

Comparison from the South: Teaching Pakistani and Bangladeshi Anglophone Writing in University English Studies

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how Pakistani and Bangladeshi Anglophone writing is positioned, taught and received in university English studies. Despite their shared British colonial history and the partitions of 1947 and 1971, the two traditions differ in terms of language politics, international visibility and curricular status, and these differences have been overlooked in scholarship. The analysis is conducted in two ways: documentary analysis of curricular and policy documents, and interpretive synthesis of literary-critical and pedagogical literature. The study yields four findings: the prevailing Anglo-normativity of English departments; the divergent status of English, shaped by the 1952 Language Movement in Bangladesh and by contestation over an inherited canon in Pakistan; the convergence on themes of partition, migration, hybridity, and representation in post-9/11 contexts; and the conditional value of dialogic and culturally responsive pedagogies. The article elaborates on the idea of “comparison from the South” and suggests that reading the two traditions against each other, rather than against a metropolitan norm, reveals the geopolitics of literary recognition. Implications for curriculum design, faculty development and classroom research are outlined.



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INTRODUCTION

English literature was introduced to South Asia as a tool of colonial rule. Beginning with Macaulay's 1835 Minute, English was taught to produce subjects who would internalise metropolitan cultural authority; as Viswanathan (1989) demonstrates, the discipline was consolidated in India first and then in England. Its institutional structures (the chronological survey, the canon of “great” authors, the apparatus of critical appreciation) continued to be transmitted more or less unchanged to the new states after 1947. In Pakistan, the English department has been popularly perceived as “aesthetically autonomous, innocuous, and apolitical”, but it has historico-political dimensions that need to be addressed if it is to fulfil a progressive local role (Khan & Raza, 2020).

This confrontation has become imperative. Calls to decolonise the university have made the diversification of reading lists a central demand; however, critics point out that this is not enough if the study of literature remains conceived, taught and valued in a Eurocentric manner (Bhambra et al., 2018; Quayson & Mukherjee, 2023). When postcolonial writing is omitted, students have no vocabulary for dealing with the colonial legacies that shape their own societies.

The problem is particularly acute in Pakistan and Bangladesh. In 1947, Pakistan was created from the Muslim-majority areas of British India, and in 1971 Bangladesh separated from its eastern wing. Both have significant bodies of English writing that are influenced by partition, by the dismemberment of 1971 and by the consequences of 11 September 2001, yet their trajectories differ. While Pakistani writing in English gained international recognition after 9/11 through writers such as Mohsin Hamid,

Mohammed Hanif, Nadeem Aslam and Kamila Shamsie (Gopal, 2016; Kanwal, 2015), Bangladeshi writing in English “has not received the scholarly attention or the recognition it deserves”, even though colonial Bengal was one of the earliest centres of English education (Quayum & Hasan, 2018). This asymmetry is most readily understood when the two traditions are compared.

An additional asymmetry compounds the first. The idea of South Asia is routinely reduced to India (Ray, 2013), and the Pakistani novel in English is submerged under the Indian (Cilano, 2013). Pakistan and Bangladesh are thus doubly marginalised: as non-Western literatures in the context of an Anglo-normative curriculum, and as non-Indian literatures in the context of South Asian studies. Teaching them together therefore enters into the politics of representation that shapes how the region is known.

The article looks at three questions. First, what is the status of Pakistani and Bangladeshi Anglophone writing in university English studies, and what circumstances determine its inclusion? Second, what are the continuities and differences between the two traditions when they are read comparatively? Third, how, and under what circumstances, can pedagogical strategies help students engage critically with these texts?

It responds to them by constructing a framework of “comparison from the South” that encourages a mutually illuminating reading of the two traditions rather than treating them as supplements to the metropolitan canon.

Viswanathan's (1989) account of literary study as a weapon of colonialism remains foundational, and Ngũgĩ (1986) extended the critique to the medium of instruction. Contributors to Quayson and Mukherjee (2023) report that postcolonial English departments kept to the practice of conducting surveys of English literature long after independence, whereas in Pakistan, the discipline has only recently been historicised (Hassan & Raza, 2023; Khan & Raza, 2020).

Two reformist positions can be distinguished: one focusing on diversification through the development of regional literatures, their translations, and voices from the Global South; the other holding that diversification alone is insufficient unless accompanied by epistemological change, as “literature”, “comparison” and “aesthetics” have imperial histories (Bhambra et al., 2018; Spivak, 2003). The findings of a recent study, whose design is thinly reported, are therefore indicative: institutions mostly retain Eurocentric reading lists, the postcolonial texts included are mostly organised around resistance, hybridity and identity, and decolonial classrooms improve engagement, while untrained teachers, bureaucratic inertia and scarce resources obstruct change (Hussain & Aslam, 2025).

These reforms are accompanied by a sense of unease. Because access to English “still remains tied to class identity, social power and cultural privilege,” Roy (2014) tells of college teachers in India who embrace the unfettering of literary study but foreclose political questions when teaching grammar. The decolonising project therefore runs up against students' utilitarian expectations of English as a vehicle of mobility.

Pakistani writing in English is, in fact, older than its visibility after 2001. Rahman (1991) traced its development from the late colonial period, and Ahmed Ali, Zulfikar Ghose and Bapsi Sidhwa consolidated the tradition; Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* (1988) remains a widely taught partition novel. Cilano (2013) reads Pakistani novels in English as probes of “idea, nation, state” that challenge official histories of 1947, 1971, Islamisation and the post-9/11 crisis, and Kanwal and Aslam's (2019) *Routledge Companion* consolidated the field.

The event of 9/11, however, proved decisive for its reception. Anjaria (2018) reads Hamid, Hanif and Shamsie as offering alternative visions of Pakistan's global position against the dominant vision of 9/11, while O'Gorman (2015) reads *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), *The Wasted Vigil* (2008) and *Burnt Shadows* (2009) as deliberately globalised works that operate within and against the market; Singh (2012) and Khan (2013) read the tradition as a decentring of 9/11 and a transnational telling of Pakistan. However, this visibility is double-edged: as Gopal (2016) recalls, Bina Shah remarked that the “most dangerous country on earth” is an exciting place to be a writer, implicating the market in a violence-centred image of the region.

The major interpretive category has been hybridity, manifested in analyses of code-switching and the restructuring of English as local English (Kanwal, 2015), which is read as a localising force on global English and a disruption of its claim to neutrality; Mahboob's (2009) analysis of the localised meanings of Pakistani English offers a linguistic counterpart.

English writing in Bangladesh is a very different story. Quayum and Hasan (2018) describe the irony of a tradition which, although rooted in one of the earliest centres of colonial education, has been

overlooked, yet is gaining new momentum in the British diaspora and at home. Quayum (2025) attributes this neglect in part to the conflicts over language, religion, ethnicity and competing nationalisms that followed independence.

The birth of Bangladeshi poetry in English is usually dated to the 1970s, with early collections including Razia Khan's *Argus Under Anaesthesia* (1976) and *Cruel April* (1977) and Kaiser Haq's *Starting Lines* (1978) (Dhar & Biswas, 2016). Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) placed the tradition on the map of the New English Literatures (Dhar & Biswas, 2016; Saaz, 2022), and a canon of novelists including Adib Khan, Manzu Islam, Zia Haider Rahman and Tahmima Anam has since emerged (Salma, 2024).

Critics locate its distinctive contribution in its language politics. Anam (2018) states that Bangladeshi Anglophone literature “throws a wrench” into Global Anglophone discourse because Bangladesh's independence movement emphasised the importance of linguistic identity over religious identity, and English can here defy the erasure of one non-metropolitan language (Bangla) by another (Urdu). The diasporic strand has been read through the politics of home: Hasanat (2017) shows home, religion, war and memory to be in perpetual flux in Rahman, Anam and Ali, while Ranasinha (2016) reads Anam and Ali alongside Shamsie, Desai and Lahiri, a rare reading together of Pakistani and Bangladeshi writers. Islam (2026) explores how Ali, Rahman and Anam are categorised and taught in Bangladesh and beyond.

Abdul-Jabbar (2014) notes that teachers tend to shun postcolonial literature due to problems of text selection and of correcting students' preconceptions. Difficulty is also affective: Conradie and Brooks (2015) demonstrate how students cope with “difficult knowledge” related to racism in ways which safeguard their existing self-understandings. There is no automatic connection between exposure to postcolonial texts and critical consciousness.

The research is underpinned by two theories of pedagogy. Freire's (1970/2000) critique of “banking” education drives research on dialogic teaching, which Halabi (2022) finds beneficial in higher education, provided it is adapted to the local context. The conditions for engaging diverse texts are described in culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995), and how texts affirm identity and open onto other lives is described in Bishop's (1990) figure of literature as “mirrors” and “windows”. Both frameworks derive mostly from North American schools, a limitation addressed in Section 3.

Debate in comparative and world literature revolves around circulation and hierarchy. World literature can be defined as texts that circulate outside their culture of origin, as Damrosch (2003) puts it, or, as Casanova (2004) argues, as an unequal space of symbolic capital in which peripheral writers gain recognition via metropolitan consecration. Huggan (2001) and Brouillette (2007) describe the commodification of difference in the postcolonial marketplace, while Mufti (2016) connects world literature to an English and Orientalist-driven ordering system and the Warwick Research Collective (WReC, 2015) links it to a combined and unevenly developed world-system. Damrosch and Spivak (2011) consider the danger of deracinated teaching and Radhakrishnan (2009) mentions that comparison always assumes a standard.

These debates have a particular significance for South Asianists. The greatest limitation of postcolonial literary studies is its focus on Anglophone literatures, according to Ray (2013). A comparison of two Anglophone traditions must therefore remain sensitive to what it does not consider, most especially the Bengali and Urdu literary traditions of which they are a part.

Three gaps follow. First, scholarship on the two traditions has developed in parallel: major studies of Pakistani writing (Cilano, 2013; Kanwal, 2015; Kanwal & Aslam, 2019) and Bangladeshi writing (Quayum & Hasan, 2018; Salma, 2024) are national in scope, and the traditions intersect only in thematic surveys (Ranasinha, 2016) or studies on partition across languages (Zaman, 1999), rather than in analysis of teaching. Second, pedagogical research is also national: while curricular critique in Pakistan (Hassan & Raza, 2023; Khan & Raza, 2020; Manan & Kubra, 2022) rarely engages with literature or with research elsewhere, the same is true of language-in-education research in Bangladesh (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Hamid & Erling, 2016; Hamid et al., 2013). Third, world-literature theory rarely compares two peripheries; it explains differences in the visibility of peripheral literatures relative to the metropole (Casanova, 2004; Huggan, 2001). This article addresses a gap, as no study has yet examined the curricular positioning and pedagogy of Pakistani and Bangladeshi Anglophone writing.

The study is anchored in three interlocking formations: postcolonial theory, the comparative and world-literature debate, and critical and culturally responsive pedagogy. It is their articulation, rather than any one alone, that furnishes the analytical vocabulary for the comparison.

In order to understand how the Pakistani and Bangladeshi texts are framed for Western readers since 9/11, it is important to refer to Said's (1978) criticism of Orientalism. The reception of both traditions has been shaped by Bhabha's (1994) ideas of hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry and the "third space", which describe how colonial authority is both reproduced and destabilised. In this study, hybridity is not an ultimate destination but a process of negotiation structured by power; because hybridity-centred readings can abstract textual play from material conditions (WReC, 2015), it is read alongside the institutional and market conditions of production and teaching.

The second axis is the language axis. The debate about Anglophone literatures is structured by Ngũgĩ's (1986) argument that writing in the coloniser's language is a form of mental colonisation, as well as by the counter-position that English can be remade; both are complicated by the Bangladeshi case, because the formation of the country was spurred by resistance to Urdu and not English, and thus English serves as a third term (Anam, 2018). Spivak (2003) and Mufti (2016) write on languages of the global South and English as the medium of world literature, respectively, setting the study's double agenda: to attend seriously to literature written in English while marking what an Anglophone frame excludes.

Comparing two peripheral traditions can reveal the logic of the metropolitan routing of recognition described by Casanova (2004) and Huggan (2001).

We term the resulting orientation comparison from the South. The object of reading is not Pakistani and Bangladeshi writing measured against a metropolitan norm, but the differences between the two in language politics, diasporic trajectory and market position. It is not an attempt to escape the metropole; instead, it is a methodological choice to consider the metropole as an object to be studied and not as the default standard of comparison to be taken for granted. This approach extends WReC's (2015) account of an unequal world-system, and it thematises the excluded Bengali and Urdu literatures in reply to Ray's (2013) critique.

Dialogic method finds its justification in Freire's (1970/2000) description of dialogue as a cooperative process of knowing. Culturally relevant pedagogy is grounded in academic achievement and the development of cultural competence and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and Gay (2018) extends this to culturally responsive teaching that draws on students' cultural knowledge as a resource. Bishop's (1990) metaphor of mirror and window helps to describe the two-sided nature of texts: those that mirror students' experiences and those that open onto other people's experiences.

Two adaptations are needed. First, these frameworks presuppose minoritised students in majority-culture classrooms, whereas Pakistani and Bangladeshi students belong to the majority culture and are "othered" by the curriculum. Second, culturally responsive teaching should be able to manage internal differences of class, language of instruction, region, religion and gender: an Anglophone text could be a mirror for an English-medium, middle-class student and a window, or wall, for a Bangla- or Urdu-medium student.

The core idea of the framework is that the pedagogical potential of Pakistani and Bangladeshi Anglophone writing is realised only when texts are used to enter into the cultural and linguistic worlds of readers, discussion is dialogic rather than transmissive, and comparative approaches reveal the linguistic, institutional and market relations that shape the literatures and the institutions that teach them.

RESEARCH METHODS

Design

The study adopts a qualitative comparative case design that involves documentary analysis of curricular and policy sources as well as an interpretative synthesis of literary-critical and pedagogical literature. The two national contexts are analysed as cases and the unit of analysis is the curricular and pedagogical positioning of each country's Anglophone writing in university English studies. Documents were read critically and treated as products of particular institutions and purposes, rather than as neutral records (Bowen, 2009).

Corpus and selection

The corpus was selected purposively. Sources were included if they (a) reviewed English curricula or language-in-education policy in Pakistan or Bangladesh, (b) provided a sustained critical or historical evaluation of either country's English writing, or (c) discussed dialogic and culturally responsive pedagogy or the teaching of postcolonial literature in English. Articles, monographs and edited volumes were included, with preference given to peer-reviewed sources and with doctoral theses admitted where they provided otherwise missing policy analysis. Sources pertaining to India alone were excluded unless they provided theoretical frameworks. Table 1 summarizes the corpus.

Table 1. Composition of the Analytical Corpus

Category	Pakistan	Bangladesh
Curricular and policy analysis	Hassan & Raza (2023); Khan & Raza (2020); Manan & Kubra (2022); Rahman (1996)	Chowdhury & Kabir (2014); Hamid & Erling (2016); Hamid et al. (2013); Hopkyns et al. (2024); Nur (2019); Shahed (2022)
Literary history and criticism	Anjaria (2018); Cilano (2013); Gopal (2016); Kanwal (2015); Kanwal & Aslam (2019); Khan (2013); O'Gorman (2015); Rahman (1991); Singh (2012)	Anam (2018); Dhar & Biswas (2016); Hasanat (2017); Islam (2026); Quayum (2025); Quayum & Hasan (2018); Saaz (2022); Salma (2024)
Comparative and cross-national	Ranasinha (2016); Zaman (1999); Zaman (2025)	(shared)
Pedagogy and reception	Abdul-Jabbar (2014); Conradie & Brooks (2015); Halabi (2022); Hussain & Aslam (2025); Roy (2014)	(shared)

Analytical procedure

The analysis proceeded in three steps. First, the documents were descriptively coded for references to (a) the British literary tradition, (b) the South Asian Anglophone literary tradition, (c) national-language literatures, and (d) the role of English (literary, instrumental or identity-related). Second, coded material from both cases was compared through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by grouping codes into candidate themes, reviewing them against the corpus, revising the themes and giving them names, and discarding those themes that were not found in both cases. Third, the literary-critical and pedagogical literatures were read together in order to reach conditional propositions about teaching rather than prescriptions.

Interpretive safeguards and reflexivity

Two safeguards were applied. Neither tradition was treated as normative, and each finding was examined through the lens of the other tradition (Radhakrishnan, 2009). Because postcolonial studies tends to render South Asia legible only in English (Ray, 2013), the analysis also recorded what an Anglophone comparison omits.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis yielded four themes: the first two register divergence in the conditions of teaching, the third convergence in the literatures, and the fourth pedagogy.

Anglo-normativity and the marginal position of South Asian Anglophone texts

The most consistent result is that Anglo-normativity remains a feature of both systems. Analysis of the erstwhile MA (English) programmes of public-sector universities in Pakistan indicates curricula based on English literature, although departments are beginning to respond to the global standing of new literatures in English (Hassan & Raza, 2023). This change is not uniform and is hampered by the department's apolitical image (Khan & Raza, 2020).

There is a parallel but different dynamic in Bangladesh. The National Education Policy 2010 made English a compulsory course in colleges and universities and a medium of higher education along with Bangla; however, the focus of the policy is primarily on English as a skill rather than as a site of literary study (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Hamid & Erling, 2016). The policy trajectory is described by Nur (2019) as non-linear and incongruent – apparently egalitarian, yet prescriptive and silent on certain key questions. English is thus used predominantly as a gateway to social mobility. Islam's (2026)

observation that Ali, Rahman and Anam are taught variously as diasporic, postcolonial or South Asian writers indicates that if Bangladeshi Anglophone writing does appear in a syllabus, it does not have a clear, consolidated curricular category.

The comparison thus shows two routes to the same marginality: in the Pakistani case, an inherited literary canon takes up the centre in the curriculum, while in the Bangladeshi case, English is conceived as a policy tool rather than a literary field. Both are exacerbated by the India-centredness of the field in which these traditions would be inserted (Ray, 2013).

Divergent language politics and their pedagogical afterlife

The second theme is about divergent language politics. Bangladesh's founding event is linguistic: when the Pakistani state tried to impose the Urdu language as the sole national language, the students of East Bengal rallied in defence of Bangla, and the bullets fired by the police at the demonstrators in Dhaka on 21 February 1952 marked the symbolic birth of Bengali nationalism. In 1956, Bengali was recognised as a state language, and the movement helped lay the foundations of the independence struggle of 1971 (Rahman, 1996; van Schendel, 2009).

This history has cast a long shadow over English. After independence, English was officially designated a foreign language but retained an “uncanny prestige” (Hopkins et al., 2024): English-medium schools continued to exist through the patronage of elites, reinforcing a dichotomy between the private English-medium education and the public Bangla-medium education. In the field of higher education, the public–private dichotomy is manifested in the medium of instruction, and students and teachers build hierarchies of languages and institutions that reinforce the dichotomy (Hamid et al., 2013). Shahed (2022) accordingly describes this situation as unresolved, with English a source of both prestige and resentment.

The language question in Pakistan takes a different form. The early promotion of Urdu as a unifying national language had the opposite effect, and Urdu and English have since coexisted in a stratified arrangement, with English as the language of power and elite education (Rahman, 1996). The debate around literature study has thus focused on content rather than medium: whether to transmit an Anglo-normative canon or to “reclaim the indigenous/local knowledge(s)” (Manan & Kubra, 2022). Manan and Kubra's analysis of the removal of a colonial-era text from provincial syllabi shows that students themselves are calling for change.

The cases are, accordingly, instructive. In Bangladesh, the tension is between Bangla and English as two competing media of identity, while prestigious Anglophone literature is shadowed by the linguistic nationalism that is the basis of the nation. In Pakistan, it lies between an inherited canon and an emergent indigenous formation, framed as a question of content. The teaching of Bangladeshi writing in English, then, must negotiate the charge that English devalues Bangla; the teaching of Pakistani writing in English must negotiate the assumption that “English literature” means the literature of England. Anam (2018) and Cilano (2013) demonstrate the ways in which Anglophone writing can complement rather than displace national-language literature.

Thematic convergence: partition, migration, hybridity and post-9/11 representation

The third theme is thematic convergence. Partition is central to Pakistani fiction, which returns repeatedly to 1947 and 1971 as fundamental ruptures (Cilano, 2013), while Bangladeshi literature is influenced by 1971 and its afterlives of memory and migration (Quayum & Hasan, 2018; Salma, 2024). Partition is a shared inheritance which is divided among the national literary histories, as revealed in Zaman's (1999) research on partition novels in English, Bengali and Urdu.

The second shared complex is migration. In Pakistani fiction, the idea of home is transnational, and 9/11 is a marker that prompts readers to consider the Pakistani home beyond its traditional scope (Kanwal, 2015; Khan, 2013); in Bangladeshi fiction, home is politicised (Hasanat, 2017) and the stereotype of the Bengali Muslim migrant as a failure of multiculturalism is challenged (Salma, 2024). Both reject assimilationist narratives.

Hybridity is the third complex. In Pakistani fiction, code-switching localises global English and makes it less neutral (Kanwal, 2015; Mahboob, 2009); in Bangladeshi writing, English is triangulated with Bangla and Urdu so that it can resist the erasure of one non-metropolitan language by another (Anam, 2018). Both make use of English as a contested space, in line with Bhabha's (1994) representation of the ambivalent reinscription of colonial authority. However, the comparison qualifies

celebratory readings: there are differences in what hybridity does, due to the differing political histories of the other languages that are mixed with English.

The fourth complex is the post-9/11 reconfiguration of global perception. It is the dominant frame for Pakistani writing (Anjaria, 2018; Gopal, 2016; Singh, 2012), and it operates in Bangladeshi writing through the figure of the Muslim migrant in Britain, which is shaped by Brick Lane and the novels of Zia Haider Rahman and Tahmima Anam (Hasanat, 2017; Salma, 2024). Both traditions set complexity against stereotype, but, as Huggan (2001) would predict, they do so in a market that demands a certain legibility of difference.

Dialogic engagement, cultural relevance and student identity

Two conditions must be fulfilled for effective teaching, and three constraints apply.

The first is dialogic rather than transmissive teaching. Abdul-Jabbar (2014) calls for moving students together from prior knowledge, through an informed reality, into the world of the text; Freire (1970/2000) views teacher and students as co-investigators; Halabi (2022) affirms the importance of dialogic teaching in higher education and emphasises local adaptation. A transmissive model is problematic when material on partition and migration is emotionally charged, because it can perpetuate the authority relationships that the texts critique.

The second condition is cultural relevance. Drawing on students' cultural knowledge helps to engage students and stimulate critical consciousness (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995), and Bishop's (1990) mirror-and-window approach resonates with literature's ability to mirror and extend students' worlds. Pakistani and Bangladeshi Anglophone writing can serve as a mirror for students whose histories are absent from their existing syllabus, as the student reactions documented by Manan and Kubra (2022) suggest. Comparison also offers a reciprocal window, with each country's novels shedding light on the other's history.

There are three constraints that qualify these conditions. First, students may handle difficult knowledge in ways that preserve established self-understandings (Conradie & Brooks, 2015), especially regarding 1971, which is remembered quite differently in the two countries. Second, culturally responsive teaching needs to be informed by knowledge about students' identities, which cannot be assumed even within a common nationality given the existence of strong internal differences resulting from class, medium of schooling and region (Gay, 2018; Hamid et al., 2013). Third, untrained teachers, bureaucratic inertia and lack of resources hinder decolonial change (Hussain & Aslam, 2025). Neither the dialogic method nor the selection of the right text suffices on its own.

Discussion

The comparative payoff: the geopolitics of literary recognition

Read separately, Pakistani Anglophone fiction appears a success story of postcolonial world literature and Bangladeshi writing in English a case of unjust neglect. Read together, they reveal a geopolitics of attention: traditions shaped by the same structural forces are visible or invisible not because of literary quality. In comparison to fiction from Pakistan, which could be made readable to the world through the prism of the "War on Terror", Bangladeshi writing remained comparatively less visible, lacking an equivalent geopolitical trigger despite its earlier colonial-era foundations (Gopal, 2016; Quayum & Hasan, 2018).

This lends specificity to accounts of metropolitan consecration and the marketing of difference (Brouillette, 2007; Casanova, 2004; Huggan, 2001). Consecration is not just from centre to periphery, but it works in a selective manner among the peripheries based on their linkage with Western security agendas. Although Bangladeshi writing did become visible through Brick Lane, it did so via a different agenda: British anxieties regarding multiculturalism and Muslim migration (Hasanat, 2017; Salma, 2024). To be visible in the world's literature is thus a consequence of alignment with metropolitan concerns rather than a neutral measure of literary value.

The pedagogical implication is direct. Students taught only one tradition (the Pakistani) may internalise the market's implicit hierarchy, while students taught only the other (the Bangladeshi) may fail to grasp the frame that shows the operations of the market. Teaching both makes the geopolitics of recognition an object of study, which is vital to postcolonial teaching (Abdul-Jabbar, 2014).

Comparison from the South and the critique of world literature

The second contribution of the study is the analytical value of comparison from the South. The recognition of non-Western literatures is mediated by English while the recognition of world literature is mediated by the metropole (Casanova, 2004; Mufti, 2016). In reading two non-metropolitan traditions against each other, the comparison is not a normative one in which the metropole is the norm, but rather one that exposes the metropole as the force distributing recognition. Comparison from the South is thus not an escape from the world-system but a way of reading its unevenness from below (WReC, 2015).

The comparison nonetheless remains Anglophone, and Ray's (2013) cautionary note holds true. The appropriate response is to situate rather than reject it, and to treat the absence of Bengali and Urdu literatures as a finding about the condition of English studies. Translation is one option: Spivak (2003) demands that comparison be in the South's languages, while Zaman (2025) demonstrates that translation from the mother tongues to English is pervasive in the subcontinent and fraught with problems of loss and power. A decolonial classroom, therefore, would combine translated Bengali and Urdu texts with texts in English and would make translation itself a subject of discussion, as Zaman (1999) models.

Language politics and the pedagogical predicament

The differences in language politics have further implications. The Language Movement of 1952 in Bangladesh introduced a new perspective on national identity, basing it on linguistic identity, which in turn made teaching English literature a charged activity. The Anglophone literature classroom is also a space of class stratification, since medium of schooling correlates with class (Hamid et al., 2013; Hopkyns et al., 2024), and Bangladeshi writing in English is both a national accomplishment and a possible indicator of elite privilege.

The Pakistani case presents the inverse situation: the student-driven demand for changes to curriculum content (Manan & Kubra, 2022) has not affected the social role of English as the language of power (Rahman, 1996).

Both cases raise the contradiction Roy (2014) identifies between the utilitarian need to learn English as a means of mobility and the critical project of decolonising the study of literature. Anglophone writing from Pakistan and Bangladesh is well suited to achieving both goals, as it exemplifies proficiency in English while also offering a self-reflexive critique of its costs. A pedagogy which asks not just "What do these texts mean?" but "What does it mean to read texts in English, in this institution?" converts the predicament into the object of study.

Toward a comparative pedagogy

The results provide the basis for five proposals (conditional propositions for testing, not prescriptions). First, Anglophone writing from Pakistan and Bangladesh should be taught comparatively, not as isolated national literary traditions, so that the geopolitics of literary recognition becomes an object of study. Table 2 shows an example of how this principle could be carried out in paired readings; the pairings would need to be tailored to the programme level and availability of texts.

Table 2. Illustrative Comparative Pairings and Their Analytical Focus

Thematic axis	Pakistani text	Bangladeshi text	Comparative question
Partition and its aftermaths	Sidhwa, <i>Ice-Candy-Man</i> (1988)	Anam, <i>A Golden Age</i> (2007)	How do 1947 and 1971 reframe each other, and whose violence is narrated?
Migration and the post-9/11 frame	Hamid, <i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i> (2007)	Ali, <i>Brick Lane</i> (2003)	Which metropolitan anxieties made each novel legible abroad?
Knowledge, war and the global elite	Shamsie, <i>Burnt Shadows</i> (2009)	Z. H. Rahman, <i>In the Light of What We Know</i> (2014)	How do the novels position English, class and complicity?
Language and the poetic voice	Pakistani poetry in English (selected)	Haq, <i>Starting Lines</i> (1978); R. Khan, <i>Argus Under Anaesthesia</i> (1976)	What does it mean to write the nation in English after a language movement?

Second, teaching should be dialogic (Abdul-Jabbar, 2014) and have explicit protocols for material that is remembered differently in the two countries, such as 1971. Third, text selection should attend to class, medium and region, so that a text intended as a mirror does not become a barrier for students schooled outside English (Gay, 2018; Hamid et al., 2013). Fourth, translated Bengali and Urdu literature should be included, and translation itself studied (Ray, 2013; Zaman, 1999, 2025). Fifth, why texts are

read in English should be explored openly because adding texts does not change the Anglo-normative assumptions implicit in a syllabus (Bhambra et al., 2018).

Theoretical and practical implications

The research has three theoretical implications. First, models of world-literary recognition based on a single centre-periphery axis (Casanova, 2004; Damrosch, 2003) need to be expanded in order to incorporate another dimension: the recognition of world-literature is selective across its peripheries, and in some cases, it is based not on literary form but on the alignment of peripheral experience with the political agendas of the metropolis. The method might be adapted to other literatures that share a history of partition or conflict but differ in visibility, such as those of other partitioned or post-conflict states. Second, the results qualify the treatment of English as a single hegemonic term. The political significance of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) therefore varies depending on the language(s) with which English is mixed, with English functioning as a third language within a contest between Bangla and Urdu in Bangladesh, and as the language of power above Urdu in Pakistan. Third, culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995) needs to be reimagined for postcolonial universities, where students' majority culture is absent from the curriculum: in these, the "mirror" is a corrective to the curriculum, and class and medium of schooling are the lenses through which its relevance is determined.

The implications for practice are at multiple levels. Curriculum committees could add at least one module to an existing postcolonial or South Asian literature course in which Pakistani and Bangladeshi Anglophone texts are read in parallel with translated Bengali and Urdu texts, with the publication, prizing and reception of each treated as part of its meaning (Table 2). For teachers, the findings suggest dialogic protocols for charged material, recognition of Bangla and Urdu knowledge as a resource rather than as interference, and assessments that value reflection on the conditions of reading in English. It is necessary to sustain this change in universities through faculty development and library resources (Hussain & Aslam, 2025). Literary study is worthy of attention in higher education English in Bangladesh, where English is treated largely as a skill (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Hamid & Erling, 2016), while in Pakistan, where students already demand change, the priority is to reform the postgraduate syllabus (Manan & Kubra, 2022). The institutionalisation of comparison from the South would be possible through collaboration between departments in the two countries.

CONCLUSION

The present study has investigated the positioning, teaching and reception of the Anglophone literatures of Pakistan and Bangladesh in university English studies. Its comparative approach illuminates both the literatures and the institutional contexts of their teaching and reception. The analysis reveals a common thematic inheritance as well as clear differences in language politics, which result in different challenges for literary pedagogy in the Anglophone context. It shows that an inherited canon in Pakistan and an instrumental conception of English in Bangladesh both lead to curricular marginalisation, and that the traditions' unequal global visibility is a result not of literary value but of geopolitical hierarchy. Comparing postcolonial literatures, then, challenges the binaries of local and global, vernacular and Anglophone, in order to engage in critical negotiation of these oppositions as a methodological principle of comparison from the South.

The study makes three theoretical contributions. First, it advances comparison from the South as a method that reads peripheral literary traditions in relation to each other rather than against the metropolis. Second, it advances the theory of world-literature by showing that metropolitan recognition is defined not by literary form alone but also by how peripheral experiences align with the metropole's agendas. Third, it builds on postcolonial theories of English and culturally responsive pedagogy, demonstrating that the political implications of hybridity depend on the languages with which English is in dialogue, and that culturally relevant pedagogy functions as a curricular corrective shaped by class and medium of schooling.

The above conclusions are tentative. The analysis is based on a documentary study and therefore provides no first-hand account of classroom practice or experience. Its corpus is also uneven, as Bangladeshi research emphasises language education rather than literary syllabi, and its Anglophone frame excludes Bengali and Urdu literature. The propositions should be further investigated in classroom studies in both public and private universities, in pilot comparative teaching models, and in

translated vernacular literatures and other regional Anglophone traditions. Finally, comparative postcolonial pedagogy can transcend the dichotomy of the local and the global by engaging in a critical approach to the interplay between them as an analytical frame and a pedagogical practice.

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