Post-Graduate Certificate in the
Teaching of English

MATERIALS FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

BLOCK

I

Perspectives on Materials Construction

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MATERIALS FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

BLOCK I

PERSPECTIVES ON MATERIALS CONSTRUCTION

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INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

The aim of this course, **Materials for the Teaching of English,** is to encourage you to assess the relevance of existing materials in teaching English language and literature in your own teaching situations. The focus is on enabling you to collect, analyse and account for the materials you use in different teaching contexts. This course is seen as complementary to the **Methods of Teaching English** in that the focus in **Methods** is on developing an awareness of the general methodological principles, while in this course the focus is on applying those principles in the selection and ***use*** of available resources and ***materials*** in the classroom. This course is also complementary to the **Practice Teaching course,** in that the focus in **Practice teaching** is on developing classroom teaching abilities and skills in order to use selected materials. In all our units we are trying to reflect the developments in the field.

In the first block, you will be able to develop issues, or articulate problems in the use of your materials, and discover the role and scope of materials. As teachers, we need to be trained as informed materials-users. What are teaching materials to you? Our understanding of materials usually stops at textbooks. But is it just that? These books are selected for you. The choice of textbooks and what goes into textbooks is not yours. Given these constraints, how do we make the best of it, create opportunities for learning and using materials, either new or old for different purposes?

Block I first discusses the role of materials in the learning activity of language classrooms. Then it gives various perspectives on materials construction.

Block II examines in detail various syllabi and materials. You will gain an experiential awareness of the factors that make for effective syllabi and materials. You will be able to get the ***priorities*** right regarding the criteria for the selection, grading, and presentation of materials in both the ***predetermined syllabus,*** and ***the emergent curriculum.*** In our discussions, we would be cross-referencing with other blocks, and to the **Methods** course.

Blocks III and ***IV*** suggest some of the ways in which you will be able to choose, adapt and analyse materials for developing and testing the language skills -- listening, speaking, reading and writing. We also use different media during contact programmes. In our discussions on audio-video materials, for example, you will not only know how to use them, but we will also demonstrate how materials can be used. We will also see how materials can be made as realistic as possible.

Through the review questions, we would like you to explore your own learning strategies. "Cognitive Strategies involve specific conscious ways of tackling learning tasks" (Dickinson, 1992:19). "Metacognitive strategies are used to manage and control the learning process" (op cit., 1992:19). The purpose of our self-check exercises, through "review questions", will be to enable you to monitor and assess your own progress and thereby work towards a kind of "learner autonomy" which is one of the aims of the course. By "learner autonomy", we mean that stage in your study or profession when you can have full control over your learning. You can take decisions regarding materials without the help of teachers, the course writers or tutors. However, we feel that initially we would all like support from one another in whatever we do. Not only will you be getting feedback from us but, we would also like to get your feedback/comments as we interact through these units, review questions, activities, and assignments. You are experienced teachers tackling your own problems and making your own decisions. So please give your comments regarding this course; bring in your experience in all your discussions, whether it is an informal discussion through letters or formal discussion through assignments.

Through this experience as learners, at a distance, probably you will rethink your roles as teachers. Many textbooks are indigestible. It can help your students to know exactly what they are supposed to be getting out of their textbook episodes. A few words of advice from you, and by working through some constructive exercises and tasks you may turn what might have been an hour's passive reading into an hour's productive learning.

If your textbook is a collection of prose-pieces from various sources without any exercises in any of the chapters, then you have to frame supplementary tasks or exercises. But please do not frame it mechanically. Your purpose for designing the tasks should be clear. Which particular skill will it develop: listening, speaking, reading, writing or are you planning to integrate all the skills? Further, as teachers, you have to ask yourself - "Are they actually learning something from this task, from what *I* do with it, from what ***they*** do with it, and are we developing the skills we plan to develop at the end of the session?" Gradually, by the end of the fourth block, you will be able to choose, adapt and analyse materials for developing and testing various skills in your learners. You will be able to draw a distinction between content and skill-based materials, and accordingly frame questions both for ***formative assessment***, (i.e. continuous assessment, see Block V **Methods**) as well as ***summative assessment*** (end-of-term examinations).

We have envisaged the role of the teacher, i.e. your role, as an evaluator of materials throughout this course. As a ***classroom teacher*** you know your class better than an external evaluator. As a teacher-cum-materials user, you could offer various interpretations to different classroom phenomena.

Block V deals with the evaluation of materials, tasks, and examination procedures, the difference between process-oriented tasks and product-oriented examinations. Through our course, you will be able to analyse and evaluate the role of materials at the ***Work Plan*** stage. Please refer to the diagram given below, adapted from Breen, 1989.

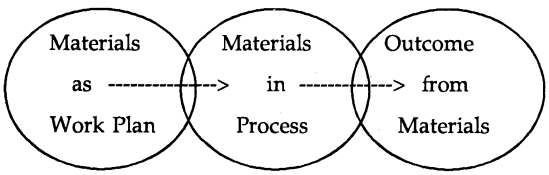

Figure 1

When we review materials, ***before*** they are used in the class, we examine the materials as they stand, that is without reference to their actual use in the classroom. There is a distinction between the ***theoretical***, i.e. the rationale behind the materials, the objectives intended by the materials producer and the ***empirical*** (i.e. the ***process*** of using the materials in the classroom) value of materials. In our implementation, we need to see whether there is a match or mismatch between the two. This stage is represented by ***Materials as Work Plan*** in Fig.1.

While we ***use*** the materials in the process of our teaching in our classrooms, represented as ***Materials in Process*** in this diagram (Fig.1), we can illustrate from our own reflection in our classrooms, the ways in which the learner actually ***uses*** and ***responds*** to materials. The ***Outcome from Materials*** illustrates the relative achievement of learners. Therefore this course may be one step towards teachers' reflection on their classroom, on their roles as ***Teachers cum Researchers***.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BLOCK

"What is the role of materials in English language teaching?" Unit 1 of Block I tries to answer this question, and raises other questions for further discussion. For example, if one teacher is successful with a graded reader, and the other teacher is equally successful with tasks around authentic materials, in the development of reading skills of their students, then which material or textbook do we recommend? The only factor which seems to be common in both the cases is that "***reading*** is the ***core***" of their syllabi. All activities centre around reading. But in what way are they different?

It is, perhaps, in the nature of the units in Block I that there should be more questions than answers, and we want to start a "debate" regarding the materials that are in use in the various states of our country.

This block offers fertile ground for open-ended debate. The effects of recent changes in English language teaching in India are critically examined. We are going through the early years of the communicative era, therefore the debate between "acquisition versus learning", "simplification versus authenticity", "structures versus functions", "fluency versus accuracy" continues. What do these terms mean as far as materials in the teaching of English are concerned? In Unit 2, we try to analyse the historical development of materials and also try to give pedagogical reasons for using materials in an eclectic manner. Do you approve of this "eclectic method", of using features of several different methods in language teaching, for example, by using both materials from the audio-lingual method and communicative language teaching techniques? We will not try to answer this question, but try to examine the various elements in the current debate.

In the West, there is a movement towards the "decline of the textbook".

> There is a tendency for the ***monolithic textbook*** to give way to less rigid forms of instructional materials. These range from various types of supplementary materials which now surround the central core of many courses, or which exist independently of the main textbook, to inventories of ideas for teachers, and to ***modular materials***.
>
> The module idea is a fascinating one; it attempts to reconcile the need for some kind of backbone to a course with the individual and ***changing needs*** of real learners. (Maley, 1990:126)

The term ***module*** is defined in the dictionary as: "an educational unit which covers a single subject or topic" (Webster, 1988). That is, the module is a self-contained unit, which has specific outcomes and which promotes an awareness of what has been learnt by the learner, thus contributing to a sense of achievement in learning and to learner training. It also allows for the fact that learners in a single class may progress at different rates, have different interests, working on different materials at the same time. In many technological institutes in our country, English for specific purposes (ESP) materials are ***modular*** in nature. Some students, who need to develop their study skills or those who come from regional medium backgrounds to these institutes, get one type of ESP material initially, and other students get another type. There are advanced courses in English for academic purposes (EAP) as well. Taken to its extreme, it leads into a field of ***individualized learning*** where the teacher does not intervene unnecessarily in a student's learning and acts as a guide.

But are these modules feasible in our primary schools, at the secondary level or in our colleges? We have discussed the practical constraints and you may add to this list, from your experience.

We have considered the ***relevance*** of such courses because of the ever increasing ***choices*** we have in the field of materials. Allwright (1990) queries the

value of ***teaching materials*** which leave the learner little room for manoeuvre, and argues the case of ***learning*** materials on the grounds that teachers often work too hard in the classroom while learners are frequently under- stretched. Maybe we could as teachers, supplement more materials along with the prescribed course books, particularly when we have to function in a centralised system. We need to exchange more ***ideas*** and talk about ***tasks*** and materials that are feasible in our classrooms. We have to, however, keep in mind our limited resources. With lack of facilities like photocopiers, or cyclostyling machines, it may not be feasible for all of us to supply ***supplementary materials*** to our learners. For better or for worse, the textbook has been a part of educational tradition since the age of mass printing began, and teachers and learners throughout the world have come to rely on it.

We need to be more ***aware*** of the ***choices*** available, and ***choose*** a ***textbook*** which provides a useful starting point for our learners. In this block, and throughout this course we will sensitize you towards the choice of right materials by guiding you to the right decisions regarding the criteria for the evaluation of available materials.

Unit 1

THE ROLE OF MATERIALS IN ELT

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Unit 1

THE ROLE OF MATERIALS IN ELT

1.0 Introduction

Teaching materials (henceforth to be referred to as TMs) are of many kinds: textbooks, audio and video cassettes, handouts, charts, teaching aids of various kinds which can all be used for different purposes by the teacher. Ordinarily, however, most teaching situations depend on the textbook.

We need to ask several questions about our teaching materials. First, we need to understand the ***role*** of teaching materials in our professional lives.

This unit helps you to examine the role of teaching materials in the English classroom. In doing so, it places the discussion in the context of teacher-learner perceptions of the role relationship among the ***teacher***, the ***learner*** and the TMs.

In this unit, the focus is on ***your perceptions*** of what your teaching materials are, your expectations of these tools, and the problems that your students face with them. You will be guided, then, to compare your perception with that of objective theoretical perceptions presented in Unit 2. Such reflection is, as we have said earlier, the focus of this course.

1.1 The purpose of textbooks

As teachers, we cannot be effective in the classroom without TMs. We need TMs of various kinds which should be available with our students also. Many disciplinary problems are rooted in the fact that students do not bring individual copies of textbooks to class.

We need to ask ourselves, however, whether we are using our textbooks or course books as effectively as possible in the class. Does using a ***good*** textbook mean that automatically good teaching and learning take place; or that using a ***bad*** textbook necessarily leads to bad teaching-learning situations? The many instances we have of good learning, occurring in most difficult circumstances, point to the fact that it is the use or interpretation of textbooks that can promote ***good learning***. A good textbook, however, does go a long way to promote more predictable learning outcomes in the average teaching-learning situation. A good textbook carries with it built-in structural scaffolding that ensures certain desirable outcomes even in situations where teachers are not prepared, not reflective, untrained and indifferent. We could also say that a learner can become more independent with the help of a good textbook, in spite of bad or non-existent teaching.

Activity A

Think of an experience when you used a textbook in your class, and felt good about it:

1. *What did that particular chapter/book contain?*
2. *Write down a few words explaining* ***why*** *you used that book.*
3. *What did you like about it?*

Discussion

1. I remember using a particular unit from Gillian Porter Ladousse's ***Reading***. It had the following format:-

Task 1 Focus

Do you think this advertisement is for

- a travel company advertising holidays in Italy
- a telephone company
- an Italian restaurant in New York

A collage of the leaning tower of Pisa on New York!

Now answer the following questions. Compare your answers with those of other students.

1. How many telephone calls do you generally make in a week?

Other similar questions

Task 2 Reading for information

Text 1

Questions

Task 3 Reading and Interpreting

Text 2

Questions

Task 4 Reading for Interest (This was the last task in the unit)

Read the following message found in a bottle. Can you think of what the circumstances were in this situation?

In 1916, a British Seaman found a bottle in the North Atlantic with this message on it:

"Still on deck with a few people. The last boats have left. We are sinking fast. Some men near me are praying with a priest. The end is near... May be this note will...." (Ladousse, 1987:5-7)

2. I wanted to expose my students to various purposes of reading, and develop various skills. Through the first task, they could predict what is to follow. In the second task they could scan for necessary information. Finally, I wanted to develop their interest in reading, by exposing them to some material outside their textbooks.
3. I liked the way the matter was presented to the learners. Texts were of various kinds: advertisements, visuals, and small messages.

1.2 Materials as opportunities for learning

One of the first roles or functions of materials is that they provide opportunities for learning. In the **Methods of Teaching English Course**, Block I introduces you to the concept of the ***Good Language Learner***. "Good language learning", Rubin says, "depends on at least three variables: aptitude, motivation, and opportunity." (Rubin, 1979:17-18). Of the three the third variable, ***opportunity***, includes ***materials*** and all those ***activities*** both within and outside classrooms which expose the learner to the language and which provide an opportunity to practice what has been learned. What goes on in the mind of the learner as s/he reads the book, or does an activity based on the book? We often ignore this learning process. How is it that some students read independently while some do not? If we try to observe a little more, we may be able to provide weak learners with supplementary materials and techniques for ***extensive reading*** so that they can help themselves when their teachers are not around. More particularly, we have to keep in mind those contexts, where second language learning takes place only in the classroom, with little or no opportunity for practice outside the classroom.

Activity B

1. *What is extensive reading?*
2. *Which of the materials listed below have you used and why?*
3. *What are the different functions of the following materials that we often use for our learners?*

Materials		*Functions*
a.	Textbook (main reader)	
b.	Supplementary reader	
c.	Workbook	
d.	Teacher's manual	
e.	Handouts/worksheets	
f.	Audio/video	
g.	Visuals	

Discussion

1. In the *Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*, "***Extensive Reading*** means reading in quantity in order to gain a general understanding of what is reading. It is intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading." (Richards, Platt and Weber, 1985:100)
2. Here is an answer from a teacher. Compare them with yours. You may give different reasons:

I have used ***textbooks*** because they are prescribed in the syllabus to introduce the students to new words, new concepts, new ideas etc. I have used the ***supplementary readers*** for extensive reading and ***workbooks*** for practice -- looking at mistakes, realising their problems, and learning from this experience. I have used the ***Teacher's Manual*** for guidance on how to go about teaching in the classroom. ***Handouts***, specially if they are interactive in nature with white spaces in between like this one:

Q1 _____

Q2 _____

reveal what the learners actually ***do*** in class. If few pens are in motion, we immediately know that learners are facing problems. The nature of the difficulty is revealed when individual learners are asked to say what they have written in their handouts.

3. *Materials*	*Functions*
a. Textbooks	The learners will be able to develop their reading skills; get to know the meanings of new words/ concepts/ideas etc.
b. Supplementary Reader	Reading for pleasure, reading for interest.
c. Workbook	Through practise, they will be able to develop their reading and writing skills.
d. Teacher's Manual	The teachers will be able to plan (indirectly helping learners).
e. Handouts/ worksheets	Learners can interact in the classroom, and learn a lot even if handouts are used in "lecture modes" (specially in colleges).
f. Audio/video	Stimulus materials for listening/writing/ speaking skills (we will discuss these materials in Blocks III & IV).
g. Visuals	Stimulus materials for speaking/writing skills.

1.3 The role relationships among teachers, learners and materials

The ***role*** of teaching materials then, can be said to be that of an instrument or tool to be used by both ***teachers*** and ***learners***. This tool can be wielded effectively more or less depending on the understanding the ***users*** have of the nature of the tool. In order to fully understand the tools we are using, we need to know our relationship with them, what they can be best exploited for, and how they can be ***adapted, enriched*** and ***interpreted***. The significance of the terms: ***adapted, enriched*** and ***interpreted*** will be discussed in this course.

The importance of teacher and learner roles in an understanding of language teaching, and in an understanding of learning content through materials and tasks, has recently been highlighted in several important studies (Wright, 1987; Richards and Rodgers, 1986). If you are not yet experienced as a teacher, you may ask yourself these questions:

"What do I actually do when I teach?"

"What have I got to offer learners?"

"What kind of materials and tasks shall I use for a particular class?"

Some of these questions will be answered in your **Methods for the teaching of English** course, and in your **Practice Teaching** course. For the "tools of the trade", for an understanding of the role of materials in the teaching of English, we hope to have stimulating discussions through this course.

Some of you are experienced teachers. You may ask such questions as:

"If the ***materials*** change, should I change my ways of teaching too?"

"What do new task-types mean for my daily work?"

"If I am not satisfied with the old textbooks, how do I bring about change in the classroom?"

You may have other questions in your mind. Please jot them down in your diary or on a piece of paper.

According to Wright (1990), "An understanding of roles also mediates between theory and practice, because it focuses on the people most intimately involved in the translating of theory into practice and who are able to test and modify theory through practice, and who are in the enviable position of being able to derive theory from practice -- teachers (that is, ***you***!). Investigating roles of teachers and learners thus has both theoretical and, most importantly, personal relevance, (for all of us !)".(Wright, 1990:84)

You may agree with this view, or disagree. You may argue and say that in a centralised system of education, you are handicapped as far as selection of materials is concerned. In your situation, who frames the syllabus? Who decides what should be taught in a particular school or college? Who writes the materials? Who is the final arbiter of right and wrong with the materials, or can you or your learners impose your own definitions of right and wrong? Or are you working in an autonomous college, where you are free to frame your own syllabus, design your own materials, decide on the techniques to be used in the classroom, develop the classroom tests, set the Final Examination question papers, and assess them yourself?

Whatever the solutions or resolutions to these dilemmas, I am at one with Stenhouse (1975) in this assertion:

> The uniqueness of each classroom setting implies that any proposal -- even at school level – needs to be tested and verified and adapted by each teacher in his own classroom. The ideal is that the curricular specification should feed a teacher's personal research and development programme through which he is increasing his understanding of his own work and hence bettering his teaching ..... It is not enough that the teachers' work should be studied; they need to study it themselves. (Stenhouse, 1975: 143)

While reading these units, working on the review questions, activities or assignments ***reflect*** on your own experience as teachers or students, on your own ***unique*** setting. We hope that we will gradually develop an awareness about a range of materials and judge their likely impact on curriculum proposals, and on the learners' progress in the classroom.

1.4 Setting the scene: perceptions of users

When we talk about the relationship between the ***materials*** and the ***user***, we need to identify the different kinds of users, and show how users react to these materials.

Activity C

List the different users of TMs.

Discussion

You have probably listed the two main categories of users: the ***teachers*** and the ***students***. We will be discussing the relationship of these two groups of people with the TMs they use. However, we would also like to draw your attention to other kinds of users:

a. Parents

Parents are users of textbooks also. If you are parents, don't you help with your child's homework? We are not advocating it, as a rule, but it does happen; and we ought to be aware and take into account that parents *are* constantly interpreting materials.

b. Researchers

There is a specialised group of ELT-researchers, who analyse TMs from different perspectives. These perspectives could be that of:

- Content-Analysis (i.e. selections in terms of theme, gender, world-views, class-perspectives, etc.)
- The use of TMs in the classroom (i.e. TMs are appropriate, popular, interactive, suitably difficult for the learners.)
- Text-linguistics (i.e. in terms of discourse, vocabulary, syntax etc.)

c. Publishers

Several textbooks are being published today by publishing houses. For example, **Collin's Cobuild**, OUP, Orient Longman, Macmillan, CUP, etc. tend to adopt the latest in teaching methodology and are geared for marketable strategies.

We will now discuss the two important perspectives that are of prime importance.

1.4.1 Perceptions of learners

Any teacher of any subject ought to try to discover quickly what kind of learning experiences pupils have already had (if you are not a teacher, then talk to some students in your community).

Activity D

Think of ways in which you will be able to arrive at an understanding of what kind of learning experiences your pupils have already had.

Discussion

There are at least three ways of arriving at the background of your learners:

i. One can talk to pupils -- a good thing to do for other reasons - and find out what course they have used, what supplementary readers they have

read, what schools they come from, whether they have taken part in a play or seen any plays (in which language?), whether they go to the cinema to see films in English and so on. This information can be supplemented by discovering their English marks in the entrance examination. In some places one can get hold of the scripts, which enable one to see strengths and weaknesses in useful detail.

ii. Where pupils have used a course in the previous stage of learning, you could read and analyse that course. To do this is particularly valuable because it enables you to see exactly what they are supposed to ***know*** item by item. This is essential knowledge for you if you wish to avoid confusing a class with too many ***new*** items all at once.

iii. The third way of finding out about the background of the students in your locality is to go to some of the schools they come from and see what happens in them.

Activity E

*What is the role of **materials** in the teaching of English to our learners? Tick, against the statements given below, if you agree:*

Materials:

- help the students to learn a great deal directly from ***exposure*** to language through reading and listening.
- guide the teachers to get an idea of how to ***sequence*** the activities in the classroom.
- stimulate learning.
- equip the students to deal with English literature.
- expose the students to examples taken from real-life situations.

Add ***five*** more statements that reveal the role of materials.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Discussion

Have you ticked all these statements? You may have referred to your experience as ***learners*** during your school or college days, or to your experience as ***teachers*** concerned about your learners. Back in the college, where I was working, the only exposure my learners got from the materials was in the classroom. So I can add ***five*** more sentences to explain the role of the materials which I used in those classes. However, this list is not exhaustive:

1. ***Audio cassettes*** provided the opportunity to just ***listen to English.*** Students listened to talks, discussions, interviews, plays etc. These materials motivated them for an exercise on ***listening comprehension.***
2. ***Interactive handouts*** were distributed while they were listening. Here they had to use their eyes as well as ears. The handouts contained diagrams, charts, photographs, which the audio talked them through.

3. ***Video and Interactive handouts***. Sometimes we had to stop the video, and the learners were expected to write something on their handouts. For example, they saw a fire accident on the video, and wrote down words and expressions that could be used in a report. For example, they wrote: "Smokes billowing out of windows", "Fire-Brigade in action", "Panic", "Fear writ on the faces of the victims" etc.

4. ***Students'own writing***. These notes and handouts were later used as materials for ***report-writing***. They were also used as stimuli for the anticipation of problems in teacher-training courses.

5. ***Video programmes*** were used to demonstrate the skills they were learning, e.g. interviewing, presentation skills, etc.

6. ***Visuals/Photographs*** were used as stimuli for descriptive essays.

In Blocks III and IV, you will take part in a discussion of various other roles of materials in the development of all the language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

1.4.2 Perceptions of teachers

The role of materials is often difficult to assess. This is not only due to the sheer diversity of course books, readers, workbooks, reference works, flash cards, cassettes, wall charts, recordings, films, etc., it is also because in any given teaching-learning situation the role of materials depends on the relation between the materials and the professional ability of the teachers. In some circumstances, materials can have a ***teacher-training function*** in addition to their contribution to the teaching task; in other situations they may enable highly trained teachers to present courses of great sophistication; or they may simply be pedagogical extras chosen almost casually from the great range of publishers' lists. Whatever their function in a particular case, there is no doubt that ***materials*** constitute an important element in the teaching-learning process.

In India, we all are working in different settings. Each of us has to tackle a particular situation with its own possibilities and ***problems***. Here are some examples from the letters of various teachers:

A. I have been teaching English in a college for more than five years. It is quite needless to say that I enjoy teaching immensely. As a teacher I realise that I have to play more then one role: firstly, as a teacher, teaching my students and helping them to cover their ***syllabus*** (both in ***English (Honours)*** and the ***Pass Course at the B.A. level***, and secondly, as a guide or a friend trying to inculcate different values, social, moral, and cultural, so that they may develop a more positive approach to life. Each student, I believe has a lot to give back to the society they belong to, or else the entire purpose of education is defeated.

   In my more reflective moments, when I ruminate on my students' future, as well as that of my own, I wonder whether I am sufficiently equipped to advise and guide my students about their careers. Some of them have come from regional medium backgrounds and some from English medium. Some may be good as social workers but not as teachers of English. Some may take up a job in a library or in a bank, but they are more inclined for a "teaching-job". How do you tell them that they should choose some other career? For the would-be teachers, could you give me some information about the courses at CIEFL? Do you have any information on Communicative Language Teaching?

B. I am teaching at the Intermediate level. The course contains ***a detailed textbook*** for ***prose*** and ***poetry***, a ***non-detailed textbook Pride and Prejudice***, and there is a section on grammar and writing in their final question paper. ***How do you improve their reading and writing skills through such a course***? Do you think "letter-writing", "paragraph-writing" and "precis-writing" are enough to improve their writing skills?

C. I am teaching in a regional-medium school. There are three textbooks 1.***New English Reader IV***; 2. ***The Wooden Bowl and other Stories***; and 3. ***New English Workbook IV***. These materials are designed well and the ***question-paper*** is excellently planned. Less weight is given to content, instead "functions" and "communicative skills", are being focussed on. There are matching exercises, multiple choice questions, Yes/No, true or false, order of events, fill in the blanks, imaginative letter-writing, dictionary referring exercises and contextualized questions. But the majority of the teachers are not in a position to correlate the ***aim*** of the teaching-learning materials design and the use of the instrument, i.e. the question paper. Hence, at times, the effectively designed question papers prove to be invalid.

Oral tests are recommended by the textbook designers, but they are not being conducted. Skills of reading and listening are tested. ***Oral tests*** like listening to AIR/TV news bulletins, followed by comprehension questions, or ***role-play*** could be included.

Could you, along with others at CIEFL, conduct a five-day orientation programme to explain to the teachers the aim of these materials, and how to administer oral tests?

Review question I

List the problems that these teachers A, B, and C have articulated through their letters.

Obviously, through the articulation of these "problems", these teachers are expressing the problems of their students as well. These excerpts, from their letters, also illustrate the range of teaching and learning situations in the world of English as a second language in India. Moreover, we have to interact with problems at various levels:

At one end of the continuum, we have to be aware of the school students' problems whether they belong to the primary, middle, secondary, or higher secondary level. Then we should be concerned about the tertiary or college students' problems and guage the difference in the nature of their work with that of the post-graduate level. While interacting with pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher-trainers, we have to keep our ears open to their "stories" and their "problems".

In this course, "**Post-graduate Certificate in the Teaching of English**", we are addressing pre-service teachers with no experience, in-service teachers with experience ranging from a few months to seventeen years or more, and teacher-trainers (who are involved in B.Ed./M.Ed. Courses and in numerous other training programmes). We will therefore try to tread a middle path, discussing general principles and introducing practical suggestions which are applicable in many situations and adaptable to others. You will have to select what is most useful to specific educational contexts and applicable to your materials meant for a particular group of students. The emphasis should be on what is useful at the classroom level, rather than on theory for its own sake.

Activity F

a. Read through the excerpts from the letters A, B, and C above once again. These teachers see TMs as:

_____

_____

_____

b. What is a textbook to you? Say Yes/No.

Is it a crutch? _____

Is it a tool? _____

Is it a take-off point? _____

Is it a stimulus? _____

Any other _____

Discussion

a. The teacher, who has written the letter A, sees TMs as books in English literature prescribed in the syllabus. For teacher B, the question paper is also considered as a tool which helps her to decide what to teach in the classroom. Similarly teacher C considers textbooks and question papers as materials. Besides, she recommends media (AIR/TV), audio/video cassettes as supplementary materials for developing oral communication skills.

b. In answering this question "What is a textbook to you?" we have taken into account the purposes for which materials have been in use. It is possible that in general use, a textbook should be a ***tool***. But we do often resort to using a textbook as a ***crutch***. This is particularly so when we have not planned our lessons. At such times we fall back on the textbook and do what the book says. Treating a textbook as a ***take off point*** or a ***stimulus*** for further teaching-learning activities allows more latitude for the teacher, and more opportunities for taking the initiative in decision-making.

1.5 Attitude to materials

It is necessary to be ***receptive*** or ***open*** to the possibilities of the use of materials. If your attitudes, further, are ***open*** or ***receptive*** to the study of English, then the chances of understanding the purposes of what the materials could be used for, are

higher. There are other types of interpretations that we could give to the word ***receptive.*** This issue is related to studies on ***integrative motivation*** (Gardner and Lambert, 1972, Gardner, 1979), the desire of the language learner to affiliate in some way with the speakers of the target language.

Activity G

As soon as you hear the word "Receptive", which words come to your mind? You can express it in the form of a mind-map. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

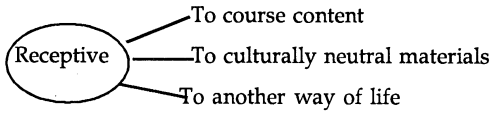

Figure 1

Discussion

Compare your diagram with the one given below:

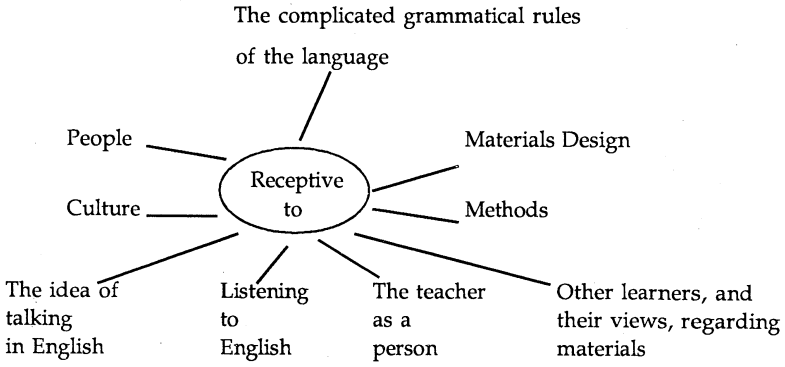

Figure 2

Do your students enjoy listening to English, or do they have a ***bias*** against the language? Are they attracted towards those who can communicate in English, or do they have any bias? To take one example, from Lambert et al (1960), speakers of English revealed their stereotypes of French-speaking Canadians by judging their personality behind tape-recorded voices, speaking either English or French. The French voices were rated as less intelligent and less trustworthy, and so on, than the English ones, although French and English recordings were made by the same bilingual speakers using two different languages.

Similarly students, teachers and teacher-trainers may form strong impressions of one another which have nothing much to do with actual performance and personality, but rather more to do with appreciation or dislike of someone's looks, smell, mood, gait, voice or clothes. These may affect our attitudes to materials as well, and we may form a bias for/against authors. These impressions can be very strong and may affect the way we feel about particular books or authors long after we have started to know them and their work.

In the Indian context, such attitudes are relevant, as a background issue, since they have a major implication on ***language teaching policy***. You will understand the implications of this through the activity given below.

Activity H

Consider these questions:

a. Should English be given a major place on a ***curriculum*** because of its importance as a world language, even where it is remembered as the language of colonial oppression?

b. Are our learners open to materials, if they are based on English Literature? Or should they be designed in a "culturally neutral" way, so that they reflect the native culture of the learners, rather than the culture of the native speakers?

Discussion

These are controversial topics and we do not have answers to these questions. But it is worthwhile to keep these questions in mind while reading through these units because they do have implications on ***our*** and your attitudes towards materials design. They also have an impact on learners' receptivity to the target language.

As teachers we have often experienced the difficulties that arise when our approach to organizing ***course-content*** does not match with the learners' expectations as to what a language course should involve. For instance learners, (and often their parents), from traditional education systems, sometimes react negatively to attempts to teach ***communicatively***, or to organize a ***situational*** or ***functional syllabus*** (these would be discussed in detail in Block II), if they feel that grammar is the proper focus for a language course and everything else is just wasting time or, perhaps more positively, having "fun" during "group-work".

Sometimes, even when everything seems favourable, learners can "switch off" because they do not like the way the content of their course is presented in the teaching materials. The textbook may perhaps be dull to look at, with crowded pages and very few illustrations to catch the eye. Or learners may be offended by the illustrative style used in textbooks. In an experimental study, for example, Pearson 1983 (cited in Allwright and Bailey, 1991) found that learners from various cultures reacted very differently when faced with different cartoon styles illustrating materials for the Teaching of English as a second language.

In other cases, learners may disagree with, or be offended by, much of the content of the reading passages and dialogues. Such materials may represent a distinct gender bias, for example, or may involve subjects that are culturally taboo (perhaps for religious reasons). Such materials may severely lose credibility, or they may be rejected altogether as totally unusable, if the learners are not given the opportunity to express their opinions.

Activity I

*a. As a **language learner** have you ever experienced a strong reaction, positive or negative, to the content of a language course, or to the materials used in teaching?*

b. Have the learners in your class ever reacted negatively to a course you prepared or to a set of materials you ever used? What did you do? In retrospect, what could you have done?

c. Recalling your experiences in your school life, do you remember your *teachers* or the *books* you had used then? Write your comments below.

Discussion

We may not have answers to all these questions right now. This activity is meant to serve as a stimulus for your *thoughts*. Some of us have pleasant memories, and recall a story book or a page of a textbook we had used in an English language class instantly. But for many of us, *teachers* have made more lasting impressions. If we analyse these feelings and attitudes, we may recall and make a thorough study of materials that were in use in our schools and colleges. We may want to adapt some, change some or delete others. In other words, we have started evaluating our materials in our own way informally. In the next unit, we will discuss the basic assumptions underlying materials.

Review question II

Make a list of the specific issues related to learner receptivity that we have considered in this section.

1.6 Summary

In this unit, we discussed the role of materials in the English Language Teaching scenario in India. Materials offer exposure to our students and provide them with a number of learning opportunities. In setting the scene, we discussed the problems faced by various teachers at various levels. The list is not exhaustive; neither the

list of problems, nor the suggestions for solutions. The study of understanding role relationships in the classroom, amongst the teacher, the student and the text is an interesting area that we can all start investigating in our own way.

Finally, we have started analysing our attitudes towards materials through questions that we have addressed to ourselves. We have tried to reiterate the same maxim "Do not judge a book by its cover" in a different manner.

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1.8 Recommended reading

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1.9 Answers to review questions

Review question I

A. In the B.A. level syllabus, there was no course on "Career Guidance"; neither were there courses on "Communicative Language Teaching". Since 1994, both these courses have been introduced as "optional courses" at the B.A. level in many colleges. Details of these courses are discussed in Block III, Unit 1.

B. This teacher needs orientation on how to use a prescribed textbook for the development of reading and writing skills. Literature can be used to develop language skills, as would be illustrated in Block III, Unit 1. Moreover, textbooks should have built-in tasks to develop the students' planning and organization in writing. In conventional courses, we lay emphasis on the ***product***, of ***what*** is the outcome at the end, instead of developing the ***process*** through various activities in the classroom.

C. ***Question papers*** are used as ***materials*** by this teacher. She wants to develop the skills of oral communication, involving both listening and speaking. Although this is one of the aims at the secondary level, and is stated in the syllabus, there is no provision for the development of these skills either in the textbooks or in the pattern of examination.

Review question II

We have considered eight specific issues related to learner receptivity: receptivity to (1) the target languages and culture, (2) the teacher as a person, (3) other learners, (4) the teacher's way of teaching, (5) the course content, (6) materials, (7) the idea of being a successful language learner and (8) the idea of communicating with other people. Although research has not yet clearly demonstrated the importance of these issues to language learning and materials design, there are some studies which lead us to believe they are worth pursuing.