

Regional Institute of English, Chandigarh Administration

Chandigarh

Course:	113PGCTE (online)
Paper:	Materials in English Language Teaching
Course facilitator:	Dr. Gopal Chandra Nayak
Topic:	Role of Materials in English Language Teaching
Objective:	To make the participants aware about the roles and needs of materials in English Language teaching and learning

### **Introduction**

This module attempts to highlight the roles and needs of materials in English language teaching. First it overviews some definitions of materials and moves to illustrate the functions of textbook, and finally provides some crucial factors which demands every teacher's attention in the English language teaching.

### **Materials**

There are different teaching learning materials such as textbooks, audio and video cassettes, handouts, teaching aid of various kinds , and so on which teachers use as means for imparting knowledge and skills to learners. Tomlinson (1998) has defined materials as:

Anything which is used to help to teach language learners. Materials can be in the form of a textbook, a workbook, a cassette, a CD-Rom, a video, a photocopied handout, a newspaper, a paragraph written on a whiteboard: anything which presents or inform about the language being learned. (p.xi)

These materials are used as tools of learning by the teacher and learner and an essential part of any teaching learning process. Appropriate materials if used effectively are expected to help fulfil the desired needs of the learners. According to Nunan (1988) "Materials are the tangible manifestation of the curriculum in action. They are in fact omnipresent in the language classroom and it is difficult to imagine a class without books..." (p.98). Dudley-Evans et al. (1998) also specified four reasons for using materials in ESP context:

1. Materials as a source of language
2. They are the learning support

3. Materials are a good source of motivation and stimulus
4. Materials are used for references

Allwright (1981) has suggested two approaches to the role of teaching materials, *Deficiency view* and *Difference view*. According to the Deficiency view, teaching materials are required for ensuring learners' learning and saving them from the teachers' deficiencies. Allwright (1981) says:

This way of thinking might lead, at one extreme, to the idea that the 'best' teachers would neither want nor need published teaching materials. At the other extreme we would have 'teacher-proof' materials that no teacher, however deficient, would be able to teach badly with. (p.6)

On the other hand, the *Difference view* holds that teaching materials functions as 'carriers' of decisions made by someone other than the classroom teacher, because the expertise required to write materials are importantly *different* from that of the classroom teacher. Allwright comments that for some this conceptions may seems to 'reduce' the teacher to the role of mere classroom manager; and for others, it frees the teacher to develop the expertise needed for dealing with practical and fundamental issues in the fostering of language learning in the classroom setting.

### **Textbook**

Though the above mentioned materials are used for teaching and learning purposes, textbook is mostly depended upon as a readily available material. According to Tickoo (2003), textbooks or coursebooks are meant to serve as:

- syllabus substitutes: they show what to teach and, in many cases, in what order to teach it;
- readily available sources of texts and tasks;
- inexpensive sources of materials for use inside the classroom and by individual learners on their own;
- compendiums of tasks and activities which teachers may use, or preferably, build upon in order to select or produce additional inputs;
- primary sources of support to individual students' efforts at preparing for tests and examinations;

- repositories of readable materials at the appropriate level, they often become models of learners' own language use. (p.257)

### **Teachers and textbooks**

There is differences of opinion when it comes to the of language teachers relationship with their textbooks. Textbook provides guidance and direction to teachers, pupils and parents; it provides for continuity by showing what has been covered and what need to receive attention next. A textbook is prepared by experts in the field keeping in mind the needs of the students, but the students who use the textbook, the context of the use and their needs are not similar but diverse. So, the textbook may not fulfil the objectives as intended by the textbook designers; the textbook needs to be adapted to the context and other suitable materials should be used to bridge the gaps between the level of the textbook and the existing level of the students. In this situation the teacher is supposed to play crucial roles. Tickoo (2003) provides the following factors.

1. *The level at which the language is being taught or learnt: from elementary to advanced.* An important factor here is the age at which the second or foreign language is being learned: an eight year old in a primary 3 class will relate to the course book differently from a teenager in her third year of learning the language. Long ago, Michael West coined the expression 'mental age of the textbook'. He did so to highlight the importance of bringing textual materials into harmony with the ages, aptitudes and interest of their users;
2. *The attitude of the school and society in general and expectations from course materials:* where the child's class reader is looked upon as the primary source of required learning, the judgements of parents and others on the quality of schooling are greatly influenced by how much use the teacher makes of it in the classroom. the more she uses the book the better she is thought of as a teacher;
3. *The rules and conventions of the system and the school:* in many foreign language classrooms teachers are, for examples, compelled to teach everything found in the textbook including those texts, tasks or exercises (e.g. texts for extensive reading, group assignments, projects) which are best left to individual or in-groups learner efforts. As a result teachers are often obliged to equate a year's successful teaching with 'covering all the portions' of the textbook.

4. *The existence or absence of additional and alternative materials:* in many developing countries an urban school may, for example, differ from a rural school in having access to a degree of library support on the one hand and newspapers and magazines, for example, as supplementary sources of authentic or real language on the other. The rural teacher may helplessly rely far more or exclusively on the textbook;
5. *The relationship of the textbook(s) to tests and examinations:* especially in schools and systems where the terminal examinations becomes the main focus and sole of teaching, mastery of the contents of the coursebooks of becomes the most important thing;
6. *Learner and teacher beliefs and practices on textbook use:* especially when a foreign language gets introduced in the fifth or sixth year of school, learners often come with strong beliefs on how they view and treat their textbooks. Very often they (and their parents) invest the book with all-knowing virtues and look at it as the key to success. In some schools, teachers too may think of the textbook as comprehensive in both content, language and also something which cannot be questioned.

#### Reference

- Allwright, R.L. (1981). What do we want teaching materials for? *ELT Journal*, 36 (1), 5-18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/36.1.5>
- David, N. (1988). *A Learner-Centred Curriculum: A Study in Second Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dudley-Evans, et al. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tickoo, M.L.(2003). *Teaching and learning English: A Sourcebook for Teachers and Teacher-Trainers*. New Delhi: Orient Longman Private Limited.
- Tomlinson, B. (Eds.). (1998). *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

**Assignment**

Answer the following question in about 500 words.

20 Marks

1. What purposes does the prescribed textbook serve in your class?