



Teacher-Designed ELT Materials for Enhancing English Language Proficiency among School Students: A Framework for Contextualised Language Learning

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Abstract:

Every student learns new skills differently; therefore, English language teachers must use flexible teaching strategies that meet learners' needs. School students' unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds, as well as their different experiences learning English, pose many challenges to traditional textbook-based teaching and learning. This conceptual paper analyses the value of teachers designing ELT materials themselves to develop students' English language proficiency. The research draws on an integrative literature review of materials development, CLT, TBLT, learner-centred teaching approaches, and contextualised language learning. The main ideas that were analysed include the principle of needs analysis of the target group of learners, authenticity of the content of the material developed, relevance of the developed content to the learners' cultural background, communicativeness of the developed materials, and technology integration into materials developed by the teacher, as well as the idea of constantly evaluating the effectiveness of the designed materials. The research shows that teacher-developed ELT materials can facilitate learners' language learning by creating motivating and interactive learning experiences.

Keywords: Teacher-designed materials, English Language Teaching (ELT), contextualised learning, language proficiency, materials development, learner-centred pedagogy.

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Introduction

Today, English has become the language of international communication, especially for learning, technological progress, and employment. Therefore, English proficiency has become an important part of children's education in the twenty-first century. For example, in countries like India, where English is the language of instruction, improving learners' English skills has become an important educational goal. Even though English is a core subject in schools' curricula. However, many students still struggle to become proficient in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. There can be several reasons for that, like a lack of experience with genuine language use, linguistic diversity of students, large classes, and the use of standardised textbooks, which are not sufficient as per the requirements and interests of students.

Over the last few years, ELT has shifted from teacher-dominated to learner-focused, with teaching materials sensitive to specific contexts. Current studies highlight that ELT materials should support active learner participation through communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and real language use. Therefore, teacher-designed materials have become a popular way of bringing curriculum and learners' language needs closer together. Unlike commercially prepared books, teacher-designed materials can be adapted to individual learners' levels, cultural backgrounds, needs, and learning preferences, making them more efficient.

Context-dependent language learning implies that materials must be linked to learners' life experience, cultural background, and surrounding social environment. By understanding learners' abilities, difficulties, and needs, teachers can create instructional materials that include real texts, varied activities, collaborative assignments, electronic sources, and culturally relevant material.

With the growing focus on communicative language teaching, inclusive education, and technology-integrated learning, the need for teacher-materials developers becomes even more

evident, rather than relying solely on prescribed textbooks. Teacher-made materials offer flexibility to include topical issues, multilingualism, project-based instruction, and assessment approaches that support the all-round development of language skills. More importantly, teacher-made materials may help overcome contextual barriers such as a lack of resources and classroom heterogeneity, as they can provide personalised experiences based on students' linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds.

In this regard, this paper considers contextualised language learning through teacher-developed English language teaching materials intended to improve school students' English language skills. The paper will consider pedagogical aspects of developing teacher-made instructional materials and the basic guidelines for creating contextually relevant materials for English language instruction.

Literature Review

Creating successful English Language Teaching (ELT) materials is of paramount importance in today's language education system, especially given the diversity of learners in terms of language, culture, and educational background. For a long time, English language teaching relied on commercially published textbooks that provided a language-learning curriculum. However, recent research encourages a shift away from dependence on such textbooks toward learner-based, flexible, and contextually sensitive materials that help students become actively involved in the language acquisition process. In fact, today, teachers become not only implementers of curricula but also creators of materials according to the needs and context of the classroom (Tomlinson 69).

Materials development can be viewed as both a field of study and a process that involves creating, adapting, evaluating, and implementing materials that support language acquisition. Language learning materials go far beyond textbooks (Tomlinson 43). The author states that

these materials include visual, auditory, digital, experiential, and interactive resources that promote real-life language use. Such materials should present language used meaningfully, motivate learners to communicate, and promote critical thinking and language exploration rather than simply learning grammatical structures. This principle has greatly impacted modern ELT approaches.

Recent decades have acknowledged teachers' roles in creating instructional materials (Richards 25), suggesting that teachers are best positioned because they know their learners' capabilities and socio-cultural backgrounds and can therefore create instructional materials superior to commercially produced materials. Teacher-developed materials offer flexibility in content, language difficulty, authenticity, and more.

Research has shown that contextualised instruction is critical to improving English proficiency. Contextualization means linking language teaching to learners' experiences, culture, and everyday lives. Instead of teaching language as only grammar structures, contextualization means learning language through meaningful situations and real-world communication. Constructivist learning theory, especially (Vygotsky 96), shows that knowledge is socially constructed through interaction and collaboration. Therefore, ELT materials that are locally based on stories, community issues, and familiar situations and that involve activities that promote interaction will promote greater learning and language acquisition.

Another trend that has increased the need for teacher-designed instructional materials is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT focuses on communicative activities involving meaningful communication and learner interaction, rather than simply transmitting knowledge. Classroom activities should simulate real-world interactions and make it easy for learners to negotiate meaning through communication. Teacher-developed materials suit such

activities because they can match learners' levels, classroom situations, and curriculum objectives (Nunan 84).

Furthermore, several scholars have highlighted the importance of using the right materials in language learning. Actual materials include newspapers, advertisements, brochures, videos, podcasts, websites, and other sources created for native or fluent users of the target language. Using authentic materials exposes learners to natural language and realistic situations. However, the researcher points out that Unadopted materials need to be adapted to learners' proficiency levels to avoid cognitive load. Teachers' adaptation of authentic materials helps simplify texts while maintaining their communicative value (Tomlinson 150).

A key development in ELT materials research is learner-centred education. Successful language instruction must be active and interactive and allow room for self-expression. Teacher-designed materials can promote learner autonomy through collaboration, reflection, peer assessment, and projects, among others. Apart from developing the language skills of the learners, these instructional strategies help in developing confidence, creativity, and critical thinking (Brown 44),

Technology integration has added yet another dimension to materials creation in English language teaching. Teachers can benefit from digital learning environments that let them create multimodal lessons that include videos, quizzes, online collaboration, mobile applications, and other technology-assisted learning tools. Recent trends in materials design emphasise blended learning strategies that integrate classroom instruction with digital media to support personalised, flexible learning (Tomlinson & Whittaker 58).

However, creating such teacher-designed materials presents challenges. Limited time, lack of institutional support, insufficient professional training, and limited access to digital media resources often hinder teachers' ability to create high-quality instructional materials. Moreover,

teachers often lack sufficient training in materials evaluation and instructional design. Therefore, scholars recommend continuous professional development programs to help teachers acquire the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed for ELT material design (Harwood 15; Tomlinson and Masuhara 42). According to a literature review, empirical research on textbook evaluation, communicative language teaching (CLT), and material adaptation is abundant. However, comparatively little has been written about developing theoretical models of teacher-created materials that would improve English language proficiency in school contexts by contextualising language-instruction processes. The available literature focuses either on evaluating commercially produced textbooks or isolated classroom projects. Because no integrated model encompasses a learner-centred approach to education, contextualisation, CLT, Learner-relevant materials, cultural relevance, and digital technologies, this paper proposes a theoretical framework for creating teacher-created ELT materials for school education.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses an interdisciplinary theoretical approach that combines theories of Constructivist Learning, Sociocultural Theory, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and Materials Development. These theories provide the basis for studying teacher-created English Language Teaching (ELT) materials and their influence on improving school learners' understanding of English through contextualised, learner-centred instruction.

Constructivist Learning Theory

According to Constructivist Learning Theory, formulated by Piaget (15) and further developed by Bruner (16), learning occurs when students actively interact with their environment and construct knowledge, rather than passively receiving information taught by teachers.

Knowledge construction happens when learners relate newly acquired knowledge to their previous experience.

The constructivist approach to English language teaching allows teachers to use learner-designed materials that involve students in real-life communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and reflection. Learners do not need to complete only the tasks offered in textbooks; they can also engage in various activities based on their local life and experience.

Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (45) argues that learning is a social process facilitated by interaction with the teacher, other learners, and cultural tools. Language functions not only as a communicative tool but also as a cognitive tool for learning.

One key idea of sociocultural theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). It refers to the difference between what a learner can do on their own and what a learner can accomplish with proper guidance. Teacher-made ELT materials can efficiently scaffold the learning process by creating tasks of increasing complexity and opportunities for collaboration, discussion, and guidance.

Learning in context, pair work, role-play, projects, and collaborative tasks help learners learn from each other and receive proper guidance from the teacher. Therefore, teacher-made materials turn into highly effective mediational tools.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is undoubtedly one of the most popular approaches used in modern English as a Foreign Language (ELT) teaching. According to Richards and Rodgers (51), the key feature of CLT is that it emphasises communication more than mastering

grammatical forms. Therefore, the main goal of language learning is to achieve communicative competence, meaning the ability to speak English successfully in various real-life situations.

Teacher-designed ELT materials are especially relevant to CLT because they allow teachers to create real-life communicative situations similar to those their students experience. Information gap activities, interviews, storytelling, debates, simulations, and role plays aim to help students speak English in real life rather than work through textbook exercises.

Teacher-designed materials include real-life settings, cultural context, and interaction, giving learners opportunities to communicate meaningfully and helping them become more fluent and motivated.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching is an advanced version of Communicative Language Teaching, based on learning through meaningful tasks rather than explicit language teaching. As noted by Ellis (36) and Nunan (87), learners acquire language best by engaging in real-life tasks like Role play, group discussion, debate, etc., where communication is necessary to achieve specific goals.

The advantage of flexible materials developed by teachers is that they support contextual task activities based on learners' academic, social, and cultural experiences. Learners can develop school newsletters, interview people in their community, give presentations, participate in classroom discussions, and complete practical activities in English.

These tasks involve various language skills while developing collaboration, creative thinking, and problem-solving. Task-based materials also involve negotiating meaning, feedback, and reflection on learners' language use.

Materials Development Theory

Materials Development Theory is a principal theory behind the current research project. According to Tomlinson (68), materials development is the systematic approach to developing instructional materials that help effective language learning. Materials development includes design, adaptation, evaluation, and implementation of instructional materials. Unlike textbooks as the only form of instruction, this theory emphasises teachers' role as material designers.

Teacher-created materials offer certain benefits compared with commercially produced materials. Teachers can adjust materials to students' language levels, learning styles, culture, curriculum, and other factors. In addition, teacher-created materials allow teachers to integrate original texts, technology, local content, project work, assessment, and collaboration into classwork.

According to Tomlinson (69), effective language materials must involve cognitive and emotional stimulation and offer extensive exposure to real language use. These goals are accomplished through the combination of meaningful content, interaction, contextuality, and independent learning.

Framework for Language Learning in Context

Together, these theories provide a comprehensive picture of ELT materials development. Constructivism focuses on active knowledge building; sociocultural theory stresses collaborative learning and scaffolding; communicative language teaching encourages meaningful communication in the target language; task-based language teaching stresses natural language use; and materials development theory stresses context-sensitive instructional design.

Together, these theories provide guidelines for creating learner-oriented, culturally sensitive, and context-appropriate ELT materials for school learners. Teacher-developed instructional

materials based on this framework may help improve learners' English language proficiency through engaging communication, participation, and critical thinking. This means the suggested framework views teachers not just as users of given textbooks but as reflective, and material-developing teachers who can create effective language-learning experiences to develop learners' English language proficiency. However, it positions educators as key contributors to curriculum creation rather than merely users of commercial materials. It underscores the importance of teachers' creativity, context awareness, and reflection in creating effective ELT materials.

Hence, teacher-created ELT materials are likely to support English language acquisition because of their relevance, interactivity, inclusivity, and responsiveness to learner needs.

Illustrative Classroom Application of the Proposed Framework

To demonstrate how the framework can be applied in practice, consider an English reading class for senior secondary students in a rural school setting. During the needs analysis stage, the teacher identifies difficulties with reading comprehension, contextual vocabulary, and making connections between English texts and learners' lives. Based on this, the teacher creates a brief reading text on a locally relevant topic, such as sustainable farming, with vocabulary exercises, comprehension questions, and a short writing assignment.

During the implementation stage, the students read the text independently and discuss its main points and unknown vocabulary in small groups with necessary scaffolding from the teacher. The assessment stage includes completing the comprehension and vocabulary exercises and writing a short piece. The final stage is revision, where the teacher evaluates students' performance and revises the materials by simplifying the text or providing further scaffolding. As shown, needs analysis, material development, implementation, assessment, and revision are all interlinked in creating responsive English language materials.

Research Methodology

The current study uses a qualitative conceptual research design to develop an ELT framework for materials design intended to improve school students' English language proficiency. Unlike other research designs that involve primary data collection through surveys, interviews, or classroom experiments, this study will be grounded in a thorough examination of the literature on materials development, language learning in context, CLT, TBLT, and learner-centred pedagogy. A conceptual research design is suitable because the main goal is to use theoretical knowledge and scientific findings to develop a framework for materials design.

This study will use a qualitative descriptive research design to analyse the literature and identify principles of effective ELT materials design. Secondary data were collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, conference papers, curricular documents, and reports produced by local and international education agencies. The literature was searched in the following academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. The review prioritised recent sources, but also included classic sources.

Inclusion criteria determined the choice of literature. In particular, the literature was limited to papers on English Language Teaching, teacher-designed instructional materials, contextualised language learning, communicative approaches, and materials development. Papers lacking scientific validity and not linked to the goals of the study in any way were omitted. This approach enabled the development of a theoretical basis grounded in trustworthy, relevant research.

The literature analysis used thematic content analysis, a common qualitative method for synthesising research findings. It entailed several steps, such as identifying literature relevant to the topic of investigation, closely reading selected papers, identifying concepts, categorising them, and synthesising findings. Several recurring features characterised effective teacher-

designed ELT materials. They include learner-centeredness, contextualization, Practical relevance, communicative interaction, cultural relevance, collaborative learning, technological component, formative assessment, flexibility, and adaptation.

The thematic analysis developed a conceptual framework with five interconnected stages. They include: needs analysis of the learners, material development, classroom implementation, formative evaluation, and ongoing evaluation and revision of the materials. The framework highlights the importance of teachers as reflective practitioners who design instructional materials based on learners' linguistic abilities, sociocultural backgrounds, preferred learning modes, and the curriculum's aims and goals.

The study's credibility is further strengthened by integrating a variety of theoretical perspectives. The main perspectives include Constructivist Learning Theory, Sociocultural Theory, Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching and Materials Development Theory. The study included no participants because it used only secondary data sources.

Overall, the chosen methodology provides a consistent theoretical foundation for developing a framework for designing ELT materials. This framework is intended to guide those who want to create such instructional materials.

Analysis of the reviewed literature shows that teacher-created ELT materials are significant in developing meaningful, learner-centred, and contextually appropriate English language learning experiences.

Result and Discussion

Results show that language learning materials are not limited to prescribed textbooks; rather, they are part of an evolving process that includes designing, modifying, and evaluating materials based on learners' linguistic and educational requirements. Based on the thematic

analysis, five main dimensions have been identified as important parts of contextualised, teacher-designed ELT materials: learner needs orientation, contextualization, communicativeness, use of natural materials, and evaluation.

Designing Materials for Learner Needs and Context

The first finding shows that teachers need to design materials that consider learners' requirements, proficiency levels, interests, and environments. The traditional textbook-oriented approach provides standardised content that cannot cater to the diversity of modern classrooms.

A learner-centred approach involves involving students in their own learning process, rather than treating them as passive receivers of information. Learning material based on students' experiences will promote participation, motivation, and ownership in the learning process. The literature review found that content related to students' realities and aspirations motivates learners to participate actively in language activities and gain confidence in using English.

Developing Culturally Grounded Language Materials

A second important observation is the need to contextualise content to make teacher-developed ELT materials more relevant. Connecting classroom activities to learners' real lives, communities, and cultures will enhance language learning. Teacher-produced materials provide an opportunity to integrate learning context into the language-learning process.

Contextualization is important in promoting inclusive language education by valuing learners' experiences and recognising their identity and linguistic background. Including learners' experiences in English instruction makes them feel valued and involved.

Promotion of Communicative Competence

The third finding suggests that teacher-made materials promote communicative language development when they include interactive, task-based activities. According to the analysis,

meaningful communication opportunities are necessary to develop English language competences beyond grammar.

Activities such as discussions, role plays, presentations, group work, problem-solving, and communication-related tasks motivate students to speak English and help develop integrated skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Thus, this finding is consistent with the key concepts of Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching, where language use is considered the basis of language acquisition.

Integrating Real-World and Digital Resources in ELT

The fourth significant finding concerns the growing role of Experiential and digital materials in modern ELT settings. Teacher-made materials allow teachers to include newspapers, videos, podcasts, Internet materials, digital storytelling, and other interactive media chosen based on learners' needs.

Integrating technological resources allows teachers to use materials in various modalities and expose students to different types of English communication. However, the effectiveness of technology-based materials depends on careful selection and a sound pedagogical approach.

Continuous Assessment and Material Development

The last theme that emerges from the analysis is the significance of continuous assessment and modification of teaching materials. Materials design is a cyclical process which involves planning, implementing, assessing, reflecting and modifying.

Reflecting on how learners respond and what happens in the classroom allows teachers to revise materials to make them more effective. Formative assessment techniques such as peer assessment, reflection, classroom observations, and learners' feedback help improve teaching materials and strengthen teachers' professional agency.

Pedagogical Implications

- Teachers should develop English-learning materials with learners' needs, proficiency levels, interests, and context in mind.
- Contextualised materials link learning English to real-life experiences and culture.
- Teachers' materials promote learners' involvement, motivation, and confidence.
- Learner-relevant materials, interactive activities, and multimedia can develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.
- Teachers should be trained to prepare teaching materials and use innovative methods of English language instruction.
- Educational institutions should motivate teachers to prepare materials that meet classroom needs.
- Using teacher-prepared ELT materials promotes learner-centred, inclusive, and communicative classrooms.

Conclusion

Teacher-created ELT materials effectively promote English language competence among schoolchildren by contextualising meaningful, learner-centred teaching and learning processes. This paper argues that teacher-prepared materials can consider learners' needs, background knowledge, and practical aspects more effectively than standardised ELT materials.

The proposed framework stresses the importance of analysing learners' needs, context-based information, the appropriate materials, communicative activities, and evaluation to develop effective ELT materials. By applying this approach, teachers can create engaging lessons that help students feel more confident and become active participants in their learning process.

The study also calls for teachers' training, institutional support, and cooperation with colleagues to improve teachers' competencies as ELT material creators. Future empirical studies may investigate the effectiveness of the suggested framework.

Overall, teacher-created ELT materials are a valuable tool for developing an inclusive and effective language-learning environment.

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