

Analysis of Current Teaching Practices in English Language based on Multiliteracies Pedagogical Framework for Language Learning

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Abstract

The present study analyses current English language teaching practices through the lens of the Multiliteracies Pedagogical Framework. Grounded in a dynamic approach to language learning, the multiliteracies framework recognises linguistic diversity and the increasing prominence of multimodal forms of meaning-making. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with in-service government school teachers in Bhubaneswar and were analysed qualitatively across all four dimensions of the multiliteracies framework. The findings reveal that the English language teachers largely conceptualise literacy as the ability to read and write, with limited awareness of the multiliteracies paradigm, which foregrounds diversity, multimodality, and active meaning-making through design (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009). Although teachers demonstrate well-intentioned pedagogical practices, these are not fully aligned with contemporary educational demands. The study also identifies a lack of uniformity in English language instruction at the elementary level. While responses varied, teachers from central government schools displayed greater awareness of the aims of language education and adopted comparatively effective pedagogical practices than their counterparts in state government schools. The study highlights an urgent need to strengthen and harmonise the English language teaching practices to address the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of learners. Enhancing alignment with the multiliteracies framework may contribute to more inclusive, meaningful, and future-ready language education.

Keywords: Multiliteracies Pedagogical Framework, Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, Transformed Practice

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INTRODUCTION

Globalisation and rapid technological advancements have necessitated a shift in pedagogical practices to accommodate the evolving linguistic and cultural needs of learners. UNESCO (2023) conceptualises literacy not merely as the acquisition of reading, writing, and numeracy skills, but as the capacity for identification, interpretation, creation, and communication in a digitally mediated, information-rich, and rapidly changing world. Literacy today encompasses digital competence, media literacy, global citizenship, education for sustainable development, and job-specific skills, extending far beyond traditional definitions.

Contemporary research advocates the situated practice of language, where literary and non-literary texts are placed at the centre of classroom instruction (Kern and Schultz, 2005; Kern, 2008). Effective literacy learning now demands versatility, autonomy, intercultural competence, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities—skills essential for functioning in multilingual and multicultural environments (Navehebrahim, 2011).

Language learning is increasingly understood as a process of discovery, interpretation, and transformation of texts rather than mere replication of linguistic forms. Learners actively reanalyse language structures to create meaning in new contexts, integrating grammatical understanding organically within textual engagement (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009).

Such an approach necessitates instructional practices that acknowledge learners' socio-cultural identities and actively engage them in meaning-making (Pittaway, 2004).

In the Indian context, English language teachers are exposed to multiple approaches and methods—such as the Structural, Functional, and Communicative approaches, and methods including Grammar Translation, Direct, and Audio-lingual methods. However, no single approach adequately fulfils the comprehensive literacy goals outlined by UNESCO. Persistent ambiguity regarding the contextual appropriateness of these methods continues to challenge effective language pedagogy (Qing-xue and Jin-fang, 2007).

The New London Group (1996) introduced the concept of multiliteracies to address the growing disconnect between traditional language teaching practices and contemporary literacy demands. Emphasising linguistic diversity and multimodal meaning-making, the multiliteracies framework reconceptualises language as a means of accessing information, constructing knowledge, understanding socio-cultural realities, and participating meaningfully in society.

This perspective holds particular relevance for Indian classrooms, which are characterised by linguistic plurality, cultural diversity, and unequal access to resources. National policy documents, including the Learning Outcomes for Elementary Education (NCERT, 2017),

NEP 2020, and NCF-SE 2023, underscore multilingualism, cultural sensitivity, and critical thinking as core outcomes of language education. The multiliteracies pedagogy aligns closely with these objectives by promoting situated learning, socio-cultural relevance, multimodal engagement, and critical language awareness.

MULTILITERACIES PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK (NEW LONDON GROUP, 1996)

The Multiliteracies Pedagogical Framework is grounded in a dynamic, socio-cultural understanding of language learning, characterised by linguistic diversity and multimodal meaning-making. The meaning is constructed through interpretation, transformation, and recontextualisation of texts. The framework consists of four interconnected components.

Situated Practice

Learners draw upon their lived experiences, cultural backgrounds, and social identities to actively participate in classroom learning. This component strengthens connections between home, community, and school, and ensures that learners' voices are valued.

Overt Instruction

Teachers explicitly scaffold learning by guiding learners towards conceptual understanding and meta-linguistic awareness through structured support and illustrative examples.

Critical Framing

Learners critically analyse texts by situating them within social, cultural, political, and ideological contexts, fostering reflective and evaluative thinking (Mills, 2006).

Transformed Practices

Learners apply and redesign acquired knowledge in new contexts, demonstrating deeper understanding through creative and meaningful transformation of learning.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In the contemporary world, literacy encompasses multiple dimensions, including digital, scientific, financial, cultural, and civic literacy. Multiliteracies pedagogy responds to this complexity by recognising diverse literacy practices and affirming learners' languages, cultures, and identities through participatory and collaborative learning.

Despite India's rich linguistic diversity, research on multiliteracies pedagogy in the Indian context remains limited. Existing studies suggest that multiliteracies can address challenges faced by multilingual learners and promote equitable and effective education (Mukhopadhyay, et al., 2019). Given the alignment of multiliteracies pedagogy with national education policies, there is a pressing need to examine current classroom practices through this framework.

This study seeks to bridge this gap by analysing elementary-level

English language teaching practices using the multiliteracies pedagogical framework, thereby offering insights into existing practices and potential pedagogical transformations.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To analyse current teaching practices in English at the elementary school level based on the four dimensions of the Multiliteracies Pedagogical Framework:

- Situated Practice
- Overt Instruction
- Critical Framing
- Transformed Practice

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design was employed for the present study. 14 English language teachers from government schools in Bhubaneswar

were selected through purposive sampling. Of these, eight teachers were from Central Government Schools affiliated with the CBSE—namely Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya Sangathan (OAVS), and D. M. Schools (DMS)—while six teachers were from State Government Schools affiliated with the State Board.

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview schedule developed by the researcher, incorporating all four dimensions of the Multiliteracies Pedagogical Framework. The interview schedule was prepared in consultation with subject experts to ensure content validity. Data analysis and interpretation were carried out qualitatively, guided by the four key dimensions of the multiliteracies pedagogical framework.

Table 1
Participants' Profile

Teachers	Designation	Experience	Gender	Affiliation
T1	TGT English	3 Years	Female	State Board
T2	TGT English	2 Years	Female	CBSE
T3	TGT English	5 years	Male	CBSE
T4	TGT English	2 years	Female	CBSE
T5	TGT English	6 years	Male	State Board
T6	TGT English	17 years	Male	CBSE
T7	TGT English	2.5 years	Female	CBSE
T8	TGT English	20 years	Male	State Board
T9	TGT English	16 years	Male	State Board
T10	TGT English	12 years	Male	State Board
T11	TGT English	4 years	Female	CBSE
T12	TGT English	2 years	Female	CBSE
T13	TGT English	3 years	Female	State Board
T14	TGT English	7 years	Male	CBSE

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Informed consent was obtained from all the participating teachers prior to conducting the interviews. Participants were assured of the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage. All personal and professional information provided by the participants was kept strictly confidential, and no identifying details were disclosed at any point in the research process. To ensure anonymity, the teachers were assigned coded identifiers ranging from T1 to T14 in all records and analyses.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data were analysed qualitatively. The semi-structured interview schedule was designed to address all the four key dimensions of the Multiliteracies Pedagogical Framework—Situated Practice, Overt

Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice—in order to compare and contrast existing English language teaching practices with this established pedagogical approach. The interview schedule consisted of a total of 20 questions, with five questions specifically aligned to each dimension of the framework. The responses were systematically analysed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and variations in teachers’ instructional practices across different school contexts.

SITUATED PRACTICES

Teachers’ Understanding of Literacy and Multiliteracies

Most teachers demonstrated a similar and conventional understanding of literacy, defining it primarily as the ability to read and write with basic comprehension. The concept of literacy was largely limited to

Table 2
Major Themes and Sub-themes for Analysis

Situated Practices	Overt Instructions	Critical Framing	Transformed Practices
Teachers’ understanding of literacy and ‘multiliteracies’ terms	Teaching of language skills	Development of critical thinking and self-awareness	Transformed teaching and assessment practices
Experiential learning and students’ engagement	Teaching of grammar, vocabulary, and structure of language	Access and understanding of different forms of text (multimedia)	Students’ role and autonomy in English language learning
Multicultural and multilingual elements in the language classroom	Multimodality of teaching resources	Diversity in the purpose and context of literacy in a multicultural society	Integration of social and global themes in English language learning

foundational language skills, and the term multiliteracies was unfamiliar to the majority of respondents.

Typical responses included statements, such as: "Literacy means the development of basic reading and writing ability, with an understanding of the concept." "Literacy is learning to read, write, and understand."

When asked about multiliteracies, teachers attempted to infer its meaning based on the term itself, offering speculative responses, such as "multiliteracies may be related to multilingualism" or "multiliteracies may be literacy about different contexts." However, they were unable to clearly differentiate between literacy and multiliteracies.

Several teachers explicitly acknowledged that they had neither encountered the concept of multiliteracies during their pre-service training nor during in-service professional development programmes. One teacher remarked, "Multiliteracies might mean reading and writing simultaneously." A few teachers assumed that multiliteracies referred to the existence of different types of literacy. One teacher said: "Literacy encompasses basic skills such as reading, writing, and speaking using correct grammar and vocabulary. I have not heard about multiliteracies, but it may suggest multiplicity of literacies. It might go beyond basic literacy skills to digital literacy or financial literacy. I am not sure, but I am interested to know more about it." These responses indicate

that although teachers attempted to construct meaning from the term, there was a clear lack of conceptual understanding of multiliteracies as a pedagogical framework. The findings reveal a significant gap between contemporary literacy theories and teachers' professional knowledge.

Experiential Learning and Students' Engagement

Teachers discussed a range of techniques and methods, used to promote experiential learning in the classroom. Most teachers from State Government schools reported following a traditional instructional approach, involving model reading of the text followed by translation into Odia. They explained that many students come from non-conducive home environments, are first-generation learners, and encounter English only after Grade 5. Consequently, students are often uncomfortable with direct English-medium instruction.

In contrast, teachers from central government (CBSE) schools reported using real-life examples to enhance students' learning experiences. A few teachers indicated the use of multimedia resources, although this practice was limited. Only a small number of teachers consciously integrated students' prior knowledge and lived experiences into classroom instruction. Among them, one teacher provided a concrete example: "I ask students to perform a role play on how we show respect to people according

to their profession. Students usually greet only teachers and not the *akkas* and *annas* (cleaning staff). This activity helps to integrate students' real-life experiences into the learning process."

With regard to student engagement, most teachers relied on grammar exercises, written assignments, and questioning techniques to maintain attention. One teacher stated, "I keep asking questions to ensure students are listening and following the lesson." Some teachers mentioned, using activity-based strategies; however, they noted that large class sizes and high student-teacher ratios made it difficult to engage all learners effectively.

Overall, classroom practices were largely textbook-centred, with occasional use of multimedia resources. Students' experiences and socio-cultural backgrounds were not consistently integrated into the teaching-learning process. The predominance of the grammar-translation method limited meaningful exposure to the target language. This finding is concerning, as the NCF (2005) emphasises learner-centred pedagogy and the importance of connecting classroom knowledge with learners' lived experiences.

Multiliteracies pedagogy advocates situated practice by integrating learners' local languages, cultures, and experiences through multimodal resources. Unlike traditional methods that rely primarily on written text

and translation, multiliteracies pedagogy employs diverse semiotic modes—linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural, and digital—to support meaning-making and enhance learner engagement (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009; Rahman *et al.*, 2000; Levy, 2000; Rajendram, 2018). Researchers strongly advocate situated language practices that establish meaningful connections between learners' prior knowledge and new learning (Kern and Schultz, 2005; Kern, 2008; Cope and Kalantzis, 2009).

Multicultural and Multilingual Elements in the Language Classroom

Regarding the integration of cultural elements, most teachers reported relying primarily on textbook content and written assignments related to local festivals and traditions. Although teachers acknowledged opportunities to integrate cultural aspects into English lessons, they rarely provided concrete examples or described specific classroom strategies.

A few teachers mentioned incorporating discussions on textiles, folk art, paintings, and regional cuisines. One teacher offered a noteworthy example of teaching the poem "Wind" by relating its theme to super cyclones affecting the Odisha coast, thereby contextualising the text within students' lived experiences. However, the teacher also admitted that such integration of local culture is not a regular practice in English classrooms.

Most teachers stated that their primary focus was on developing LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) skills, and that multilingualism and cultural diversity were not central concerns. They acknowledged that many students struggle to comprehend and speak English, and therefore teachers occasionally use Odia or Hindi to support understanding. One teacher highlighted a regional practice in rural Odisha: “In tribal areas, teachers with knowledge of local dialects are often appointed so that they can address the multilingual needs of students.”

Another teacher noted that multilingualism has gained prominence following NEP 2020, particularly in central government schools where students come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, teachers also expressed scepticism about the practical implementation of multilingual pedagogy. One teacher remarked: “Students are more comfortable in Hindi than in English. I keep my instruction bilingual, but although multilingualism is discussed in policy, it is not fully practised in classrooms.”

While teachers acknowledged the importance of multilingual approaches, they were unable to articulate specific strategies for implementing them. Moreover, the discussions largely centred on local languages and cultures, with minimal attention to global cultural perspectives. Only one teacher reported introducing students to the

cultural contexts of foreign literary texts included in NCERT textbooks to foster global awareness.

Understanding the cultural, linguistic, and social contexts associated with a language is essential for meaningful language learning. The multiliteracies pedagogical approach promotes critical language awareness and enables learners to understand how language use varies across contexts and cultures (Mills, 2006; Schmerbeck and Lucht, 2017). The findings suggest that although teachers recognise the importance of cultural and multilingual dimensions, these elements remain underutilised in English language classrooms.

OVERT INSTRUCTION

Teaching of Language Skills

Teachers identified activities such as role play, debates, dramatisation, writing tasks, and model reading as means of developing language skills. However, no specific strategies were mentioned for listening skills development. Only two CBSE school teachers referred to conducting language lab sessions, though participation was reportedly low.

Teachers from state government schools cited inadequate resources and time constraints as barriers to adopting activity-based approaches. Several teachers acknowledged that sustained exposure to the target language is essential but difficult to achieve due to the absence of an English-proficient environment.

Consequently, instruction tended to prioritise reading and writing skills over listening and speaking.

Research indicates that multiliteracies-based instruction supports holistic language development by integrating multimodal and interactive practices (Arwita *et al.*, 2022; Nawawi and Christanti, 2020).

Teaching of Grammar, Vocabulary, and Language Structure through Overt Instruction

Vocabulary instruction was largely textbook-driven, with teachers explaining new words and their usage. Grammar teaching focused on discussion and practice through written exercises such as fill-in-the-blanks and sentence correction. Teachers emphasised repeated practice and classroom participation to reinforce learning.

Differentiated instruction was limited due to time constraints, though teachers reported providing additional support to slow learners when needed. The findings highlight the need for student-centred, multimodal approaches that actively involve learners and promote responsibility for learning—key principles of multiliteracies pedagogy (Maesaroh and Muzayyin, 2022).

Multimodality in English Teaching

Teachers' use of multimedia varied considerably. While some CBSE school teachers used audio-visual aids, presentations, and documentaries, most State Government school teachers

relied heavily on textbooks due to limited access to ICT resources. A few teachers shared digital worksheets via WhatsApp, while one experienced teacher demonstrated innovative use of concept mapping and multimedia integration.

Teachers also expressed concerns about insufficient professional training in multimodal pedagogy. Multiliteracies pedagogy addresses these challenges by promoting the integration of diverse semiotic resources—linguistic, visual, aural, and gestural—to enhance engagement and learning (Cope and Kalantzis, 2016).

CRITICAL FRAMING

Development of Critical Thinking and Self-awareness

Teachers reported fostering critical thinking through moral discussions, debates, brainstorming, and hypothetical situations. Some provided examples of addressing gender-bias and encouraging students to question social norms. However, explicit integration of critical societal issues and power dynamics was rare, as teachers prioritised syllabus completion.

While teachers acknowledged the importance of analysing media texts and real-world language use, such practices were not routinely implemented. The findings suggest limited awareness of the evolving role of language teachers. Multiliteracies pedagogy's critical framing supports the development of analytical skills

and critical language awareness by examining how language operates across contexts (Mills, 2006).

Access to and Understanding of Multimedia Texts

Most teachers focused primarily on textbook-based instruction, citing time, and resource constraints. Engagement with alternative texts was limited, with newspaper reading mentioned mainly in assemblies. Only one teacher described integrating a media reference during classroom instruction.

Multiliteracies pedagogy emphasises engaging learners with diverse texts and media forms to develop critical and creative thinking, enabling students to connect language learning with real-world contexts (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009).

Diversity in Literacy Practices in a Multicultural Society

Teachers generally admitted that multilingual, multicultural, and global perspectives were not systematically incorporated into English teaching. Although some recognised the potential of technology and alternative narratives, such practices were not part of regular instruction.

Given India's linguistic and cultural diversity, adopting multiliteracies pedagogy could address the needs of multilingual learners and promote global citizenship. Researchers emphasise its potential to make English language education more inclusive and contextually relevant

(Mukhopadhyay *et al.*, 2009; Nawawi and Christanti, 2020).

TRANSFORMED PRACTICES

Transformed Teaching and Assessment Practices

Some teachers reported incorporating inquiry-based learning, written and oral projects, and assignments that allow students to reflect on their language skills and creativity. However, responses regarding inquiry-based language learning were largely general, with examples primarily limited to pen-and-paper projects. One teacher noted that inquiry-based approaches are effective only for a few curious students, as most are hesitant to speak in English. Experiential learning is integrated wherever feasible, yet challenges persist, particularly regarding students' reliance on word-for-word translation of English texts.

Teachers described using activities such as role play, debates, and sentence correction to develop language skills and understanding of grammar and structure. Project-based assignments were often assigned during long holidays, with a few examples involving physical models, such as a model of a missile inspired by the lesson *The Missile Man of India*.

Regarding assessment, most teachers followed existing guidelines, allocating 80 per cent weightage to pen-and-paper tests and 20 per cent to participation, assignments, and oral evaluations. A few teachers mentioned innovative assessment

strategies such as self-assessment, peer assessment, and observational evaluation. One teacher described using weekly role play sessions as both a learning and assessment tool.

In alignment with NEP 2020 and NCF 2005, teaching and assessment should embrace contextual and interdisciplinary approaches. The multiliteracies framework supports diversity, multimodality, active meaning-making, and a holistic pedagogy. Assessment should be continuous and formative, moving beyond rote testing to incorporate multiple modes of meaning-making, creativity, and timely feedback (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009; Kalantzis and Cope, 2012).

Students' Role and Autonomy in English Language Learning

Most teachers reported that the students view English as intimidating and primarily aim to pass examinations. Only a few students actively participated in classroom activities. Some teachers attempt to make students central to the learning process, but the foreign-language status of English in India leads to heavy reliance on teacher input.

A few teachers highlighted that assignments allow students some autonomy in thinking and writing. One teacher described soliciting students' preferences regarding lesson content, activities, and learning methods, though sometimes autonomy led to classroom disruption.

The findings highlight the need for well-prepared, skilled

teachers capable of fostering autonomy in multilingual contexts. Multiliteracies pedagogy ensures learning is meaningful, connects to students' experiences, and enhances their ability to construct knowledge, engage creatively, and take ownership of learning (Navehebrahim, 2011; Cope and Kalantzis, 2009). Such approaches encourage thoughtful, responsive, and future-oriented teaching (Boche, 2014; Nawawi and Christanti, 2020).

Integration of Social and Global Themes in English Language Learning

Few teachers actively integrated social or global themes in classroom instruction. Some used debates, discussions, and written assignments to address social issues, while others relied solely on textbook content. One teacher emphasised including discussions on social justice but acknowledged limited engagement with global issues.

In the spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* ("the world is one family"), it is essential to cultivate students' understanding and respect for diverse cultures. Multiliteracies pedagogy, with its emphasis on multiple communication channels and cultural and linguistic diversity, offers opportunities to integrate social and global perspectives into English language learning. Language education should not only facilitate communication but also provide access to knowledge, contemporary information, historical

understanding, and opportunities for creativity and inspiration (Courtney, 1996).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY REFORMS AND TEACHER PREPARATION

- Introduce innovative pedagogies, including multiliteracies, into the teacher education curriculum.
- Pilot projects to evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of multiliteracies pedagogy in Indian classrooms.
- Develop introductory modules for teachers on multiliteracies, integrating India's multilingual and multicultural contexts.
- Provide training for designing multiliteracies-based lesson plans covering all four key dimensions of the framework.
- Train teachers in the use of visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and digital tools for language instruction.
- Develop textbooks and supplementary resources aligned with multiliteracies pedagogy.
- Organise webinars and workshops to raise awareness and

understanding of multiliteracies practices.

- Encourage collaborative efforts to create both online and offline teaching resources.

CONCLUSION

There exists a clear gap between current language teaching practices and the aspirations of a globalised, multilingual, and multicultural education system. To equip learners for global citizenship, education must foster critical thinking, autonomy, and ownership of learning. Diversity—both within India and globally—should be seen as a resource for developing skilled, adaptable, and culturally aware individuals.

Multiliteracies pedagogy offers a holistic approach to language education, integrating multiple modalities, cultural perspectives, and learner-centred practices. Further research is required to explore its adaptation and effectiveness in the Indian context. By embracing innovative pedagogical frameworks, we can create inclusive, engaging, and future-ready educational environments, that empower learners to thrive in an interconnected world.

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