

## BOOK REVIEW

# Developing Materials for Language Teaching, 3rd edition

*Edited by Brian Tomlinson*

*Bloomsbury, Bloomsbury Academic, 2023, 584 pp.*

*ISBN 9781350199682 (hardback) ISBN 9781350199675 (paperback)*

*ISBN 9781350199699 (e-book)*

*Reviewed by Persis Dineen Rodrigues*

**T**his book has been widely anticipated by scholars and practitioners engaged in materials development for language teaching. The edited book covers a broad range of important topics that provide updated insights and relevant academic literature to the language teaching field. The book presents both language teaching theory and application that are ideal for readers to explore current and predicted future trends in materials development. The book brings together a wide selection of writers, publishers, researchers and teachers who examine diverse perspectives on materials development for specific learner groups and material types, supported by relevant principles and adaptation strategies.

The introductory chapter, by the editor, Brian Tomlinson, offers an in-depth overview of key concepts in materials development including definitions, historical evolution, ongoing challenges, the selection of appropriate contributors, and the authenticity of materials. One of the most compelling aspects that caught my attention is the editor's discussion on authenticity of text in language learning. The editor highlights a thought-provoking argument that authenticity does not necessarily facilitate language acquisition but authentic texts often pose greater challenges for learners. This claim further prompts the need for adaptation in materials development, particularly focusing on inclusivity for both teachers and learners across the globe.

The book addresses a wide range of key topics in materials development making it a valuable resource for academics, teachers, and even students in the same field of study. The book contains four parts with a

total number of 26 chapters. It begins with evaluating and adapting materials (Part 1), and it continues with integrating relevant frameworks and guidelines for developing materials (Part 2), customising materials for target groups (Part 3), and finally, it ends with developing specific types of materials (Part 4) for teaching the four language skills, incorporating multimodal discourse, raising intercultural awareness and emphasising communicative ability. At the end of each chapter, readers' tasks, further reading, notes and references are provided for readers to enhance understanding, encourage deeper engagement with the content and ensure academic integrity. A commentary section provided by the editor at the end of each part is a good idea because it allows the readers to analyse and summarise the chapters.

For this book review, I focus on one chapter from each part to provide an overview of the diverse perspectives.

## Part 1: Evaluation and Adaptation of Materials

### Chapter 1. Materials evaluation by *Brian Tomlinson*

This first chapter is very important as it explains the theories behind materials evaluation with relevant and current literature reviews (include SLA theories), elaborates the stages of materials evaluation, and suggests criteria for evaluation. Tomlinson emphasises that 'an evaluation is not the same as an analysis' (p. 26). These two terms are clearly defined when the author asserts that an evaluation usually focuses on the users of the materials while an analysis focuses

on the structure of the materials. Examples of the two different terms are given, and the examples are worth their weight in gold. For instance, 'Does it provide a transcript of the listening texts?' is an example of an analysis question which then can be answered as either 'Yes' or 'No'.

Tomlinson's years of experience in materials evaluation has bridged both theory and practice to be more holistic and meaning-focused. For instance, the author conducted an analysis of ten lower-level coursebooks and found the books were more focused on low-level skills (e.g. pronunciation of words) than high-level skills (e.g. inferencing). As far as materials development is concerned, the author goes beyond learning theory (especially SLA) and provides other variables such as cultural awareness and sensitivity, experiential learning, personalisation, self-assessment of learning, and opportunities for learners' feedback.

Towards the end of this chapter, Tomlinson gathers some common themes and literature from various research studies that provide the basis of criteria for developing materials. To make this introductory chapter more readable, a set of guiding questions or criteria is provided to encourage deeper reflection among the target readers. Despite the differences between a global and local context, the author concludes the chapter on a positive note by stating: 'My great hope is that one day the mismatches between theory and practice will diminish and learners, teachers, and publishers around the world will gain' (p. 51).

## Part 2: Principles and Procedures of Materials Development

### Chapter 9. Developing digital language learning materials by *Thom Kiddle and Chris Farrell*

This chapter comprehensively explores the adoption of technological tools, pedagogies, platforms and principles for digital materials (the authors note it was written before the most recent developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) especially Generative AI tools). The authors review the evolution of digital language learning materials including during the Covid-19 pandemic, and recognise those phases (p. 208) that possibly provide great prospects for localisation of the content in the materials developed by teachers (as mentioned in Tomlinson's Chapter 5 on *Humanizing the Coursebook*, pp. 128-144). On the other hand, Kiddle and Farrell acknowledge that digital language learning materials have their challenges when it comes to the implementation of the tools, teachers' accessibility to the digital materials and even technical competence (p.208). The authors also set out a clear overview of frameworks being used in digital

language learning materials, and relate the frameworks to Popovski's (2016) *Principles for Materials Writing* and Mavridi's (2020) *Digital Literacies Framework*, and they argue that the transformation of digital language learning materials is also challenged by SLA theory.

To support the development of digital language learning materials, the writers propose three important aspects: publisher-created materials, teacher-created materials and student-generated materials. Each aspect focuses on areas that each group prioritises in ensuring the digital materials are accessible, connected, integrated and self-directed. For instance, publishers need to ensure that instructors are able to collect submissions of learner-produced content within the materials, and ensure adaptation is carried out within the context as well. Teachers play more significant roles in embedding digital competencies, multimodal design knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, linguistic knowledge, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guidelines, and affordable tools. Despite the diverse roles, the authors point out that there is no clear emphasis on whether the teachers should focus on pedagogical approach or digital technological skills in the digital materials. Kiddle and Farrell emphasise that the integration of technology in the materials is important for students to self-learn the content independently through mobile learning (mLearning) and/or a flipped classroom approach that allow both instructor and students to participate in the feedback activity.

The chapter highlights how AI can influence writers, teachers, and students at all levels through a combination of corpus linguistics, computational linguistics, and learning analytics, and the role of AI in education (e.g. the ethical framework for AI in education). I think the term the authors use - 'disruptive technologies' - is very convincing in implying that technology challenges traditional language learning methods. The chapter ends with considerations such as the authors' predictions on the quality of digital materials, teachers' future challenges on workload planning, and the uptake or rejection of hybrid learning models.

## Part 3: Developing Materials for Target Group

### Chapter 14: Materials for adults resilience in the face of adversity: Inspiring and motivating L2 adult learners of beginner's Spanish by *Rosa-Maria Cives-Enriquez*

Cives-Enriquez begins the chapter by acknowledging the use of technology in teaching L2 adult learners of beginner's Spanish. To motivate her L2 learners, the author emphasises that her pedagogy has always been authentic as it is influenced by natural language

acquisition, Total Physical Response (TPR), storytelling, the concept of multiple intelligences, and other relevant theories. Looking at this teaching approach, Cives-Enriquez considers the wellbeing of her L2 learners and to what extent the learning materials can sustain their learning motivation especially when using online platforms.

Being a linguist and mental health practitioner, the author values emotional wellbeing among her L2 learners. She strongly feels that the use of language stimulus needs to be right for her learners to be connected with the language. Cives-Enriquez feels it is necessary to 'humanise' her classroom context by engaging her learners with the materials. To elaborate her 'humanising' approach, the author proposes seven steps to engage with her learners: 1) getting to know their own learning styles; 2) providing basic classroom instructions in Spanish; 3) explaining her teaching and learning approaches; 4) creating a 'safe space' for learning; 5) providing flexibility for her learners to choose the online learning tools; 6) using visual, auditory and kinaesthetic mediums when introducing new topics; and 7) using group work to engage in virtual breakout rooms.

One part of the chapter I found extremely interesting was about the way the author deals with language learning motivation (pp. 301–310) and how she adopts this framework in her online lessons. For example, she believes in establishing healthy boundaries with the learners which leads to use of the concept of the Johari Window, creating a safe learning environment for feedback sessions, including cultural concepts, promoting self-regulated learning and personalising the process of learning with clear goals.

The author concludes the chapter by reinforcing that constructivism and motivation are the keys to creating motivational materials. She also suggests that balancing the learning process is crucial (i.e. 're-charge' and 're-calibrate').

## Part 4: Developing Specific Types of Materials

### Chapter 24: Towards intercultural competence: Materials for raising intercultural awareness by *Freda Mishan*

I chose this chapter because it provides rich insights into theoretical frameworks of intercultural awareness and the influence of technology on the intercultural environment. The importance of raising intercultural awareness in developing materials is evident in this chapter.

The chapter begins with a list of conceptual frameworks that collectively bring out the definitions of intercultural awareness and intercultural competence. Mishan

further elaborates the complexity of the language-and-culture relationship, influenced by globalisation that includes virtual multiculturalism, which can then lead to issues of, for instance, personal identity.

The author quotes Byram's (2021) definition of critical cultural awareness (CCA) and compares it with Fantini's model (2009) with respect to the dimensions of intercultural competence. As a result of these discussions, Mishan feels that CCA seems to be appropriate as a pedagogic goal (p. 495). To implement CCA in developing materials, the author highlights concepts such as a 'grammar of culture' that focuses on 'small cultures', laying the groundwork for 'counter-normalising' and thus 'interculturality'. Under the implementation section, Mishan summarises the principles for intercultural awareness-raising materials which are helpful for teachers, content developers and publishers to create practical activities (p. 498).

My favourite part of this chapter is where the author explains how intercultural awareness can be fostered through activities in a physical classroom or an online learning platform. One of the most fundamental elements, the author reiterates, is the importance of respecting students' voices and background as part of gauging the cultural appropriateness of classroom activities. This section includes practical and insightful ideas on how to handle intercultural group interactions sensitively, such as intercultural zooming, small cultures, story exchange, I DIVE (a reflective activity), comboculture, and interpreting visuals. The author provides the rationale/theory and procedure for each activity which helps readers connect the concept and application.

Even though the selection of materials is a small sample, the connection between the theoretical framework and implementation opens up more opportunities for teachers and even publishers to explore in developing intercultural learning materials.

## Conclusion

Overall, the book is comprehensive with different recurring themes that help readers connect the theories and applications accordingly. The four major parts of this book are well structured to illustrate the flow of content (i.e. starting from evaluation of materials to developing specific types of materials). I notice most of the authors across the four parts of the book, call for more current empirical research and even professional development training for teachers in the use of language learning materials. Such a requirement can be more demanding now that Generative AI tools are available for all parties at this present time.

In my opinion, the book stands out as a stimulating and well-rounded collection, benefiting greatly from the diverse perspectives of its authors. The readers' tasks help consolidate each chapter of the book

promoting deeper thinking among the readers. Lastly, I truly appreciate the commentaries at the end of each part because they summarise its key points and highlight both agreements and disagreements.

*Persis Rodrigues has been teaching English for 20 years. At present, she is teaching Academic English modules at the Centre for English Language Studies, Sunway University, Malaysia. Persis is also a certified trainer by the Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF), Malaysia. She has developed and conducted various workshops and programmes for corporate employees. Currently, Persis has been appointed as an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Champion of Sunway University, to support the development of academics through training sessions. Upon completion of her Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (International) from Lancaster University, Rodrigues is conferred Fellow Member of the Higher Education Academic of UK. Research wise, Rodrigues has published papers in language learning strategies, project-based learning, e-Learning, and Generative AI tools. She is a Life Member of QRAM (Qualitative Research Association of Malaysia).*

**FOR MATSDA MEMBERSHIP PLEASE CONTACT**

Jensen Zheung, MATSDA Membership Secretary, e-mail: [membership@matsda.org](mailto:membership@matsda.org)

[www.matsda.org/folio.html](http://www.matsda.org/folio.html)