

4 Materials for Creativity: A Constructivist Perspective

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Understanding Teachers' Frustration with ELT Materials

Language teaching materials sometimes cause frustration to the user. This very much depends on two factors: how self-reliantly the teacher approaches textbooks and how flexible the textbook is. In 1981, when Allwright wrote his scathing article about the coursebook, he believed that language learning materials could only 'embody decisions, but they cannot themselves undertake action' (p. 9). Being simply a lifeless object, the textbook has been viewed as the tyrant within the classroom (Williams, 1983), demanding that teachers and learners conform to it with no room for deviation or personalisation on either's part. O'Neill (1982) offers an expanded view by stating that despite the broadness or narrowness of it, the essential language components present in a coursebook should allow for applicability in most situations with most students. The main purposes of materials, arguably, are: to maintain quality of education and to standardise instruction (Richards, 2001); to keep 'order within potential chaos' (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994: 327) by providing structure; and to reassure students that structure is present (Harmer, 1998; O'Neill, 1982).

Critics have pointed out that commercially viable coursebooks tend to aim for a gainful target market. Serving a profit-making industry, they eventually become a 'compromise between the financial and the pedagogical' (Sheldon, 1987, 1988). While trying to appeal to everyone everywhere in every language-learning situation (Cunningsworth, 1984; McGrath, 2002), the textbook ends up being too broad to be interesting and relevant. As Dat (2006) elaborates, 'since coursebooks reflect the writer's knowledge and view of the world, when they are transferred and used by people whom the writer knows little about, irrelevance of content and subject matters are likely to result' (p. 52). Other scholars who touched on such irrelevance in materials (Edge & Wharton, 1998; Hutchinson, 1987; Jolly & Bolitho, 1998; Murray, 2003) have noted that although coursebook writers may not be consciously aware of their own beliefs, these individual views still permeate the book in both content and organisation of activities.

A coursebook, therefore, has potential to be subjective, and whether it proves to be effective depends on how well it anticipates the multiple ways of being relevant to the users and how effectively it supports their teaching and learning as a result of such imagined potentiality. To reduce subjectivity requires course writers to stop controlling and leave the task of interpreting and implementing materials more open to course users. As Canniveng and Martinez (2003) emphasise, dealing with the limitation of second language materials requires teachers to be consciously proactive in bridging the gap. This stance needs to be spelled out concretely, the range of resources needs to be expanded, and suggestions for use need to be pedagogically strategic. Such actions will help generate space for teacher and learner creativity.

Why Creativity Matters

The term ‘creativity’ reminds us of new ways of seeing, generating novel ideas and demonstrating divergent thoughts, all of which help us escape mundane or typical ways of addressing an issue or answering a question. Although this understanding seems straightforward, scholarly efforts to define creativity often encounter a complicated challenge, as evidenced by the extended range of definitions of this construct which, according to Torrance (2003), are all far from accurate. Indeed, ways of describing this process seem too diverse to be consistent. For instance, researchers who look into this construct have collected as many as 112 definitions (Treffinger, 2000) of and 1400 terms (Aldrich, 2001) related to creativity. Among these, significant concepts that stand out include mental and social process, cognitive thinking, affective responses and a form of intelligence. Perhaps the closest word to ‘creativity’ is ‘imagination’, which refers to the ability to see the invisible. In an ideal situation, creativity turns that fancy into a concrete idea and innovation continues to expand it further, into actual practice.

This conceptualisation, however, might not be agreeable to everyone. Instead, creativity from an applied point of view has been widely misunderstood by both educators and other members of society. Some assume that it is a dimension of abstract thinking that operates in a small number of disciplines, such as the sciences and the arts, rather than something to be practised throughout all aspects of schooling. Others feel that it works more for individuals with special talents rather than for everyone. Some perceive creativity as a final product, that is, being materially accomplished, rather than a continual process in the mind to be mentally nurtured. Others regard it more as an inborn aptitude than as a competency that can be established via coaching effort. Despite such misperceptions, scholars involved in teaching and promoting creativity know very well that this is a versatile facility that, if one desires, can pervade all levels of education (Robinson, 2011).

With the above awareness in mind, educators in an increased global movement are making efforts to incorporate creativity in curriculum reform (Gariboldi & Catellani, 2013; Shaheen, 2010) as a way to enable deeper engagement among students and help them reach their full potential. This is due to the wide acknowledgement that creative abilities play a powerful role in academic achievement (Bano *et al.*, 2014; Chamorro-Premuzic, 2006; Hansenne & Legrand, 2012; Molaei & Abasi, 2014; Powers & Kaufman, 2004). As a matter of fact, empirical research conducted into creative programmes in many school curricula has yielded evidence of their benefit for learning outcomes. There are at least five main reasons why creative education has developed into a highly significant obligation. Those reasons concern how creativity is connected to: skills development; multiple possibilities; societal benefit; enhanced affect; and learnability. Each of these is explained below.

Skills development

Achieving creative problem-solving ability involves building a wide collection of skills (Haler, 2016). Examples of such skills include sensitivity to problems, hypothesis formulation, diverse guessing, novel association, resistance to routine, thinking fluency, original interpretation, attentiveness to imagination and the courage to explore.

Multiple possibilities

Creativity encourages the thinking of endless possibilities (Amabile, 1983; Kohn, 1987) whereby the learner explores various sets of attributes within an issue of concern and combines them in ways that make novel sense. Possibility thinking also represents a form of intelligence that would be useful in any aspect of life (Carlo, 2009; Craft, 2002) as it enables the mind to perceive the world in a renewed fashion.

Societal benefit

The practice of creativity has the potential not only to produce competitive advantage for individuals but also to bring collective benefit to humans on various global and societal levels (Kader, 2008). This is because creativity is not something that grows solely from inside the mind but tends to arise as the mind interacts with the thoughts of others in a specific sociocultural context (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013).

Enhanced affect

Creativity triggers the emotional channel in learners so that they become frequently curious about the surrounding social environment. Such

curiosity stimulates them to intuitively recognise what seems missing, to adopt a risk-taking attitude towards one's self-expression, and to willingly stretch their potential responses. With this experimental mindset, learners would enjoy moving from fantasy thinking to consequential action.

Learnability

Creativity is learnable and achievable, which is why creative practices have been introduced into the classroom in many education programmes. The extensive amount of research being conducted on interactive pedagogies for creativity have proven that thoughtful stimulation of learners' enthusiastic participation has the power to improve learning outcomes (Besancon & Lubart, 2008; Gariboldi & Catellani, 2013; Honig, 2000; Kader, 2008; Woods, 1990).

Materials for Creativity

I would like to draw a helpful distinction between the term *creative materials*, which refers to originality in course design, including content and pedagogy, and *materials for creativity*, which refers to resources that help their users become creative in teaching and learning. Arguably, there is a logical connection between the two: the latter require the former, as it would be impossible for boring, conventional materials to turn teachers and learners into resourceful discussants of exciting ideas. On the contrary, if participants experience a great deal of innovative moments while working with materials, their learning mechanism will get inspired and their creative behaviour is likely to be fostered. On the basis of research evidence, scholars argue that curriculum development plays an essential role in the development of creativity among students, which can be oriented towards particular subject areas (see, for example, Blamires & Peterson, 2014).

Inside the language classroom, one can observe evidence that teachers and learners are exhibiting creative behaviour. For instance, participants engage with a large repertoire of strategies to teach and learn. They become playful with both language and content. They perform a wide range of both cognitive and affective processing in their discussion. They recycle previous knowledge and skills in new, personalised ways that break away from common, tedious routine.

A Constructivist Approach to Creative Materials Design

This section argues for a constructivist stance towards materials development, with an open-minded view of learning as a continuing, adaptable process. A major concept that lays the foundation for constructivism, as highlighted by Spiro *et al.* (1991), is flexibility, a factor that has

been recognised as a significant facilitator of creativity (Bao, 2015). A closer look at the tenets of constructivism reveals a number of features with rich potential to support creative effort, such as an emphasis on:

- the need for original adaptation (Wanniarachchi, 2016);
- support for customised learning needs and experiences (Yildirim, 2005);
- encouragement of situated learning in real-life contexts (Driscoll, 2007);
- open-mindedness towards accepting multiple perspectives (Staits & Wilke, 2007).

Constructivist-based pedagogy as inspired by the work of Dewey (1929), Piaget (1954) and Vygotsky (1978) – as well as other cognitive, social and practical constructivists – advocates practices that make use of learners' individuality, applicability and social context. In Vygotsky's educational philosophy, learning happens on two levels: intra-psychologically (i.e. within everyone) and inter-psychologically (i.e. among social members) (Wink & Putney, 2002). To make this possible, education needs to provide the duality of conditions under which learners not only pursue their independent thinking but also interact with the thinking of others. With this consideration, teaching materials, which situate the learner in its centre, should be designed in a way that responds to individual priority, social concern and real-world practicality.

The approach has strong potential to be applied to materials design, in the sense that materials will no longer be predetermined throughout but always have an open space for further challenge, participation and decision. In a constructivist coursebook, although some texts are given, there are also provisions for students to select what to read. Some questions are asked by the textbook but learners are also invited to initiate their own questions. Many tasks are open-ended and process-based, to encourage different ways of obtaining the answer. Assessment does not always have the answer key but might accept a variety of responses. When a comparison task is included, criteria are provided but students can also add their own criteria. Vocabulary on a topic may be given but that list may be incomplete, to be additionally elicited by the teacher and contributed by the learner. These are only some examples to show how constructivism as a tool can reshape the internal structure of materials. More systematically, the next section presents a set of principles for materials to make the creative mode of learning happen.

Five Key Principles Underlying Materials for Creativity

Materials need to invite teachers and learners to navigate their ways around available resources with a proactive attitude rather than as submissive visitors. The coursebook can encourage this stance by organising

for the following dimensions to be activated, namely curiosity, response, experience, challenge and negotiation.

Stimulating curiosity in teachers and learners

A coursebook for creativity should be able to instil in its users some degree of inquisitiveness, so that they enjoy interacting with course content to discover and generate more meaning from it. This requires a diverse selection of amusing texts, topics for debate, attention-grabbing task design and functioning visuals, among other innovative resources that are not usually found in the typical textbook.

Inspiring unconventional responses

Materials for creativity should organise for learners to play out their innovative aptitude, performing actions such as creating, inventing, discovering, imagining, supposing and predicting. These actions will generate original ideas and diverse ways of self-expression. Of course, helpful conventional coursebooks have asked students to rehearse language in many ways, such as to review, apply, use, repeat, recycle, produce, speak out, which activates their practical ability; or have invited learners to analyse, criticise, judge, compare, evaluate, which strengthens their critical thinking. In reality, though, we rarely see materials that actively inspire such a wide range of responses or stimulate students' artistic talents in the learning process, which is something that materials for creativity should do.

Promoting open-ended learning experiences

The meaning generated from a discussion may not be the same for all learners, due to differences in individuals' world-views, interests and personalities. To utilise such diversity, materials could suggest a series of elements (such as multiple conditions for solving a problem, different views about an issue, various places to be compared, or a set of items for associating and constructing meaning), from which teachers and learners are able to decide which elements to use and how to combine them.

Here is an example. The proposed activity is writing a play script, and the class is provided with a set of characters. First of all, learners in small groups are invited to pick out any two characters from the given list and to develop a conflict situation between them. Secondly, learners are to choose another character or a pair or group of other characters to either make the conflict more complex or to find a solution to the problem. Thirdly, each group can decide on a setting or context for the story. What makes the activity unique each time it is conducted in a new class is that although everyone has the same set of characters, all the scenarios they develop

are likely to end up being very different from one another in their plots, titles, genres, mood, actions and moral lessons. Learners can also draw an illustration and present it together with the story for the class to interact with.

Creating emotional and intellectual challenge

For content to be integrated into learners' affect and intellectuality, materials should bring together different background knowledge, experiences and interests into the learning situation, whereby students are encouraged to provide their personal responses. Without much divergence and conflict, it is hard to produce anything challenging and unpredicted that would make learning exciting. One example would be to build into an activity multiple degrees of challenge so that mixed-level learners can find their own reactions; another example is a task that touches on various senses and emotions so that learners can utilise more than one channel of responding to the same issue.

Facilitating teacher and learner negotiation with materials

The extent to which a coursebook can simultaneously meet the contentment of the writer, be appropriate to users and meet the ambition for commercial sales is often minimal and tends to require a great deal of negotiation. Materials for creativity need to allow flexible conditions for different teachers and students to implement course content not only to meet their own preferred ways but also to make the learning process highly entertaining. With such support, teachers are making changes towards more relevance to learners' needs, levels and learning styles. With such support, students are also given the pleasure of experiencing some degree of novelty in learning.

Proposed Strategies for Materials to Support Creative Negotiation

Adaptability

The idea of course adaptation as a way to avoid the use of irrelevant materials has been promoted since the 1990s by scholars such as Maley (1998) and Hodder (1994). For this to happen, coursebooks can invite some degree of teachers' and learners' creative manipulation through activities with multiple options for teachers and learners to acclimatise them. Based on this, teachers can exercise more control of materials by excluding what learners do not enjoy, expanding a discussion with learners' self-reflection or comparative views, diminishing monotonous content with minimal response capacity, improving insufficient language through more vocabulary supplement for learners to discuss a topic, rewriting texts

that are not linguistically or culturally appropriate, recycling language that learners need to use with more frequency, discarding or replacing irrelevant elements, modifying an argument that does not follow learners' logic, dividing a difficult task into more manageable steps, and combining sub-tasks to increase challenge.

Sequence change

Materials can provide suggestions for teachers to alter the sequence of a task, a lesson or even the entire coursebook so as to suit learners' preferred system of internalising language. The need for flexibility in teaching and learning procedures has been advocated for decades in materials development (Bell & Gower, 1998; Mares, 2003). This could mean being able to exploit the same text in different processing procedures (Maley, 1998) or the re-sequencing of units and tasks within a textbook (Mares, 2003) based on what teachers and learners feel most comfortable with.

Re-timing

Creative time management requires teachers' ability to lengthen or shorten the duration of tasks and lessons. As Pilbeam (1987) indicates, not every class will go through the same task within the same amount of time but duration might vary for various reasons. Creative materials therefore can provide suggestions for teachers and learners to decide how much time they would like to spend rehearsing certain skills. To make this possible, a task might include multiple steps and a lesson might comprise multiple optional activities for selection. On this basis, learning duration can stretch or shrink depending on time availability, learner proficiency and learning interest.

Contextualisation

Contextualisation means being able to localise content to suit the learning environment and any given situation (Masuhara *et al.*, 2008; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Tomlinson, 2001; Widdowson, 2000). One method to make this happen is to provide multiple ways of stimulating responses so that learners of various backgrounds can participate with resources drawn from their own lives, views, feelings, knowledge and experiences. In addition, knowledge, skills and strategies developed by learners need to be regularly recycled for sustainability. To enable this, materials can suggest a range of circumstances for learners to apply language and, hopefully, as Crawford (2002) indicates, learners' flexibility in coping with contextualised language use will play a significant role in skills development.

Pedagogical and learning selection

Students become more productive if they are able to select what to learn and how to learn it (O'Neill, 1982; Saraceni, 2003). To allow this happen, materials can offer rich communication activities to ensure opportunities for both formal learning and informal acquisition. They need to provide multiple options of the same task or diverse ways of developing the same skill. Teachers with different teaching styles and abilities also need a coursebook that allows them to choose their favourite way of teaching as well as to obtain the kind of support they need to conduct a difficult lesson successfully. As Saraceni (2003: 76) suggests that good materials 'should provide learners with the possibility of choosing different activities, tasks, projects and approaches, and therefore of adapting the materials to their own preferred learning needs'. This understanding suggests that classroom decisions should be shared by both students and teachers, so that students are exposed to a variety of different ways of learning.

Variety

To encourage students' persistence in language learning, monotony needs to be removed from the coursebook. Boring teachers, poor pedagogies, irrelevant cultural content, inflexible materials and a dull classroom atmosphere are factors that put students off learning. To prevent this from happening, materials should feature variety, an element advocated by scholars such as Hutchison and Waters (1987) and Howard and Major (2005). In particular, materials need to offer supplementary resources, such as optional appendixes, and variations of tasks in terms of both method and content. Diverse texts should be included, both factual and fiction, to facilitate both practical knowledge and novel imagination.

Supporting various cultures of learning

Since students have the right to choose not only what to learn but also how to learn it (O'Neill, 1982; Saraceni, 2003), the coursebook has to cater for different learning styles and preferences (Breen & Candlin, 1987; Masuhara *et al.*, 2008). This requires authors to care about individualisation, that is, taking into account the fact that students in the same classroom may vary in age, abilities, interests, personalities, seating, formality, cultural and learning backgrounds (Doff & Jones, 2007).

Once the coursebook provides these options, teachers can easily adapt learning content to suit students' personalities and performance styles, taking into account analytical learners, who focus their attention on discrete learning points, kinaesthetic learners, who prefer physical movement, experiential learners, who enjoy a discovery approach, and so on. Pedagogically, a creative coursebook should incorporate not only

the Western-style communicative approach but also a wide range of strengths from other teaching traditions, such as the use of translation as a way to support second language learning (which is strong in the reading approach), intensive use of pictures and actions for visual and kinaesthetic learners (as found in the direct approach), memorisation as connected with the development of linguistic automaticity (as advocated by audio-lingualism), opportunity for sequential and individualised consultation (as advised by community language learning educators), and so on.

Opportunity for localisation

Localisation means making the coursebook suited to students' learning environments (Masuhara *et al.*, 2008; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; Tomlinson, 2001) and allowing students to ease their engagement with a syllabus or curriculum (McDonough & Shaw, 1993). To do so, course materials should avoid subjective views that might disturb learners' beliefs and values unless there is a chance for learners to argue with those views.

Open-ended participation

Open-ended activities can be provided so that different students can tailor the task to their own level of proficiency and ability to participate. In this way, both weaker and stronger students will have opportunities to feel they learn something during the lesson. Discussion content, such as famous quotes, visuals, poems and stories, can also be open to reinventing, interpretation and creation of the conclusion.

Conditions for building intercultural skills

Course materials can nurture intercultural competence by equipping learners with linguistic and cultural behaviour that welcomes positive interpretation of various cultures. The English that students learn needs to help them communicate successfully beyond the native-speaker model. For example, instructional materials might involve both local and international contexts that are familiar and relevant to diverse cultural lives. Activities should have suitable discourse samples pertaining to interactions between native and non-native speakers, as well as interactions among non-natives. Discourse exclusively between non-native speakers should be kept to a minimum.

It is through the use of models from both native and non-native speakers that students can develop strategies to understand various accents and ways to behave cross-culturally. Adaptation skills need to be part of such content and the language should contain more than just common English vocabulary but also foreign words that are frequently borrowed in everyday conversation in English. Learners need to be made aware that

a diverse range of interactional patterns exists and thus they need to be flexible in recognising different cultural forms of politeness rather than forcing the whole world to behave in one unrealistically consistent way.

An Example of Flexible Task Design

To demonstrate how ELT materials can be made more flexible to maximise learning, in this section I show how a task taken from a real coursebook can be changed to make it more flexible.

In *English File Intermediate Student's Book* (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 1999: 92), one activity asks learners to make sentences to state where people come from. The accompanying illustration displays a collection of funny-looking characters in some typical appearance that obviously shows their nationality, and learners are supposed to decide which country each person comes from: an overweight American wears a Hawaiian shirt and a cowboy hat and is using a pair of binoculars in a manner which suggests that he is a nosey person; a young European lady looks slim, wears fashionable clothes and walks elegantly to suggest that she is Italian; a mean-looking man wearing sunglasses and smoking a pipe, dressed in a flamboyant, flashy suit to demonstrate a well-off mafia figure is South American. In a word, members of various cultures are reduced to cliché in an attempt to make the characters recognisable to serve a predetermined pattern of language practice.

Not only does the visual illustration decrease representation of various cultures to conventional, narrow formulations but it also provides misleading icons of what would occur in the real world: all people coming from the same country must share a similar image and give the same simplified impression about their origin. One way to take learners out of this stereotypical construction would be to invite them to select one (or more) of the following options.

- Each student finds pictures of at least three people who they know come from three different countries and asks either a classmate or the whole class to guess their origins. They can be celebrities or ordinary people that the students know.
- Each student imagines he/she is from a country other than his/hers. Without saying what their names are and without mentioning any famous landmarks, they show pictures to the class and ask them to guess where the characters come from. If the class cannot guess, the student then provides some clues, such as 'this country is in East Asia', 'there is snow in winter' or 'the country is known for its manufacture of mobile phones'.
- Students work in groups of three to select a country and look for a set of pictures representing various people from it. They then show the pictures to the class and ask everyone to guess the country.

- Classmates work in pairs to create a drawing with two or three images representing three actions or activities that people normally do if they live in that country (such as taking the bullet train, sleeping on the floor and eating sushi). Other students are then invited to guess where that pair of classmates come from.
- If learners are in a multicultural class, everyone gets up from their seats to walk around and ask one another where they are from. Students can chat with those they do not know the origin of and participants can even make guesses if they like.
- Students write down the name of a country on pieces of paper, which are then put in a box. The teacher then shuffles and redistributes those names to the whole class. Each student now has to imagine he/she comes from the named country. Individually, students stand up to say a few key words related to that country, for the class to guess which it is.

These optional sub-tasks allow learners to use their own resources not only to assist the teacher in his/her teaching but also to create meaning for themselves. Although the eventual output is simply to say someone is from a particular country, the process of participating makes learners become open-minded to multicultural information. The approach makes it easier to develop ‘noticing’ as a tool in learning new words and structures, to encourage resistance to fixed ideas about the world being imposed on learners, to build rich information into the learning content, to encourage students to interpret how people fit in their living environment, to make lesson content less conservative, and to create fun in the learning process. These creative options also help teachers move away from over-simplification of reality and share new information about other cultures, and to enrich learners’ experience and expand their cultural awareness.

Conventional images and stereotypical information in coursebooks reflect flawed thinking about people and cultures, provide an inaccurate picture of the real world and cause damage to learners’ thinking. As Hinton (2000) points out, if a wide range of people hold the wrong view it becomes easy for more people to stick with it. Such conveniences become harmful as ‘much of our knowledge of other people does not come from personal contact with them but through other sources’ (Hinton, 2000: 25–26) and for this reason many EFL learners may never have a chance to find out the truth about other cultures. As Cunningsworth (1995) indicates, language is a cultural phenomenon. Learners while studying language also subconsciously take in cultural elements and it is the writer who has the power to affect that view in many positive ways.

Implications of Creativity for Teacher Development

A creative coursebook can serve as a toolbox, with resources open to any new arrangement of teaching and learning in context. It is not right for

materials to be created with inherent irrelevance to learners' context and leave the task of modification to the teacher. To avoid excessive repairing of existing problems, the coursebook should contain rich, diverse resources with systematic guidance for teachers and learners to organise new combinations for their own situations. When such conditions are provided, there is no longer the need to evaluate the whole coursebook, which might be a waste of time, but only the relevance of each tool to meet what the everyday classroom requires. Only when such conditions are provided will teachers and learners be able to make the classroom process effective. Such flexibility plays an important role in creating a vibrant learning impact which includes outcomes such as negotiation, experience, collaboration, inspiration, enhancement and empowerment:

- *Negotiation.* Course materials can provide a valuable negotiation space for teachers to interact with course content and allow further negotiation to happen between the teacher's ability and learners' need, between the teacher's decision-making skills and the everyday classroom setting.
- *Experience.* Course materials can equip teachers with more experience in adaptation and enable them to evaluate and reconstruct pedagogical resources in context, which in the end makes a contribution to teacher development in terms of both knowledge and competence.
- *Collaboration.* Different teachers using the same coursebook may end up teaching differently, depending on their choices, strengths, personality, pedagogical skills and classroom situations. Such practice may be worth sharing among teachers.
- *Inspiration.* Course materials can offer creative substance that inspires teachers rather than bores them with the same routine when using textbooks. Good materials should alert teachers to the fact that there is never a single logical way to teach a lesson but there can be multiple ways and opportunities for the same lesson to be taught successfully. Such processes not only increase the range of action but also open the mind.
- *Enhancement.* Course materials can allow the teacher to play with possibilities, try out options, reflect on practice, evaluate tasks and revise the materials for increased learning opportunities. Such a process also encourages a stronger sense of classroom experiment and enhances creativity in teachers.
- *Empowerment.* Course materials should respect and empower teachers to be the owner of the materials, to treat coursebooks as tools, not authority. By reducing the control of materials over the teacher and by liberating teachers from being reliant on the written text, this position expands options in lesson planning and allows teachers to share responsibility with textbook writers.

The role of materials is to help teachers develop creative insights into pedagogies and into the principles of materials design, based on knowledge about learners and teaching context. It is difficult to see how adaptation can take place without such a foundation. According to Tomlinson (2003) to the impromptu intuitions of teachers are under pressure of time and institutional constraints.

The moment a coursebook has been written, it already contains a set of inherent restraints, simply because the writer was not in a position to see who would eventually use the material or in what particular setting the book would be used. To address this difficulty, it is important to recognise and act upon the shared obligation of course writers and teachers. Instead of blaming the author for the failure of a textbook, it would be better for the material to be developed with negotiation opportunities incorporated in it so that the product represents a shared process with the teacher. It is the teacher who will then implement the material, based on profound knowledge of pedagogy, a clear understanding of learners' profiles and effective management skills. For decades, empirical research publications have reported hundreds of coursebook evaluation projects with far more dissatisfaction than contentment with course materials. Arguably, it is not really useful for researchers to keep conducting coursebook evaluations with a target learner group in mind whom the book was never written for in the first place.

Conclusion

Teaching is all about making choices (Dougill, 1987; Graves, 2001) and flexible materials can promote this process. Since flexibility is closely connected with creativity (Edge & Wharton, 1998), coursebooks can serve as an 'ideas bank' which stimulates teachers' creative potential (Cunningsworth, 1984: 65). As Graves (2001: 188) elaborates, 'textbooks are tools that can be figuratively cut up into component pieces and then rearranged to suit the needs, abilities, and interests of the students in the course'. It is through the teacher's resourceful dialogue with the textbook (Islam & Mares, 2003) and non-predetermined incidents in the classroom (O'Neill, 1982) that relevant, meaningful learning can happen. It is important to perceive coursebooks not as decision-makers but as tools 'which only have life and meaning when there is a teacher present' (Bell & Gower, 1998: 118).

Learning is a self-discovery process. The role of course materials is to help learners construct authentic experiences for themselves beyond what is contrived in the book. This can happen through constructivist education, which cares about learners' adaptation and multiple realities (Wanniarachchi, 2016), social context and self-directed learning (Driscoll, 2005; Staitis & Wilke, 2007), personal reflection and collaborative work (Gazi, 2009), as well as learners' self-determination of their own learning needs (Yildirim, 2005). Materials writers are in a unique position to

construct a negotiable playground for teachers and learners to explore their creativity. In that playground, the toys are optional components, task variations, multicultural texts, experimental ideas, supplementary resources, suggestions for re-sequencing, multiple answers to questions, incomplete texts and ways of contextualising course content.

Once the above conditions are met, course materials can liberate teachers rather than control them. The triumph or disaster of materials implementation, instead of being the liability solely of the writer, should become a shared responsibility with the teacher. Coursebooks are no longer fixed or imposing but are appropriated every time the book is opened. In this shared responsibility, teachers are textbook co-designers who participate with their practical knowledge. Teacher knowledge, which is largely drawn from teaching experience, is perceived by Calderhead (1988) as the substance that prompts action. A good coursebook, therefore, empowers teachers by positioning them as co-creators of materials and by engaging them in a dialogic approach to pedagogy. With creative support from course materials, every class will be novel and exciting as the teaching and learning progression are frequently customised.

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