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Author(s): Shah, Waqar Ali; Pardesi, Hajra Y.; Memon, Talha

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Neoliberalizing Subjects through Global ELT Programs

WAQAR ALI SHAH 

*Center for Applied Language Studies, University of Jyväskylä
Jyväskylä, Finland; and
Center of English Language and Linguistics,
Mehran University of Engineering & Technology
Jamshoro, Pakistan*

HAJRA Y. PARDESI 

*Institute of English Language and Literature
University of Sindh
Jamshoro, Pakistan*

TALHA MEMON 

*Lecturer in English Thar Institute of Engineering, Science and Technology
Mithi, Sindh province of Pakistan*

Abstract

A recent surge in textbooks studies has revealed a closer link with neoliberalism and the way they construct neoliberal subjects. This paper uses Foucauldian governmentality as the conceptual lens to analyze the neoliberal discourses in EFL textbooks used in English Access Microscholarship (EAM)—one of the US-aided global ELT programs in Pakistan. English language learners' views on course outcomes and textbooks were also examined. The study shows that among others, English as a neoliberal life skill, celebrity culture, consumerism, entrepreneurship, and individual and corporate social responsibility dominate textbooks. It is thus found that textbooks play an important role in neoliberalizing learners. Moreover, English language learners perceive English as a key to economic success. They also value consumerism, branding, and personal responsibility. In light of the study findings, we suggest a decolonial option, reflective activism, and post-method pedagogy as possible alternatives at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels to resist the discourses of

neoliberalism and colonial power patterns entrenched in a postcolonial society like Pakistan.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the country's independence in 1947, English has enjoyed a privileged status in Pakistan (Mahboob, 2002; Mansoor, 2004). The popularity of English language in the country is attributed to both the colonial legacy (Rahman, 2002) and the expansion of English as a global language, particularly in the fields of science, technology, and commerce (Crystal, 2003). Consequently, English serves as a gateway for Pakistani EFL learners, making them competitive in the linguistic market that Manan (2021) suggests is intertwined with the logic of the market. The global EFL textbook industry, typically based in English-speaking (Anglophone) countries (most notably the United Kingdom and the United States), participates in the neoliberal marketization of English language education by providing in-country services and training in Pakistan to achieve the desired outcomes.

English language textbooks in Pakistan have often been analyzed in the context of state-centric discourses of militarism, nationalism, and Islam (see Aziz, 2010; Qazi, 2020; Rahman, 2002). There are, however, a few studies that discuss the promotion of western culture (Rahman, 1996; Shah & Pathan, 2016). Manan's (2021) study on neoliberal governmentality in the Pakistani context is restricted to the status of the English language. So far, US-funded programs in Pakistan are understudied when it comes to the culture or values promoted in textbooks followed in these programs and how they mold learners' subjectivities. Our research argues that these US-funded English language programs operating in the country for 18 years reflect neoliberal discourses, which are promoted as a means for constructing neoliberal subjects through ELT.

Using Foucault's "governmentality" as a conceptual lens, the present study examines the global ELT textbooks used in one US-aided English language program, that is, English Access Microscholarship (EAM henceforth) in Pakistan. Additionally, the study examines the perspectives of the English language learners participating in the course to explore their perceptions about the course outcomes and English language textbooks used. This study will add to the existing literature examining how neoliberal discourses are embedded in ELT materials (Bori, 2021; Gray, 2010a, 2010b), with a particular focus on

governmentality. The study will provide insights into how US-aided or similar global ELT programs globally can potentially enact governmentality by utilizing multiple technologies of knowledge and mechanisms (Phyak & De Costa, 2021) through teaching materials used in the classes, and how the participants view such materials and outcomes of the program. In what follows, we first discuss neoliberalism and how it has been reflected in ELT textbooks, followed by a theoretical discussion using Foucault's ideas to understand neoliberal governmentality. We then explain the context, methodology, data, and participants followed by the results and discussion. We conclude our study with the way forward suggesting decoloniality (Manan & Hajar, 2022; Mignolo, 2013; Quijano, 2007), reflective activism (Phyak & De Costa, 2021), and possible pedagogical tools for teachers, including post-method pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) to resist the neoliberal and colonial power patterns deeply entrenched in a postcolonial society like Pakistan. The following questions are addressed in this study

- a. Which discourses of neoliberalism are produced in global ELT textbooks?
- b. What are English language learners' views, experiences, and reactions to the neoliberal discourses disseminated by global ELT program (i.e., EAM) in Pakistan?

NEOLIBERALISM AND GLOBAL ELT TEXTBOOKS

What Is Neoliberalism?

Neoliberalism generally refers to how our choices and ways of being, knowing, and doing are influenced by market rationality. As David Harvey notes "neoliberalism has become a hegemonic discourse with pervasive effects on ways of thought and political-economic practices to the point where it is now part of the commonsense way we interpret, live in, and understand the world (Harvey, 2005, p. 22)". According to Babaii and Sheikhi (2018), market is the basis for neoliberalism. In this sense, Treanor (2005) notes that market rationality is when every action of a being constitutes a market transaction in competition with every other being. Neoliberalism, thus, depicts the world as a vast supermarket which idealizes its citizens as purchasers (Apple, 2006). Individuals are thus expected to master market skills in order to position themselves better in the new world order characterized by neoliberalism. Harvey (2005) contends that neoliberalism works to restore the power of economic elites by establishing the

conditions for capital accumulation through dispossession. As a result, the market logic breeds dominant values, such as competition, consumerism, individualization, profit-making, and capital accumulation. The role of government in the neoliberal world order, as Gray (2010a, 2010b) explains, is “to guarantee and extend the reach of the market.” Consequently, governments continue to deregulate the financial markets, privatize state assets, and liberalize areas of life that were once under the jurisdiction of the state.

Pierre Bourdieu who is often cited as one of the major theorists on neoliberalism has called neoliberalism a program for the methodical destruction of collectives (see Bourdieu, 1988 as cited in Callinicos, 1999). Somewhere else, he views it as a “political project for facilitating the re-structuring and re-scaling of social relations in accordance with the demands of an unrestrained global capitalism” (Bourdieu, 1998). Holborow (2012, p.15), however, identifies four definitions of the term as (1) an economic theory, (2) a new form of capitalism, (3) a discourse (including the discourse of Englishization), and (4) an ideology. Our study makes use of the notion of neoliberalism as a *discourse*. Fairclough (2002) explains that new capitalism is knowledge or information-based, which implies that the transformations of globalization are discourse-led. According to him, neoliberal globalism is enacted and inculcated through both the global language of English and orders of discourse expounded by corporations, governments, and international agencies. In its entirety, neoliberalism is considered detrimental to the spirit of collectivism and social cohesion. It is also worth noting that neoliberalism is not just an economic project but also accounts for the social and cultural processes that have led to new capitalism. Bori (2021), thus, writes that neoliberalism has inflected our entire way of life from political economy and international trade (Harvey, 2005) to the ways we engage in our daily life situations (Dardot & Laval, 2013).

Neoliberalism in Textbooks

Over the last two decades, the construct of neoliberalism has occupied an essential place not only in the critical study of economics but also in education (Giroux, 1992) and more recently in applied linguistics (see Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012; Holborow, 2015). Education is redefined as a commodity in neoliberal ideology (Gordons, 1991, p.144). Similarly, the influx of ELT resources, teacher training programs, and global textbooks from the Anglophone world into developing countries is seen as a neoliberal invasion into social and cultural spaces. The English language is framed as commodified and technicized

job skill (Bernstein, Hellmich, Katznelson, Shin, & Vinall, 2015, p.6) and a tool for economic success (Kubota, 2011). Bernstein et al. (ibid., p.6) define EFL learners as human capital. According to Bori (2018), the human capital principle encourages learners to become self-regulating individuals who constantly improve their skills in order to meet market demands. As Urciuoli (2008) also pointed out that the current imaginary of contemporary capitalism defines workers' employment value in terms of their skills. As a consequence, Lemke (2001, p.199) asserts that neoliberal subjectivities position individuals as in need of acquiring all the skills as a result of their investments.

A recent surge in the critical research on textbooks has been observed in the context of neoliberal values in the global ELT textbooks and their impact on EFL learners. Several studies have analyzed the content of English language textbooks to identify the neoliberal discourses that attempt to shape the EFL learners' subjectivities (see Barnawi, 2018; Bori, 2021; Chun, 2009; Copley, 2018; Gray, 2010a, 2010b, 2012; Nizamani & Shah, 2022). For example, Gray (2012) notes that the global ELT coursebooks reinforce the link between English and notions of individualism that underlie the very spirit of the neoliberal ideology. Similarly, Babaii and Sheikhi (2018) have identified the dominant tenets of neoliberalism in global EFL textbooks, such as market, consumerism, branding, individual productivity/marketability as well as superficial non-critical multiculturalism, which they consider as "inculcation" (see Fairclough, 2001).

Moreover, Xiong and Yuan (2018) identify English as a capital as one of the key neoliberal characteristics of the ELT textbooks. In a similar vein, the findings of Bori (2018, 2021) indicate that EFL class practices and textbooks maintain students' interest in learning English, preparing them to become citizens and workers in the current economic order. Moreover, he contends that English language textbooks encourage students to become entrepreneurs and responsible consumers. In his critique of textbook knowledge, Van Dijk (2008) asserts that language materials should be seen not only as mediating tools of subject knowledge but as vehicles for the ideological construction of social reality. Furthermore, these materials legitimize specific forms of reality (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991, p.3).

THE PRESENT STUDY

Theoretical Lens

The present study draws on the notion of governmentality as a theoretical lens aiming to investigate how global ELT programs in Pakistan

carry neoliberalizing effects. The root of the term governmentality can be traced in the latter works of Michel Foucault who in his lectures at College de France in 1978 introduced it in relation to the individual's capacity to self-regulate (Lemke, 2012). Governmentality views government not in a strict sense of state administration or control, but as the conduct of conduct. Governmentality in this context involves the use of a multitude of techniques, schemes, structures, and ideas in order to exert influence over others' behavior (Doherty, 2007). The family, the workplace, the profession, and social spaces are different sites within which the government exerts its power. The first definition of the governmentality by Foucault (1997, pp.144–145) refers to:

the body of institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculations, and tactics that facilitate the exercise of this very specific form of power, which the population as its target, political economy as its principal form of knowledge, and the apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument.

The notion of the governmentality emanates from Foucault's response to the criticism on his notion of disciplinary power outlined in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) where the individual is seen as an object of power, constituted, and eliminated through power. As Foucault, 1981 notes that:

In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.

Knowledge is seen as inseparable from power. In other words, the power produces knowledge and makes people accept it. As Holborow (2012, p.24) notes that Foucault has a particular view of power and knowledge. Power resides in knowledge and institutionalizes through various practices, such as penal systems, knowledge systems, and discursive regimes. In Foucault's view, it is more pertinent to explore how individuals internalize dominant discourses. Therefore, he does not view power as being concentrated in a single point, but instead identifies micro-sites where the process of internalization is normalized. Foucault's account of disciplinary power ignores so-called individual agency which he addresses in the concept of governmentality as a response to an individual's capacity for free choice and reaction to political knowledge (see Martin, Gutman, & Hutton, 1988). He calls it as a "technology of the self". Governmentality reintroduces disciplinary power through the concept of the power technology. Foucault (in Martin et al., 1988, p.18) mentions four types of technologies that we have illustrated in Figure 1. However, we have used the last



FIGURE 1. Foucault's technologies.

two technologies, that is, the technology of the self and the technology of power in our analysis as the first two forms of technology refer to economic and linguistic analysis of the social structure. Our analysis is restricted to the way power that determines the conduct of individuals and subjects them to certain domination, and technologies of the self that refer to the way in which individuals themselves or with the help of others effect certain operations on their own bodies, thoughts, conduct, and ways of being so as to transform themselves in order to attain some state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault, 1988, p.18).

In relation to neoliberalism, Martin and Waring (2018) maintain that Foucault demarcates the line between classical liberalism and neoliberalism in a way that the latter makes the market as a base of interaction for all social relationships. Foucault (2008, p.241) puts it:

Every subject is rendered as entrepreneurial, no matter how small, impoverished, or without resources, and every aspect of human existence is produced as an entrepreneurial one. The individual's life itself – with his relationships to private property ... with his family, household, insurance, and retirement—must make him into a sort of permanent and multiple enterprise.

The neoliberal state, then, obligates the individual to engage in self-government and self-regulation. In Foucault's view, subjects become immersed in entrepreneurial existence in neoliberal ideology. According to Martin Rojo and Del Percio (2020, p.5), neoliberal governmentality replaces other forms of governance such as sovereignty and discipline. Following it, the last few years have seen an increase in studies on language and neoliberal governmentality (Manan, 2021; Rampton, 2016; Rojo & Del Percio, 2020; Urciuoli, 2020). Scholars who examine the present conditions of neoliberalism argue that it has

evolved into a form of governance that reinforces market capitalism's logic and values (Manan, 2021). Neoliberalism has affected every aspect of social life, education, language, and individual lives (Martin Rojo & Del Percio, 2020).

Context of the Study

As a former British colony, Pakistan appeared on the world map in 1947. After its creation, English and Urdu became its official languages, with the former reflecting its colonial history and the latter celebrating its Islamic heritage. Following partition, the ruling elites set up a dichotomous educational system for rich and poor, so they could create a specific group of people through English medium schools, while providing minimal funding to government schools (Channa, 2017). Coleman (2010) divides Pakistan's educational system into four types: (a) private elite English language schools, (b) private non-elite English language schools, (c) government Urdu language schools, and (d) religious seminaries (madrasas). Rahman (1996, 2002) and Channa (2017), on the other hand, posited a slightly different picture of Coleman's idea. They replaced "Urdu medium schools" with "government Urdu/vernacular medium schools" as there are a number of government-run schools in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces of Pakistan that use Sindhi and Pashto, respectively.

In light of the debate, we propose three categories of educational institutions in Pakistan on the basis of English language teaching (ELT). First, there are elite private schools in Pakistan where the children from elite families (political ruling class, businessmen, bureaucrats) study English through UK-based O-level education system, and use textbooks imported from Anglophone countries (see e.g., Nizamani & Shah, 2022). Second, there are government-run and non-elite private schools comprising the students from lower and middle class who learn English either through state-mandated curriculum or English language textbooks locally produced by private publishers. According to Mahboob (2017), these state-mandated schools offer limited semiotic resources to learners through English textbooks, as compared to the former. Lastly, and related to our study, is English for children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds which is not a part of the formal education but introduced separately as a part of global ELT programs in the country to empower the students from poor economic backgrounds. This third category of English language programs is sponsored by the Regional English Language Office (RELO), a part of the US Embassy in Pakistan.

There are four provinces in Pakistan: Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Global ELT programs have been implemented nationwide with uniform materials and guidelines for teaching English as a global language. Training is offered by RELO in all provinces and follows a common curriculum. In order to understand neoliberal governmentality in global ELT programs, such as EAM in our case, we have focused on Sindh province. In Sindh province, the English Access Microscholarship (EAM) operates at four sites, including Hyderabad, Tando Jam, Tando Allahyar, and Karachi. Due to the travel issues caused by COVID, we selected one province for interviews. In the following section, we give a description of the selected program.

English Access Microscholarship Program

The English Access Microscholarship (EAM) program provides English language instruction to talented but disadvantaged students in different parts of the world over a 2-year period. Founded in 2004, the program has served this purpose for more than 18 years in Pakistan. Previously taught as a 1-year in-person program, English Access is now a 2-year hybrid program (virtual and in-person), which aims to help participants improve their English language skills in addition to critical thinking skills, leadership skills, as well as develop cross-cultural understanding. This program is currently held in four different cities in Sindh province of Pakistan, as a research site for the current study. An underprivileged school is selected at each site. In our study, we have focused on both the analysis of English language textbooks and interviews with the students.

Textbooks

The American Headway series introduces books which are published by Oxford University press from beginner to advanced, that is, A1-C2 levels. The books come along with free digital resources and a free Oxford University Press account, which includes several activities, audios, worksheets, and other English language learning material. Each *American Headway* book series includes a skill book, workbook, and a teacher's book. *The American Headway book aims* to improve EFL learners' reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills independently. Our study looks at the following global ELT textbooks, as shown in Table 1, which are aimed at basic users of English, that is, A1 as taught in the English Access Microscholarship program in Pakistan.

TABLE 1
Information About Textbooks.

Name of the book	Level	Authors	Year
American Headway 1 (Skill book) 3rd edition	A1	Liz and John Soars	2016
American Headway 1 (workbook) 3rd edition	A1	Liz and John Soars	2016

Interview Participants

We conducted semistructured interviews with 20 English language learners using a purposive sampling to see if the textbooks referred in the global ELT programs in Pakistan have a neoliberalizing effect on the learners. Apart from the instances from the textbooks, interviews helped the present researchers to interact with the learners who were the direct recipients of the content. Their experiences and reactions were, thus, deemed important in the present study besides textual analysis. We chose participants aged 19–20 as they could reflect well on the questions in our study. Before each interview, a consent form was signed by the participants showing their agreement to take part in the study. The interviews were conducted outside the premises of their classes since at the time of our data collection, classes were conducted online due to Covid restrictions. As part of further ethical considerations, participants' anonymity was also maintained during data transcription, translation, and presentation. Participants of the EAM program were selected from four cities in the Sindh province of Pakistan. Table 2 shows the profile of the students who participated in the interviews.

We chose English as language of the interview. However, depending on the participants' proficiency in the English language in each interview, we switched to the local languages, more specifically Sindhi and Urdu where necessary. Sindhi and Urdu are both widely understood throughout the province. Each interview lasted on average 20–25 min. The data were then analyzed using qualitative content analysis (QCA) to identify latent content (Drisko & Maschi, 2015) through the governmentality lens.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We begin by providing overview of neoliberal discourses (see Table 3) as found in selected textbooks (the Skill book and the Workbook). Using governmentality as the lens, we then present our analysis of each theme/discourse in the following section followed by the interview results.

TABLE 2
Description of the Participants.

		Students
Number		20
Gender	Male	10
	Female	10
City	Hyderabad	5
	Tando Jam	5
	Tando Allahyar	5
	Karachi	5
Religion	Muslim	15
	Hindu	5
Language background	Sindhi	5
	Saraiki	2
	Marwari	1
	Jatki	1
	Urdu	5
	Dhatiki	2
	Meghwari	2
	Balti	2

TABLE 3
Discourses of Neoliberalism in Textbooks.

Discourses of neoliberalism	Skill book		Workbook	
	Unit No.	Page No.	Unit No.	Page No.
Marketization and competition	5, 6, 11	39, 42, 43, 45, 105, 87	6, 11, 12	35, 66, 74, 78, 79
Consumerism	4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12	27, 28, 29, 57, 64, 68, 81, 94, 95	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	20–23, 25, 29, 31, 36, 41, 47–54, 64, 65, 69, 75
Personal and corporate social responsibility	2, 5, 6, 7	15, 39, 43, 46, 47, 54	3, 5, 7	18, 30, 39
Self-entrepreneurship	2, 3, 6, 11	10, 11, 18, 44, 45, 86	2–6, 9, 12	8–11, 18, 26–28, 35, 56, 74, 78, 79
Aspiration/celebrity culture	2, 3, 5, 6, 11	12, 18, 19, 22, 23, 37, 38, 39, 42, 43, 45, 105	3, 6, 11, 12	14, 33, 71, 74, 78, 79
Mobility	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 11	7, 10, 22, 42, 43, 53, 85	2, 3, 9, 11	11, 14, 15, 57, 70, 71
English as a neoliberal life skill	1, 2	7, 12, 85	2, 3, 10, 11	12, 15, 62, 63, 65, 69

However, in our analysis below, we have merged the first and the last two categories since the excerpts reflected both discourses altogether. The rest of discourses identified in the textbooks have been presented separately using specific excerpts from the textbooks. While

describing images from the book, we have only referred to page numbers and avoided inserting images due to copyright laws.

Marketization, Competition, and Consumerism

One of the core values of the neoliberal ideology is “marketization,” which informs the market-driven nature of social relations, behaviors, and actions within any social space. Market-driven thinking encourages the social agents to compete with one another. Table 4 contains excerpts related to marketization, competition, and consumerism. The excerpt (1) illustrates how marketing the luxury car “Jaguar” determines the economic success of individuals by making its purchase an important economic goal.

The similar sense of marketization and competition can be seen in unit 6 of the workbook relating to a Chinese girl making a pop song on her cellphone where she holds an iPhone in her hand as shown in an image on page 35 of the workbook. Both the “Jaguar” and “iPhone” as brands serve the neoliberal discourse of economy which is promoted through global ELT textbooks. Furthermore, the sense of joy equated with the affordability of the branded car and cellphone shows how the dominant agency in the textbook contains implicit meanings, leading to competition among commodities with a

TABLE 4
Discourses of Marketization, Competition, and Consumerism.

Excerpts	Textbook
1. When I was 16, there was a beautiful car—a Jaguar—in the shop but I couldn't afford it. It was too expensive. So, I started a business. Soon there were 15 shops. By the time I was 19, I could afford the jaguar. That was a very good day!	Skill book, p. 39
2. 1,500 people attended the first festival in September 1970. They paid £1 (about \$1.70) a ticket. Last year 190,000 people attended. They paid £205 (about \$340) for a ticket. In 2003, news of Michael Jackson's death hit in the middle of the festival. Immediately T-shirts with the slogan “I was at Glastonbury when Michael Jackson died” were on sale.	Skill book, pp.94–95
3. There are many things that London is famous for. Tourists come all over the world to visit to its historic buildings such as Buckingham palace and house of parliament. They also come to visit its theatres, museums, and stores such as Harrods where you can buy anything. And of course, they want to ride on the London Eye next to the river! For me, the best thing about London is the parks. There are five in the city center. But the place the children like the most is Hamleys, the biggest toy shop in the world!	Skill book p. 110
4. Noburu Suzuki and Roku Ito come from Tokyo. They became best friends at school when they discovered they were both crazy about American music.	Workbook, p. 70

likelihood of developing a consumer mindset for the most expensive objects, independent of the ground reality where the textbook is imported for instruction. Technology, Foucault explains (in Martin et al., 1988, p.19), imposes certain forms of training and modification on individuals, which not only give them certain skills but also force them to acquire specific attitudes. Discourses of marketization and competition are, in this sense, neoliberal technologies that attempt to shape specific attitudes of learners.

The textbooks promote a consumerist attitude through brands. The concept of consumer culture is defined by Sassatelli (2007), p.195) as a culture that is both for and of consumers: consumers can consume commodities, but they can also represent themselves as consumers. Babaii and Sheikhi (2018) identify instances of branding in global ELT textbooks and demonstrate that branding is a major factor in consumerism that tends to popularize certain products by famous companies. The objective, according to Gray (2010a), is to create identifications that allow consumers to enter the “world” of the brand. In order to better understand the idea of competition between commodities, consider the following example of teaching comparative adjectives.

Pete’s car is smaller than Ann’s car.

Pete’s car is cheaper than Ann’s car.

Ann’s car is newer than Peter’s car.

Ann’s car is comfortable than Peter’s car (Workbook, Unit 9, p.53).

The implicit meanings underlying the sentences indicate a human fact to compare objects. As a consequence, this comparison of objects creates a sense of competition, which leads to psychological preferences for the newer, more expensive, and more comfortable object. In excerpt (2), people are shown paying huge amounts for tickets to attend a festival and by selling t-shirts with slogans associated with Michael Jackson (a celebrity!). Foucault’s notion of power is central to discourse. Neoliberal power works through consumer culture, allowing products to be sold through competition and celebrity culture. As Foucault (1978, p. 93) explains that in modern power structure, one does not govern territory but things. Things in this sense, as he argues, are in fact men in relation to their other kinds of things, customs, habits, ways of acting, and thinking. As a consequence of consumerism and celebrity culture, people in the present epoch are subjected to neoliberal chains, and their ways of thinking and acting are governed

accordingly. In addition, it facilitates the commercialization of the entertainment industry as well as promoting American pop music (as shown in excerpt 4 of Table 4). Entertainment as a commodified entity is not “free”; instead, you have to buy the tickets and the cultural artifacts associated with the celebrities.

Other examples of consumerism in the textbook relate to living in five-star hotels and eating at expensive restaurants as illustrated in the picture appearing on page 48 of the workbook. For example, “The Liberty Hotel, Boston” followed by phrases like “it’s a hotel you don’t want to leave!” serves to shape learners’ choices according to specific market-driven values.

Furthermore, there are several instances in textbooks where students are taught how to shop while making choices between commodities, as shown in the image on p.64 of the Skill book. Foucault (1980, p.39) argues that through governmentality, power reaches individuals, their bodies, their actions, attitudes, and conduct. The neoliberal world order is enacted and propagated (Fairclough, 2001) through a variety of means, such as restaurants and products that tend to govern the behavior of language learners.

Furthermore, the global ELT textbooks under scrutiny provide examples of tourism to major cosmopolitan cities in English-speaking countries, like London (see excerpt 3 of Table 4 above). In its implicit sense, Anglophone world tourism commodifies tourist spots like theaters, museums, stores, and parks, as a significant tool of neoliberalism. These spots are not free. The expressions like “...and of course, they want to travel on the London” tend to shape consumer behavior.

Self-Entrepreneurship

In neoliberal discourse, individuals are advertised as self-entrepreneurs. In excerpt (1) in Table 5, Nicola Benedetti is depicted as being self-sufficient using linguistic expressions, such as “Nicola is always independent”. The neoliberal social order emphasizes individualism. Thus, government is depicted as proud of individuals’ achievements, as in Scotland’s pride in Nicola, and this implies the importance of self-responsibility as part of neoliberal living. Similarly, excerpt (2) establishes a comparison between the “rich” and “poor”, where the wealthy are associated with the private sector, such as a fashion designer, while the poor disregard a public profession, such as a lawyer. The book explains how to become rich by starting your own business. Foucault (2006) mentions that neoliberalism redefines human existence as “entrepreneurial”, redefining man’s relationship

TABLE 5
Discourses of Self-entrepreneurship and Self-responsibility.

Excerpts	Textbook
1. Nicola Benedetti is a world-famous violinist. She was BBC young musician of the year in 2004 when she was 16. Nicola as always independent, like me. She could play the violin when she was four. Now she plays concerts all over the world. I am so proud of her. She practices for 7 h a day. Scotland is so proud of her. Everybody knows her now	Skill Book, p.39
2. Gabriella and I played a lot together. We also went to same school; we were 18 years old. Gabriella was very artistic. She went to a fashion school in New York. I went to college, and now I'm in law school. I want to be a lawyer. Four years later, I am still a poor student. My cousin Gabriella is rich and famous. She won a major fashion award. She was just 22. Our family is very proud of her	Skill Book, p. 105
3. Author, businessman, adventurer—Simon Murray has been all of these in his life. Now in his seventies, he is looking for more adventures.	Workbook, pp. 78–79

to his family, household, insurance, retirement, and everything else associated with him.

In excerpt (3) in Table 5, the lexical item “businessman” promotes the discourse of self-entrepreneurship among EFL learners. A similar instance of celebrities becoming entrepreneurs has been noted by Gray (2012, p.102). He identifies, for example, J. K. Rowling as an author and billionaire, which is similar to our findings about Simon Murray. According to Foucault (2007, p.93), the fundamental problem of neoliberalism is to constantly move things from one place to another. Celebrities are mobilized in various global ELT textbooks in order for dominant neoliberal values, such as “celebrity culture” and “self-entrepreneurship,” to be internalized by EFL learners. Similar stories about self-entrepreneurship can also be found in the textbooks about a Chinese girl who makes pop songs on her cellphone and then uploads them to YouTube in addition to contacting Apple. The reason for her fame is what she accomplished in her individual capacity. According to Bori (2018), entrepreneurship and market competitiveness are just as important as individual responsibility in neoliberal ideology. Dardot and Laval (2013) argue that neoliberal rationality produces subjects by governing them so that they behave as competitors who must maximize results by taking risks and fully accepting responsibility for failures.

Personal and Corporate Social Responsibility

Neoliberalism encourages people to take responsibility for their lives and well-being, as shown in excerpt (3) of table (6), rather than relying on government to improve life conditions. In excerpt (1), a

situation is portrayed in India where studying in a private school is seen as a fortune, instead of finding fault with the quality of public schools. Education thus becomes the responsibility of the citizens. As Martin Rojo and Del Percio (2020, p.7) point out, Foucault’s governmentality is informed by political economy, which is a body of knowledge governed by dominant market mechanisms and restricted state intervention. Therefore, the state is relieved of providing education to the people in a Foucauldian sense. Neoliberalism promotes privatization as a core value, which is reinforced by the corporate sector, such as private schools.

Additionally, excerpt 1(b), which is particularly interesting, expresses Babur’s passionate interest in teaching the “poor”. It indicates that the poor will always be at the mercy of a few individuals rather than their governments taking responsibility for them at the macro level.

Gray (2010a) has also observed several instances where global ELT textbooks celebrate individualism—the ability to take care of oneself and others. Along with education, providing clean water is another individual responsibility mentioned in the textbooks under our inquiry. Guy Laliberte a world famous artist is shown in the textbook setting up a “one drop foundation” that helps people access clean water. In excerpt (2) of Table 6, it is characterized as “making a difference in the world” Corporate social responsibility in this case ensures that the basic needs of life are met through charitable work, which Chun (2009) views as caring capitalism, rather than the government’s

TABLE 6
Discourses Related to Personal and Social Responsibility.

Excerpts	Textbooks
1. a. Babur Ali comes from west Bengal in India. His village doesn’t have a school, but Babur is lucky because he goes to a private school in the next village. His school costs 1000 rupees, 17\$ a year. This is too expensive for many children in Babur’s village, but they want to learn, so Babur teaches them everything that he learns. b. Babur’s days are very busy. At 8 o’clock he goes by bus to his school 3 miles away. He studies hard all day until 4:00 in the afternoon. Then he travels back to village and at 5:00 he begins the classes. He teaches English, Bengali, history, and math until 8:00 in the evening. He says, “I love teaching. I am never tired” <i>I always want to teach poor children</i> ” quote from Babur Ali.	Skill Book, p.15
2. aliberte is a man who make a true difference in the world!’	Skill Book, p. 46
3. Brian law is a train driver for Eurostar. He drives high-speed trains from London to Paris. Brian works 4 days a week. Sometimes he’s free on weekends, but usually he works on Fridays and Saturdays.	Workbook, p. 11

responsibility to ensure that citizens have free access to the basic needs of life as a fundamental right since they pay taxes.

The theme of caring capitalism embedded in the notion of “corporate social responsibility” was also found in a task, that is, a project for the learners that follows as under:

Project: Research another person who raises money for an organization. What organization is it? How does the person raise money? Tell the class. (Skill book, p. 86)

Babur showing an interest in “teaching the poor” and the organization raising funds are examples of what Martin Rojo and Del Percio (2020, p.8) write about the way neoliberal rationality manages life in all its aspects: society, corporations, civil society, and finally the individual as a form of “self-on-self” action. Neoliberalism proclaims that we, as individuals, should take on the responsibility of our own destiny by acquiring the skills required by the market and becoming entrepreneurs of ourselves (Dardot & Laval, 2013).

English as a Neoliberal Life Skill for Mobility

Neoliberalism places English at the center of its discourse. Global ELT textbooks in Pakistan present English as a neoliberal life skill. It can lead to better jobs and opportunities globally. As Manan (2021) mentions, English is considered essential for economic success in Pakistan: without English, there would be no career. Thus, learning English in the global ELT textbooks is equated with fun. To learn it properly, it is shown that it is helpful to visit a native country, as in the case of the Brazilian student in excerpt (2) of Table 7. Foucault (1975) contends that power regulates behavior by mobilizing specific meanings, ways of talking, and ways of being. The dominant discourses of the English language are mobilized for this use in such a way that they are positioned as contributing to individual success.

English, unlike other languages, offers an opportunity for mobility as shown in the textbooks. The following dialogue written in the skill

TABLE 7
Discourses Related to English Language and Mobility.

Excerpts	Textbooks
1. I like learning English! It's fun.	Workbook, p.65
2. Hello! I am a Brazilian student. I am in Boston Massachusetts in the US! I am here to learn English.	Skill book, p. 7

book (p.85) illustrates this mobility which is possible through learning English language.

Speaking Practice Task

When did you go to Australia?

Two years ago

Why did you go?

To learn English.

Bori (2018, p.125) points out that neoliberal social order presents mobility as an ideal neoliberal worker who is ready to change jobs constantly to meet new challenges. In this case, the textbooks show how English can be learned in a native speaking country and acquired as a proficiency required in neoliberal labor markets. Park and Lo (2012) write that in neoliberal ideology, English is essentially an individual project of self-empowerment which increases the chances of success for the individual. Gray (2010) notes that English in global ELT coursebooks is similar to promoting a commodity. In the neoliberal social order, new discourses such as human capital (Becker, 1983) and linguistic instrumentalism (Kubota, 2011) emphasize the importance of learning English to maximize employability (Copley, 2018). Historically, English has dominated because of its affiliation with the US empire, which represents corporate consumerism. As Phillipson (2008) correctly states, English as an ideology-driven language does not only trigger imposition but also develops a connection with consumerism and hedonism, resulting in its bottom-up popularity. Neoliberalism, according to Foucault, is enabled by a mentality that becomes hegemonic and justifies this kind of governance (Foucault, 1997, p.74). English, according to O'Regan (2021: p.7), is a "free rider" on global capital, which implies a symbiotic relationship between the expansion and accumulation of English and capital. As a result, English has helped expand and accumulate capital, and capital has helped expand and accumulate English.

Aspiration and Celebrity Culture

Celebrity promotion and aspirations form a significant part of global ELT textbooks. A celebrity story (pp.222–23) in the skill book

depicts Jamie Cullum (songwriter and jazz pianist) and Bobbi Brown (founder and CEO of cosmetics brand) as well-known, rich, self-made, and intelligent people who live a luxurious and fulfilling life. The textbook presents these stories as very attractive and ambitious. It is through these stories that EFL learners internalize and idealize the content. As an example, the students are asked to perform the role play while following these instructions:

Work with your partner. One of you is Claire Higgins (Skill book, p. 19)

Bori (2021) argues that the content in ELT textbooks is presented as “aspirational” by representing a lifestyle built around consumerism, professional and personal success, and travel. By portraying an idealized reality, ELT textbooks may conceal the structural inequalities of neoliberal societies, and therefore maintain the status quo. And such content interests and motivates the students to learn English language (Gray, 2010a). The same can be said of other stories such as those related to Chiaki Yasukawa (ballet dancer) and David Guetta (DJ superstar) who is shown on page 12 of the Skill book achieving fame all over the world while displaying knowledge of English besides other languages. The kind of people that English language learners would aspire to are those who are self-made, hardworking, job loving, highly paid, stable, intelligent, honest, famous and above all living their life luxuriously, in other words, celebrities/famous people.

Considering the impact of neoliberalism on everyday life, Martin Rojo (2018) argues that it has become a form of governance. Neoliberalism has influenced not only the economy, but society as a whole. Consequently, a neoliberal society urges individuals to act in accordance with neoliberal principles. This is accomplished through neoliberal content, such as celebrity culture. Babaii and Sheikhi (2018) show that in ELT textbooks globally, people are judged not on their moral values such as honesty, empathy, and consciousness but on their experience, expertise, and popularity. As outlined in the textbooks (see Workbook, p.36), participation in concerts promotes the celebrity’s popularity. Following is an example related to John Lennon in this regard:

John Lennon married the artist, Yoko Ono in 1969, and the Beatles broke up in 1970. John and Yoko moved to New York. John wrote and sang his most famous song ‘*Imagine*’ in 1971. In 1980 he recorded a new album, *Double Fantasy*. (Workbook, p. 36).

Gray (2012, p.102) notes that since the first decade of the 21st century, there has been a growing tendency for textbooks to focus on celebrities from the world of entertainment who are also successful entrepreneurs, or entrepreneurs who became celebrities due to their

achievements in business. An interesting example of aspirational content relates to “superman” in a grammar task (workbook, p.26). This depiction shows how textbooks inspire learners to make consumption choices and to build aspirations that reinforce the neoliberal world order. For Foucault (1975, p. 194), discourse creates the subject. And discourse entails use of technologies of the power and the self (see Foucault in Martin et al., 1988). In this view, this content on Superman embodies idealization leading to the commodification of the character. As such, neoliberalism employs tactics of aspirational heroes to govern the conduct of the English language learners, in case of the present study.

English Language Learners’ Views about the Global ELT Program and Textbooks: Construction of Neoliberal Subjectivity

The students in this study came from diverse sociocultural and economic backgrounds, and in presenting our findings, we have used pseudonyms to illustrate their responses. The students view the English Access Microscholarship program (EAM) as very useful for improving their English including their communication skills. One student commented:

This program develops our English language skills and prepares us for the world in which English plays an important role (Interview, Alisha, 12/2/2022).

For students in Pakistan, English language is not just a language of status but also a key to success. As the official language, English is essentially a “passport to privilege” (Rahman, 2005) and the dominant language in contemporary Pakistan due to its importance in the domains of power. It is used as a gatekeeper to various national and international high-stake examinations to secure better jobs and educational opportunities. Studies have shown that English takes a privileged position in Pakistan, without which upward mobility is difficult to imagine (see e.g., Mahboob, 2002; Manan, 2021). It has, therefore, become an essential life skill. Moreover, the data indicate that the students also showed high regard for American English, specifically admiring its accent. The following excerpt illustrates this phenomenon.

I like the pronunciation of Americans, so I concentrate fully on it so that I can learn how to speak like them, how to converse with others using American accent (Interview, Sanjay, 15/2/2022).

It is evident from the English language learners' interest in English language as a necessary skill and their idealization of the American accent that their subjectivity is shaped under the influence of neoliberalism (Martin Rojo, 2018; Price, 2014; Nizamani and Shah, 2022). As Copley (2018) noted, students are taught to constantly improve everything they do to increase their chances of landing a job. English, in this case, is part of the process. According to Phyak and De Costa (2021), governments and neoliberal regimes reproduce and enact governmentality by using multiple technologies of knowledge and mechanisms. Governmentalities, according to them, are mediated through schools, the media, industries, and labor markets that systematically deny the local languages and embrace neoliberal values, such as competition, commodity, and choice. Consequently, neoliberal governmentality is embedded into our everyday lives, with implications for how we understand the world and how we interact with each other. In the context of Pakistan, the recent findings by Manan and Hajar (2022) also indicate how English language learners in Pakistan construct English learning as a form of entrepreneurship, celebrating competition, and continuous self-improvement. However, we believe that this can partly be attributed to the colonial legacy and American global imperialism, which have permeated educational spaces in Pakistan over the decades. Additionally, the students' admiration of the English Access program reinforces what Manan (2021) suggests that the students' admiration implicitly endorses the liberalization of the linguistic market and allows the government to withdraw from its core responsibility to provide effective English education. As a value-laden entity, language carries a set of values with it. A conversation with a female participant illustrates the specific values embedded in these textbooks when it comes to English learning in the EAM program in Pakistan:

Interviewer	What kind of things you learn in English textbooks in this Access Program?
Saadia	In these textbooks, we learn about American culture, music, modern lifestyle, and about people who become successful in their life.
Interviewer	What are your thoughts on such content?
Saadia	I think we must have knowledge about things happening outside Pakistan. We must know about different people in the world. In this way we can learn from their culture and adopt modern ways of living in our life.

According to Foucault (1978, p. 95), power does not work by imposing laws, but by disposing of things. By doing so, it employs tactics, or technologies, as a means of achieving certain ends. Considering these tactics and technologies that power employs, the learning of English in this global ELT program in Pakistan can be viewed as subjectifying

learners with neoliberal discourses of consumerism, material possessions, and success that characterize modern life. The above excerpt can be seen as an instance where English learning in the context of Pakistan is not value-free but tends to shape learners' thinking and ways of acting by inculcating these discourses around modern lifestyle and consumption patterns. It was more evident when the participants were asked about modern gadgets as shown in the textbooks, and how they seemed to enact these ways of thinking on their beings as shown in the following excerpt.

I like brands. I certainly like iPhone. I think they are modern necessities and show our status in society (Interview, Kashif, 17/2/2022).

In the present instance, technologies of the self are enacted as English language learners embrace and value such neoliberal lifestyles characterized by the increasing popularity of brands and technological tools as symbols of prestige and status. Similarly, the participants' responses in the following instance about restaurants and hotels show the same aspirations as in the above excerpt. Students considered dining at restaurants and staying at hotels as an important social skill. Here is an example of how the students internalize the neoliberal logic of luxury hotels:

Interviewer	How do you see the restaurants and hotels shown in the textbooks?
Nisha	I think they are beautiful. The textbooks tell us that we should learn these skills to visit the restaurants and hotels. We are growing now. We should know these things. Learning these skills will be good for our future.
Interviewer	Is there any hotel or restaurant you have learnt in the textbooks, and you like it?
Nisha	Yes, I like "Liberty Hotel" in Boston. It is very luxurious. It looks beautiful. I am impressed by these people who have built it. And I really want to visit it.

Using the example of luxury hotels, the purpose is to develop EFL learners' consumer mindset by telling them about the fascinations that these hotels possess. The students form a positive opinion of the restaurants and hotels and believe it will be worthwhile to visit them. Foucault (in Martin et al., 1988, p.18) asserts that individuals themselves or with the help of others perform certain operations on their bodies, minds, conduct, and ways of being to transform themselves in order to attain happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. Branding of the hotels and restaurants is one way in which they internalize neoliberal values of consumerism and consider them as source of happiness.

In the ELT classroom, Bori (2021) also finds that students like business-related content and find it useful. In Urla's (2020) words, neoliberalism brings new technologies for governing conduct and new

ways of understanding ourselves. It is worth noting that five-star hotels' branding culture conflicts with English language learners' lived realities. One female student said:

There are fewer hotels and restaurants in our city than in textbooks. We have small, traditional hotels where only men congregate and enjoy each other's company (Interview, Faria, 20/2/2022).

Hotels and restaurants are hard to find in the Sindh province of Pakistan, mostly in rural areas. In their areas, life is poverty ridden, so imagining a luxurious, glamorous life is a dream. However, most of the English language learners' reactions indicate an appreciation for the neoliberal lifestyle as an important social skill. For this to happen, learners must put in considerable effort. One student claims that the life portrayed in textbooks is ideal and their economic background is a curse, which must be overcome:

These textbooks show us that we can do anything we like. We can create happiness. We can encourage ourselves to do it. We should stay motivated and self-confident to achieve the success, and to change our living conditions (Interview, Sagar, 25/2/2022).

In Foucault's ideas on governmentality, power reaches the individual's bodies, souls, and spirits as well as society as a whole (see Foucault in Martin et al., 1988). Rather than being imposed on us, power relationships are dispersed through a network of relationships. Thus, the power of neoliberalism influences the minds of individuals through English language education. English language learners' neoliberal subjectivities are formed by the dominant values of neoliberal ideology. Scholars describe these reactions by learners as subjection to the logic of the market (Bori, 2021; Manan, 2021; Park, 2011; Rojo, 2018; Urla, 2020). The students view life as an individual responsibility which can be transformed by hard work on their part. According to them, they should work hard until they change their economic position in society. Neoliberalism's mode of governmentality can be identified as a particular way of producing economic subjects with specific preferences, tendencies, and motivations, according to Martin Rojo (2018, p. 172). This can be seen in the participants' general comments about events organized as a part of this program.

Interviewer	Would you like to comment on any events that you celebrate in this program?
Shafiq	Yes, we celebrate different kinds of events related to international education day, self-defense day, Martin Luther King Day and also young entrepreneur and Children's market event.
Interviewer	What do you do in such events, for example, as you said you celebrate young entrepreneur event?
Shafiq	We learn how to make money by setting up small businesses.

We can see the purpose (e.g., neoliberal agenda) of EAM global ELT program in Pakistan through events like “The Young Entrepreneur” and “Children’s Market.” In this view, learners are equipped with the necessary skills of self-entrepreneurship and market-centric awareness in preparation for the neoliberal social order. Further, the participants shared that they learned how to create YouTube channels and start freelance work on Fiverr. In the interview, some of the participants shared that they already had YouTube channels and they also worked as freelancers. According to Foucault, when discussing technologies of the Self, the subject must be viewed in light of a set of practices where individuals are only concerned with themselves. It happens through discourses about self-knowledge, self-care, and self-concern (Foucault in Martin et al., 1988, p. 19). Neoliberalism as promoted in this global ELT program in Pakistan also encourages individuals to take responsibility for their own actions. The above data indicate that students are taught this responsibility through discourses such as establishing “young entrepreneurs” and setting up “children’s markets.” A key aspect of the neoliberal self is the “skills discourse,” as noted by Urciuoli (2008, p. 215). In her view, these skills are compatible with dominant practices, institutions, and beliefs in a neoliberal order. By defining what is valued knowledge, the dominant institutions establish the type of person valued by the privileged system. In our data, English language learners are shown as experiencing such market-oriented effects by becoming self-responsible and entrepreneurial as visible in the form of creating YouTube channel and working as freelancers.

The students associate happiness with fulfilling life standards determined by neoliberal lifestyles, such as visiting luxurious places, learning English, and being entrepreneurs. According to Foucault (in Martin et al., 1988), individuals subjectify themselves by reproducing specific forms of knowledge and situating themselves within specific historical spaces. As Martin Rojo (2018, p. 183) notes, in this subjectification process, neoliberal or entrepreneurial subjects will do anything to improve and enhance their market value. The findings show that students view entrepreneurship as a valuable life skill. As such, they enjoy the entrepreneurial characters and celebrities shown in textbooks. According to Martin Rojo and Del Percio (2020), neoliberalism is built around “self-responsible and self-entrepreneurial subjects.” English language learners believe that entrepreneurs are self-made individuals, and they should follow their example. Participants in the study thus showed that in such a case, they would not need to depend on others, whether the family or the government. Babai and Sheikhi (2018) have noted how neoliberalism affects not only economic institutions but also the social and private lives of people

overwhelmingly by promoting entrepreneurship, branding, and consumerism. The following excerpt illustrates how a student idealizes Babur as an Indian boy who educates himself and then develops a passion to teach the poor children in his village.

Interviewer	Any story about the character you like most?
Kashi	Yes, I like Babur's story.
Interviewer	Why do you like this story?
Kashi	The story about Babur teaches us that we should be hardworking. We should invest in ourselves and in others. Like Babur, I also want to teach the poor children.

Since poor children cannot afford to pay the high fees of private schools, students believe they should teach them. Neoliberal ideology, thus, obscures the responsibility of the government in improving education standards and strengthens the dichotomous educational system in the country. Consequently, students consider it unproblematic to take responsibility of educating others. Under neoliberalism, it is, therefore, the individuals who are seen as taking responsibility of economically disadvantaged section of the society. One comment from a student summarizes discourses of neoliberalism how they have internalized and normalized in the process of learning English through global ELT program

If you fail, stand against it. Life is a journey. We must be successful. The journal must be successful. Falling and standing against it shows your courage to face the life. (Interview, Maham, 5/3/2022)

In this sense, English language learners perceive life as an individualistic battle to win. Failure is seen as a part of life, and to succeed, one needs courage. Interestingly, in neoliberalism, success is attributed to learning English, owning material possessions, eating at big restaurants, staying in luxurious hotels, using modern gadgets, and living a life characterized by neoliberal forces.

It is worthwhile to discuss that, in our data, there also emerged conflicting discourses due to participants' sociocultural beliefs and different ideological orientations as compared to values encoded in textbooks. However, such responses were minimal in our data. As an example, a few participants demonstrated different aspirations influenced by local culture and religion with regard to places, practices, and cultures. In contrast to what textbooks teach, the following remarks suggest alternative views by the participant

When we have different events in our classrooms, or outside at other places, sometimes we don't like it. My parents also dislike it because we

celebrate Christmas, we sing songs, and some students also dance. Islam doesn't allow it (Interview, Maqbool, 10/3/2022).

Another participant commented

I like Turkey more than these other countries given in the textbooks. Turkey is beautiful, and I want to visit it. I also like Saudi Arabia and I am happy that it was also shown in the textbooks (Interview, Fayyaz, 28/3/2022).

In the excerpts above, it is evident that the students' aspirations conflict with the type of aspirations shaped under neoliberalism. As Pakistan is essentially an ideological country, Islam and Pakistani nationalism have profound impacts on how people in the country make sense of the social world they live in (see Aziz, 2010). These influences as found in the participants' responses convey their aspirations based on local culture and religion. It suggests how participants negotiate and reproduce their local identities as counter-discourses to the neoliberalism. This was also indicated in an excerpt above where Faria mentions local traditional hotels in the Sindh province as compared to the big restaurants as shown in the textbooks. Learners' local sociocultural ecologies provide them with alternative ways of looking at the world that oppose the dominant realities constructed through neoliberal discourse. Because of their significance in the Islamic world, participants' liking for Saudi Arabia and Turkey is religiously shaped. Saudi Arabia, for many Muslims in Pakistan, holds a central place when it comes to Islam due to the presence of Holy Kaaba and Masjid-e-Nabawi (the mosque associated with the prophet of Islam). Moreover, some Muslims in Pakistan view some practices like dancing, singing, and celebrating Christmas as "un-Islamic." In Pakistan, these practices somehow appear as a counterchallenge to neoliberalism promoted through English programs.

CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD FOR RESISTING NEOLIBERAL DISCOURSES IN ELT

Using governmentality as the conceptual lens, we have sought to understand the dominant discourses of neoliberalism in the global ELT textbooks as taught in the EAM—a US-aided global ELT program in Pakistan. English language learners' opinions on textbooks and program outcomes were also included in the study. The results of the study indicate that the US-aided global ELT program operating in the country over the last two decades tends to shape the neoliberal subjectivities of English language learners enrolled in these programs. The

religion and culture of the participants, however, somehow countered the influence of neoliberalism. In general, English as a neoliberal life skill, celebrity culture, consumerism, entrepreneurship, and social responsibility, among others, dominate the textbooks. In addition, English language learners perceive the global ELT program as valuable because they perceive English as the key to economic success and upward mobility. Undoubtedly, the English language assumes a privileged position in the linguistic landscape of Pakistan given its colonial history and its status as the official language of the country. However, associating economic success and upward mobility only with the English language obscures the structural inequalities as found in the participants' responses. As Manan and Hajar (2022) argue that English plays a divisive rather than an empowering role in deeply polarized postcolonial societies like Pakistan. It is not just the English language that contributes to deprivations but also structural disadvantages and divisions across social classes, regions, locales, or ethnicities. This is also supported by Romaine (2015, p. 252) who notes, "the poor remain poor not because they do not speak English, but due to deeply entrenched inequalities in societies."

Taking this argument, we believe that the EAM as a global ELT program funded by the US promotes the English language as an empowering skill besides other neoliberal values as indicators of success in the neoliberal order while obscuring the local structural inequalities deeply rooted in Pakistani society. What then can be done to counter neoliberalism in a deeply polarized postcolonial society like Pakistan? To counter neoliberalism, scholars such as Bori and Canale (2022) argue that alternatives should be envisioned and implemented at the micro, meso, and macro levels. As they argue, resistance to neoliberal language education cannot be left to individuals alone. The shift in discourses is necessary at all levels—class/school, society, and the state if we are to counter neoliberal hegemony. In this vein, we believe that decoloniality (Manan & Hajar, 2022) combined with reflective activism (Phyak & De Costa, 2021) are possible alternatives to counter the neoliberal invasion into cultural and social spaces in Pakistan. In order to realize a decolonial option, it is necessary to adopt criticality and alternative thinking in addition to challenging and changing the power structure of the hegemonic neoliberal order (Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Maldonado-Torres, 2016). This can happen through changing attitudes and attitudinal orientations of the colonized subjects by creating their grammar of decoloniality (Mignolo, 2013) using the local socio-cultural ecologies of the masses to create alternative epistemologies.

This macro-level change could potentially be enacted by reviewing policies that reinforce neoliberal and colonial power relations, of which this global ELT program is one example. At the meso level, the

role of community activism (see Phyak, 2021) in challenging hegemonic colonial–neoliberal power structures and conscious and theoretically informed scholarship at academic (scholarly publications) and nonacademic (local scholarly lectures, discussions, and publications in local languages) can transform existing normative intellectual inertia where coloniality runs deep in the mentality of *damné* (Fanon, 2004). As Kubota (2022) suggests a praxis-oriented scholarship which involves decolonizing our minds, paying attention to and intentionally committing to transformation, engaging in public scholarship for knowledge mobilization, encouraging multilingual scholarship, changing institutional expectations and practices, and actively connecting with communities. The counter-neoliberalism alternative needs to take place at the level of imagination (Quijano, 2007) by dismantling, de-naturalizing and de-essentializing Western European ideologies, epistemologies, and cultural practices. This is necessary because the discourses of neoliberalism contradict learners’ local sociocultural ecologies as located in the participants’ resistance to the discourses in these textbooks given their affiliation with Islam, local aspirations and cultural practices.

At micro-level, we consider the role of teachers and teacher educators as crucial in this process. Through their own agentic responses, they can confront colonial and neoliberal structures in their classrooms. One method would be to engage in decolonial pedagogy. As Macedo (2019) calls for educators to act proactively and use their professional agency in a proactive manner as change agents. In contrast to orthodox ELT models, alternative pedagogies can be used to achieve this. Post-method pedagogy, for example, may assist teachers and teacher educators in implementing context-sensitive language education, which involves understanding local linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularities, constructing their own theory and practice, and taking into account the learners’ sociopolitical consciousness that they bring to their classrooms to negotiate and transform their identities (see Kumaravadivelu, 2001). As Kumaravadivelu (2001, p. 539) writes “all pedagogy, like all politics, is local. To ignore local exigencies is to ignore lived experiences.” In addition, recent studies also suggest several alternative pedagogical tools that teachers can use to resist neoliberal tendencies in language education, such as critical pedagogy (Barnawi, 2019; Chun, 2009), dialogic teaching (Littlejohn, 2022), creating local ELT materials that challenge neoliberalism (Babaii, 2022), extensive reading, informal conversations in the classroom, and portfolio reflection letters (Barnawi, 2022). To resist neoliberal discourses in Pakistan, such intellectual and pedagogical tools can be used in emancipatory ways in addition to other local and situated ways of challenging the dominant neoliberal power structures.

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THE AUTHORS

Waqar Ali Shah is presently a doctoral researcher at the Center for Applied language Studies (CALS), University of Jyväskylä, Finland. His areas of research interests include politics of the official knowledge, textbooks, and curriculum analysis using critical and poststructuralist traditions in applied linguistics. Professionally, he works as a lecturer at the center for English language and linguistics, Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Jamshoro Sindh Pakistan. His work has been published in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals, including *Critical Discourse Studies* and *Accountability in Research*.

Hajra Yousif Pardesi is teaching the English language and linguistics at the Institute of English language and literature (IELL), University of Sindh, Jamshoro. Her areas of interest are linguistic human rights (LHRs), language ideology, language policy and planning, and critical discourse analysis. Miss Pardesi has done her Master of Studies in Applied linguistics from Mehran University of Engineering and technology, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan.

Talha Memon is working as a lecturer in English at Thar Institute of Engineering, Science and Technology, Tharparkar Campus, Mithi, Sindh province of Pakistan. He holds masters in English Linguistics. He also serves as a freelance writer in Pakistan. His areas of interest include critical theory, textbooks, and ideology and critical strands in technology-integrated language learning.

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