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Materials Development in Language Teaching

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Preface

Brian Tomlinson

This is a book of original chapters on current issues in materials development written by well-known contributors to the fields of applied linguistics and TEFL, most of whom have made presentations at MATSDA conferences.

MATSDA (The Materials Development Association) is an international materials development association founded in 1993 by Brian Tomlinson to contribute to the development of quality materials for learners of second and foreign languages. It aims to bring together teachers, researchers, materials writers and publishers in a joint endeavour to stimulate and support principled research, innovation and development. It does this by holding conferences, running workshops, providing consultants, publishing a journal (*Folio*) and stimulating books like this one.

For further information about MATSDA and for application forms for membership contact Brian Tomlinson, President of MATSDA, brianjohnTomlinson@gmail.com, or go to the MATSDA website at www.matsda.org.uk. The main aim of this book is to further the work of MATSDA in providing information, ideas and stimulus which will facilitate the application of current thinking and research to the practical realities of developing and exploiting classroom materials. It also aims to stimulate further experimentation and innovation and thus to contribute to the continuing development of quality materials.

More and more applied linguistics and teacher development courses are including components on materials development (there are even MA courses focusing on L2 materials development at the International Graduate School of English in Seoul and at Leeds Metropolitan University), and more and more presentations at ELT conferences are focusing on issues related to the writing and exploitation of materials. And yet until 1998 few books had been published which investigated these issues. *Materials Development for Language Teaching* filled this gap by providing an opportunity for researchers, teachers, writers and publishers to communicate their informed views and suggestions to an audience seeking to gain new insights into the principles and procedures which were informing the current writing and exploitation of L2 materials. This revised edition of *Materials Development for Language Teaching* aims to retain the insights of the 1998 edition whilst adding

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new ideas and information related to developments since its initial publication. It includes five new chapters, two extra chapters on making use of new technologies in materials development and three replacement chapters on the pre-use evaluation of materials by publishers, on making use of corpora in published materials and on the post-use evaluation of tasks. The other chapters are revised and updated versions of chapters published in the 1998 edition.

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Glossary of basic terms for materials development in language teaching

Brian Tomlinson

The following terms are used frequently in this book. Unless they are differently defined by the author(s) of the chapter, they are used with the meanings given below.

Authentic task (or real world task)

A task which involves learners in using language in a way that replicates its use in the ‘real world’ outside the language classroom. Filling in blanks, changing verbs from the simple past to the simple present and completing substitution tables are, therefore, not authentic tasks. Examples of authentic tasks would be answering a letter addressed to the learner, arguing a particular point of view and comparing various holiday brochures in order to decide where to go for a holiday.

See **pedagogic task**.

Authentic text

A text which is not written or spoken for language-teaching purposes. A newspaper article, a rock song, a novel, a radio interview, instructions on how to play a game and a traditional fairy story are examples of authentic texts. A story written to exemplify the use of reported speech, a dialogue scripted to exemplify ways of inviting and a linguistically simplified version of a novel would not be authentic texts.

See **simplified texts**; **text**.

CLIL

Content and Language Integrated Learning – an approach in which students acquire a second or foreign language whilst focusing on learning new content knowledge and skills (e.g. about science, about composing music, about playing football).

See **experiential learning**.

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Glossary of basic terms

Communicative approaches

Approaches to language teaching which aim to help learners to develop communicative competence (i.e. the ability to use the language effectively for communication). A **weak communicative approach** includes overt teaching of language forms and functions in order to help learners to develop the ability to use them for communication. A **strong communicative approach** relies on providing learners with experience of using language as the main means of learning to use the language. In such an approach learners, for example, talk to learn rather than learn to talk.

Communicative competence

The ability to use the language effectively for communication. Gaining such competence involves acquiring both sociolinguistic and linguistic knowledge and skills (or, in other words, developing the ability to use the language fluently, accurately, appropriately and effectively).

Concordances (or concordance lines)

A list of authentic samples of language use each containing the same key word or phrase, for example:

The bus driver still didn't have **any** change so he made me wait.

I really don't mind which one. **Any** newspaper will do.

I just know what they are saying. **Any** teacher will tell you that it's

Concordances are usually generated electronically from a corpus. See **authentic text**; **corpus**.

Corpus

A bank of authentic texts collected in order to find out how language is actually used. Often a corpus is restricted to a particular type of language use, for example, a corpus of newspaper English, a corpus of legal documents or a corpus of informal spoken English, and it is usually stored and retrieved from electronically.

See **text**.

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Glossary of basic terms

Coursebook

A textbook which provides the core materials for a language-learning course. It aims to provide as much as possible in one book and is designed so that it could serve as the only book which the learners necessarily use during a course. Such a book usually includes work on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, functions and the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

See **supplementary materials**.

Discovery activity

An activity which involves learners in investing energy and attention in order to discover something about the language for themselves. Getting learners to work out the rules of direct speech from examples, asking learners to investigate when and why a character uses the modal ‘must’ in a story and getting learners to notice and explain the use of ellipsis in a recorded conversation would be examples of discovery activities.

ELF

English as a lingua franca – the English used by non-native speakers or the use of English by non-native speakers to achieve communication with each other. Some applied linguists consider ELF to be a variety of English whereas others consider it to be a way of using English.

See **World English**.

Experiential learning

Referring to ways of learning language through experiencing it in use rather than through focusing conscious attention on language items. Reading a novel, listening to a song and taking part in a project are experiential ways of learning language.

Foreign language

A language which is not normally used for communication in a particular society. Thus English is a foreign language in France and Spanish is a foreign language in Germany.

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Global coursebook

A coursebook which is not written for learners from a particular culture or country but which is intended for use by any class of learners in the specified level and age group anywhere in the world.

Language awareness approaches

Approaches to teaching language which emphasise the value of helping learners to focus attention on features of language in use. Most proponents of language awareness approaches emphasise the importance of learners gradually developing their own awareness of how the language is used through discoveries which they make for themselves.

See **discovery activity**.

Language data

Instances of language use which are used to provide information about how the language is used. Thus a corpus can be said to be made up of language data.

See **corpus**.

Language practice

Activities which involve repetition of the same language point or skill in an environment which is controlled by the framework of the activity. The purpose for language production and the language to be produced are usually predetermined by the task or the teacher. The intention is not to use the language for communication but to strengthen, through successful repetition, the ability to manipulate a particular language form or function. Thus, getting all the students in a class, who already know each other, repeatedly to ask each other their names would be a practice activity.

See **language use**.

Language use

Activities which involve the production of language in order to communicate. The purpose of the activity might be predetermined but the language which is used is determined by the learners. Thus, getting a

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Glossary of basic terms

new class of learners to walk around and introduce themselves to each other would be a language use activity; and so would getting them to complete a story for which they have been given the beginning.

See **language practice**.

Learning styles

The way(s) that particular learners prefer to learn. Some language learners have a preference for hearing the language (auditory learners), some for seeing it written down (visual learners), some for learning it in discrete bits (analytic learners), some for experiencing it in large chunks (global or holistic or experiential learners), and many prefer to do something physical whilst experiencing the language (kinaesthetic learners). Learning styles are variable and people often have different preferences in different learning contexts.

Lexical approaches

These are approaches which focus on the use of vocabulary and especially on the choices available to users of English when wanting to communicate particular meanings in particular contexts for particular purposes.

Lexical chunks

These are phrases in which a group of words are used with only one meaning (e.g. 'have no option but'). They can be fixed terms in which the words never change (e.g. 'at the end of the day') or they can be routines in which one of the elements can change (e.g. 'All the best for the future/next week/exam/interview', etc.).

L2

A term used to refer to both foreign and second languages.

See **foreign language**; **second language**.

Materials

Anything which is used to help language learners to learn. Materials can be in the form, for example, of a textbook, a workbook, a cassette,

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a CD-ROM, a video, a photocopied handout, a newspaper, a paragraph written on a whiteboard: anything which presents or informs about the language being learned.

Materials adaptation

Making changes to materials in order to improve them or to make them more suitable for a particular type of learner. Adaptation can include reducing, adding, omitting, modifying and supplementing. Most teachers adapt materials every time they use a textbook in order to maximise the value of the book for their particular learners.

Materials evaluation

The systematic appraisal of the value of materials in relation to their objectives and to the objectives of the learners using them. Evaluation can be pre-use and therefore focused on predictions of potential value. It can be whilst-use and therefore focused on awareness and description of what the learners are actually doing whilst the materials are being used. And it can also be post-use and therefore focused on evaluation of what happened as a result of using the materials.

Multimedia materials

Materials which make use of a number of different media. Often they are available on a CD-ROM which makes use of print, graphics, video and sound. Usually such materials are interactive and enable the learner to receive feedback on the written or spoken language that they produce.

New technologies

A term used to refer to recently developed electronic means of delivering language-learning materials or of facilitating electronic communication between learners. It includes the Internet, as a resource as well as emails, YouTube, chat rooms, blogs, Facebook, video conferencing and mobile phone technology.

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[More information](#)*Glossary of basic terms***Pedagogic task**

A task which does not replicate a real world task but which is designed to facilitate the learning of language or of skills which would be useful in a real world task. Completing one half of a dialogue, filling in the blanks in a story and working out the meaning of ten nonsense words from clues in a text would be examples of pedagogic tasks. Pedagogic tasks can, however, require the use of real world skills. A task requiring a group to reproduce a diagram which only one member of the group has seen, for example, involves the use of visualisation, giving precise instructions and asking for clarification. It is arguable that such tasks, despite not being real world tasks, are in fact authentic.

PPP

An approach to teaching language items which follows a sequence of presentation of the item, practice of the item and then production of the item. This is the approach still currently followed by most commercially produced coursebooks. Some applied linguists prefer, however, an experiential PPP approach in which production comes before presentation and practice.

See **language practice**; **SLA**; **language use**.

Second language

The term is used to refer to a language which is not a mother tongue but which is used for certain communicative functions in a society. Thus, English is a second language in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Singapore, and French is a second language in Senegal, Cameroon and Tahiti.

See **foreign language**.

Self-access materials

Materials designed for learners to use independently (i.e. on their own without access to a teacher or a classroom). They are normally used by the learner at home, in a library or in a self-study centre and can be paper-based or electronic.

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Simplified texts

These are texts which have been made simpler so as to make it easier for learners to read them. The usual principles of simplification involve reduction in length of the text, shortening of sentences, omission or replacement of difficult words or structures, omission of qualifying clauses and omission of non-essential detail. Some applied linguists prefer to simplify texts by adding examples, by using repetition and paraphrase and by increasing redundant information. In other words, by lengthening rather than shortening the text, by elaboration rather than reduction.

SLA

This is an abbreviation for Second Language Acquisition and is normally used to refer to research and theory related to the learning of second and foreign languages.

Supplementary materials

Materials designed to be used in addition to the core materials of a course. They are usually related to the development of the skills of reading, writing, listening or speaking rather than to the learning of language items, but also include dictionaries, grammar books and workbooks.

See **coursebook**.

Tasks

These are activities in which the learners are asked to use the target language in order to achieve a particular outcome within a particular context (e.g. solving a problem; planning a meeting; selecting candidates for an interview).

Task-based approaches

This refers to materials or courses which are designed around a series of authentic tasks which give the learners experience of using the language in ways in which it is used in the 'real world' outside the classroom.

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They usually have no pre-determined language syllabus and the aim is for learners to learn from the tasks the language that they need for successful participation in them. Examples of such tasks would be working out the itinerary of a journey from a timetable, completing a passport application form, ordering a product from a catalogue and giving directions to the post office.

See **authentic task**.

Text

Any extended sample of a language presented to learners of that language. A text can be written or spoken and could be, for example, a poem, a newspaper article, a passage about pollution, a song, a film, a live conversation, an extract from a novel or play, a passage written to exemplify the use of the past perfect, a recorded telephone conversation, a scripted dialogue or a speech by a politician.

Text-based approaches

Approaches in which the starting point is a text rather than a teaching point. The learners first of all experience and respond to the text before focusing attention on salient language or discourse features of it.

See **experiential learning**.

Workbook

A book which contains extra practice activities for learners to work on in their own time. Usually the book is designed so that learners can write in it and often there is an answer key provided in the back of the book to give feedback to the learners.

World English

A variety of English which is used for international communication.

See **ELF**.

For definitions of other terms frequently used in EFL and applied linguistics see:

Crystal, D. 1985. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

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