



Investigating ESL Teachers' Textbook Use, Adaptation, and Pedagogical Practices in Teaching Writing Skills

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ABSTRACT

The prescribed textbook remains the single most powerful mediating artifact in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms across South Asia, yet comparatively little is known about how teachers actually use it, how far they adapt it, and how those decisions shape the teaching of writing. This study investigated ESL teachers' textbook use, adaptation practices, and pedagogical approaches to writing instruction in public and private institutions in Punjab, Pakistan. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed with 60 ESL teachers selected through stratified purposive sampling. Quantitative data were collected through the researcher-developed Textbook Use, Adaptation, and Pedagogical Practices Questionnaire (TUAPQ), a 45-item five-point Likert instrument comprising five subscales, which returned strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .93$). Qualitative data were generated through semi-structured interviews with 12 purposively selected teachers and non-participant observation of eight writing lessons. Descriptive statistics, independent-samples *t* tests, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlations, and multiple regression were computed in SPSS 27, while interview and observation data were analyzed thematically. Findings revealed high textbook reliance ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.54$) alongside only moderate adaptation ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.68$), with adaptation confined largely to surface-level addition, simplification, and omission rather than substantive re-design. Writing pedagogy was strongly product-oriented, and feedback practices were dominated by comprehensive error correction. Perceived constraints, textbook reliance, materials-development training, and teaching experience jointly explained 48% of the variance in adaptation practices, $F(4, 55) = 12.68$, $p < .001$. Qualitative themes indicated that examination washback and syllabus-completion pressure converted the textbook into a de facto syllabus and narrowed teacher agency. The study argues for materials-adaptation literacy as a core component of ESL teacher education and for assessment reform that legitimizes process-oriented writing instruction.

1. Introduction

In most second and foreign language classrooms worldwide, the prescribed textbook is not merely one resource among many; it is the organizing center of instruction. It supplies the syllabus, sequences the content, defines the tasks, frames assessment, and, in many systems, silently determines what counts as legitimate classroom knowledge. Materials researchers have long observed that coursebooks function simultaneously as a map, script, and authority, and that the relationship between teachers

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and this artifact is far more complex than the language of “delivery” suggests (Garton & Graves, 2019; Guerrettaz et al., 2021). Textbooks do not teach; teachers teach with, though, around, and sometimes against them. Therefore, understanding what happens in the space between the page and the lesson is central to understanding language pedagogy.

This space becomes especially consequential in the teaching of writing. Writing is the language skill most resistant to transmission-style instruction. It requires extended engagement, iterative drafting, purposeful revision, audience awareness, and feedback that addresses meaning as well as form (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023; Hyland, 2019). However, writing is also the skill that textbooks handle most thinly. Composition sections in national textbooks frequently reduce to a small set of examination-oriented genres, letters, applications, essays, and story completion presented as finished models to be reproduced rather than as processes to be learned (Baig et al., 2021; Bhatti & Bashir, 2025). When the textbook offers models but not procedures, the burden of turning material into pedagogy falls almost entirely on the teacher. Whether teachers accept, ignore, supplement, or transform that material becomes decisive for what learner’s experience as writing instruction.

Pakistan presents a particularly instructive case. English holds the status of a second language and an official language, functioning as the medium of instruction in most private institutions and as a compulsory subject from the primary level onwards. Access to higher education, professional employment, and social mobility is heavily mediated by written English competence. At the same time, textbooks in the public sector are centrally prescribed by provincial curriculum and textbook boards, examinations are largely centralized and reproduction-oriented, and teachers work under conditions of large classes, heavy contact hours, and limited access to sustained professional development in materials development (Baig et al., 2021; Shakil & Sadiq, 2024; Zaman & Khan, 2025). The result is a system in which the textbook carries enormous institutional weight, while the teacher retains little formal licence to alter it. How ESL teachers negotiate this tension, particularly when teaching a skill as process-dependent as writing, is an empirical question with direct implications for curriculum policy and teacher education.

The international literature on materials use has grown substantially over the past decade, moving from the evaluation of textbooks as texts to the study of materials in action as situated, negotiated, and agentive practice (Guerrettaz et al., 2021; Li, 2025; Yan & Weng, 2026). Studies have documented adaptation profiles shaped by teacher beliefs (Zhang et al., 2024), the mediating role of teacher guides (Morady Moghaddam & Parsaiyan, 2025), the reconfiguration of teachers as digital materials developers (Tajeddin & Asadnia, 2024), and the persistent gap between what teachers believe about coursebooks and what institutional conditions permit them to do (Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2022). Yet three gaps remain. First, most of this work is situated in East Asian, European, or Middle Eastern contexts, with South Asian classrooms comparatively underrepresented. Second, studies of materials use rarely disaggregate by skill; adaptation for reading or grammar may follow a very different logic from adaptation for writing. Third, few studies connect adaptation behavior to the specific pedagogical practices of planning, task design, feedback, and assessment that follow from it. This study addresses all three gaps simultaneously.

Therefore, this study investigates how 60 ESL teachers in Punjab, Pakistan, use and adapt the prescribed English textbook when teaching writing, what pedagogical and feedback practices accompany that use, what constrains their adaptation decisions, and which teacher-level variables predict adaptation behavior. By combining a purpose-built questionnaire with interviews and lesson observations, this study aims to produce an account that is both statistically patterned and pedagogically textured.

1.1. Research Questions

Correspondingly, this study addressed the following six research questions:

- **RQ1:** To what extent do ESL teachers rely on prescribed textbooks when teaching writing skills?
- **RQ2:** Which adaptation techniques do ESL teachers most and least frequently apply to textbook writing materials?
- **RQ3:** What pedagogical orientations and feedback practices characterize their writing instruction?
- **RQ4:** Do textbook use, adaptation, and pedagogical practices differ significantly by sector, experience, and training?
- **RQ5:** To what extent do constraints, reliance, training, and experience predict adaptive practices?
- **RQ6:** How do teachers account for their textbook decisions in the teaching of writing?

2. Literature Review

2.1. From Textbook Evaluation to Materials Use

Early scholarship on language teaching materials was dominated by evaluation: checklists, criteria, and frameworks for judging whether a coursebook was fit for purpose. This tradition produced valuable analytical vocabulary but rested on a questionable assumption that the properties of the book determine the quality of the lesson. Over the past decade, the field has shifted decisively towards materials use, that is, towards what teachers and learners actually do with materials in situ (Garton & Graves, 2019; Guerrettaz et al., 2021). From this perspective, a textbook has no fixed pedagogical value; its value is realized, suppressed, or transformed in the moment of enactment. Guerrettaz et al. (2021) argued for a sociometrical account in which materials, teachers, learners, and institutional structures are mutually constituting, so that the same page can generate radically different learning opportunities in two adjacent classrooms. Harwood (2017) made the complementary argument that language education has much to learn from mainstream textbook research, where the study of enacted rather than intended curriculum has a longer history.

This reframing has practical implications. If materials are enacted rather than delivered, then teacher education focused solely on selecting good books is insufficient; teachers require analytical and design capacity to reshape any book they are given. Mishan (2022) makes a related point in questioning whether the global coursebook can ever fit local feet, arguing that the mismatch is structural rather than incidental and must be resolved at the level of teacher adaptation to the local context. Li (2025), working from an ecological perspective, shows that material use is a site of teacher learning: teachers develop professionally through the recurring problem of making inadequate material work.

2.2. Adaptation: Categories, Motives, and Depth

Adaptation has been described through a durable set of operations, adding, deleting, modifying, simplifying, reordering, and replacing, most influentially systematized by McDonough et al. (2013) and elaborated by Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018). What distinguishes recent work is the attention to depth rather than type. Surface adaptation adjusts the difficulty, length, or sequence of a task while leaving its underlying pedagogical logic intact; deep adaptation changes what the task asks learners to do cognitively and communicatively. A teacher who shortens a model letter is adapting; a teacher who converts that model letter into an audience-analysis and drafting cycle is adapting differently in kind, not merely in degree. Luís (2024), analyzing how authentic texts are treated inside published textbooks, shows that the same asymmetry operates at the level of materials writing itself: texts are routinely trimmed and simplified, while the tasks attached to them remain unchanged in cognitive demand.

Motive matters as much as depth. Studies consistently report three drivers of adaptation: cognitive fit with learners' proficiency, contextual and cultural relevance, and communicative need (Carabantes, 2024; Nurhayati et al., 2024). Zhang et al. (2024), using latent profile analysis with a large sample of English teachers, identified distinct adaptation profiles and demonstrated that these profiles were differentiated by teachers' beliefs about the authority of the coursebook, their qualifications, and their years of experience. Teachers who construed the coursebook as a resource adapted extensively, whereas teachers who construed it as a syllabus adapted minimally. Rathert and Cabaroğlu (2022) captured the same dichotomy in the metaphor of teachers as masters or slaves to their coursebooks, showing through an in-depth case study that the position a teacher occupies is only partly a matter of belief and substantially a matter of institutional latitude.

Agency, then, is the pivotal construct. Yan and Weng (2026) found that Chinese secondary teachers working with newly introduced textbooks confined themselves largely to addition, describing their own practice in terms of what they were not permitted to remove. Chen and Shu (2026) similarly document how the ecological conditions of schooling examination formats, monitoring regimes, and syllabus timelines set the outer boundary within which teacher agency operates. Bosompem (2021), reporting on Ghanaian tertiary teachers, found a comparably narrow repertoire of adaptation techniques despite positive attitudes towards adaptation in principle. The consistency of this finding across very different systems suggests that the gap between adaptation belief and adaptation behavior is structural.

2.3. Teacher Cognition and the Textbook

Borg's (2015) framework of teacher cognition, what teachers think, know, and believe, and how this relates to what they do remains the standard lens for interpreting this gap. Cognition is formed through schooling experience, professional preparation, and contextual factors, and it is contextual factors that most often account for the divergence between stated belief and observed practice. A teacher may believe that writing should be taught as a recursive process and still teach it as reproduction because the examination rewards reproduction. Morady Moghaddam and Parsaiyan (2025) extend this line by examining the mediational role of teacher guides, finding that guides can either scaffold teacher appropriation of materials or substitute for teacher thinking altogether, depending on how prescriptively they are written.

Professional development appears to be a reliable differentiator. Tajeddin and Asadnia (2024) showed that structured collaborative reflection on classroom materials shifted teachers from passive consumers to active developers, particularly in digitalizing and personalizing content. Carabantes (2024) argues that materials development remains under-represented in initial teacher education and that materials-based assessment tasks can function as a vehicle for professional growth. These findings converge on a practical claim relevant to the present study: adaptation capacity is teachable, and its absence is at least partly a training deficit rather than a disposition.

2.4. Textbooks and the Teaching of Writing

Writing occupies an awkward position in most general English textbooks. Because writing is time-consuming, difficult to standardize, and hard to assess objectively, textbook writing sections tend to be compressed and product-oriented. Hyland (2019) distinguishes orientations to writing instruction that focus on language structures, text functions, creative expression, composing processes, content, and genre and social context. Textbook writing tasks overwhelmingly instantiate the first two. Ferris and Hedgcock (2023) note that the teaching of L2 composition requires explicit attention to invention, drafting, revision, and response, none of which can be represented adequately by a model text and a prompt. Graham (2019), synthesizing decades of writing intervention research, identifies strategy instruction, goal setting, collaborative writing, and formative feedback as the practices with the strongest evidentiary support, which textbooks rarely operationalize. Feedback is the second flashpoint. A large literature has debated the value of comprehensive versus focused written corrective feedback, with the balance of recent evidence favoring selective, focused, and meta linguistically informed feedback over exhaustive error marking (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Karim & Nassaji, 2020; Kang & Han, 2022). Nevertheless, comprehensive error correction persists as the default in examination-oriented systems, partly because it is visible, defensible to parents and administrators, and congruent with the textbook's implicit view of writing as accurate reproduction.

2.5. Conceptual Framework

This study is based on three integrated strands. From the materials-in-action tradition, the premise is that the textbook's effect is realized in enactment rather than in design (Guerrettaz et al., 2021; Li, 2025). Teacher cognition research assumes that enactment is shaped by beliefs formed and constrained by context (Borg, 2015; Zhang et al., 2024). From the L2 writing pedagogy perspective, writing instruction can be located along a product–process–genre continuum, whose position determines the learning opportunities available (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023; Hyland, 2019). These strands are held together by Richards's (2022) distinction between the planned, enacted, and experienced curriculum: the textbook represents the planned curriculum, teacher adaptation produces the enacted curriculum, and only the latter determines what learners experience in the classroom. The framework predicts that high textbook reliance and perceived constraints will be associated with shallow adaptation and product-oriented pedagogy, while training and experience will be associated with deeper adaptation and more process-oriented practice. These predictions were tested in the analysis reported below this section.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The quantitative phase established the distribution and patterning of textbook use, adaptation, pedagogy, feedback, and constraint across the full sample; a subsequent qualitative phase explained and contextualized these patterns through interviews and lesson observations. This design was selected because the research questions combined a descriptive-comparative dimension, which requires numerical breadth, with an interpretive dimension, which requires access to teacher reasoning. Priority was given to the quantitative strand, with the qualitative strand serving an explanatory and elaborative function; integration occurred at the interpretation stage through joint display and narrative weaving.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The target population comprised ESL teachers who taught compulsory English at the secondary, higher secondary, and undergraduate levels in public and private institutions in Punjab, Pakistan, where a centrally prescribed English textbook was used to teach English. A stratified purposive sampling procedure was used. Strata were defined by institutional sector (public or private) and instructional level (secondary, higher secondary, or undergraduate) to ensure that both prescribed and semi-prescribed textbook environments were represented. Within strata, teachers were selected based on three inclusion criteria: (a) a minimum of one full academic year of experience teaching English writing; (b) current use of a prescribed English textbook containing a composition or writing component; and (c) willingness to participate in both phases if selected. Sixty teachers were recruited for the study. This figure was determined based on two reasons. First, for the planned analyses, independent-samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA with three groups, and a four-predictor multiple regression analysis with an a priori power analysis conducted in G*Power 3.1 indicated that 60 cases provided a power of approximately .80 to detect a medium-to-large

effect ($f^2 = .22$) at $\alpha = .05$ for the regression model and adequate power for medium effects ($d \approx 0.75$) in two-group comparisons. Second, the figure is consistent with the sample sizes reported in comparable teacher-focused materials-use studies and is large enough to support the descriptive and comparative claims made here without overextending to population-level inference.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participating ESL Teachers (N = 60)

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Male	34	56.7
	Female	26	43.3
Age (years)	25–30	14	23.3
	31–35	19	31.7
	36–40	15	25.0
	41 and above	12	20.0
Academic qualification	MA/MSc English	21	35.0
	MPhil/MS	27	45.0
	PhD	12	20.0
Teaching experience	1–5 years	16	26.7
	6–10 years	23	38.3
	11 years and above	21	35.0
Materials-development training	Yes	19	31.7
	No	41	68.3

Note. f = frequency. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place and may not total exactly 100 within a category.

4. Instrumentation

4.1. Textbook Use, Adaptation and Pedagogical Practices Questionnaire (TUAPQ)

The principal quantitative instrument was the researcher-developed Textbook Use, Adaptation, and Pedagogical Practices Questionnaire (TUAPQ). Item generation drew on the adaptation typology of McDonough et al. (2013), the writing-orientation framework of Hyland (2019), the feedback categories synthesized by Ferris and Hedgcock (2023), and the constraint dimensions reported by Rathert and Cabaroğlu (2022) and Yan and Weng (2026). The instrument comprises nine demographic items and 45 substantive items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = never / strongly disagree, 5 = always / strongly agree), distributed across five subscales:

- Textbook Reliance and Coverage (TRC), 9 items, the degree to which the prescribed book determines what, when, and how writing is taught.
- Adaptation Practices (ADP), 12 items measuring the frequency of specific adaptation operations applied to textbook writing material.
- Writing Pedagogy Orientation (WPO), 10 items that balance product-, process-, and genre-oriented instructional moves.
- Feedback and Assessment Practices (FAP): 8 items on the nature, focus, and timing of response to student writing.
- Constraints on Adaptation (CON), 6 items perceived institutional, temporal, and examination-related limits on adaptation.
- Four items (two in the WPO and two in the FAP) were negatively worded and reverse-scored prior to analysis.

4.2. Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review. The draft instrument was submitted to five experts—three university faculty members in applied linguistics and two experienced secondary-level ESL practitioners—who rated each item for relevance and clarity on a four-point scale. Item-level content validity indices (I-CVI) ranged from .80 to 1.00, and the scale-level index (S-CVI/Ave) was .93, exceeding the conventional .90 threshold. Seven items were reworded, and three were deleted for redundancy, based on expert comments. A pilot study was conducted with 15 ESL teachers who met the inclusion criteria but were not part of the main sample. Pilot data supported the subscale structure and produced acceptable reliability estimates. In the main study, Cronbach's alpha for the full instrument was .93, with subscale alphas ranging from .79 to .91 (Table 2). Corrected item-total correlations exceeded .30 for all retained items. Given the sample size, exploratory factor analysis was not performed; therefore, the subscale structure was theoretically rather than empirically derived, which is acknowledged as a limitation.

4.3. Interview and Observation Protocols

A semi-structured interview guide comprising 14 open-ended questions and associated probes was developed around four areas: the perceived role and authority of textbooks, decision-making about writing tasks, feedback rationale, and constraints and workarounds. The guide was reviewed by two applied linguistics faculty members and trialed with two teachers from the pilot group. Interviews lasted between 32 and 58 minutes ($M = 41$ minutes), were conducted in English with code-switching into Urdu permitted, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. Urdu segments were translated and back-translated by a bilingual colleague to verify their fidelity. A structured non-participant observation schedule recorded, in five-minute intervals, the source of the activity in use (verbatim textbook, adapted textbook, teacher-generated, learner-generated), the phase of writing being addressed (pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, none), and the interactional pattern (teacher-fronted, individual, pair, group). Eight complete writing lessons were observed, four in each sector.

4.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected across a single academic term. Institutional permission was obtained from the heads of the participating institutions, and participants gave written informed consent after being briefed on the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw at any point without consequence, and the measures taken to protect confidentiality. Questionnaires were administered in person where possible and through a secure online form otherwise; 60 usable responses were obtained from 68 distributed instruments, a response rate of 88.2%. In the second phase, 12 teachers were purposively selected for interview to maximize variation across sector, experience band, and adaptation score, and eight of these teachers agreed to lesson observation. Interviews were conducted after observation where both took place so that observed events could be discussed.

4.5. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. Data screening confirmed no missing values exceeding 5% on any item, no univariate outliers beyond ± 3.29 standard deviations after inspection of standardized scores, and skewness and kurtosis values within ± 1.5 , supporting the assumption of approximate normality. Levene's test confirmed the homogeneity of variance for all group comparisons ($p > .05$). For the regression model, tolerance values exceeded .60 and variance inflation factors were below 1.7, indicating no multicollinearity concern, and the Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.94. Descriptive statistics addressed RQ1-RQ3; independent-samples t tests and one-way ANOVA with Tukey's HSD post hoc comparisons addressed RQ4; Pearson product-moment correlations and standard multiple regression addressed RQ5. Effect sizes are reported as Cohen's d for t tests and eta squared for ANOVA. Qualitative data were analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis. Transcripts and observation notes were read repeatedly for familiarization, coded inductively, and organized into candidate themes that were subsequently reviewed against the full data set. Coding was conducted manually and then re-checked by a second coder on 30% of the data, yielding a Cohen's kappa of .82. Trustworthiness was addressed through member checking of summarized interpretations with seven participants, an audit trail of coding decisions, and triangulation across questionnaire, interview, and observation data.

5. Results

5.1. Reliability and Descriptive Overview of the Subscales

Table 2 presents the reliability coefficients and descriptive statistics for the five TUAPQ subscales. Interpretation of mean scores follows the conventional five-point band structure, in which values of 1.00–1.80 indicate a very low level, 1.81–2.60 low, 2.61–3.40 moderate, 3.41–4.20 high, and 4.21–5.00 very high.

Table 2: Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for TUAPQ Subscales (N = 60)

Subscale	k	α	M	SD	Level
Textbook Reliance and Coverage	9	.87	4.02	0.54	High
Adaptation Practices	12	.91	3.31	0.68	Moderate
Writing Pedagogy Orientation	10	.88	3.14	0.71	Moderate
Feedback and Assessment Practices	8	.84	2.96	0.66	Moderate
Constraints on Adaptation	6	.79	3.87	0.59	High
Full instrument	45	.93	3.46	0.51	High

Note. k = number of items; α = Cronbach's alpha. Higher Writing Pedagogy Orientation scores indicate a more process- and genre-oriented approach after reverse scoring.

The profile is internally coherent and pedagogically revealing in nature. Teachers reported high reliance on the prescribed textbook (M = 4.02) and high perceived constraint (M = 3.87), but only moderate adaptation (M = 3.31), moderate movement towards process- and genre-oriented pedagogy (M = 3.14), and the lowest score of all on feedback and assessment practices (M = 2.96). The pattern indicates a system in which the textbook is central, adaptation is present but partial, and response to student writing remains the least developed dimension of the practice.

5.2. RQ1: Extent of Textbook Reliance

Table 3 presents item-level descriptive statistics for the Textbook Reliance and Coverage subscale, ordered by mean.

Table 3: Item-Level Descriptive Statistics for Textbook Reliance and Coverage (N = 60)

Item	M	SD	Rank
The prescribed textbook determines the writing content I teach	4.28	0.61	1
I follow the sequence of writing tasks given in the textbook	4.21	0.66	2
I complete all writing exercises in the textbook during the session	4.13	0.72	3
Textbook model texts are the main input for my writing lessons	4.09	0.70	4
My lesson planning begins from the textbook page	4.02	0.75	5
I use the textbook's writing prompts in classroom assessment	3.98	0.79	6
I depend on the textbook to decide how much writing practice is enough	3.86	0.81	7
I consult supplementary writing resources regularly (reverse)	3.74	0.88	8
I would find it difficult to teach writing without the textbook	3.86	0.90	9

Note. Ranks are based on the unrounded means. The reverse-scored items were presented in their scored direction.

Reliance is highest where the textbook performs a syllabus function determining content, sequence, and coverage, and comparatively lower where it performs a resource function. The two highest-rated items concern content determination and sequence adherence, both above 4.20, indicating very high agreement. Notably, the item concerning completion of all textbook writing exercises within the session (M = 4.13) points to coverage as an organizing principle of practice, a finding elaborated in the qualitative phase.

5.3. RQ2: Adaptation Techniques

Table 4 presents the frequency with which teachers reported applying each adaptation operation to textbook writing materials.

Table 4: Reported Frequency of Adaptation Techniques Applied to Textbook Writing Material

Adaptation technique	M	SD	Rank	Level
Adding extra practice or examples	3.78	0.74	1	High

Adaptation technique	M	SD	Rank	Level
Simplifying language or instructions	3.62	0.79	2	High
Omitting tasks judged unsuitable	3.44	0.86	3	High
Reordering tasks within a unit	3.29	0.83	4	Moderate
Modifying or rewriting a task	3.05	0.88	5	Moderate
Adding scaffolding (outlines, sentence frames)	2.94	0.91	6	Moderate
Replacing a task with a teacher-designed alternative	2.71	0.94	7	Moderate
Localizing content to learners' context	2.58	0.89	8	Low
Extending a task into a multi-draft cycle	2.49	0.92	9	Low
Integrating digital or authentic texts	2.41	0.97	10	Low

Note. Two additional ADP items concerning collaborative adaptation with colleagues and documented adaptation records were reported in the text.

A clear gradient emerges. The three most frequent operations, adding, simplifying, and omitting, share a common property: none of them alters the pedagogical logic of the task. They adjust volume, difficulty, and inclusion. The four least frequent operations, replacing, localizing, extending into drafting cycles, and integrating authentic or digital texts, are precisely those that would reconstitute a reproduction task as a composing task. In other words, adaptation in this sample is real but shallow: teachers modify the surface of the material while preserving its underlying orientation. Two further items reinforce this reading: collaborative adaptation with colleagues was infrequent ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 0.95$), and only eight of 60 teachers reported keeping any record of the adaptations they made ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 0.88$).

5.4. RQ3: Writing Pedagogy and Feedback Practices

Table 5 presents the pedagogical moves that characterize the participants' writing lessons, and Table 6 presents their feedback and assessment practices.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Writing Pedagogy Orientation Items (N = 60)

Item	M	SD	Orientation
Students reproduce model texts from the textbook	4.16	0.68	Product
Writing is taught mainly through textbook exercises	4.05	0.71	Product
Accuracy of grammar and spelling is the main lesson focus	3.92	0.76	Product
Students memories examination-oriented formats	3.81	0.85	Product
I use brainstorming or pre-writing activities	3.02	0.87	Process
I analyse the purpose and audience of a text type	2.74	0.90	Genre
I teach drafting and revising as distinct stages	2.68	0.93	Process
I use genre analysis of textbook model texts	2.55	0.88	Genre
Students write collaboratively in pairs or groups	2.38	0.94	Process
Students engage in structured peer review	2.31	0.96	Process

Note. The orientation labels followed the product–process–genre distinctions outlined by Hyland (2019).

The separation between the two clusters is stark. Every product-oriented item scored above 3.80, while every process- and genre-oriented item scored below 3.05, with a mean gap of approximately 1.35 scale points. The reproduction of textbook models is the single most common instructional move ($M = 4.16$). Collaborative writing and peer review, both strongly supported in the intervention literature (Graham, 2019), are the two least common practices in the entire dataset.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for Feedback and Assessment Practices (N = 60)

Item	M	SD	Rank
I mark all surface errors in student writing	4.11	0.70	1
I award a grade or mark without written comment	3.72	0.83	2
I correct errors directly rather than indicating them	3.58	0.86	3
I comment on content and organization as well as form	2.79	0.89	4
I use an explicit rubric shared with students	2.51	0.92	5
I require students to revise after feedback	2.47	0.95	6
I hold individual writing conferences	2.34	0.90	7
I use self-assessment or reflective checklists	2.16	0.87	8

Note. Higher scores on items 1–3 indicate a greater use of comprehensive, direct, form-focused correction.

Feedback practices mirror pedagogical orientations. Comprehensive marking of surface errors is near universal ($M = 4.11$), direct correction is common ($M = 3.58$), and practices that make feedback consequential for learning, such as requiring revision ($M = 2.47$), conferencing ($M = 2.34$), and self-assessment ($M = 2.16$), are rare. Feedback in this sample is largely terminal rather than formative; it evaluates a finished product rather than feeding into a subsequent draft.

5.5. RQ4: Group Differences

Independent-samples t-tests were used to compare public- and private-sector teachers on the four practice subscales (Table 7).

Table 7: Independent-Samples t Tests Comparing Public and Private Sector Teachers

Subscale	Public M (SD)	Private M (SD)	t(58)	p	d	Result
Reliance	4.15 (0.49)	3.86 (0.55)	2.16	.035	0.56	Significant
Adaptation	3.09 (0.61)	3.58 (0.63)	3.05	.003	0.79	Significant
Pedagogy	2.97 (0.68)	3.35 (0.69)	2.14	.036	0.55	Significant
Feedback	2.84 (0.62)	3.11 (0.68)	1.61	.113	0.42	Not significant
Constraints	4.06 (0.52)	3.64 (0.60)	2.90	.005	0.75	Significant

Note. $n(\text{public}) = 33$ and $n(\text{private}) = 27$. d = Cohen's d ; two-tailed tests; $\alpha = .05$.

Private-sector teachers reported significantly lower reliance, significantly higher adaptation, more process-oriented pedagogy, and significantly lower perceived constraints, with effect sizes ranging from medium to large. Feedback practices did not differ significantly between sectors, a finding of some interest: while private-sector conditions apparently permit greater latitude in what is taught and how, they do not appear to alter how student writing is responded to. This suggests that feedback practice is governed less by institutional flexibility than by shared assumptions about what feedback is for.

A one-way ANOVA examined the differences in adaptation by teaching experience (Table 8).

Table 8: One-Way ANOVA for Adaptation Practices by Teaching Experience

Source	n	M	SD	F(2, 57)	p	η^2
1–5 years	16	3.02	0.59	3.42	.039	.107
6–10 years	23	3.27	0.66			
11 years and above	21	3.58	0.68			

Note. Tukey's HSD post hoc comparison indicated a significant difference between the 1–5 and 11+ year groups (mean difference = 0.56, $p = .031$). Other pairwise comparisons were not significant.

Adaptation increased monotonically with experience, and the effect size ($\eta^2 = .107$) indicates a medium effect. However, the gain was modest in absolute terms: even the most experienced group reached only 3.58, in the lower part of the high band, and post hoc analysis showed that only the extreme groups differed significantly. Experience appears to expand adaptation gradually rather than transformatively. A further independent-samples t-test compared teachers with and without materials-development training. Trained teachers ($n = 19$, $M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.60$) reported significantly higher adaptation than untrained teachers ($n = 41$, $M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.62$), $t(58) = 3.41$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.95$. The effect size is large and exceeds that of both sector and experience, indicating that training is the strongest single group-level differentiator of adaptation behavior in this sample.

5.6. RQ5: Relationships and Prediction

The Pearson product-moment correlations among the five subscales are reported in Table 9.

Table 9: Pearson Correlations Among TUAPQ Subscales (N = 60)

Subscale	1	2	3	4
1. Reliance				
2. Adaptation	-.41**			
3. Pedagogy	-.36**	.58***		
4. Feedback	-.28*	.44***	.51***	
5. Constraints	.33*	-.47***	-.39**	-.35**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Two-tailed.

The correlation matrix is consistent with the conceptual framework. Reliance is negatively associated with adaptation, pedagogy, and feedback quality, while constraint is positively associated with reliance and negatively with all three practice dimensions. The strongest single association is between adaptation and pedagogical orientation ($r = .58$, $p < .001$), indicating that teachers who adapt more also teach writing in a more process- and genre-oriented manner. This is the empirical hinge of the study: adaptation is not a cosmetic variable but travels with substantive pedagogical differences. A standard multiple regression was computed with adaptation practices as the criterion and constraints, reliance, materials training (dummy coded), and experience (in years) as predictors (Table 10).

Table 10: Multiple Regression Predicting Adaptation Practices (N = 60)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	3.94	0.62		6.35	< .001
Perceived constraints	-0.39	0.13	-.34	-3.09	.003
Textbook reliance	-0.30	0.14	-.24	-2.21	.031
Materials training	0.38	0.15	.27	2.53	.014
Teaching experience	0.03	0.01	.21	2.02	.048

Note. $R^2 = .48$, adjusted $R^2 = .44$, $F(4, 55) = 12.68$, $p < .001$. Materials training was coded as 0 = no and 1 = yes. Durbin-Watson = 1.94; all VIF < 1.7.

The model was significant and accounted for 48% of the variance in adaptation practices. All four predictors made significant unique contributions. Perceived constraint was the strongest predictor ($\beta = -.34$), followed by materials training ($\beta = .27$), textbook reliance ($\beta = -.24$), and experience ($\beta = .21$). This ordering is instructive: the largest lever on adaptation is not what teachers know but what they believe they are permitted to do.

5.7. RQ6: Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of 12 interviews and eight lesson observations generated four themes that jointly explained the quantitative pattern.

Theme 1: The Textbook as Syllabus, the Syllabus as Examination

Participants consistently described the textbook not as a resource but as an obligation, whose authority was derived from the examination. Coverage was framed as an accountability requirement rather than a pedagogical judgement. One secondary-level teacher with 14 years of experience explained the situation as follows:

“The paper comes from the book. If I do not finish the book, and a question comes from the last unit, then the parents will ask, the head will ask, and I have no answer. So first I finish, then I think about method.” (T4, public, 14 years)

The sequencing in that final sentence first covered the method that recurred across interviews and accounted for the very high reliance means in Table 3. Nine of the 12 interviewees explicitly linked textbook fidelity to examination format, and six described writing as the section of the paper that was most amenable to preparation through memorized models.

Theme 2: Silent Adaptation

Teachers adapted more than they initially claimed, but they did not name it adaptation and did not record it. Observations revealed simplification of instructions, oral scaffolding, translation into Urdu, and the substitution of local topics for textbook topics, none of which the participants had listed when first asked what they changed. As one teacher put it:

“Change? No, I teach the book as it is. Of course, I explain in Urdu, and I give them my own outline for the essay because the book’s outline is too difficult. But that is not changing the book, that is only helping them.” (T9, public, 7 years)

This theme has methodological and substantive significance. It suggests that self-report instruments may underestimate adaptation frequency while accurately capturing adaptation depth, since the unreported behaviors were themselves surface-level. It also indicates that adaptation is not conceptualized by teachers as a professional practice with a name, rationale, and record, which helps explain the very low score on documented adaptation ($M = 1.92$).

Theme 3: Writing as Product, Error as the Unit of Response

Across the eight observed lessons, textbook-derived activity occupied 78% of coded instructional time; pre-writing activity accounted for 6%, revision for 4%, and peer interaction for 3%. In six of the eight lessons the writing task was assigned for completion at home and no drafting occurred in class. Feedback, where discussed, was construed almost exclusively as correction:

“If I leave one mistake unmarked, the student thinks it is correct, and next time he will repeat it. My duty is to show every mistake.” (T2, private, 5 years)

Only two participants described any practice of returning writing for revision, and both framed it as exceptional rather than routine. The construal of feedback as an exhaustive audit of error, rather than as input to a further draft, is consistent with the very low scores on revision and conferencing in Table 6 and the absence of a sector difference on feedback in Table 7.

Theme 4: Constrained Agency and the Wish to Do Otherwise

Almost all interviewees articulated a pedagogical vision that was at odds with their reported practice. Teachers described wanting to run drafting cycles, use authentic materials, and give substantive commentary, and then described the conditions that made this unworkable: class sizes above 50, four to six contact periods daily, examination formats that did not reward process, and administrative monitoring focused on syllabus pace.

“I know what good writing teaching looks like. I did it in my MPhil. However, with 62 students and 45 minutes, if I collect two drafts from each one, when will I read them? The wish is there. The room is not there.” (T11, public, 9 years)

Notably, the three interviewees who reported the highest adaptation scores were all from private institutions with smaller classes and, in two cases, had attended materials development workshops. Their accounts differed less in belief than in perceived permission, corroborating the regression finding that constraints, rather than knowledge, are the dominant predictors of adaptation.

6. Discussion

This study set out to establish how ESL teachers in Punjab use and adapt the prescribed textbook when teaching writing, what pedagogical practices accompany that use, and what predicts adaptation behavior. Four findings deserve an extended interpretation.

6.1. Reliance Is High Because the Textbook Performs a Governance Function

The reliance mean of 4.02 is high, but the item-level pattern is more informative than the aggregate. Reliance peaks on items concerning content determination, sequence, and completion, and falls on items concerning supplementary resources. This is the signature of a textbook functioning as a syllabus and an accountability instrument rather than as a teaching resource. The qualitative data make the mechanism explicit: because examination items are drawn from the book, coverage becomes a defensible professional obligation, and any deviation becomes a risk borne by the individual teacher. This interpretation aligns closely with Rathert and Cabaroğlu's (2022) argument that the master-slave relation to the coursebook is produced by institutional positioning rather than by individual disposition, and with Yan and Weng's (2026) finding that teachers working with mandated textbooks describe their agency in terms of what may be added rather than what may be removed. The present data extend that account by showing that the addition-only pattern is not merely a discourse about agency but is measurable in the ranking of adaptation techniques: adding ranked first ($M = 3.78$) while replacing ($M = 2.71$) and extending ($M = 2.49$) ranked seventh and ninth.

6.2. Adaptation Is Real but Shallow

The moderate adaptation mean conceals a systematic asymmetry. Operations that adjust the quantity, difficulty, or ordering of material were frequent; operations that alter the cognitive and communicative demand of a task were rare. This distinction between surface and deep adaptation matters because only the latter can compensate for the well-documented limitations of the textbooks themselves. If a textbook writing task asks learners to reproduce a model letter and a teacher simplifies the instructions, adds two more examples, and omits one item, the learner still reproduces a model letter. The pedagogical experience remains unchanged. This finding both confirms and refines prior work. Bosompem (2021) and Nurhayati et al. (2024) reported similarly narrow adaptation repertoires in Ghanaian and Indonesian contexts, respectively, and Zhang et al. (2024) identified profiles differentiated primarily by belief about coursebook authority. The refinement offered here is skill-specific: adaptation depth appears especially consequential for writing, because writing pedagogy is defined by procedure (planning, drafting, revising, responding) rather than by content, and procedure is exactly what surface adaptation leaves untouched. A teacher can adapt a reading text substantially by changing its topic; a teacher cannot make a writing task process-oriented by changing its topic. Theme 2 adds an important qualification. Teachers adapted more than they reported and did not label what they did as adaptation. This resonates with Carabantes's (2024) contention that materials work remains professionally invisible in teacher education, and with Morady Moghaddam and Parsaiyan's (2025) analysis of appropriation as a scaffolded, learnable capacity. Where adaptation lacks a professional vocabulary, it also lacks criteria, planning, evaluation, and transferability, and remains an improvised response to immediate difficulty rather than a designed intervention.

6.3. Writing Pedagogy Reproduces the Textbook's Implicit Theory of Writing

The gap of approximately 1.35 scale points between product- and process-oriented items, together with observation data showing that textbook-derived activity occupied 78% of instructional time and revision only 4%, indicates that classroom writing instruction largely instantiates the model of writing embedded in the textbook. This model treats writing as the accurate reproduction of a known form. It is precisely the model that L2 writing scholarship has repeatedly found insufficient (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023; Hyland, 2019), and it excludes the practices with the strongest evidence base: strategy instruction, collaborative writing, goal setting, and formative feedback (Graham, 2019). The feedback findings are the sharpest illustration. Comprehensive marking of all surface errors was near-universal ($M = 4.11$), while requiring revision after feedback was rare ($M = 2.47$). Feedback under these conditions cannot function formatively regardless of its quality because there is no subsequent draft in which it can be enacted. The literature on written corrective feedback has for two decades debated focus and explicitness (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Kang & Han, 2022; Karim & Nassaji, 2020), but that debate presupposes a revision cycle. Where no cycle exists, the more consequential question is not whether feedback should be comprehensive or focused but whether it enters the learner's writing process at all. The absence of a significant sector difference on feedback (Table 7) sharpens this point. Private-sector teachers, who enjoyed greater latitude on every other dimension, responded to writing in essentially the same way as their public-sector colleagues. Feedback practice therefore appears to be governed by a shared professional construal that responding to writing means auditing errors rather than institutional constraints. If so, it is amenable to change through professional learning in a way that class size and examination format are not.

6.4. Constraint Outweighs Knowledge as a Predictor of Adaptation

The regression model accounted for 48% of the variance in adaptation, with perceived constraint being the strongest predictor. Materials-development training was the second strongest, and the training group difference was large ($d = 0.95$). Read together with Theme 4, in which teachers articulated pedagogical visions they could not enact, this suggests that adaptation in this system is limited more by permission than by capability. The policy implication is that training alone will produce limited returns. A teacher who leaves a workshop knowing how to build a three-draft cycle and who then returns to 62 students, six

daily periods, a monitored syllabus timeline, and an examination that rewards memorized formats will revert. Tajeddin and Asadnia (2024) demonstrated that collaborative reflection can shift teacher identity towards materials development, but their participants worked in conditions that permitted enactment. The present findings indicate that in high-constraint systems, professional development and structural reform must be paired: the former supplies capacity, and the latter supplies room. At the same time, the significant effects of training and experience indicate that constraint is not wholly deterministic. Teachers with training adapted substantially more within the same system, and adaptation increased with experience. Constraint sets the boundary; professional resources determine how much of the available space is actually used.

7. Conclusion

This study examined the textbook use, adaptation practices, and writing pedagogy of 60 ESL teachers in Punjab, Pakistan, through an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The findings describe a coherent system rather than a set of isolated deficiencies. Teachers rely heavily on the prescribed textbook because the textbook functions as a syllabus and examination source; they adapt it moderately but shallowly, favoring operations that preserve the pedagogical logic of the original task; their writing instruction is consequently product-oriented, and their feedback is terminal rather than formative; and their adaptation behavior is predicted most strongly by perceived constraints, followed by materials-development training, textbook reliance, and experience, which together explain 48% of the variance. The central contribution is the distinction between adaptation frequency and adaptation depth, and the demonstration that this distinction matters most acutely for writing. Because writing pedagogy is constituted by procedure rather than content, surface adaptation cannot generate process-oriented instruction, no matter how frequently it is performed. Interventions that aim only to increase how often teachers adapt will therefore leave classroom writing instruction substantially unchanged. What is required is a shift in the type of adaptation teachers are equipped and permitted to perform. The study also shows that the teachers in this sample are not pedagogically uninformed. They articulated defensible visions of good writing instruction and identified with precision the conditions preventing enactment. Their practice is best understood as a rational adaptation to an incentive structure, not as a knowledge deficit. This reframing matters for policy: the productive question is not how to persuade teachers to teach writing differently but how to build a system in which teaching writing well is institutionally survivable.

8. Recommendations for Further Research

- A larger multi-province survey with confirmatory factor analysis to validate the TUAPQ structure and permit population-level inferences.
- Longitudinal intervention research testing whether material adaptation training produces a sustained change in adaptation depth under unchanged institutional constraints.
- Classroom-based studies linking adaptation depth to measured gains in learners' writing quality, using rated writing samples rather than teacher reports.
- Comparative analysis of examination formats and their washback on writing pedagogy across boards to test the incentive explanation advanced here.
- Design-based research developing and trialling textbook writing units with process architecture embedded in printed material.
- Investigation of the role of generative AI tools in materials adaptation, given the low current integration reported here ($M = 2.41$) and the rapid change in their availability.

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