

# Developing Materials for Teaching English in Schools of India Through Principles and Guidelines of Second Language Learning

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**Abstract** - Materials play a crucial role in conducting effective learning/teaching in any classroom context. They serve as a basis for language input a learner receives in any second language classroom context. Therefore, a careful planning and extensive research which follows a guideline keeping the context, learner and teacher should be carried while developing materials in English.

This paper discusses material development from the theoretical perspective in view of the principles and procedures undertaken from evaluation, adaptation and implementation of specific activities.

**Index Terms** - materials, language, learner, context.

## INTRODUCTION

English, though a foreign tongue but has acquired the status of a unique position in Indian context. Firstly, due to its aptitude as a linguistic tool in the administrative cohesiveness of the country. Secondly, it serves as a link language of international communication. The need of times to equate with the developed countries has led to its proliferation and modernisation. A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognised in every country. The growth in international communication due to globalisation has led internet and electronic gadgets broke off the cultural barriers and created newer trends to accept English language as Global English (Crystal, 1997).

### An Overview of English in Indian Context

Since Independence, English begun to be taught in Indian schools and colleges. As many of the educated Indians felt the need of English proficiency only would lead its generation to face the global world. Thus, it got its recognition as an important link language for national and international purposes.

Further, The Official Language Act of 1965 allowed English to be made as a subsidiary official language, next to Hindi.

The Secondary Education Commission in 1952 recorded the evidence of continuation of teaching English in their following statement-

“many eminent educationists and scientists have, therefore, expressed the opinion that under no circumstances should we sacrifice the many advantages that we have gained by the study of English”

In 1971, the Central Education Ministry or Human Resource Development Ministry laid down objectives regarding English to be achieved by the end of secondary School stage.

- Read with fluency and understand passages of prose written within the limits of teaching points and reading vocabulary suggested in the syllabus.
- Understand a simple talk on a subject within his experience, and
- Use the language correctly in speech and writing within the limits of the teaching points and active vocabulary detailed in the syllabus.

Government of India, (1971), Report of the Study Group on Teaching of English, New Delhi: Ministry of Education.

With the growing importance of English language many of the Indian states gave proper recognition and respect thereby making it a compulsory subject in their educational system. Today, majority of the material produced at school level for teaching English in India is produced by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) or State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT). Apart, many changes in the syllabuses, instructional materials and teacher training courses are being introduced according to the need of times.

## ROLE OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Instructional materials or textbooks play an important role in creating uniformity in classroom activities. Ian McGrath (2013,16) has created a Master list of certain items which he has collected from teachers list of ‘What do you mean by ‘Materials’?’

1. A textbook, produced by a commercial publisher (i.e. for profit), a Ministry of Education or a large institution (e.g. university language centre, private language school chain); this will normally be accompanied by some combination of the following: teachers; notes, a student workbook, tests, visual aids (e.g. wall charts, flashcards), a reader, audio and video material/ computer-based (CALL) exercise material/ Smartboard software/ web-based materials.
2. Commercial materials that are not provided as part of the textbook package: for example, reference material (dictionaries, grammar books, irregular verb charts) and practice material (supplementary skills books, readers).
3. Teacher-prepared materials, selected by or devised by the teacher or a group of teachers working together:
  - authentic print materials (e.g., newspaper and magazine articles, literary extracts, advertisements, menus, diagrams, and other print materials downloaded from the internet which were not designed for language teaching)
  - authentic recordings (e.g., songs, off -air recordings, recordings of academic lectures; Internet sources such as YouTube)
  - worksheets, quizzes, and tests downloaded from the internet or photocopied from other sources.
  - teacher-developed materials (e.g., oral, or written activities developed to accompany authentic or textbook materials, self-standing tasks and exercises, tests, overhead projector transparencies, PowerPoint presentations, CALL materials)
  - games (board games, Bingo, etc.)
  - realia (real objects, including drawing on the board).

Tomlinson (1998:2) says that materials are anything used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language. It could be a textbook, handouts, dictionary, newspaper or photograph, food packages, cassettes, CD-ROM, DVD or internet etc. With the advent of communicative language teaching, teachers began to depend on a number of materials like textbooks, videotapes, newspaper etc. to support their teaching and their students’ learning. In India, The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and NCERT in a detailed discussion document by the (National Curriculum Framework for School Education: A Discussion Document, New Delhi: NCERT, 1999) had made efforts to change the textbooks and teaching styles to new methodologies. Thus, bringing a change in the whole teaching scenario in India as well. In the words of (Sheldon, 1988) “published materials have more credibility than the teacher generated one.” Any language program in order to run effectively requires materials which should promote students’ academic performance.

Cunnigsworth (1995,7) has summarized the role of materials in language teaching as

- a resource for presentation material.
- a reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and so on.
- a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom activities.
- a syllabus (where they reflect learning objectives that have already been determined).
- a support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence.

Materials do play an important role in any ELT program. The teacher may use a textbook, institutionally prepared material or his/her own material. An inexperienced teacher may find his/her material to be a driving force as it motivates the teacher to plan and take up her classes according to a framework. According to Hutchinson and Torres (1994, p.315) states that “the textbook is an almost universal element of English language teaching. Millions of copies are sold every year, and numerous aid projects have been set up to produce them in (various) countries...No teaching - learning situations it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook.”

### Material Development Practices

Developing materials requires a careful study which undertakes different stages of production, evaluation, adaptation and exploitation of the intended materials for language learning and teaching. It is always a multi skill activity as it should consider learners cultural, literary and communicative needs. It also follows certain procedures to produce language learning materials.

Dick and Carey (1990) suggest ten components of the Systems Approach model like identifying an instructional goal, conduct an instructional analysis, identify entry behaviours, write performance objectives, develop criterion-referenced test items, develop an instructional strategy, develop and/or select instructional materials, design and conduct the formative evaluation, revise instruction, and conduct summative evaluation.

### Relationship of Teachers, Learners and Materials:

Materials form a link between the teachers and learners. In fact, they cater the needs of both teachers and learners at the same time. It helps learners to practice and use it as referential source to grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. On the other side it helps the majority of beginning teachers who are starting of their careers.

### Factors to be considered before Developing Materials

1. Objectives designed for language learning.
2. Learner's background
3. The framework of textual material.
4. Possibility for stimulation of creativity and imagination.
5. Including Value education.
6. Valuable expertise from academicians.

### Principles and Guidelines for developing materials:

Reviewing the principles proposed by academicians one such proposal has come from Tomlinson (1998) who has summarised some of the basic principles of second language acquisition research called as "Guidelines for Designing Effective Teaching Materials."

1. Materials should achieve impact through novelty and variety.
2. Materials should help learners to feel at ease.
3. Materials should help learners to develop self-confidence.

4. What is being taught should be perceived by learners as relevant and useful.
5. Materials should require and facilitate learner self-investment.
6. Learners must be ready to acquire the points being taught.
7. Materials should expose the learners to language in authentic use.
8. It should draw learners' attention to the linguistic features of the input
9. Materials should provide opportunities to the learners so that they can use the target language for communicative purposes.
10. Materials should take into account that the positive effects of instruction are usually delayed.
11. Materials should recycle instruction.
12. Materials should take into account the fact that learners do differ in learning styles and affective attitudes.
13. Materials should provide a silent period at the beginning of any kind of formal instruction.
14. Materials should maximize learning potential by encouraging intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement which stimulates both right and left-brain activities.
15. Materials should not rely too much on controlled practice.
16. Materials should provide opportunities for outcome feedback.

### Implementations of the Principles and Guidelines.

1. Topics should be significant and conventional.
2. Content should provide an opportunity for learners to participate interactively in classrooms.
3. Learners' background knowledge should be related to the contents included.
4. Criteria for text selection should be laid beforehand.
5. Inclusion of texts written in English by ESL writers.
6. Inclusion of texts which learners confront every day in their life.
7. Inclusion of texts from places which children love to read.
8. Extensive reading should be supported.
9. Learner's dictionary and thesaurus should be included.
10. Use of technology should be promoted.

11. Variety of activities for pre, while and post to be included.
12. Making a move to develop learners to be responsible and critically aware citizens.

#### Material evaluation in English Language Teaching

Material evaluation is another practical undertaking in developing materials. It tries to make judgements about the appropriateness of teaching materials set for a specific course. The criteria include various considerations like the credibility, validity, reliability, motivation, short term and long-term goals, appeal factor, flexibility of materials, learners' and teachers' perception regarding the value of materials etc. Evaluation helps to identify problems and gaps in materials for a particular course work. It also suggests recommendations if any material is found to be ineffective to meet objectives and language needs. According to Sheldon (1998, pp 239-240) "often materials are found to please one group of users e.g., learners but not all e.g., teachers. Since materials are used by different groups of users, it is necessary to provide the needs and expectations of all while using these materials". Evaluation can be of various forms like designing new materials, updating newer versions according to the developmental nature of learners, adapting materials according to context.

Material evaluation can be of various types and proposed by various academicians in this field of study like the pre-use, while-use and post-use proposed by (McGrath,2002; Tomilnson, 2003). Pre-use evaluation considers making prediction about the potential value of materials for their users, a kind of face value prediction. While-use evaluation measures the value of materials during the study of the course. Post-use evaluation can provide a detail outcome of the effects of the materials on the users.

Ellis (1997) has discussed about predictive evaluation and retrospective evaluation. predictive evaluation decides on the what materials to be used in a particular course of study while the experience observed during a course of study regarding the authenticity of the particular material whether the materials have really worked out in the most successful manner can be termed under retrospective evaluation.

McDonough and Shaw (1993) suggest three stages of evaluation process which are as: external evaluation, internal evaluation and overall evaluation. External evaluation considers the claims made on an overview

of the table of contents and introduction on the students' and teachers' books. Internal evaluation tries to go in for an in-depth analysis of the external content to internal content of materials. Finally, overall evaluation considers various factors like the usability, generalisability, adaptability and flexibility of the adopted materials.

Material evaluation is an important task in any material development procedure as it leads to better understanding of the context in which any learning and teaching is taking place. In fact, some academicians have emphasised that evaluation is a continuous process. The success and failure of any materials can only be viewed after a continuous use in classrooms and feedback from teachers.

#### Material Adaptation

Longman Dictionary of Applied linguistics defines "When teachers make changes to published materials to make them more suitable or appropriate for a particular group of learners or particular teaching needs, this is called, adaptation". Adaptation help teachers to overcome mismatches related to a number of factors. It is seen as a matching process between "what is provided" with "what should have been provided" in a particular context.

Some of the procedural undertaking a teacher takes up to adapt are as follows-

- a. Adding: It includes various activities which a teacher includes in order to make the topic more elucidated. It includes expansion and extension of any given text so that the learners are able to understand it in their context.
- b. Deleting: This process includes removing unnecessary details which are often repeated, for example if there are too many exercises under a given topic, some can be deleted and substituted with other exercises or activities. This process helps a teacher to adjust the content according to the needs of the learner.
- c. Modifying: The content can be changed internally by modifying the text into a different genre. A dialogue can be changed into a short story or turning a written exercise into an oral one etc.
- d. Simplifying: This process is often undertaken by majority of teachers as it helps them to make instructions, questions, explanations appear simple to their learners. Texts can be made by

reducing the length of longer sentences, changing vocabulary and grammatical contents.

- e. Reordering: In this process a teacher can re-order the contents or topics as he/she may find the learner not so proficient enough to understand them initially. For e.g., similar themes, repeated exercises and activities can be reordered to make learners understand the language skills in a more interesting manner.

#### Selecting Inputs in Designing Materials for English Language

- a. Grammar Materials: It can be presented in the form of a text, conversational extracts or as a corpus of utterances.
- b. Listening Materials: The elements to be selected is of a choice between authentic/ scripted or a combination of both materials.
- c. Reading Materials: Selection from a range of texts belonging to different genres which can be selected from a magazine, newspaper, book extracts etc.
- d. Writing Materials: A range of different types of text compositions comprising of authentic texts and supplementary reading articles to enhance learner's experience.
- e. Speaking Materials: Materials enhancing speaking in the form of dialogues, recordings, texts, topics, pictures etc. to be selected.

#### Activities for Developing Materials in English

Activities to be included should be selected from a range of different genres which should stimulate communication and help learners to face real life situations. It can be selected from authentic sources such as a newspaper article, a radio program, an interview, debate, giving or taking directions, answering a telephone/letter, role plays, dramatizing or miming, problem solving, interpreting information in the form of a chart, a graph or a map, report writing on the basis of a news bits, conversing on real life situations, language games like riddles and puzzles, writing on the basis of pictures, sketches and cartoons, discussions and debates on recent topics, group work enhancing cooperative learning, narrating and reciting stories and poems.

- Oral and visual representation of literature depicted through films, dramas, serials etc.

- Non-canonical literature in the form of short stories, comics, newspaper article etc.
- Selecting different texts and bringing it together so that students can develop extensive reading habits.
- Motivating students to look at Thesaurus and learner's dictionary.
- Activities which elicit students critical thinking like information gap, questioning, process writing, skimming, scanning, predicting, matching, problem solving etc.
- Listening a conversation and then try to infer the topic.
- Matching pictures while listening a conversation.
- Sequencing a list of key points according to a conversation.
- Looking at pictures and try to guess the responses and then later matching it to the actual conversation.

#### CONCLUSION

Developing materials in English requires an in-depth study and research. They should be developed with an Indian focus but incorporating a global perspective. In fact, while developing materials, insights from second language acquisition and language use along with the inputs from teachers, learners, writers, experts and researchers should be given priority. Selection of materials is an important task as it requires an in-depth study of the suitability and appropriacy of the materials in regard to the context and goals. Therefore, while designing and developing any material one should consider the various factors to identify the goals and objectives of language learning. Thereby enhancing a wider scope of successful material development.

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