



Teachers' Perspectives on Contextualized ELT Materials in Pakistan and Their Pedagogical Implications

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ABSTRACT

Material adaptation is a crucial component of English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly in Pakistan's linguistically diverse and multicultural educational context. This study explores teachers' perspectives on the adaptation of contextualized ELT materials at the secondary school level in Pakistan, with a focus on the challenges encountered and the perceived effects on students' engagement and learning outcomes. Adopting a qualitative descriptive research design, data were collected from five experienced English language teachers through semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal that teachers actively adapt instructional materials by incorporating local cultural references, social realities, and students' lived experiences to enhance relevance and learner motivation. However, challenges such as mixed-ability classrooms, limited instructional resources, large class sizes, and restricted access to educational technology were reported. Despite these constraints, teachers observed noticeable improvements in students' comprehension, classroom participation, and overall academic performance. The study highlights the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy in the Pakistani ELT context and emphasizes the need for sustained professional development and institutional support to facilitate effective material adaptation.

Keywords: Contextualized ELT Materials, Material Adaptation, Teacher Perspectives

Introduction

English Language Teaching (ELT) in Pakistan occupies a central position within the national education system, functioning not only as a medium of instruction but also as a key skill for academic and professional advancement (Zaffar et al., 2025). Despite its importance, ELT materials used in Pakistani classrooms have often been critiqued for their limited cultural relevance and lack of alignment with learners' sociocultural contexts. Research indicates that many ELT textbooks predominantly reflect global or



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Western cultural norms, marginalizing local identities and experiential realities of Pakistani learners (Zaman et al., 2025). Such cultural dissonance can adversely affect learners' engagement, comprehension, and motivation, particularly where instructional content does not resonate with students' lived experiences and linguistic backgrounds (Mohsin & Habib, 2025; Iqbal & Bukhari, 2023).

The need for contextualized and culturally responsive ELT materials has become increasingly salient in Pakistan, where educational stakeholders emphasize the inclusion of local contexts, values, and examples to promote meaningful language teaching (Zaffar et al., 2025). Studies examining cultural representation in locally published ELT textbooks reveal that, although some efforts have been made to include indigenous cultural content, portrayals often remain superficial and fail to authentically reflect the complexity of Pakistani social and cultural life (Begum & Ali, 2025). This gap underlines a broader pedagogical challenge: aligning language learning resources with the cultural and linguistic realities of Pakistani classrooms to enhance relevance and learner engagement (Mohsin & Habib, 2025).

In response to these concerns, Pakistani ELT practitioners are increasingly exploring strategies for adapting global ELT materials to better fit local teaching–learning contexts. Such approaches have been shown to improve pedagogical outcomes by fostering greater learner interest and facilitating accessible language acquisition when material resonates with learners' backgrounds (Zaffar et al., 2025; Iqbal & Bukhari, 2023). However, literature also highlights persistent structural barriers—including inadequate teacher training, limited resource allocation, and curricular constraints—that impede effective material adaptation in many schools (Zaffar et al., 2025). These contextual challenges necessitate systematic inquiry into teachers' perspectives on material adaptation and its pedagogical implications within the Pakistani educational landscape.

Problem Statement

Despite the central role of English in Pakistan's education system, ELT materials used at the secondary level often remain insufficiently contextualized to learners' sociocultural, linguistic, and educational realities. Many prescribed textbooks and instructional resources continue to reflect generalized or Western-oriented content, offering limited representation of local culture, social practices, and students' lived experiences. This lack of contextual relevance can hinder learners' engagement, comprehension, and meaningful language use, particularly in mixed-ability classrooms common in Pakistani schools.

Although teachers frequently attempt to adapt and supplement ELT materials to bridge this gap, such efforts are often constrained by systemic challenges, including large class sizes, limited access to teaching resources, rigid curricula, and inadequate professional training in material adaptation. While existing studies have examined cultural representation in Pakistani ELT textbooks, there remains a paucity of research focusing specifically on teachers' perspectives regarding the adaptation of contextualized ELT materials and the pedagogical implications of these practices at the classroom level. Addressing this gap is essential to inform teacher education, curriculum development, and policy decisions aimed at improving ELT effectiveness in Pakistan.

Research Objectives

The present study aims to:



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Explore secondary school English language teachers' perspectives on the adaptation of contextualized ELT materials in Pakistan.

- Identify the strategies employed by teachers to contextualize ELT materials to suit local cultural and educational contexts.
- Examine the challenges faced by teachers in adapting ELT materials in Pakistani classrooms.
- Investigate teachers' perceptions of the pedagogical impact of contextualized ELT materials on students' engagement and learning outcomes.

Research Questions

To achieve the stated objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do secondary school English language teachers in Pakistan perceive the importance of contextualized ELT materials?
2. What strategies do teachers use to adapt ELT materials to the local Pakistani context?
3. What challenges do teachers encounter while contextualizing ELT materials in their classrooms?
4. How do teachers perceive the pedagogical implications of contextualized ELT materials on students' engagement and learning?

Literature Review

The adaptation of contextualized English Language Teaching (ELT) materials plays a vital role in promoting inclusive and effective language learning in increasingly diverse classroom environments. As English continues to function as a global lingua franca, it is taught to learners from varied cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds, making contextual sensitivity a pedagogical necessity rather than an option (Yaccob et al., 2022). Contextualization refers to the process of aligning instructional content with learners' real-life experiences, cultural identities, and local knowledge systems to enhance relevance and accessibility (Rose et al., 2022; Stahl et al., 2020). Such alignment has been shown to improve learners' comprehension, sustain interest, and foster stronger connections between students and the target language (Heald et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, particularly in eastern regions such as Sorong Regency in Southwest Papua, the need for culturally and contextually adapted ELT materials is especially pronounced. Students in this region come from diverse indigenous communities, each characterized by distinct languages, traditions, and worldviews. This diversity presents a dual instructional challenge for teachers: addressing individual learning differences while cultivating an inclusive and cohesive classroom environment. Research suggests that adapting ELT materials to reflect students' cultural backgrounds and everyday realities can help reduce proficiency disparities, strengthen learner confidence, and enhance motivation (Toledo-Sandoval, 2020).

A growing body of literature supports the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. Howard et al. (2021) argue that students are more likely to engage actively and retain knowledge when instructional content reflects their cultural identities and lived experiences. Similarly, Setiawan and



Qamariah (2023) emphasize that integrating local cultural elements into ELT materials enables learners to perceive instructional content as familiar and meaningful. However, much of the existing research has been conducted in urban or resource-rich educational settings, where access to teacher training, digital tools, and institutional support is considerably greater. In contrast, educators working in rural or marginalized regions frequently contend with outdated textbooks, a scarcity of contextualized materials, and limited opportunities for professional development (Rose et al., 2022).

These challenges are particularly evident in Sorong Regency, where students often speak indigenous languages at home rather than Indonesian, and have minimal exposure to English. This linguistic distance presents a significant obstacle to English language acquisition (Jaekel et al., 2023). Furthermore, limited access to digital learning resources, libraries, and adequately equipped classrooms compels teachers to rely heavily on their own creativity and initiative when adapting generic instructional materials (Prastiyo & Navisha, 2025). Such adaptations commonly involve the inclusion of local names, customs, places, and everyday activities to make lessons more comprehensible and relatable. Despite these practices, there is limited empirical research examining how teachers in Sorong implement material adaptations and the specific challenges they encounter during this process.

Although previous studies have acknowledged the general benefits of contextualization in ELT, many focus primarily on urban learners or concentrate narrowly on linguistic adaptation, often neglecting broader cultural and academic diversity (Hanifa & Yusra, 2023). Moreover, much of the literature emphasizes theoretical models of material development rather than providing insights grounded in teachers' everyday classroom experiences. Basnet (2024) identifies this limitation, noting that existing studies tend to isolate individual variables instead of examining the complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and contextual factors involved in material adaptation.

Method

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the subjective experiences and perspectives of English language teachers regarding the adaptation of contextualized ELT materials in Pakistani classrooms. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth understanding of teachers' practices, challenges, and the contextual factors influencing their instructional decision-making. Through semi-structured interviews, the study sought to generate rich and nuanced insights into how teachers adapt ELT materials to address students' cultural, linguistic, and academic diversity within real classroom settings.

The research was conducted in Pakistan, a country characterized by significant linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity. English is taught as a compulsory subject at the secondary level, often in classrooms comprising students from varied linguistic backgrounds, including Urdu and multiple regional languages. To capture this diversity, the study focused on three public-sector secondary schools located in an urban–semi-urban setting. These schools were selected due to their heterogeneous student populations and the presence of English language teachers with direct experience in adapting prescribed ELT materials to meet diverse learner needs. The selected schools provided a suitable context for examining material adaptation practices within the constraints of the national curriculum.



The primary participants of the study were five English language teachers teaching at the secondary school level. The participants included teachers with teaching experience ranging from 5 to 15 years and represented a mix of genders and academic backgrounds. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants based on their demonstrated experience in adapting English language teaching materials in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. Although the sample size was limited, the participants' extensive teaching experience and familiarity with contextual challenges provided in-depth qualitative data aligned with the exploratory nature of the study.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed flexibility while ensuring consistency in addressing the research objectives. An interview guide consisting of 12 open-ended questions was developed to explore teachers' perceptions of contextualized ELT materials, the challenges encountered during material adaptation, and their views on the impact of these adaptations on students' motivation and learning outcomes. The interview instrument was reviewed and validated by two university faculty members with expertise in English Language Teaching and qualitative research methodology. Their feedback contributed to improving the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the questions with the study's objectives. To enhance credibility, member checking was conducted by sharing interview transcripts with participants for verification and confirmation of accuracy.

The 12 interview questions were organized into three thematic categories. Questions 1 to 4 focused on teachers' perceptions of contextualized ELT material adaptation, examining how teachers conceptualize contextualization and its role in effective language teaching. Questions 5 to 8 explored the challenges faced by teachers in adapting materials, particularly in relation to mixed-ability classrooms, limited instructional resources, curriculum constraints, and linguistic diversity. Questions 9 to 12 examined teachers' perceptions of the pedagogical impact of material adaptation on student motivation, engagement, comprehension, and overall learning outcomes.

Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through online platforms, depending on participants' availability and logistical considerations. Two interviews were conducted in person at the respective school premises, while three interviews were conducted via online platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp video calls due to scheduling constraints and connectivity considerations. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent.

For data analysis, thematic analysis was employed to identify and interpret recurring patterns within the qualitative data. The analysis began with data familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts. Initial coding was conducted by systematically identifying meaningful units of data relevant to the research questions. A total of 38 initial codes were generated from the interview data. Specifically, questions related to teachers' perceptions of material adaptation yielded 14 codes, questions addressing challenges in adapting materials produced 12 codes, and questions focusing on perceived student outcomes resulted in 12 codes.

Frequently recurring codes included concepts such as cultural relevance, student engagement, limited teaching resources, curriculum rigidity, and language barriers. These initial codes were subsequently grouped into three overarching themes that directly reflected the study's research focus: (1) Teachers' Perceptions of Contextualized



ELT Material Adaptation, (2) Challenges in Addressing Diverse Learners' Needs, and (3) Pedagogical Impact of Material Adaptation on Student Motivation and Learning Outcomes. Each theme encompassed related codes that collectively addressed specific dimensions of the research questions, enabling a coherent and systematic interpretation of the findings.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings derived from semi-structured interviews with secondary-level English language teachers in Pakistan. The analysis revealed three major themes: (1) teachers' perceptions of contextualized ELT material adaptation, (2) challenges in addressing diverse learners' needs, and (3) the impact of contextualized materials on student motivation and learning outcomes. These themes collectively illuminate how Pakistani ELT teachers adapt instructional materials to align with students' cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic realities.

Theme 1: Teachers' Perceptions of Contextualized ELT Material Adaptation

A dominant theme emerging from the data was teachers' strong belief in the importance of adapting ELT materials to reflect students' cultural backgrounds, daily routines, and local environments. Teachers consistently viewed contextualization as a means of bridging the gap between English as an academic subject and students' lived experiences. Rather than relying solely on textbook content, teachers reported embedding familiar cultural references such as family traditions, community practices, local markets, and festivals to enhance relevance and comprehension.

One teacher explained that culturally familiar narratives significantly improved student engagement:

"I use stories about traditional celebrations or family activities for reading tasks. Students can relate to the content and participate more actively."

Similarly, another participant highlighted the practical value of contextualized language use:

"I design dialogues around daily activities like shopping or cooking, which help students learn conversational phrases they can use."

These practices reflect a learner-centered pedagogical orientation in which language is treated as a functional tool for communication rather than an abstract system of rules. Teachers emphasized that when students recognize their own realities in learning materials, they become more emotionally invested and cognitively engaged.

In addition to teacher-generated adaptations, participants reported encouraging student-generated content. Learners were invited to share personal stories, describe family traditions, or narrate everyday experiences in English. This approach not only enhanced authenticity but also promoted learner agency. As one teacher noted: *"I encourage students to share their own cultural experiences in English, then build lessons based on those stories."*

Teachers also deliberately incorporated local environmental and social issues—such as waste management, cleanliness, and community responsibility—into reading and writing tasks. These topics were used to develop vocabulary, argumentative skills, and critical



thinking. One teacher shared: *“I ask students to write about how their families manage household waste. It helps them learn words like ‘recycle’ and ‘separate.’”*

“We discussed why littering is a problem in our area. Students gave opinions and practiced writing solutions.”

Similarly, cultural events such as religious festivals and family ceremonies were frequently used to teach narrative and descriptive writing, verb tenses, and vocabulary related to food, clothing, and emotions. A teacher explained: *“During local festivals, I ask students to describe what happens or act out scenes. They learn English through their own experiences.”*

Overall, these findings suggest that Pakistani ELT teachers perceive material adaptation as an essential pedagogical practice that enhances relevance, affirms learners’ identities, and supports meaningful language use.

Theme 2: Challenges in Addressing Diverse Learners’ Needs

Despite their commitment to contextualized teaching, teachers reported multiple challenges that complicate material adaptation. One of the most significant difficulties was managing mixed-proficiency classrooms. Teachers described the challenge of designing materials that simultaneously support low-proficiency learners while adequately challenging more advanced students. As one participant stated: *“It’s difficult to create lessons that are not too easy for advanced students but also not overwhelming for beginners.”*

Teachers noted that standard textbooks rarely accommodate this diversity, forcing them to modify content extensively. This often involved simplifying vocabulary for some learners while designing enrichment tasks for others, substantially increasing workload. Another teacher explained: *“The textbook doesn’t fit all students. I have to change it—simpler words for some, extra work for others.”*

Maintaining equitable participation was also problematic. More proficient students tended to dominate classroom discussions, while weaker learners often remained silent. One teacher observed: *“Advanced students answer quickly, and others stay quiet. It’s hard to keep everyone involved.”*

To address this, teachers experimented with peer support, group work, and tiered activities, although these strategies required careful planning and classroom management.

Challenges were further intensified in rural and semi-rural contexts, where students often have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Teachers explained that learners from these backgrounds struggle to connect with textbook content that reflects urban or foreign realities. One participant noted: *“Students from rural areas have very little exposure to English, so I use examples from their own community.”*

Teachers responded by localizing content—using village life, local markets, farming routines, or family structures—to make lessons accessible. However, the absence of



institutionally developed rural-relevant materials meant that teachers bore full responsibility for creating such resources. As one teacher remarked: *“I make my own worksheets using local names or events. It takes time, but students understand better.”*

Resource scarcity emerged as another major challenge. Teachers reported limited access to updated textbooks, multimedia tools, and printing facilities. Many relied on outdated materials and low-tech strategies. One teacher explained: *“We try to be creative, but with limited materials, it’s hard to keep lessons interesting.”* Some teachers even reported using personal resources to support instruction: *“Sometimes there’s no printer or paper, so I print worksheets at home.”*

Limited access to technology further restricted pedagogical options. Many students lacked internet access or digital devices, making it impossible to assign online tasks or use multimedia resources equitably. A teacher shared: *“Some students can use apps at home, others can’t. So every activity has to work without internet.”* These findings highlight how contextualized teaching in Pakistan is constrained not by teacher willingness, but by systemic limitations related to curriculum rigidity, resource inequities, and infrastructural gaps.

Theme 3: Impact of Contextualized Materials on Student Motivation and Learning Outcomes

Despite these challenges, teachers unanimously reported that contextualized materials had a positive impact on student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. When lessons reflected students’ cultural backgrounds and daily realities, learners demonstrated greater interest and willingness to participate. One teacher stated: *“When we use familiar content like local celebrations, students enjoy learning more.”*

Teachers observed that role-plays, storytelling, and discussions based on real-life situations—such as shopping in local markets or family gatherings—significantly increased oral participation. As one participant explained: *“When students role-play real-life situations, they want to speak in English.”* Importantly, contextualization reduced students’ anxiety and increased confidence, particularly among shy learners: *“Even quiet students want to speak when the topic is something they know.”*

Teachers also reported improvements in comprehension and retention. Grammar and vocabulary were more easily understood when taught through familiar contexts. One teacher noted: *“Using local festivals to teach past tense helps students understand quickly.”*

Similarly, vocabulary retention improved when words were linked to students’ lived experiences:

“They remember words better when they come from their own daily life.”

Writing skills also showed noticeable improvement. Teachers reported longer, more coherent responses when students wrote about familiar topics: *“When students write about their homes or village life, their writing improves.”*

Several teachers linked contextualization to improved academic performance in assessments. Students demonstrated better vocabulary usage, grammatical accuracy, and



content development in tests: “They performed better in tests because they could relate the content to real events.”

Overall, these findings confirm that contextualized ELT materials function not only as motivational tools but as effective pedagogical strategies that enhance comprehension, participation, and academic achievement. By grounding instruction in students’ social and cultural realities, Pakistani ELT teachers create inclusive learning environments that support meaningful and sustained language development.

Conclusion

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that contextualized ELT material adaptation in Pakistan is a powerful yet demanding pedagogical practice. While teachers show strong agency, creativity, and commitment, their efforts are constrained by systemic challenges such as mixed-ability classrooms, resource scarcity, and limited technological access. Nonetheless, the positive impact on student motivation and learning outcomes underscores the urgent need for institutional support, teacher training, and policy-level investment in culturally responsive ELT practices.

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