

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 4. Issue.2., 2017 (April-June)

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

PRODUCING MATERIALS FOR THE LEARNERS WHO LEARN ENGLISH AS A SECOND
LANGUAGE: ISSUES, SCOPES AND CHALLENGES

MD. FORHAD HOSSAIN¹ MD. SADEKUL ISLAM²

^{1,2}Lecturer, Department of Languages, IUABT-International University of ,Business Agriculture and
Technology

¹forhadhossain@iubat.edu; ²sadekul@iubat.edu



MD. FORHAD HOSSAIN

ABSTRACT

Having the drastic rise as Lingua Franca, English has convinced many parts of the world to learn it for effective communication. Along with the growth of huge number of learners who learn English as a second language, the inevitability of developing context-specific language learning materials has also achieved priority among the non-English speaking countries. Developing effective learning materials for any group of learners who learn English as a Second Language is always a complex process that is contributed by good number of factors of differences, originated from all the stakeholders: the learners, teachers, institution and publishers who either produce or exploit materials. **Along with huge scopes to produce context-specific language learning materials**, the material developers face difficulties in each stage of material development. The factors of differences, that originate from learning environment and offer various number of challenges, are related to diagnosis of students needs, formulation of material development objectives, content selection, methodology and pedagogical realization, acceptability by the participants, integrating skills in a lesson or course, contextualization, available budget and time for material development, poor infrastructure and vice versa. Some are quite similar to the challenges that a material developer faces in a native environment; while many of them exist only in ESL environment. This paper aims at describing the scopes of producing materials for the ESL learners and the challenges that the material developers may face at different stages and, in some cases, suggesting ways that may help overcome the difficulties and facilitate the scopes of material writing.

Key Words: ESL, Material Development, Learning Context, Challenges, Scopes

“Authors always take a great risk: they receive praise if their work is good-and criticism if not”
(Ronald V. White.1988)

Introduction

It is incontrovertible that material plays an emphatic role in language learning, distinctively in a context where there is interaction between and among the learner/s and teacher/s both having specific needs and objectives of learning and teaching to accomplish. Developing language learning materials for the learners

and teachers who learn and teach English as a second language is much more difficult and challenging because of distinct features of ESL learning environment that hardly exist and dominate the learning environment, the acquisition as well, where learners are natives of English. Though, thousands of teaching materials are produced throughout the globe and made available in the market for sale, it becomes important for the teachers or educational institutions to choose to construct their own teaching material because they find that commercially produced materials cannot meet their needs accordingly. Besides, not great deal of quality materials, especially in the non-native countries, is produced to meet the needs of particular group of learners; even if materials are produced, the efficiency and effectiveness of those are subject to rigorous evaluation. So, most often materials developed by the native material developers are adapted, sometimes adopted, by the teachers and organizations to teach their students while sacrificing many aspects of learning in many forms. Thus, this adaptation or adoption may hardly meet the needs of all interested parties in a learning environment. This, often, results in forcing the interested parties-learners, teachers, organizations, publishers, government and sponsors-to develop their own materials for their learners. Such a context gives a lot of scopes for the creation of appropriate materials, while at the same time poses varieties of challenges at different stages of material development.

Materials, Materials Development

In the earlier ages, course books and only few other things were addressed as language learning materials, but with the technological advances, as hundreds of things have been redefined around the world, the concept of what material is also has changed. Simply defined, as Brian Tomlinson says, material can refer to anything which is used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language.

"Materials could obviously be cassettes, videos, CD-ROMs, dictionaries, grammar books, readers, workbooks or photocopied exercises. They could also be newspapers, food packages, photographs, live talks by invited native speakers, instructions given by teacher, task written on cards or discussion between learners. In other words they can be anything which is deliberately used to increase the learners' knowledge and/or experience of the knowledge". (Brian Tomlinson: 1988)

Whatever the materials are, we need to develop them with conscious and meticulous effort. According to Brian Tomlinson, "materials development refers to anything which is done by writers, teachers or learners to provide sources of language input and to exploit those sources in ways which maximize the likelihood of intake: in other words the supplying of information about and /or experience of the language in ways designed to promote language learning. Materials developers might write textbooks, tell stories, bring advertisements in to the classroom, express an opinion, provide samples of language use or read a poem aloud. Whatever they do to provide input they do so in principled ways related to what they know about how languages can be effectively learned".

The last line of Brian indicates the challenges by denoting that language input should be developed and manipulated in principled ways that will ensure effective language learning. While developing materials in principled ways to ensure effective learning, the material developers may face many challenges that will be oriented to many of the following aspect of material development. But, we should remember that, in all contexts or in ESL environments, all materials developers will not face the same challenge, in the same face, of similar intensity as each context is unique and characteristically distinctive.

1. Diagnosing the needs of learners and teachers:

"The needs of a learner represent the gap between what the learner wants to get out of the **learning** experience and his or her current state of **knowledge**, skill, and enthusiasm" (Noessel, 2003). At the very first step, the material writers need to identify the need of his/her target group of learners. "Materials writing is at its most effective when it is turned to the needs of a particular group of learners" (David Jolly and Rod Bolitho, 1998). In an ESL environment, like any other language learning environment, to ensure effective learning, the best the teachers can do to their students is to develop their own materials on the basis of their unique needs. The needs of learners vary from learner to learner to a great extent in the ESL classes as initially, to all of them, English is a new language and all of them have great experience of diverse use of their mother tongue that most often dominates their learning over the target language and works as an obstacle

too. So, the material developers have to identify number of variables that shape the needs of a particular group of learners. The task is not an easy one. To identify the unique needs of the learners, a material developer must investigate the factors that affect the language learning of Second Language learners.

"Each learner is unique, and brings to the **learning** situation his or her own different learning style, knowledge set, pool of past experiences, and **motivation**. In learner-centered instruction, it is important for instructors to consider the level of knowledge and skill development attained by the learners prior to instruction" (Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2004). Rod Ellis(2001) has described 3 aspects that play role in second language acquisition and to be discussed in theories that explain second language acquisition: 1. Internal factors 2. External factors and 3. Individual learner differences. Material developers can focus on these aspects of learners while diagnosing the needs of particular group of learners.

Internal factors refer to the level of existing knowledge among the learners and the internal mechanism that guide their acquisition. As these are covert and not directly observable, the material developers need to infer these by studying learner's output and how they learn. Internal factors may not play role in a case when material developers will develop fresh materials but will help edit materials in future. And undeniably, as it is an ongoing process, initially, material developers develop materials based on their assumption that grows out of their research on number of factors and of their experience. They often need to re-identify the real needs of learners and re-shape materials. In such condition, internal factors help to identify even how much the developers were right in identifying the needs of students.

External factors are related to the environment in which learning takes place (Rod Ellis 2001). Learning does not take place only inside the classroom; it can be said even that a great deal of learning takes place outside the classroom that can be considered one of the settings for learning. Other external factors include social class, ethnic identity, learner's choice of target language variety, educational settings etc. Any of these may greatly shape the learning needs.

Individual learner differences include age, sex, previous experience with language learning, proficiency in the native language, personality factors, language aptitude, attitudes and motivation, General Intelligence(IQ), Sense Modality Preference, Sociological preference (e.g. learning with peers Vs learning with the teacher), Cognitive styles and learner strategies. (Altman, 1980). These factors shape individual learners needs as well as affect learner's language acquisition.

Materials developers must have enough knowledge on all these factors that create variable needs among a group of learners. It cannot be speculated that the above factors influence all the second language learners in the same way, but with these more effective diagnosis of learner's needs is possible. If teachers or material developers fail to understand how their target group of learners wants to learn a language and how much they can cope up with a particular language learning material, it is almost useless to produce any material. It cannot be assured as well that needs analysis will make the materials developers able to produce flawless or unanimously acknowledged materials, but more efficient production of materials is also highly possible to generate.

The best work of needs analysis can be done by the teachers who themselves are the material developers because they understand their students' needs and their preferred learning styles. The material developers must be wise enough to identify needs and be responsive to the identified needs. To do so, they can involve themselves in researching their own classrooms when the developers are teachers as well. Otherwise, materials developers may consult teachers and observe the learners in different ways. The teachers who conduct research and develop materials can serve the purpose best.

Both the teachers and developers must respond to the learner's needs by considering the factors of learner differences: internal, external and individual differences. David Jolly and Rod Bolith say, "How they (teachers or material developers) respond to this needs depends on many variables: the prevailing norms in a specific education context, the amount of time available, the availability of reprographic facilities, the teacher's' background and training etc. To sum up, the most effective materials are those which are based on a thorough understanding of learners' needs, i.e. their language difficulties, their learning objectives, their styles of learning etc."

It may also give benefit to concentrate on the needs of teachers: what they intend to ensure, how they want on what principle and what outcome they expect. It can be teachers' need even when someone wants to ensure particular level/ amount of learning among their students. In that case, teachers' need, what they feel necessary, can also bear importance. Material developers should also analyze what the teachers' needs are while preparing materials because, ultimately, teachers will play a key role in materializing the actual learning. What teachers would find less feasible, problematic or less relevant will definitely give poor output.

Identifying the needs and analyzing them to reach a conclusion regarding what to produce is a complex process and there is not a single way to identify learners' needs. Different models/ways have been suggested by different researchers, from different perspectives, who are from linguistics, educational psychology, etc. Of course, gathering information, using different tools, is of great importance. Authentic and effective information about learners' needs created by internal factors, external factors and their individual differences help the developers to build language corpora that facilitates knowledge on how language is achieved, what is the difference between learning pattern of past and present, what possible improvement should be introduced in future to ensure effective learning. Developers may accomplish the following tasks to collect information:

- a. The current syllabus or course materials can be analyzed, if there is any.
- b. The learners can be asked to write what they want to learn in any course.
- c. Instructors can probe learner needs by having students individually list their positive and negative experiences in prior courses.
- d. It can be useful to construct a survey to explore students' learning preferences such as learning style, their prior experience, and their motivation to learn the subject matter (Davis, 2001). As the needs analysis is a continuous process, the survey can be conducted at different stages: pre-development stage, while-development stage and post-development stage. Pre-survey will help to identify what they have learned and what more they need or want. While-survey will help to check whether they can relate themselves to what have been /is being developed. Post-survey will be an effective tool to identify whether their needs are satisfied or not.
- e. What the students have learned from the previous learning experiences can be useful to design the new syllabus or curriculum.
- f. The stakeholders of materials can share their experiences and expectations publicly and developers can compile all the responses to rephrase and classify learners' needs into different categories.
- g. Whatever methods the developers follow should be subject to their own context. The best practice is to identify the real needs of learners in a particular learning context and customize the methods, models and tools in a way that can fulfill their objectives.

2. Formulation of Objectives

"Objectives are specific outcome or products of courses which are outlined in a syllabus. Objectives guide teachers; they also help learners understand where the course is going and why. Goals address more general, societal, community or institutional concerns"(Fraida Dubin and Elite Olshtain,1986). Each course or course book is designed and written with a goal to be achieved. Course contents and tasks are written to achieve the objectives of each chapter/unit/learning task. ESL course books often are designed and written for a target group of learners who may share common learning experiences and expect specific learning outcomes that are determined mostly by the objectives of learning. As the ESL learners have their own learning needs, just after the analysis of their needs, formulation of learning objectives, in line with their needs, is of great importance. Needs analysis can also be facilitated by objectives or goals in a case where there is a national or institutional curriculum and syllabus where needs are also identified against the objectives. At institutional level, it is important to align learner's' needs with the course instructors' /institutional goals. As the second language learners sometimes may not be aware of their learning needs and most often courses or classes, in school or colleges, institution or course instructor may set syllabus that aims at meeting particular learning needs.

The task of formulation of objectives is not at all easy as diverse group of learners participate in learning activities in ESL environment. National curriculum design or structure plays an influential role here as well. As each nation has their own curriculum to serve their language learners, at institutional level, if anyone wants, it can be quite difficult to balance the national curriculum and institutional objectives/syllabi. Besides, in all ESL countries, there are many private institutions which may have their own policy of teaching and learning. For them, balancing is much more difficult; sometimes ignoring the national curriculum becomes a risky job when any institution receives students who have gathered learning experiences under the national curriculum. If the national curriculum does not reflect learners' need through proper objective formulation and syllabus design, it is not easy to do so at institutional level as they receive students with poor or ineffective learning experiences. So learning objectives should be set, stated and declared clearly to all the interested parties. Of course, objectives of any course or course book or syllabus should focus students' need at a particular level, in a particular context in line with national and international context of language learning. As people learn a language only for communication, both the national and international contexts, where the learners will communicate for a large number of purposes, should be considered while determining the learning objectives. "Along with learners' diverse needs, curriculum design, and national and international contexts, the most worthy factor, to be considered while determining learning objectives, is syllabus design and its types. Objectives of learning cannot be set in vacuum; objectives depend on the method of language learning and teaching and syllabus design. Similar methods can be applied through different types of syllabus like Communicative Language Teaching can be done through 8 types of syllabus" (Yalden, 1983)

1. Structures plus functions (Wilkins 1976)
2. Functional Spiral around a structural core (Brumfit 1980)
3. Structural, functional, instrumental (Allen 1980)
4. Functional (Jupp and Hodlin 1975)
5. Notional (Wilkins 1976)
6. Interactional (Widdowson)
7. Task based (Prabhu-1983)
8. Learner-generated (candling-1976, Henner Stanchina and Riley-1978)

Methods and syllabus pattern will guide as well as dominate determining language learning objectives. As the same methods can be demonstrated through different types of syllabi, it becomes challenging and complex task for the material developers to select the effective syllabus they want to follow. If the choice is wrong, surely, learning objectives based on that will not be effective and will fail to meet the learners' needs. It is also important in a context where the learners are natives but the native context is not as diverse as the ESL contexts are. A good curriculum, right method and effective syllabus can ensure efficient learning. While one context requires notional functional syllabus, the other context may require structural syllabus. In both the cases, learning objectives cannot be completely similar though having common base. Nowadays mixed type of syllabus, even mixed methods give good output in ESL contexts. In that case, lessons' objectives will be of various dimensions in the language classrooms.

Formulation of objectives are also greatly determined and shaped by:

- a. **Class Size:** In many ESL contexts, the number of students influences various aspects of language teaching and learning. Material developers should set objectives in way that is achievable in accordance with the class size. For example, it will be meaningless if a material developer tries to improve speaking competence through pair work in a class where the number of students is 100. So, objectives of a course or lesson should be realistic in line with the class size
- b. **Learners' Background:** Material developers should set objectives considering the amount of experience the learners already have so that the learners can assimilate and relate themselves and perceive learning objectives. If they can relate themselves, it will motivate them to actively participate in learning.

- c. **Language Efficiency of Learners:** In each new course or at new level, it is important to know and measure how much efficient the students/learners are and what level of efficiency they have achieved so far. These will help determine the objectives and develop appropriate materials as well.
- d. **Class Hour:** How much time the teachers and learners will get in a class and how much of a lesson or what type of lesson can be done in a given time will surely affect language learning. The teachers/material developers should consider the class time or learning exposure a student receives. Though a significant amount of learning can take place outside the class, the major learning and motivation for learning can take place inside the class. Objectives or part of objectives, in a lesson, should be time bound.
- e. **Group of Learners:** When the learners, in a class, are of mixed ability or mixed background along with individual differences, it is again challenging task to set objectives that all learners will find meaningful. Setting objectives in a class where such kind of diversity does not exist can be more linear.
- f. **Multilingual/Bilingual Context:** It is easy to predict that, in a learning environment where learners are from more than one language background and each of their mother and regional languages influence their learning, setting objectives that all will find interesting and productive is also challenging as it is really a complex process to set course or lesson objectives to meet the needs of mass learners.

The above factors drive the materials developer into a great complexity, sometimes into confusion, oriented to what to do and what not to, how to set the objectives and many other questions they have to answer and satisfy. As objectives will lead the material developers to content selection and organization, they must be very meticulous and must consider all the above factors that may affect learning in various forms. The material writers need to set appropriate macro (for course/book) and micro (for lesson/ chapter) objectives.

3. Content Selection, Sequencing and Quality design

When the objectives are set, along with syllabus types, and material developers know what they want to produce for which group of learners in which context. In the next step, the subsequent challenges for them are to select contents that are to be taught and to put them in effective sequence. According to David Nunan (2003), selection of the content should be justified. The material developers may need to justify their selection and sequencing to all interested parties or to one or more than one of them. Before selecting contents for a course or program, it is important to choose method/s and syllabus/syllabi. As the ESL environments are diverse, one method and one type of syllabus may hardly fulfill the needs of learners. The material developers may choose more than one methods for a course that will be followed by mixed type of syllabus. As in point number 3, Yalden, who suggests that CLT can be conducted through 8 types of syllabus, has been referred. It is not easy to ensure effective learning in CLT or in any other method through only one type of syllabus in all ESL contexts. In the same course more than one method can be used to make the lessons appropriate to the contexts and effective. Likewise, more than one syllabus pattern can be used in the same course: for example a blend of structural syllabus and functional syllabus can be effective in a context where learners want to use a language for communication, especially through speaking and writing, in the real world. Speaking can be demonstrated through contents developed based on functional syllabus; while structural syllabus can help facilitate writing. Thus content selection in line with the methods and syllabus pattern is a great challenge for the material developers.

In selecting contents, what approach/es the materials developers will follow is also worth of consideration. Authors or material developers may pre-determine a syllabus and develop materials; on the other hand, they may let the syllabus develop organically from the taught contents. "In some cases the authors are writing to a specific brief and must follow an imposed syllabus absolutely. But one of the things we know about language acquisition is that most learners only learn what they need or want to learn. Providing opportunities to learn the language needed to participate in an interesting activity that is much more likely to be profitable than teaching something because it is the next teaching point in the syllabus. And deriving learning points from an engaging text or activity is much easier and more valuable than finding or constructing a text which illustrates a pre-determined teaching point" (Brian Tomlinson,1998). Saying so, Brian suggests a

text-driven approach to syllabus development. It can be effective if syllabus is grown out of developed contents that are learners' need oriented. But when learners' needs analysis is done, pre-determined syllabus followed by contents can also give good output in terms of learning achievement. Materials developers have to decide, in their context, what they want to do, what will give them better dividend.

Choosing right contents is not enough. The selected contents should be put in right sequence so that it affects language learning positively. The learners may have their own learning traditions and they may expect to learn something before learning something else. Besides, learning one content before the other is more effective, especially for those who are learning English as a second language. Material developers must answer the following questions:

- a. What should come first in the content list and what should come later?
- b. On what principle a content list should be produced?
- c. What kind and amount of output they expect they may get because of the content sequence?

It should be remembered that no one can be sure and guarantee how and how much certain types of sequence will facilitate language learning. For example, in a structural syllabus where grammatical items are dominating, it cannot be absolutely determined what should be taught first, what at second as the items are intricately related and sometimes complementary: study of one requires knowledge of another. In such a dilemma, it cannot be surely said, for example, whether a course should start with Tense or Word class. Thus, in all contexts, there will be confusions, contributed by different factors of learning environment including syllabus design and methods of teaching, among the materials developer regarding the sequence of contents. But material developers must overcome their confusions and take decisions, sometimes based on their assumptions, on what sequence they will choose in their courses and for the learners. Trialing will surely help them to judge their decision in various steps of use of materials by the teachers and learners.

4. Methodological and Pedagogical Realization: The material developers must have methodological and pedagogical realization of what they are going to produce as these two greatly shape the materials and eventually determine the quality of the produced materials as well. According to David Nunan (2003), "methodology has to do with selecting, sequencing and justifying learning tasks and experiences". Methodology focuses on classroom techniques and procedures. After selecting content, the material developers need to concentrate on what type of exercises, tasks and activities they are going to develop for the participants of classroom. The exercises, tasks and activities should be in effective sequence and integrated, in a lesson or in a book, in a way that will make the materials useful to all. Learning tasks and exercises should be relevant to the content and efficient enough to ensure the outcome of a lesson in terms of effective learning among the learners in all respects. As, most often, along with different types of assessment examinations, learning tasks and exercises are useful tool of evaluating students' achievement and proficiency, the material developers should adopt a holistic approach to set task and activities.

Pedagogy, simply, refers to the art, craft and science of teaching. Creative and effective teachers use a cluster of teaching strategies; certainly as because there can be no single universal strategy that fits and works in all learning contexts. While some strategies may fail or prove to be less effective in a learning environment; another, possibly in combination with different strategies, can effectively be implemented in the same context having certain kind of students, of certain background knowledge and experiences, who are taught by certain type of teacher. The material developers, whether they are the users of the materials in a learning context or not, must prepare materials in a way so that the teachers can use an array of strategies while teaching their students. Materials must support teachers' creative thinking and his/her plan to involve learners in different ways. If the materials are rigid and there is hardly any scope for the users to improvise, surely the materials will seem less effective.

5. Integration of Four Skills in the Same Book or Same Course: Nowadays, Integrated approach, teaching more than one skill or all the skills together, to language learning and teaching has become popular because this approach gives better output. It is hardly possible to teach a one of the four language skills separately as all the skills have some interconnections among themselves. " Language use is a combined skill where everything depends on everything else- at the very least we listen and speak together, and read and write

together” (Jan Bell and Roger Gower). While developing materials, the writers must decide much earlier of writing materials whether they want to prepare learning materials on one skill or more than one skill. Headway series can be an ideal example in this regard. “Headway” has become popular but still the other issues like, class size, class time, students’ level etc. may have influence on this. For example, in a large class, teaching four skills along with grammar can be challenging or less effective; undoubtedly the success of materials will greatly depend on how teachers treat them in the class. Material developers must think deeply about integration of four skills. They may integrate two skills together in a course book like speaking and listening together. Or they may like to develop materials on one skill, while having simultaneous minor focus on the other skills as well. This will also be a sort of integration, if they do so. As Rebecca Oxford says, ““A particular series might highlight certain skills in one book or another but all the language skills might nevertheless present in the tasks in each book. In this way, students have the benefit of practicing all the languages skills in an integrated, natural communicative way, even if one skill is the main focus of a given volume”. The material developers will also find it difficult to choose which type of integrated skill instruction they will choose for their target group of learners: there are two types of integrated-skill instruction: Content Based Language Instruction, where language learning takes place through learning content and Task Based Instruction where the emphasis is on doing tasks that require communicative language use.

6. Contextualization of Materials: “An important advantage of teacher produced materials is contextualization (Block, 1991)”. It is a very popular trend in non-English speaking countries to nativize or contextualize the materials. The material developers hardly adopt native materials for their learners; most often they adapt materials or write their own materials in their context. Contextual realization by the writers plays an important role in material development. The writer must have deep understanding about the learners’ context, their culture, their beliefs, traditions and so on. Jocelyn Howard and Jae Major have pointed out that, “a key criticism of commercial materials, particularly those produced for the world wide EFL market is that they are necessarily generic and not aimed at any specific group of learners or any particular cultural or educational context.” The possible lack of ‘fit’ between teaching content and course book has been expressed thus: “our modern course books are full of speech acts and functions based on situations which most foreign-language students will never encounter... ‘Globally’ designed course books have continued to be stubbornly Anglo-centric. Appealing to the world market as they do, they cannot be by definition draw on local varieties of English and have not gone very far in recognizing English as an international language either.” (Atlan, 1995, p. 59)

David jolly and Rod Bolitho (1998) have effectively quoted an experienced school teacher from the Ivory Coast, “It’s a very nice book and very lively, but in the section on the “processes” for example all the exercises are about unusual things for our country. We are a hot country and also have many Muslims. The exercises are bout snow, ice, cold mornings, water cisterns; writing and publishing EFL books and making wine. I can tell you I can’t do making wine and smoking pot in my country!” This quotation clearly tells us materials on a content that the learners cannot relate themselves in their context will be less effective. If we want to teach reading descriptive on “Opera” to a Bangladeshi student, he/she will hardly be able to relate and consequently, reading will hardly take place. Instead of Opera, if a Bangladeshi learner reads a text on “Kirtan” (devotional song practiced in Hindu religion in Bangladesh and India), he or she will be able to assimilate and learning will be easier to him/her. Materials developer may also find it challenging to switch from one culture of education to another. Whatever they produce must be relevant to the society and relevant to the existing traditions of teaching and learning in a particular context.

Undoubtedly, Contextualization is challenging and a complex work as English has its own characteristics as a language. Material developers may contextualize their learning materials through the inclusion of indigenous traditions, values, practices etc. For example in a lesson on “Sentence Writing”, the rules can be simplified and the examples and exercises can reflect the matters of that country where the materials are being produced. In a speaking course, for example in Bangladesh, the topics of discussion or conversation must be on matters like Traffic Jam, Poverty, Dowry, Micro-Credit etc. as the learners in

Bangladesh can assimilate these easily. Of course, being a global citizen, the need of learning other cultures is also vital but not sacrificing the core goal of learning language.

7. Time Factor: Time can be a great and influential barrier for two groups of people: a. The publisher/organization/text book governing body of a nation and b. the writers, teachers, inspectors and trainers who are involved in the whole material development process at different stages. If the publisher or any organization imposes time limit for the developers to accomplish their task, then it may hamper the creativity of the writers who are supposed to work independently. Most often, the commercial publishers may want to gain money or to launch a learning product at their desired time. In such a case where time is insufficient, writers may have to compromise with the quality of the materials in many respects such as: length of the book, varieties of exercise, quality of activities, appropriacy of the contents etc. Undoubtedly, for the most efficient material developers, time may have less impact on the quality of the materials.

The time can also form sort of difficulty when a group of people work together to produce materials. A single author can have his/her own planning and time schedule to work on selected contents but, when there is more than one author, the group of writers may take more time in balancing conflicts of opinion as they all will have their own ways of making decisions on content of the book, topics to be covered, the balance of all skills, activities and exercises, role of grammar and vocabulary, planning, setting up deadline and so on. If one member fails to accomplish his or her job, it will have effect on the whole work. Besides, coordination among all the material developers in a group is also challenging as it includes several meetings among the members, updating all members and persons related to the whole material development process, avoiding the overlap, piloting, reviewing and editing the materials and so on. As each writer has individual working and writing style, it may take longer time to balance the whole output and give a final shape. In case of having group of people as material developers, one may lead the whole work, mediate and balance all these influential factors. Writers should not compromise with the quality of learning materials as it will harm the learners a lot. The publishing organization should also consider the issue of quality and give enough time to the material developers.

8. Poor infrastructure and Lack of Investment: In the whole process of material development, the authors must consider the resources available and the infrastructural facilities in the context where the materials are going to be used. Lack of available resources will not allow the material developers to work accordingly. In language, any half done materials can affect the learners severely. The material developers must make appropriate balance between materials they are planning to develop and the available resources for them. The infrastructural facilities are required to implement the developed materials to see their outcome. For example, the authors cannot include use of electronic aid to facilitate learning for a group of learners who are from a context where electronic aids are not available.

In south Asian countries, for schools and colleges of remote areas and villages, including electronic aids will be a disaster because resources are not available or there is scarcity of resources. Besides, the teachers are also not trained to operate the aids and use them in language learning. Materials that require small class size cannot be used in a large class. In poor countries, the government, even non government schools and colleges, cannot offer small classes as the ratio of students and teachers is too discriminatory. What may happen in such cases can be explained in the context of Bangladesh. The English texts are communicative texts that require small classes to practice speaking, reading and writing, but the average class size in the city areas is sixty and in the town and rural areas, the average class size is more than 100. The government cannot afford required infrastructure but they have introduced a rich syllabus. As a result, teachers are neither following the texts accordingly nor they are interested. The market is full of exam oriented 'guidebooks' and both the teachers and students are following these commercial 'guidebooks' only to pass the examinations, not for actual learning, as the materials and government policy have failed to rouse interest among the users. The assigned people for material development (Text Books) might not have thought about the impact of such irrelevant texts in the context of Bangladesh. In European countries, the scenario is different. Unwisely, the scholars or government has imported communicative language teaching method and prepared text for Bangladeshi learners but, surprisingly, not considering the crucial prerequisites of

Bangladeshi learning context. The government could also not spend enough money on teachers training on how to teach a communicative syllabus. Ultimately, nothing has happened, unless the waste of government's asset and a very little success in only a few school and colleges of metropolitan areas. Efficiency has not grown among the learners unless only partial achievement in exercise solving ability or partial speaking and writing ability. But the ultimate goal was to make the learners able to communicate in all respects: speaking, listening, reading and writing.

9. The Notion of Compromise: The term '*notion of compromise*' has been coined from Jan Bell and Roger Gower (1998). Material developers work for mainly for two types of stakeholders: publishers and users. Each of these stakeholders has their demands from the writers who may often struggle to develop quality materials in the way he or she plans and, at the same time, to entertain the interest of all stake holders. So, they may need to compromise for stakeholders in different forms, at different stages of material development. Sometimes the users may be found to adapt to their situation and needs; then it is a compromise from the learners' side. The learners know that no single version or type of material can fulfill all of their expectations. Roger Bell and Roger Gower say, "with international materials it is obvious that the needs of individual students and teachers, as well as the expectations of particular schools in particular countries, can never be fully met by the materials themselves". The publishers also have to make compromise to produce marketable materials that will give them competitive advantage over other competitors. Among these three groups of people, material developers face the most critical challenges from publishers as their works directly influence learners as well as set the future of the commercial publishers.

The publishers need to consider what the other competitors are producing in the similar area. A publisher may want to produce quality materials in its own way but if the other competitors are offering something better, a publisher may need to shift from its own in various forms and faces. A publisher may plan to do something innovative but if the users are found not interested in that innovation, publisher has to make a sensible balance between its innovative ideas and the current trends liked by the learners and teachers. The areas where publishers may need to compromise include existing popular trends, quality of text, design of text, length of the text, cost, and internal decoration and so on.

Most often, the authors face constrains imposed by the publishers; it becomes intolerable when little experienced publishers force to include or exclude ideas but, still, author teachers have to compromise. Many authors cannot put better ideas into practice because of budget limit. Authors face the most vulnerable situation when they really think how to satisfy the teachers and learners. At the one end, they cannot write materials which learners may find difficult; at other end they may struggle to decide how teachers will be able to cope up with the materials in the class room and what may happen among the teachers and students in a particular learning context, either inside the class or outside the class. So, they have to make balance between what they think and want to produce and what the users expect.

Thus, it becomes an inevitable responsibility of authors to ensure the acceptability of materials among the teachers and learners. It is quite predictable that users will not be attracted to the materials if they don't find it relevant and useful. The learners must be ready and willing to use the developed materials; otherwise effective learning will not take place. "Certain structures are acquired when learners are mentally ready for them." (Dulay, Burt and Krashen 1982). If the contents are tough and complex to understand, the learners will not be interested in learning. For example, topics like money, relationships, clothes, foods will make greater appeal among the learners than the topics like vegetarianism, race relations etc.

On the other hand, the material developers must concentrate on what the teachers may be willing to teach and find effective for their learners. If the teachers get flexibility in teaching or using materials, if they can move activities around, reduce or supplement the given activities and exercises and move around from one style of teaching to another, they are surely going to like the materials. The teachers can be busy and may want an easy life; they may want to work little and take little preparation for the class. In these cases, the materials must be definitive and worthy enough to fulfill their demands. Besides, teachers' sense of self-esteem may persuade them not to use materials developed by somebody-else. They may also disagree on the approaches and methodologies of teaching set by the material developers. To be frank, it is not easy,

sometimes not necessary even, to satisfy all their needs and wishes if the material developers are confident enough about the quality of their works. Sometimes, the material developers may compromise and make a balance between their planning and needs; while in other cases they must go on according to their own planning. Teachers may not have the intellectual capacity to understand the materials and they may unnecessarily make complaints against the effectiveness of materials greatly because they are unable to use them in the class or they do not want to switch to a new style that may make them spend time and struggle to cope up. So, they may be unwilling. If all their needs are considered, then there is no use of developing context specific new learning materials because the teachers may not be ready to accept the new ideas and techniques of teaching and learning.

10. Designing effective Test: The effectiveness of any material can be measured by the amount of learning takes place among the learners. To measure the output, effective and relevant tests are required. The nature of learning and teaching in ESL context is different and learners must be tested efficiently. It is also true for the first language learners. But it is much more critical in ESL context. Most often, it is found that the test is only partially relevant to the contents. Bangladesh can be a pertinent example in this regard. Here, the syllabus is communicative in nature but only reading, writing and sort of related grammars are included in board examinations. No listening and speaking tests are held on in examinations taken under the Board of examination. Though, recently in 2016, in English First Paper text book for class seven, Speaking and Listening have been included, it seems quite an abortive step as there are hardly any infrastructural facilities for testing Listening; Testing speaking is also be much challenging due to the number of students studying in a class. In a class of more than 60 students, speaking can only insufficiently be tested. Besides, the difficulty level of contents covered in the texts and the questions asked to answer are most often contradictory. The questions are much easier and the government is happy with soaring passing rate. In such circumstances, developing materials along with effective test is quite impossible. Besides, including something in the text and not testing that in the examinations will deviate both the teachers and learners from actual learning tasks and objectives and encourage them to be exam oriented. Then, learning will exist only as boring ideas to both these groups. When the materials are produced and tests are designed accordingly, no one can deviate from the contents, approaches and methodologies of teaching and learning. In case of commercially produced materials the scenario is different unless the publishers target a group of learners. Authors can include varieties of tests in commercially produced materials; they, sometimes, even do not need to consider who are going to use it and their aim is to produce a good book only. Whatever the materials are, effectiveness and appropriacy will greatly be determined by and depend on valid, practical and reliable test. Moreover, the test must justify the objectives and goals to be achieved in a course and only a desired output can rationalize the perfectness of materials.

11. Evaluating Materials: The material developers should remember that developing materials is only a beginning. To make the materials effective and efficient, the developers must work on relentlessly. The next challenge for them is to evaluate their produced materials. Evaluation can take place in many forms at different stages of material development. The feedback on the usefulness of materials must come from publishers, students, teachers, co-workers and experts. In ESL context, the learners may not have the ability to give appropriate feedback on the materials as they study English as a second language and they have hardly any ideas about the characteristics of good materials. There may be lack of experts as well in many ESL countries. In that case, external expert may join and evaluate. As it is a time consuming and tiresome job, the materials should hold their interest and keep on working.

Evaluation can take place at three stages: Pre-use evaluation, While-use evaluation and Post-use evaluation. Pre-use evaluation takes place from the writers' and publishers' side. Before they publish any material, usually they do their best to ensure flawlessness.

While-use evaluation is the most important stage as teachers and students use the materials in the real learning environment and give their impression on the quality of materials. In many cases, the poorness may lie not on material but on the nature of implementation of materials by the teachers in the class room. Operative implementation can diagnose the effectiveness of learning materials appropriately. Material

developers may be in continuous contact with the teachers and learners at different stages of material use for feedback on materials and thus they can decide what sorts of revision and refinement are required. The best evaluation can be possible when authors use materials as a teacher; of course, they can be biased in their evaluation as it is own production. "Learners are the users of materials, and we have to need their opinions and listen to their feedback. This is easy enough for the teacher-writer, working with her/his own group of learners. Yet it is a message which many publishers have been slow to take on board"(David Jolly and Rod Bolitho,1998)

Teachers and learners may be asked to share their impression at the end of the course. Experts may be asked to evaluate the feedback given by the users and to give their own opinions as well. Evaluation can also take place in two forms when curriculum board is involved in material development (text writing) and it is considered as a project: macro evaluation that seeks for how much has been achieved against the set of goals and how much improvement can be introduced and micro evaluation that focuses narrowly on specific aspect of curriculum.

McDounough and Shaw (1993) opine that teachers should begin with "external evaluation" that examines the claims made on the external part of the book: cover page and back page. They also suggest that external evaluation must be followed by "internal evaluation" which refers to an in-depth analysis of various contents , activities , their sequence, grading, kind of texts used in the book, relationship between exercises and tests.

12. Trialing/Piloting Materials: Evaluation of materials requires piloting materials as well. Piloting or trialing materials may be done in various forms-narrow and informal scale; wider and more formal scale. Piloting can be done by individual author, by publishers or by any government or non government organization. "Individual teacher often prepare exercises or sets of material, for their own classes, which can be refined over a period of time on the basis of 'how it went' with a number of classes. Rather than trying to arrive at a final, definitive state for the materials, such development is often a continuing open-ended process of refinement and adaptation to different groups of learners" (Peter Donovan,1998). In ESL context, material developers must concentrate on what type of and form of trialing they desire at different stages of material development, in what face. When curriculum board wants to develop materials by some assigned people, they can go for wider and more formal scale. But at individual level, narrow scale piloting can give better output. Besides, most importantly, in ESL context nobody knows what type of materials are going to give what sort of output. Initially, developed materials can be used in few selected areas or institutions to see how they work; otherwise there can be a huge wastage of both money and time. This sort of practice can be done even at individual level: among the authors/writers.

Peter Donovan (1998) has described several characteristics of piloting situation that may create some external challenges for material developers:

1. Most often material developers stay at a distant place from the piloting areas. Piloters are teachers who hardly have or do not have any communication with the material developers. The piloters (teachers) receive materials from publishers or sponsors or agency or government offices. So, it may happen that teachers do not know how to use the materials for what purpose.
2. The teachers may have their free choice whether they want to use the materials or not, unless they are forced by the institution.
3. The piloting materials may not be relevant to their teaching programme as they have their own materials. Besides, piloting materials might have been provided as optional.

It is true that each context is different and the above characteristics may not be found in many situations. In many other situations, many other features and challenges will be faced by the material developers. For example, publisher may choose an institution for piloting that is not appropriate but selected only because the publisher has good terms with the authority of that institution. The message for the authors is that they must know how to balance all these issues. As different teaching situations and different types of materials may challenge the authors differently at piloting stage, they need to ...

- a. make a schedule on piloting.

- b. decide how data/ feedback will be collected from both the teachers and learners.
- c. settle the channels of communications .
- d. clearly present the role of piloters and how they are supposed to work.
- e. provide all the required components needed for piloting materials.
- f. set the number of piloters and fix who will be given the responsibility to what extent.

The success of piloting stage will heavily depend on how the authors will coordinate the whole process and how they will overcome the challenges. The authors may feel it necessary to introduce training, initially for the piloters, for the users at the root level.

13. Revising Materials: The feedback of piloting will make the authors evaluate the materials that will result in the necessity of revising the trailed materials. In all contexts, language learning materials are dynamic in nature and require timely evaluation and revision. Though Training and evaluation make the authors understand what sort of revision is required, they are not free from the dominance of institution, publishers, ministry or other sponsors. Of course, they are going to receive some suggestions, in some cases enforcement, on what sort of revision the stakeholders expect from the authors. In ESL context, the authors may receive more suggestions from external consultant who is a native expert in the relevant field. Whatever the suggestions are, the authors must focus on the needs of particular context. The native experts may not realize the whole context of a particular ESL environment greatly because they are not familiar with the culture and trends of existing education in a non-native country. If the authors themselves or any other stakeholders feel that they are not enough capable of introducing effective revision, they may consult the experts but they themselves accomplish the final revision work. For example, a foreign expert may not be able to choose a reading text that is relevant to a particular non-native society.

Conclusion

It is obvious that there is a huge scope for the non-native countries to produce context specific and needs oriented language learning materials; at the same time, materials developers, authors or teachers, in all ESL contexts, will face either or many of the discussed challenges originated from both external and internal factors that are dominating in the whole working process and from all stakeholders' side. The authors must have the ability to realize their own contexts and balance all the conflicting issues in a way that makes the stakeholders happy. At the same time, they must not sacrifice the need of actual and effective learning- the ultimate goals of material development.

References

- Ahmed, Aashraf. Limitations to Syllabus and Testing System For English Language Teaching At The SSC and HSC Levels In Sylhet (Master's Thesis). Leading University, Bangladesh, MA. 2014. Print.
- Ali, Md. Maksud. Revisiting English Language Teaching (ELT) Curriculum Design: How Appropriate is Bangladesh Higher Secondary Level National ELT Curriculum as a Learner-Centered one?. IIUC Studies, 7, 283-296. December, 2011. Print.
- Allwright, Richard. What do we want teaching materials for? In R. Rossner and R. Bolitho, (Eds), Currents in language teaching. Oxford University Press. 1990. Print.
- Bell, Jane, & Roger, Gower. Writing course materials for the world: A great compromise. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), Materials development in language teaching (pp. 116-129). Cambridge: Language Teaching Library, Cambridge University press. 1998. Print.
- Donovan, Peter. Piloting-a publisher's view . In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), Materials development in language teaching (pp. 149-189). Cambridge: Lgnuage Teaching Library, Cambridge University press. 1998. Print.
- Dubin, Fraida, & Elite, Olshtain. Course Design: Developing programs and materials for language learning, Cambridge: Cambridge university press. 1986. Print.
- Ellis, Rod. The evaluation of communicative tasks. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), Materials development in language teaching (pp. 217-238). Cambridge: Lgnuage Teaching Library, Cambridge University press. 1998. Print.
- Harris, P. David. Testing English as a Second Language. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York. 1969. Print.
- Huges, Arthur. Testing for Language Teachers. (2003 ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2003. Print.

- Jolly, David, & Rod, Bolith. A framework for materials writing. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Materials development in language teaching* (pp. 95-116). Cambridge: Language Teaching Library, Cambridge University press. 1998. Print.
- Kitao, Kenji., & Kathleen, S. Kitao. College reading textbooks do not meet needs. *The Daily Yomiuri*, P. 7. September 16, 1982. Print.
- Kitao, Kenji., & Kathleen, S. Kitao. Selecting and Developing Teaching. Learning Materials. *The Internet TESL Journal*. 4(4). April, 1997. Print.
- Littlejohn, Andrew, & Scott, Windeatt. Beyond language learning: Perspective on materials design. In R. K. Johnson (Ed.), *The Second language curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1989. Print.
- Munby, John. *Communicative Syllabus Design*. Cambridge university Press. 1978. Print.
- Nunan, David. *Principles for designing language teaching materials*. *Guidelines*, 10 (2), 1-24. 1988. Print.
- Nunan, David. *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers* Hertfordshire: Phoenix ELT. 1991. Print.
- Prowse, Philip. How writers write: testimony from authors In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Materials development in language teaching* (pp. 130-145). Cambridge: Language Teaching Library, Cambridge University press. 1998. Print.
- Wallace, J. Micheal. *Training Foreign Language Teachers: A Reflective Approach*, Cambridge University Press. 1991. Print.
- White, V. Ronald. *The ELT Curriculum: Design, Innovation and Management*. Blackwell. 1988. Print.
-

Brief Autobiography of Corresponding Author

Md. Forhad Hossain is the youngest child of his parents. He passed his S.S.C. from K.K. Govt. Institution, Munshiganj, Bangladesh in 2002 and H.S.C. from Govt. Haraganga College, Munshiganj, Bangladesh, in 2004. He completed his B.A. (Honors) in English Literature in 2008 from the Dept. of English, University of Dhaka. Later he completed his M.A. in applied Linguistics and ELT in 2009 from the same University. On 19 September, 2012, he joined as a Lecturer at Dhaka Residential Model College and worked there till 1 July, 2012. Since September 05, 2012, he has been teaching English Language at IUBAT-International University of Business, Agriculture and Technology. He has also completed his MBA (major in MIS), in 2015, under the Evening MBA programme of Business Faculty at Dhaka University. He is interested in conducting research in different fields of English language and Linguistics, especially in Curriculum Development, Syllabus Design and Material Development.
