textbooks are not sufficient, supplementary material in the form of teacher manual must be supplied to incorporate critical competencies among English language learners. Globally across contexts, there is an emerging tendency and thrust to integrate creative and multimodal literacy among learners. Ryan (2020) situated high stress that new media must be incorporated in the textbooks so that learners can comprehend visual, audio, video, and digital constituents, which are fundamental indicators of multiliteracy integration. Conventional texts requisite to be supplemented with info-graphics, audio, and visual connected materials to augment literacy and to engross learners as a part of multiliteracy, which are interactively learners centred and creative. Researchers like Ryan (2020) positioned accent on the notion that textbooks must be supplemented with dynamic contents, project work, storytelling, and real world communication. It accentuates that TESOL textbook contents must be more open-ended, multilingual, multicultural, and multimodal to cultivate the critical and creative persona of English language learners.

To sum up, the global perspective concerning the TESOL analysis designates that TESOL textbooks are replete with cultural biases and oversights (Zhang et al., 2024; Fang et al., 2022). To mend the situation, there is a developing necessity to follow the “adaptation” of material in local contexts. Most significantly, unlike the Asian and Pakistani contexts, the global perspective is shifting towards integrating multiliteracy in textbooks, i.e., creative, critical, digital, and multimodal competencies (Rathert & Cabaroglu, 2022; Jang, 2023; Fang et al., 2022). In most of the Western context, policies are being reviewed to dynamically involve learners to critically deal with media and content. TESOL practices are reinforced through authentic multimodal resources along with modernized textbooks.

The upshot is that, though, gradually, the ELT textbooks are demonstrating to assimilate assorted competencies among English language learners, i.e., multimodality, multicultural and multilingual perspectives along with cultural, critical, linguistic and creative persona. As a means to sponsor multiliteracies, this global panorama highpoints an existing gap in Asia and especially in the Pakistani context to transform TESOL practices to align them with global and contemporary tendencies to revitalise TESOL practices and to equip English language learners of Pakistan to be better equipped to thrive in the modern digital and competitive world of 21st century.

Situation among Pakistani TESOL Textbooks

Bhutto et al. (2022) pointed out an exciting fact in their studies that actually TESOL textbooks being imparted in the public schools of Pakistan are merely 25 to 50%, aligned with the goals and objectives set forth in the national curriculum. The goal or objective of the national curriculum is to residence intonation on all the language skills, i.e., reading, listening, writing, and speaking rather than just reading. Hence, this practical incompatibility between policies and practice results in the incapacity to equip English language learners to thrive in the interconnected world at one hand and unable to engage English language learner on the other hand. Such a mismatch also upholds passive and conventional learning rather than fostering critical thinking among English language learners (Fazal et al., 2024).

Muhammad et al. (2024) delineated that in current TESOL textbooks, visual and digital constituents are missing or anticipated stereotypically, which hampers diversity and varied communicative practices. For instance, images and texts in the contents of the textbooks frequently reinforced narrow and biased gender stereotypical projection rather than assisting English language learners to advance critical skills to review those images. It is also outlined by researchers such as Muhammad et al. (2024) that current TESOL textbooks have very diminutive to do with modern digital and multi-modal tools such as online tools, graphics, and video. This state is indicative of a substantial mismatch and misalignment between curriculum goals and actual practice on hand. It has urbanized an inability of these old textbooks to foster multiliteracies among English language learners of Pakistan.

Likewise, Baig et al. (2021) concluded their research that currently TESOL textbook of Pakistan priorities only limited skill sets or rather these sponsor a single skill, i.e., reading comprehension with a “focus on reading comprehension only.... with a dire need to incorporate writing skills and oral/aural communication skills.” Besides, Muhammad et al. (2024) accentuated that current TESOL textbooks are deficient in incorporating multi-modal essentials, i.e., visual, graphic, audio, and video features, which are the essential constituents of multiliteracies, a renowned literacy theory and a pedagogical approach destined to counter the constraints of the conventional approach of instruction to equip learners with the indispensable skills to navigate the digital era.

To recapitulate, the review of literature suggests substantial and critical glitches that are relevant to TESOL textbooks of secondary schools level in Pakistan that are prescribed for public schools, i.e., TESOL textbooks are out-dated, which sponsors only rote learning, memorisation, and grammar instruction. These high spots on only reading skills with the text centric and teachers led approach. Hence, these are incapable of equipping the English language learners with multiliteracies, which are destined to endorse communicative and functional competencies among English language learners to thrive effectually and proficiently in a digital modern age of 21st century.

Implication for Pakistani TESOL

The above review of the literature with regard to global practices has across-the-board implications to reform the TESOL practices in general and the TESOL textbooks of secondary school level in Pakistan in specific. For instance, the inferences of Ryan (2020) instigated the integration of visual, digital, and multimodal features in textbooks through pictures, info-graphics, and audio-video connected through QR codes. In classroom practice, activities such as critical analysis and creating tasks can be added to compensate for the inadequacy of textbooks. For that, not only the insertion of multimodal essentials is indispensable but also the mode to operate that media and it can be done through teacher manuals as supplement materials demonstrating how to activate and brand maximum use of the media in TESOL classrooms.

Asian and Western studies denote that a balance needs to be fashioned between local and global cultures for enhanced instruction. Through the review of Pakistani studies like Sundaram and Qureshi (2023), it is evident that Pakistani TESOL textbooks are replete with rich local culture at the expense of global culture. Integrating a global perspective with Pakistani culture will support English language learners of Pakistan to be globally competent along with multilingual and multicultural diversity. It is in line with the conception of Rathert and Cabaroğlu (2022) blending local and global contexts for cross-cultural diversity. In addition, creative literacy can be enhanced through open-ended and learner-centred instruction in Pakistan. It is aligned with the notion of Ryan (2020), who reckoned multiliteracy as a creative and hands-on approach. For that role-playing, project work, blog writing, and real-world communication-based prompts can be handy.

The review of studies affirmed the fact that textbooks should nurture critiquing literacy among English language learners by asking queries and challenging biases rather than just countering factual questions. It is augmented by Jang's (2023) outlook that incorporating framing tasks and critical ability-related tasks in textbooks can augment the learner's capability to think critically and analytically. In the Pakistani TESOL textbook context, it can be supplemented through debate, discussions, and blog writing about social issues. At the policy level, Pakistani policymakers can take insides from Ontario Curriculum (2019) reforms that English textbooks must equip English language learners to think critically. In addition, Pakistani textbooks should be free from gender biases and disparities, as specified by Mostafa and Jahan (2024). Moreover, Pakistani English language learners' multicultural and multilingual identities can be effectually exploited to maximise TESOL practices in Pakistan, as augmented by Feng et al. (2022) through “Global Englishes.”

It can be applied through trans-language strategies, i.e., mixing local languages as scaffolding and through acknowledging local accents and varieties of English in Pakistan. Lastly, revitalising TESOL practices in Pakistan through the integration of multiple literacies is essential to transforming assessment and evaluation criteria. The exam must not be limited to just testing grammar, vocabulary, and information-based knowledge, but also to trying critical, analytical and creative competencies of English language learners. For that, open-ended tasks, writing real-world prompts and interpreting visuals must also be examined to advance the integration of multiliteracies in Pakistani TESOL classrooms. Adaptation and creating a balance between local and global perspectives as anticipated by Boss and Gao (2022) and Zhang et al. (2024) can be operated to supplement the existing TESOL practices and to reform TESOL textbooks in Pakistan at the secondary school level.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis shows that TESOL textbooks across different levels and contexts vary in how they incorporate multiliteracies and contemporary pedagogical approaches. Globally, ELT textbooks and practices strongly favour, support, and integrate multimodal learning, critical thinking, digital engagement, sociocultural awareness, and learner-centred approaches. South Asian textbooks exhibit mixed approaches toward these dynamics; however, TESOL textbooks in Pakistan mainly rely on traditional skills and methods, which restrict the development of broader skills and competencies essential for the 21st century. The study recommends that Pakistani TESOL stakeholders can benefit from adopting relevant regional and global practices while maintaining their cultural, linguistic, and educational priorities. It emphasises that, instead of merely copying global trends, these practices should be adapted to complement the national curriculum and classroom realities. To achieve this, the study advocates for a coordinated effort to modernise curricula, redesign textbook content, and train educators to foster an inclusive pedagogical culture.

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