Materials Development in English as a Second Language in India – A Survey of Issues and Some Developments at the National Level

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Introduction

This paper presents some of the processes of recent curricular revision and materials development in English at the national level in India, especially as these relate to the initiatives of NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training). Teacher's needs and wants, their participation in the development of materials, the choices teachers have to make and their implications for classroom transactions are discussed from the experiences of one of the members of the textbooks development team of the NCERT.

The paper attempts to answer the following questions:

(i)   Should India need a textbook at the national level for teaching English as a Second Language?
(ii)   Should methodology influence material or the vice versa?
(iii)   What can be material for textbooks in English in countries like India?
(iv)   Can teachers prepare good materials?
(v)   Is it possible to include materials development as part of professional development of teachers?

An important aspect of this paper is the presentation of the English language teachers' needs and wants as perceived by them and reported through various surveys.

The Impact of Learning Theories and Theorists

Materials development for the teaching of English as a second language has witnessed significant changes during the last three decades in countries like India. The concerns informed by research on language learning and learning theories have impacted the methods which in turn resulted in change in thinking in materials development. This also led to demands to achieve uniformity or commonality in the system. This has resulted in making the teacher–learner/teaching-learning activities textbook centric.

Though teachers are not heard much in the process of textbook development, their participation is recognized as a positive trend. Teachers, on the one hand, expect materials to do all wonders, and, on the other, we also notice that their needs and wants clash with each other and also with

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the needs of learners and learning. This creates many problems for the teachers and materials developers.

The Process: Impact of Political Trends on the Preparation of Textbooks

With the change of the government at the Centre (national level), from the BJP-led NDA government to the Indian National Congress-led UPA government, the National Council of Educational Research and Training[1] was directed by the new government to take up the revision of the school curriculum. The Education Secretary's letter to the Director of NCERT annexed with the National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF) made clear the agenda of the government, as it quoted the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and its revision of 1992. *The NPE – 1986* and its revised form *Programme of Action* (POA) (1992) call for a revision of the curriculum once in five years.

Major opposition to the textbooks developed as a follow up of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE - 2000) was that the Right-wing ideas of the Hindutuva ideology have been brought into the textbooks, particularly in the textbooks of social sciences. The Left-leaning academics and others opposed the NCFSE -2000 vehemently.

The new government in 2004 constituted several committees and subcommittees to look into the exercise of the curricular revision done in the year 2000 by the previous government. Immediate action of the new government was to review the textbooks and suggest measures to remove the texts and portions of lessons that presented the Hindutuva agenda of the previous government. As this exercise was completed, NCERT started preparing for the revision of the curriculum.

A Nation-wide Exercise for the Revision of Curriculum and Materials Development

Though it was not clear how effective this exercise would be, it sounded in our initial discussions that this was not going to be another exercise to revise the curriculum. It was taken as a nationwide exercise involving large number of academics, teachers, social activists, NGOs working in the field of education at the gross root level. This was a very systematically carried out exercise to review the national curriculum. People from all fields were involved in it, as also for the first time views and opinions of common public were called for and taken into consideration.

In order to synchronize the exercise, many structures were created. These included: i. National Steering Committee[2] and ii. National Focus Groups[3] (21 groups). The steering committee had around 40 members from many fields and people from NGOs. The Steering Committee held discussions at least seven times at many places in the country and deliberated upon various

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[1] National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is a national level apex organization which advises the govt. of India and the state (provinces) governments on matters of school education. It is also a premier organization which develops textbooks at the national level and undertakes research and extension activities. .
[2] For details of the proceedings of the meeting of the Steering Committee please visit www.ncert.nic.in
[3] To know more about the Focus Groups please visit: www.ncert.nic.in

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issues on school education and its status. While the steering committee was very keen in triggering discussions and debates on some of the hard spots and issues that needed to be answered, the twenty-one National Focus Groups, set up on various curricular areas, national concerns and systemic issues, held their meetings at different places and brought out issues and concern in each area.

The position papers of national focus groups provided inputs for shaping of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF – 2005). When the NCF – 2005 was finally approved and the national focus group position papers were made available to all, the syllabi committees were geared into action to design syllabi in each subject area. An interesting thing to be noted is that some of the members in the three structures, steering committee, focus groups, syllabi committee were common. This helped to have a holistic understanding of the whole exercise. While some of the members who were new in a particular committee, groups were well aware of the happening in each group.   Thus the whole exercise of NCF -2005, focus group position papers, and syllabi created interest among all stakeholders.

Same Issues of the Past

Many of the issues brought out and discussed in the national monitoring committee and the national focus groups have been there for quite some time. These have been discussed since the NPE – 1986. Besides the concerns of education for all (EFA) from an Indian perspective, other concerns were reduction of curriculum load, both physical and all other forms, understanding of learners from their perspective, examination reforms, other systemic issues like teacher education, education of the socially, economically suppressed, gender, special needs group and language education in the Indian situation - the multilingual perspective, and position and demand for English and so on.

Issues Relating to Language Education

The issues in language education were deliberated in the two National Focus Groups – Teaching of English and the Teaching of Indian Languages. The major issues in both the groups could be listed as:

1. Medium of learning – teaching /instruction
2. Language policy in school education – three language formula
3. Introduction of English as a language
4. Language teacher education – teachers' professional development
5. Language teacher proficiency
6. Methodologies of teaching
7. Materials for teaching the language(s)
8. Multilingualism as a strategy in classroom transactions
9. Promotion of reading

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The syllabus committee in language(s) took serious note of the ideas of the position papers and translated them into reality. Future will tell how far this has been realized.

The syllabus listed themes and suggested varied ways for class transactions in a broader sense.

Textbook Preparation

After the syllabus committee, the textbook development committee plunged into action to design textbooks for various classes in a phased manner.

In the first phase, textbooks for classes I, III, VI, IX, X and XI were brought out. An added advantage in English was the chairperson of the national focus group for the group on teaching of English was involved in the syllabus making and she is now the chief advisor for textbook development committee in English.

Each textbook had a separate group with the common chief advisor with at least one faculty from NCERT as member-coordinator of the activity. Each team consisted of members from practicing teachers, faculty from universities, institutions like the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL)[4].

Discussions Relating to the Preparation of Textbooks

The following sections describe the discussions, debates of one of the textbook development committees in English for (class X) on various occasions on the important issues and concern to develop materials that would make an impact in the classroom to enable children in learning the language.

Teachers' point of view - Teachers' Needs and Wants

Teachers' worries are of varied kinds. Teachers in various systems of schooling have varied needs and wants. The examination-driven teaching and the primary importance given to examination can be seen everywhere in India, whatever system it be.

So, teachers' worry is the examination even when they look at the material presented to them or the development of new materials. Two members of our textbook development committee were (chosen) from the schools of Delhi Administration where most schools are run in regional medium, mostly Hindi, or in some cases, it is Punjabi or Urdu with a few English medium sections in the Hindi medium schools.

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[4] Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) located at Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, a central institute conducts post graduate and research courses in English and Foreign Languages and also in-service courses and researches. The Institute has now become a central university. CIEFL is presently renamed as The English and Foreign Languages University (TEAFLU)

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Teachers' Participation

It is a known fact that children from lower strata of the society and those who cannot afford to send their wards to English medium private schools send their children to these schools.

The two teachers we chose from these schools were actually asking for a textbook their students would be able to understand and connect with their real life situations. We were happy that the teachers were in reality wanting to have what NCF-2005 advocates as its one of the guiding principles -- Connecting life outside the classroom with the classroom experiences and recognizing learner as constructor of knowledge, one tenet of constructivism which the NCF bases as underlying principle for understanding the child.

Arguments of Teachers

What was not convincing us was that because their students did not have or posses the required proficiency in English, they want/expect the textbook to be very lighter in terms of context, language content, and anything above this level, they believe their students cannot do. The level of students they assumed is almost nothing. Teachers' needs and wants clash here in consonance with their understanding of learners and their needs.

Hitomi (1996) categorizes needs of teachers into two categories:

> Teachers' needs would consist of two general areas: one deriving from personal traits such as their age, sex, cultural and educational background and the other from their professional traits such as areas and levels of expertise, length and types of teaching experience.

Needs, Hitomi further classifies, (i) as self-perceived needs, (ii) needs perceived by others and (iii) objectively measured needs. One could sense the needs of the teachers here are self perceived needs, of course in their context and their understanding of the learner and language learning.

In our scrutiny and analysis of the 'texts' or 'materials' brought in by each member of the group and an analysis of the existing textbooks, the teachers were more apprehensive of relevance and use of almost each text, saying, "This our children cannot do" "The text is very tough."

This also made us to look at how a typical English language classroom operates in these schools. We were/are well aware that the situation would not be much different in most of the vernacular medium (government run) schools.

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There are data to show (Nag-Arulmani 2005) that 40 percent of children in small towns, 80 per cent of children in tribal areas, and 18 percent of children in urban schools cannot read in their own language at the primary stage. From the mouths of the teachers we came to understand, though not so shockingly, how the materials are taught/used in classroom.

"Our children are from very poor background. Lower caste, some are slum dwellers. They do not understand even a single sentence spoken by us. We need to translate most part of the story. More than eighty percent can not even read the lessons you prescribe."

Question one*: How do you deal with the textbook in your class?*

"I explain the whole text line by line and give answers to the question that follow the text and children memorize or some understand and write the answers."

Question Two: How do you explain?

"We translate each sentence and connect it with their real life situations"

Question Three: Do your children read anything in English?

"Leave alone English, they read almost nothing in their mother tongue except the textbook. Some may read newspapers, or short novels, stories, etc. Reading as a habit is not there at all. Reasons are many, they have to study many subjects: science, social studies, mathematics, they spend lots of their times in those subjects where they need to score more to get into science stream in class XI."

This tells us many a thing; important among them is the belief, "Don't expose them to any materials as they cannot read or understand" The irony is that the teachers who believe their students cannot read and understand do not want their students be troubled with anything above their level till they attain the level expected by the syllabus and textbook. How can we expect any level without exposing them to any language input?

Secondly, knowledge of the recent developments in language learning and second language acquisition and ELT, though they claim to have, is very limited. Each situation they described and their own opinion about students (would) reveal that students are not exposed to comprehensible input and there is no motivation on the part of the learner.

Views of Teachers from the Central Schools

Teachers' views from the other two systems of schools centrally administered by the government of India to cater to two different populace – Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), the Central Schools Organization created for the children of Central Government employees and Defense Services, and Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS), a group of 500 schools set up based

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on the recommendation of the NPE – 1986 to cater to rural talents from the socially and economically poorer section from rural areas - are also the same.

Most of the teachers' arguments on having or not having a text, for that matter any text in English textbook, could be summarized as,

> *"Our children do not know English. They cannot even read the texts you prescribe."*

This is no exaggeration. Each school system has its own problems.

The Gaps Noticed – Dependence on Textbooks

There is a gap between the teachers' need and their want, and there is a gap between teachers' need and learners' needs. This we sensed not only in our discussions during the development of the materials, but also in our attempt to design model question papers for class X for the CBSE as also in the training sessions, both face-to-face and through teleconferencing mode.

During our training, we received many queries which conveyed the impression that the problems could be answered by well developed materials to maximum extent, for, the teachers believe that materials is 'the major thing' that they have with them to enable their learners to learn English. They believe this is a major instrument in terms of content, language input, methods and also for evaluation. What they fail to recognize is that the 'text' or materials are major inputs for exposing children to natural or authentic language or contextual situations. This creates tension and anxiety in teachers.

It is not only learners but also teachers who are anxious and tensed when it comes to English language learning in their situations. Krasen's point that "*effects of various forms of anxiety on acquisition are seen in the learner."* But *"the less anxious the learner, the better language acquisition proceeds. Similarly, relaxed and comfortable students apparently can learn more in shorter periods of time.*" (Krashen, Dubey, Burt 1982) is true.

This anxiety is triggered as teachers' needs and wants seem to be not matching or suitable to the needs of learners. Teachers are driven by their self perceived needs and though they seem to accept the learners' identity, yet underestimate the learner in general as they cannot learn, i.e. they cannot learn the language as it happens in an urban English medium school.

Variety of Textbooks Now Available in India

It is not that the scene is that frustrating as India today has large number of textbooks/materials in English for students and teachers. Besides the national level agencies like the NCERT, and centrally administered boards like the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), each state produces textbooks for use by the schools affiliated to the Boards managed by them. This is in addition to the large number private publishers who produce materials for teaching of English as

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a second language. These materials are used by independent schools that are free to use them up to class VIII any textbook. When it comes to class IX and X they are bound to use the prescribed books by the Boards. Students of these schools are proficient users of English language. So the teachers strongly feel "These textbook may work well in English medium private schools." Consider Jim Cummin's remark "poor kids get behaviourism and rich kids get social constructivism" (Jim Cummins 2005). In practice, that means skills for the poor and knowledge for the rich seem befitting to this situation. He was speaking in the context of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of USA. In the Indian situation, stress and burden for poor and skills and knowledge for the rich!

Questions Relating to Materials Selection and Presentation

Selection of materials was done by all members of the textbook development team individually and also during the workshop meetings. The major intensions/objectives behind the selections was (i) providing comprehensible inputs through variety of materials based on the themes listed in the syllabus, (ii) the materials would facilitate learners to engage themselves with the language in contexts that they are familiar with, (iii) exposing students to authentic/natural (language) text, (iv) the tasks provided should enable learners to work individually, in groups or as a whole class, and use the language and produce language in situations, (v) the materials would take the child from known to unknown (themes) and also from reading to writing and writing to reading, and also speaking and listening as part of the process of reading as well as post-reading of the text.

In the selected material, we had included materials from all genres and themes that would suit our situations. We had translations from Indian languages, travelogues; stories about animals, speeches of persons like Nelson Mandela (his speech on assuming office as the first black president of South Africa), narratives that would enable learners to ponder over the reading philosophically (like Buddha's Sermon *at Benaras*). Poems are drawn from a variety again, from William Blake to Ogden Nash and some living poets.

Issues Faced by the Teachers and the Textbook Writers

The issues faced by the teachers as well as by some of the textbook writers included:

- We should have texts
  Classics - from Shakespeare, William Blake; romantic poets like William Wordsworth, Keats, Shelly; poets like Robert Frost are fine, but have longer poems by him not the smaller ones. Majority prose / fiction by writers belonging to that period.

- We need to have a good introduction to the author, the poet and about the piece included in the textbook.

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- We already have texts (as we perceive the ideas of the syllabus and the position paper on teaching of English & Indian Languages).

- Would like to have a variety of texts that include contemporary (themes) writing so that learners would be able to relate to their knowledge and thinking and with real life situations. We should have a mixed variety of materials from the British, American, and new literatures from other countries and Indian literature (both Indian writing in English and translations from Indian languages).

- We need no introduction or need only a very sketchy introduction to the authors / poets. Let learners explore and find out. Moreover, the poem or work of art matters more than the poet or the writer.

The Question of Teaching Morals through Literature

The syllabus (NCERT 2006) lists fifteen major themes from where the ideas for the text could be drawn. It is only a guideline to draw texts from, not a restriction. One major question teachers wanted not only as teachers, but as parents and citizens is, "We need to have texts or stories to teach morals explicitly to our children." This may also be the opinion of many 'adults' who visualize education as 'man making business by imbibing values', 'character building' and 'behaviourial change.' The curriculum, in its aims and contents, calls for education to act as an instrument in creating a citizenry for a democratic society in the Indian context.

What is expected by the majority of the teachers from a textbook as 'adults' is that the materials act as didactic instrument to teach morals as morals so that our children get to learn them.

In this regard the demand on the language textbook is more than the demands on the textbooks of other subjects. However, students want not merely moral stories. Some responses and reflections by students during my visit to a school run by the NVS is:

> *"Please stop preaching through textbooks in English. We do not want direct moral like a sermon. Stories should interest us."*

> *"The textbook should have such stories and material of our interests, not simply life and works of people and their teaching in language textbooks*."

While the teachers, on the one hand, feel that their students would not be able to read and understand textbooks, they also expect the text to be value-laden to preach. As students point out, they expect the text to interest them. We need to think much before choosing a text.

Grammar or No Grammar?

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This has taken much of our deliberations in and out of our workshops. A major change or reform that has taken place in this textbook revision is the integration of grammar activities with the textbook itself. Till this revision, we had had a textbook or a reader, an extensive reader (supplementary reader) and a work book, which presented grammar, most of them being sentence based exercises, somewhat contextualized.

As a mark of reducing the burden - both physical as well as the burden of incomprehensiveness and allowing children learn grammar in situations and contexts - the three books have now been made into two. Grammar has now become part of the textbook, the main text book. The difficult choices here are:

Teach Formal Grammar to Some Extent

- We need to teach grammar in a functional manner in contexts but give them also the rules at least at the end. Sentence based grammar is very useful.

- Each grammar item should be tested in the examination distinctly. For example, test reported speech as a distinct item. Do not club it with editing, cloze exercise, etc.

- Students should know the labels as well as rules so that they would become better users of the language.

- More grammar and correct grammar would make students to use the language very well.

Teach grammar in contexts, situations

- Grammar is unnecessary at the initial years of learning.

- Let the learner discover rules of grammar through the grammar activities in the text and contextualized situations.

- Teach and test grammar in contexts and in an integrated manner.

- Knowing labels and rules will not make a good learner / user of the language. From the contexts learners will discover the rules and know the labels as they grow.

- Language is learnt when the learner is less anxious (Krasen 1982). Learning (Grammar) mechanically only makes learners stressed. Teaching of more grammar with out any understanding of the language will only make the child stressed.

What Methods and For Whom?

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Teachers are obsessed with some method or the other. A large number of them feel that methods are the overarching principles on which a textbook need to be written. Most teachers believe that the way they were taught would still be the best method.

So, the structuralist and behaviorist model of teaching-learning still holds well for them. The National Curriculum Framework – 2005 and the position paper on Teaching of English (2005) call for a method which, in a way may be the best of all the methods and approaches to language learning, a sort of an eclectic approach.

A combination of the tenets of Chomskyan mentalist, Piagetian and cognitive and Vygotskyan perspective of constructivism would do a lot for teachers to engage learners with situations connecting their life where they use the language.

> *Input-rich theoretical methodologies (such as the whole Language, the task-based, and the comprehensible input and balanced approaches) aim at exposure to the language in meaning-focused situation so as to trigger the formation of a language system by the mind (Position Paper –Teaching of English NCF 2005).*

The task based methodologies, the position paper believes, would do justice in placing the learner to get engaged with peers, with the community and with the language to make meanings.

Teachers' Apprehensions

Teachers in their response have raised the following apprehensions:

1. Making students read the texts of the textbook is a difficult task in our schools. We need to read out each line and explain.
2. So it is difficult to have pair/group work in the class. Students would not be able to speak in English.
3. What is wrong, if I teach grammar rules? Here they mean teaching of rules of grammar by giving illustrations in sentences or in short paragraphs.
4. Let us teach poems contrary to what the textbook says, "Teach poetry for enjoyment and sensitize learners to language use like rhymes, and ideas of the poem to reflect."
5. We have to keep examinations in mind.

Some Concrete Content to Teach

One phenomenon could be noticed as we discuss the demands of teachers and their wants. Teachers expect some concrete 'content' to teach, i.e., teaching the material or text or the content of the textbook as an idea rather than using it as an input for learning the language. This may not be true with all the teachers.

However, teachers who want to teach grammar rules and tell about the authors or poets, it seems, want to talk about or teach about the content by explaining and describing or supplying

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additional information about the author or the poet. This needs to be studied in depth with getting into classroom processes.

Activities and strategies to help in promoting peer learning and working with language like pair work, group work and reading with understanding are not of much importance for the teachers who believe in and want to teach everything.

The Format of a Lesson or a Unit

One major criticism about the textbooks published by the states and also the NCERT was that the textbooks were not attractive and print quality was not good. Reasons for this condition are many.

States provide textbooks free or at very low cost. NCERT's textbook up to class VIII cost (even now) is Rs. 30. Textbooks by private publishers are costly and in multi-colour. (The New Generation textbooks published by NCERT are in multicolour.) The new textbooks present a flexible format.

A typical lesson in the NCERT English textbook includes:

   (i)   Before You Read (the warming up activity to enter into the text)
   (ii)   the text (Reading with comprehension checks)
   (iii)   Thinking about the text (Comprehension and extrapolative question to move beyond the texts)
   (iv)   Thinking about language (Grammar & language activities rooted from the text)
   (v)   Writing
   (vi)   Listening, speaking activity.
   (vii)   Some tips for teachers.

This is only what in total a typical lesson consists of, not a prescription for all lessons or units. Some lessons do not have any reasoning through language or speaking or listening activity. This flexible format breaks monotony and also gives scope for the teachers to design their own activities.

The last item at the end of each lesson is some tips for the teachers under the headings: ***What we have done & What you can do.*** This has been introduced based on the feedback from teachers in our interactions during the process of revision and during our training sessions.

Teachers wanted to have some ideas how they can deal with the text in the class and also move beyond the book to enrich learning activities. 'What we have done' tells what the authors have provided in the lesson and their intentions for language learning while 'What you can do' gives clues for the teacher to go beyond the text and organize or deign activities so as to help learners engage with the language with many more activities in contexts. Teachers have accepted the format and feel this would help them to do well.

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Materials Development as Professional Development of Teachers

Developing expertise among teachers and sensitizing them to develop and design materials is one major concern for textbook development organizations like the NCERT and state level textbook development corporations in India. Teacher training courses, both pre-service and in-service, have not much to offer, except a few like the courses run by institution like CIEFL. Most teacher training courses try to develop skills and competencies that would enable the teacher to deliver in the classroom. But they tend to often give them methodologies, approaches and strategies to transact in the classroom.

As Brian Tomlinson (1998) says,

> In a teacher training approach teachers or trainee teachers are given procedures and advice to follow. This approach assumes a relationship of experts to novices and characterizes many pre-service courses in which the participants are trained to teach a particular textbook, methodology, or curriculum. In the best type of teacher training courses, the participants are provided with a range of options to choose from; in the worst result if often teachers who know what to do but who do not know when and how not to do it. In other words, conformists who have little initiative or creativity of their own and who find it difficult to respond to the unexpected.

> Teacher training help institution and countries to achieve convergence and uniformity, but ultimately it is not very useful for learners, who need teachers who can respond to their divergent needs and wants. Training teachers to become a little more organized and to write clearer instruction but it is not going to lead to increased confidence, creativity, flexibility or self-esteem.

Teachers are there as materials users/consumers, and facilitators for students to use the materials and also as the ones who evaluate students' learning as a result of which and otherwise they evaluate the materials. This needs stronger base and understanding of the learner, nature of language learning and acquisition and the contexts in which the learner is placed and his / her identity, etc.

Teachers who lack an understanding of all the above would not only find it difficult to develop materials but also they would find it much more difficult to deliver or transact any materials in an effective manner.

Hitomi Masuhara (1998) argues,

> Teacher can even be said to be the central figures in materials development – for they are the ones who select materials (or, at least, have some influence in the selection process), who actually teach the materials and who sometimes have to

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rewrite materials. The students come and go and so do materials but large number of teachers tend to stay.

All the arguments by teachers reflecting on their needs and wants would not justify a position that teachers' participation in materials production will be a disadvantage. They need to be there as Hitomi stresses above .

To Conclude

NCERT's textbooks cater to the needs of students studying in schools affiliated to the national level boards. The textbooks developed by institutions like the NCERT are taken as model textbooks even by the State agencies and private publishers. Teachers' needs or wants reveal, however, that a single textbook for the entire nation may meet all the aspects of teaching English in India. We may have arguments for or against having a single textbook for a class even in such systems like the KVS, NVS and schools affiliated to the Central Boards. Teachers in a particular system and who are on a transferable position from one region to another do not see this (having a single textbook) as a problem. Our interactions with the teachers do not reveal that. They feel that they need to accept any textbook given to them.

As Krishna Kumar (1992) puts it rightly

A textbook is prescribed for each subject, and the teacher has to teach it, lesson by lesson until there are no more lessons left. She must ensure that the children can do the exercises given at the end of each lesson without help, for this is what they will have to do in the final examination. The textbook symbolizes the authority under which the teacher must accept to work. It also symbolizes the teacher's subservient status in the educational culture.

This, however, does not lead one to conclude that countries like India can not have national (level) textbooks as the present exercise made an attempt to bring in large number of people from all areas of schooling, from practicing teachers to academics at the university.

Brian Tomlinson's (1995) point to develop effective materials is of much relevance in today's context.

We need to find ways of bringing together researchers, teachers, writers and publishers so as to pool resources and to take advantage of different areas of expertise in order to produce materials of greater value to learners of languages**.**

The gap between teachers' needs and wants is felt during the process of textbook development. Teachers' wants are determined by different concerns and their understanding of language learning and understanding of the child and her context. Even this assumption needs to be questioned as the teachers needs and wants, we can argue, are not determined by their understanding of pedagogical aspects. So they expect the textbook do all wonder, to have

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content, language elements, a method which they feel suitable and an evaluation that would enable the learner to enrich their language. This is no exaggeration.

Teachers judge/assume that student would not understand English even if spoken in simple sentences and so do not provide them any thing that they would not understand. In truism, teachers feel, "do not expose them with language input as they cannot understand anything at all."

One could conclude that the gap between what teachers want and their need impact the classroom transactions. The gap between teachers' needs and wants and students' needs determines teacher's use of the textbook in the classroom. So, it is more likely that the teachers who believe his/her students cannot read and understand anything in English would not use the textbook as intended by the syllabus or textbook writers. This may lead to many more arguments. One among them is that teachers need to be effective material developers in order not only to understand the text to teach or facilitate learning, but also to understand the very nature of the learners, their mind, the process of learning and also the context in which the learners are placed.

We need to still introspect much more on methodologies and whether materials need to openly advocate or prescribe a method or some methods to the teacher to follow in his or her classroom teaching. This is raised not simply to undermine the textbook as a restricting mechanism, but by accepting it as a launching pad for teachers to facilitate language learning where comprehensible inputs are provided to students and tasks are designed to enable learners to engage with the language and engage with their peers and surroundings to use the language.

Teachers as users of materials want to follow the materials religiously as the final thing. Moving beyond the textbook to design tasks and activities which children would feel nearer to their lives or from their lives would be one of the purposes of teacher facilitating learning. Julian Edge and Sue Wharton (1995) feel 'in the ELT literature, views about course book seem to polarise'. Richards (1993) also supports the concern that a comprehensive, tightly structured course book encourages dependence on the part of the teachers, and fosters a situation where the teacher relies on the book to do the real work of teaching. Julian Edge and Sue Wharton (1995) quote Richards:

> He (Richards) suggests that many course books attempt themselves to do the work
> of decision making and pedagogical reasoning, and therefore do not encourage
> teachers to use them in a creative and personal way.

An effective textbook would need to encourage teachers to move beyond it. The New Generation books of NCERT have made an attempt to free the teacher from (the shackles of) tyranny of textbooks.

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As for what should be considered as material for learning, the discussion in this paper may make one feel that anything in the context, natural or authentic text would do justice and serve the purpose of realizing the aims of language learning-teaching.

The new textbooks have made an attempt to bring in themes of interests and different genres to interest the learner through such comprehensible inputs.

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Colophon:

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