Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework of Self Learning Material and the Evaluation of the Existing Compulsory English Study Material of Aligarh Muslim University

3.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this study discussed about the language acquisition and the factors that influence second language acquisition. The preceding chapter served as a look-back into the theories and practices that went into evolving different kinds of teaching-learning materials spread over the ages. Among different forms in which knowledge was being spread, a new type of education system surfaced in the last two decades of the twentieth century. This education system was termed as ‘distance education’ or ‘open and distance learning.’ Pandey in his research paper “History Development and Present of Distance Education in India” defines distance education as “a mode of delivering education and teaching, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional setting such as a classroom” (51). The distance education system was developed to equip those learners with knowledge who due to some or the other constraints could not get the benefit of reaching out to the regular and formal classes.

History of distance education emerges from the eighteenth century when in 1728 a teacher named Celeb Phillips offered to teach shorthand skill through letters to learners in different parts of the country. A similar kind of approach was taken on a broader scale by Sir Issac Pitman when in 1840 he began the correspondence courses through mails. University of London claims to have offered the first distance learning program in 1858. In United States, William Rainey Harper, the first president of the University of Chicago promoted the concept of distance education in 1892 with the establishment of correspondence school courses. Australia was the first country to develop the Department of Correspondence Studies in 1911 in the University of Queensland. In the first half of twentieth century, distance education began to be delivered through radio and television programs as well. Since 1971, after the foundation of PEACENET, satellites also have taken their roles in spreading distance education.
education in the world. Distance education in today’s world is known by different names like ‘Cyber Education,’ ‘Virtual Education,’ ‘Technology-supported Education,’ ‘Web-based Education,’ ‘Extended Learning,’ ‘E-learning’ etc. Among all these forms of education and different technology-supported communication tools that contribute in the easy-access to distance education, there is an element that remains common to all distance learning process—the distance of the learner from the teacher. To overcome this significant loss, teaching-learning material took the form of materials specific for distance learning program i.e. self learning materials (SLM).

3.2 What is Self Learning Material?

A study material that has a characteristic of teaching its content directly to the learner in the simplest and informative manner can be termed as a self learning material. These materials are designed to aid learners to learn in their own time and pace. In the introduction of Self-Learning Materials and Modules for Health Workers: A Guide for the Development, Utilization and Evaluation, self learning materials are defined as a “learning resource that can be used by the learner without the presence of a teacher. . .” (2). Koul and Chaudhary in their book Development and Revision of Self Learning Material advocate that “SLMs are designed both on site and at distant learners to use on their own. SLMs include all the material prepared to stimulate independent study/learning” (10).

On the similar lines, online dictionary Wordnik defines self learning as “Learning done by oneself, without a teacher or instructor.” Calderwood outlines that “Self-learning is taking in information, processing it, and retaining it . . . without the need for another individual to be teaching it in order for the understanding to occur.” To facilitate the learning process, self learning materials (SLMs) are designed with such skills and details that they tend to equip every user with a personal teacher seated beside in the form of the material. In other words, self learning materials build in the ability among learners to work independently thereby increasing the level of motivation when they accomplish the task successfully.

A.H. Sequeira in his work “Self-Learning is Future: A New Paradigm for 21st Century” delineates self learning as an individualized method of learning. Highlighting the flexible nature of self learning materials, Sequeira remarks that self learning enables the learners to choose what to learn, when to learn and why to learn.
Self learning materials are learners’ autonomy oriented. They are specifically designed for the learners to give them control of their learning. The learners develop a sense of achievement among themselves which in turn builds the confidence. SLMs train the learners to find their ways around the text and look for the required answers.

The SLM is equipped with various tools under the titles such as ‘Caution!,’ ‘Tasks,’ ‘Notes,’ ‘Did you Know?’, ‘Pictures,’ ‘Graphics,’ ‘Examples,’ ‘Summary,’ ‘Keywords,’ ‘Glossary,’ etc. which makes it easier for the learners to learn the content on their own without any external help. ‘Self assessment questions’ and ‘Review questions’ enable learners to gauge their progress on their own on the topic covered. SLM keeps the learners actively involved throughout the learning process. To add more, self learning materials are designed for asynchronous learning i.e. learning which does not occur at same place or same time. The learner has liberty to choose his own time and place of learning while dealing with SLM.

3.2.1 Characteristics of Self Learning Materials

The STRIDE handbook on Development and Revision of Self Learning Material lays forward the characteristics of self learning material in detail. The characteristics of SLM which make them different and more user-friendly for the learners to use are outlined below.

3.2.1.1 Self-explanatory

Self learning materials are presented in a style that learners can go through the material without any external support, even without a teacher. The content laid in the material is analysed in a logical manner and presented in a well graded manner with clear concepts. The proper gradation ensures in maintaining the continuity and consistency of the content within the text, which in turn promotes self-learning.

3.2.1.2 Self-contained

The self learning materials are self sufficient so that the learner does not require looking for other additional sources to clarify the concepts. The reason behind making self learning materials self sufficient lies in the fact that SLMs are used for distance mode of education, and hence, efforts are made to ensure that material should be self sufficient enough so that learners do not feel at a disadvantage because
of being at physical distance from the teacher. For this, the scope of the content of each unit has to be visualized in detail and only the necessary and essential details have to be included, skipping the unnecessary details.

3.2.1.3 Self-directed

By the term self-directed, it means that the material provides necessary guidance, hints and suggestions at each stage of learning so as to move the learning in the positive direction. SLMs are presented in the form of easy explanations, sequential advancement of the topic, illustrations and learning activities to strengthen the bond of learning. Like a good teacher, SLM guides the learner around the text and ensures learning.

3.2.1.4 Self-motivating

The self learning materials are designed to perform the functions of an efficient teacher to arouse curiosity, raise problems and relate knowledge to familiar situations. Learners are attracted to the learning that appears to be of practical use to them. SLMs are designed to make the learning process meaningful with the help of relevant tasks and appropriate content.

3.2.1.5 Self-evaluative

Feedback is an essential part of learning process. Due to the fact that SLMs are used in distance education, it becomes essential for course designers to think of a way to provide relevant feedback on learners’ progress. To meet this purpose, the units of SLM are followed by self-check questions, activities and exercises which are followed up with model answers that aid the learner in keeping a constant check on the trek of learning and provide the learner with the much needed feedback about the same.

3.2.1.6 Self-learning

Self-learning is the most intrinsic feature of self learning materials. The principle of self-learning advocates strengthening learners’ independence and control over their learning process. The text is laid in simple language and provided with examples, illustrations and diagrams to maximise the comprehensibility by the
learners. SLMs also equip the learners with hints, study tips, directions and references to facilitate further learning.

3.2.2 Objectives in the Self Learning Materials

As mentioned above in section 3.2.2.5, objectives form a crucial component in self learning materials, and therefore, they demand a detailed discussion. Ofei defines objectives as “an extended behavioural change that a learner is expected to exhibit after undergoing a learning experience.” Sanjay Mishra writes in detail about objectives in his book Objectives in Self Learning Materials: A Critical Analysis of their Expected Roles, Learners’ perception and Usage. Mishra writes that objectives in self learning materials can be defined as the “…statements of intended learning outcomes. In a learning package, how the learning outcomes are presented makes a considerable difference to how they are received by the learners” (9).

The term ‘objective’ is often misinterpreted as ‘aim’; however, in the field of material development, a great variance lies between the two. In the STRIDE Handbook 5 Development and Revision of Self Learning Materials the difference is clearly defined in the lines that “The aims are expressed by the teacher as to what he/she would try to do or get across through his/her teaching activities. On the other hand, the objectives are the behaviours to be displayed by a learner” (41). To summarize, aims are set and meant to be achieved by the teachers, while the objectives are set for the learners to achieve.

Ashish K. Awadhiya in his presentation “Development of Self Learning Materials” argues that the objectives in self learning materials should be:

- **S**: Specific
- **M**: Measurable
- **A**: Accurate
- **R**: Realistic
- **T**: Testable

In self learning material, objectives form the backbone of the entire material. The stating of objectives at the beginning of each study unit helps the learners in accessing what to expect with the unit they are dealing with, as well as what prerequisites the unit expects the learners to be equipped with before dealing with the
unit. The objectives are presented in the form of clear and well defined statements. A clear objective helps in planning and evaluating the teaching methodologies from time to time to meet the desired outcome. These objectives are laid in behavioural terms, and while doing so, the action words are chosen carefully. The cognitive domain of Bloom’s Taxonomy plays a significant part in choosing appropriate action verbs in writing learning objectives which has been discussed at length later in the unit.

3.2.2.1 Components of Objectives

IGNOU’s *Self Learning Material Development: Developer’s Handbook* written in 2000 identifies the components of each objective. These components include the following.

- A descriptive term (verb) which describes what learners are expected to do after they complete the study unit.
- The condition under which the desired outcome or behaviour shall be performed.
- The criteria on the basis of which the performance of students shall be assessed.

3.2.2.2 Importance of Objectives in Self Learning Materials

The IGNOU’s Handbook 5 *Self-Instructional Course Units* written in 1989, reviews the importance of these behavioural objectives. According to the handbook, the behavioural objective:

- acts as a guiding devise in the planning of the unit as well as instructions that shall go into designing the unit.
- helps in taking decisions of which assessment technique shall be employed.
- facilitates the learners’ perception of what they shall achieve at the end of the particular unit.
3.2.2.3 Emergence of Different Types of Objectives

Objectives have always played a significant role in the curriculum designing and material development. However, across the period of time, objectives have undergone a number of transformations conceptually. This section is an attempt to trace back the developments that underwent in outlining the objectives.

- **Educational Objectives**

  Tyler is claimed to have used the term ‘objective’ for the first time in 1949 in his book *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, as he writes the following:

  . . . if an educational programme is to be planned and the efforts for continued improvements are to be made, it is necessary to have some conceptions of the goals that are being aimed at. These educational objectives become the criteria by which materials are selected, content is outlined, instructional procedures are developed and tests and examinations are prepared. (3)

  The educational objectives are therefore the statements outlining the changes in behaviour of the learners that an educational institution expects to bring about. It outlines what instructions an educator may take up while dealing with the particular unit.

- **Instructional Objectives**

  In 1962, Mager suggested a new conceptual idea behind writing objectives with the claim that objectives should demarcate what learners might be able to achieve after the completion of the unit which they lacked prior to the commencement of the unit. Instructional objectives emphasise on the use of an unambiguous action verb, condition in which learners shall perform, and a standard performance expected by them. Instructional objectives brought more clarity to the purpose and specification of the objectives.

- **Behavioural Objectives**

  The use of action verbs in the objectives’ statement and emphasis given on students’ behaviour during the learning process led to the replacement of the term ‘instruction’ with ‘behavioural’ in the concept of objectives. Like instructional
objectives, behavioural objectives also emphasised on what learners shall be able to do after the end of learning process which they could not do earlier. The results of various empirical studies suggested that behavioural objectives aid in making the learners more attentive towards the materials, and hence, they facilitate learning. Learners assess the relevant and irrelevant items while learning which further aids in better organisation of time. However, critics criticize this foundation of behavioural objectives of confining students’ attention to specified objectives thereby discouraging the incidental learning. Nevertheless, behavioural objectives have proven to be an enhancer to relevant learning, and incidental learning also can be encouraged by changing the placement of objectives within the unit.

- **Non-behavioural Objectives**

Sanjay Mishra in his book *Objectives in Self Learning Materials* quotes Allan and writes that “The over emphasis on behavioural objectives also helped re-emergence of non-behavioural objectives such as understanding the concepts, appreciating art forms and developing critical thinking” (24). As opposed to behavioural objectives which define learners’ achievement clearly, non-behavioural objectives specify what teachers intend to do in the process, and hence, do not specify terminal behaviour or achievement of the learners which can be tested.

Among various conceptual transformations that objectives have gone through, behavioural objectives have proven to be progressive in terms of techniques of curriculum designs.

### 3.2.2.4 The Bloom’s Taxonomy

In 1956, a framework was developed by Benjamin Bloom classifying the educational objectives into a hierarchical structure based on various levels of learning. This framework was termed as Bloom’s Taxonomy. This taxonomy was based on the following three domains or areas of learning.

- **Cognitive Domain**

This domain of learning is concerned with the knowledge and the development of rational thinking. Recalling and recognition of facts and patterns lead to the development of cognitive domain.
• **Affective Domain**

The affective domain of learning deals with the emotions, feelings, values, enthusiasm and motivation of the learners. It includes receiving a phenomenon, responding to it, valuing a phenomenon, organising a thought, and internalizing the values.

• **Psychomotor Domain**

The domain which deals with the use of motor skills of the learners through physical movement and coordination is called as psychomotor domain. Development of this domain requires practice. It ranges from manual tasks like choosing, beginning, following etc to more complex tasks like displaying, altering and combining.

All the three domains stated above comprise of a hierarchical structure for classifying learning. As one moves higher in the hierarchical level, the complexity increases. The level in the hierarchy are linked with each other, therefore, in order to master a given level, it is a prerequisite to attain mastery on the lower level. In this manner, Bloom’s Taxonomy leads to classifications from lower to higher order learning.

The Bloom’s Taxonomy of cognitive domain of learning deserves a special discussion as in higher education it serves as the principal guide in developing the objectives in self learning materials. Affective domain and psychomotor domain, on the other hand, help in developing the other components of the self learning materials, and hence, they have not been discussed here.

The Bloom’s Taxonomy of cognitive domain was divided into six levels by Benjamin Bloom in 1856. These levels were arranged from lower to higher order thinking, and ‘nouns’ were used to name these levels of learning viz. knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. However, after being tested and assessed by specialists in 2001, a revised version of Bloom’s Taxonomy was published by Benjamin Bloom’s students Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl. The revised Bloom's Taxonomy included a few significant changes in the terminology and structure. Here, the top two higher-order levels in cognitive domains were interchanged in positions, along with changes in the names of three levels. Also,
verbs in place of nouns were used to label the cognitive levels viz. remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating.

Figure 3.1 explains the levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy of cognitive domain in the original as well as the revised taxonomy.

![Fig. 3.1 Representing Bloom’s Original and Revised Taxonomy](image)

As can be seen in the above diagram (represented in Schrock) which compares the original Bloom’s Taxonomy with the revised Bloom’s Taxonomy, the higher levels of thinking i.e. ‘Evaluation’ and ‘Synthesis’ from original taxonomy are interchanged in their positions in the revised version, and the names have been changed. ‘Evaluation’ is termed as ‘Evaluating’ and ‘Synthesis’ as ‘Creating’ in the revised version.

For each level of learning, Bloom had presented a list of suitable verbs that describe the level in the written objective in self learning materials. These verbs have been adopted in the revised version as well and utilised effectively while framing objectives in self learning materials. The Bloom’s Taxonomy of cognitive domain has been presented in the form of an advanced organiser below.

The organiser presents the six levels arranged in the hierarchical order from lower order thinking to higher order, accompanied with the suitable sample verbs that are used while writing objectives for self learning materials.
### Remembering
- It refers to recognising and recalling knowledge from long term memory.
- **Sample verbs are** - Define, Duplicate, Identify, List, Name, Recall, Recognise, Reproduce, Retrieve, Tell.

### Understanding
- It refers to the framing of the meaning by interpreting the received message.
- **Sample Verbs are** - Calculate, Categorise, Classify, Compare, Describe, Discuss, Exemplify, Expand, Identify, Illustrate, Locate, Match, Outline, Summarise, Report.

### Applying
- It refers to the implementation of the gained experience and knowledge in concrete situations.
- **Sample Verbs are** - Carry out, Classify, Demonstrate, Implement, Practice, Solve, Use, Utilise, Execute.

### Analysing
- It refers to the analysing of the relationship, organisation and structure of the components of the material.
- **Sample Verbs are** - Appraise, Attribute, Deconstruct, Detect, Differentiate, Discriminate, Distinguish, Examine, Formulate, Infer, Integrate, Organise, Parse, Relate, Sequence, Test.

### Evaluating
- It refers to evaluating and assessing if the material available can serve the purpose or not.
- **Sample Verbs are** - Appraise, Check, Coordinate, Critique, Defend, Detect, Dispute, Judge, Monitor, Rate, Reconstruct, Select, Prioritise, Support, Verify.

### Creating
- It refers to producing a completely new utterance.
- **Sample Verbs are** - Compile, Compose, Construct, Create, Design, Formulate, Generate, Improve, Plan, Produce.
The Bloom’s Taxonomy does not only help in understanding the purpose of learning by assisting in developing objectives for intended learning; it also helps material designers in planning and delivering appropriate instructions and assessment tasks. Apart from these, developing material objectives following the Bloom’s Taxonomy of cognitive domains helps in the gradation of materials from lower order thinking to higher order thinking, and hence, promoting the critical thinking among learners as well. Critical thinking means to have a logical thinking and reasoning skills which can be developed by moving from lower levels of cognitive domains like remembering and understanding to higher levels like evaluating and finally creating something new. Therefore, Bloom’s Taxonomy does not only help in developing objectives for self learning materials, it also aids in making users of self learning materials a critical thinker.

3.2.3 Instructional Design in Self Learning Materials

Self learning materials, being the main component in Open Distance Learning, are designed skillfully using instructional design. The instructional design is the term used for a systematic planning, development and the use of educational techniques and activities for the teaching so as to help learners in engaging in the education and increasing knowledge as well as motivation. The instructional design keeps learners at the priority and tends to adapt the learning system for the learners in place of making learners adapt accordingly.

Richey defines instructional design as “the science of creating detailed specifications for the development, evaluation and maintenance of situations which facilitate the learning of both large and small units of subject matter” (9). He claims that instructional designs provide a deliberately arranged condition to promote the learning. Since self learning materials’ efficiency lie in their self-contained design, and they are designed for situations in which no or very little external aid can be expected, it becomes necessary for them to create instructional pattern within the material. Hence, the creators of self learning materials follow the instructional design.

Smaldino, Lowther and Russell gave the ASSURE model for instructional design in 2010. They claimed that for effective instructions, careful planning is a requisite. Therefore, ASSURE model helps in efficiently integrating all the required
technology in the preparation of material to ensure maximum learning. ASSURE is an acronym in which each letter stands for a step:

A : Analyse learners
S : State objectives
S : Select method, media and material
U : Utilise available media and material
R : Require learner participation
E : Evaluate and revise

Following the model, an instructional designer hence takes up a series of tasks while designing the self learning material, key steps among which include the following.

- Assess the learners’ needs and determine what they need to learn.
- Create objectives to be met in the unit.
- Determine the assessing techniques based on the set objectives.
- Decide upon objectives for each unit in the material.
- Within each unit think of the activity that shall be required to bring out the desired outcome.
- Look for the examples required to create the desired understanding.
- Incorporate graphics when and where necessary.
- Plan a self-assessment for the unit.
- Develop the unit.
- Test and evaluate the developed material.
- Revise the material on the basis of the results achieved.

Latest McMillan and CCE courses use SLM format. Moreover, various universities in India like Lovely Professional University, Sikkim Manipal University, and IGNOU are using SLM. AMU needs to incorporate it as well as it also has distance courses at undergraduate level.
3.2.4 Self Learning Materials vs. Conventional Materials

It is important to reflect on the difference between the conventional or traditional material and the self learning material to successfully understand the characteristics which provide a leading edge to the SLMs in most of the situations. These characteristics of self learning materials have been termed by scholars as ‘embedded devices.’

3.2.4.1 Text Division

In comparison to the conventional or traditional teaching materials in which the text is divided into chapters based on the topics irrespective of the time required to deal with the topic, the SLMs are divided into study units divided on the basis of the study time required in learning the given unit and acquiring the mastery over the topic. Majorly each study unit is designed to be covered in one week’s time.

3.2.4.2 Text Layout

The self learning materials, unlike traditional materials, have a generous layout and are provided with lots of pictures, diagrams and empty spaces for learners to write on. The traditional materials in contrast to it are filled with text and appear to be complex. The occasional empty spaces within the text not only provide a space for learners to write on, but also put learners psychologically at ease as the material appears to be presentable and non-intimidating. The useful pictures and diagrams help in invoking visual imagery and in forming connection with the topic.

3.2.4.3 The Organisation of the Content

The self learning materials are thematically structured. The language items and activities within a study unit of self learning materials are arranged in a well internally graded manner. The concepts within the text are arranged from known to unknown, and concrete to abstract in order to move a step forward in the learning at every stage. The language items and grammar activities are graded from simple to complex as the learner moves forward within the study unit. The creativity and learner’s autonomy is strengthened by moving from topics which are particular and personalised to general and global ones.
3.2.4.4 Study-time Indication

As noted in the above section, study-time indication is one of the most essential features of self learning materials. Each SLM study unit is indicated with an estimated time limit required in dealing with the given topic. On the contrary, no such time limit indication is witnessed in the conventional materials. The study-time indication aids in psychologically preparing the learner for the minimum time required for devoting to a topic thereby ensuring better productivity.

3.2.4.5 Objectives

Self learning materials are always accompanied with instructional objectives before the beginning of every study unit. These objectives are specific as well as general and function as the describing statement that tells what learners will be able to accomplish after they follow the instructions within the specified study time. There are no such demarcations or objectives that can be seen in the traditional study materials. Due to this, the users of SLM always are comparatively more aware of their learning process as compared to the users of traditional materials.

3.2.4.6 Address to the Learner

While the conventional materials address the learners in third person and employ the passive language such as ‘it was noticed in the previous section . . .’, the self learning materials address them in second person and use a more active form of language to interact with the learners such as ‘you saw in the previous section . . .’. Self learning materials try to make a more responsive and personal interaction with the learner which helps in making connections with the text easily. It makes the learners feel the presence of a live teacher in the form of these materials.

3.2.4.7 Language

Self learning materials, unlike traditional materials, are written in a simpler language. The sentences used for the purpose of explanation in SLM are short and descriptive, and the structure of these sentences is simple. The main aim of self learning materials is to help learners in grasping the essence of the text. To meet the same goal, SLMs avoid too decorative and ambiguous language and furnish text with simpler one which is easy to comprehend by learners of all level. Simple vocabulary
along with interactive and personalised style of language is used within the self learning materials. Use of occasional humour forms another important part in the language of SLMs. Humour sets learners at ease and enables them to participate effectively in the learning.

3.2.4.8 Primary User

The SLMs are primarily written for the learners as compared to the traditional materials which focus on teachers as their primary users. Self learning materials are hence self contained, and they guide the learners in dealing with the text. Traditional materials are written primarily for the teachers, and therefore, they come with a teacher’s guide in which detailed methodology to handle the text is laid. Each study unit in self learning materials is well explained, and it leads to another unit.

3.2.4.9 Study Guide Inclusion

The self learning materials, keeping up with the principle of self-direction and self-motivation, are equipped with a study guide that steers the learners around the given text. This study guide advises the learners on how to use the material and how to study by oneself. The conventional materials, on the contrary, are not provided with any such guide. However, the conventional materials include a teacher’s guide which directs a teacher on how the material can be used in providing the maximum knowledge to the learners. This fact provides evidence that while self learning materials are designed primarily for learners’ use, conventional materials are written with teachers as primary users in mind.

3.2.4.10 Study Tips Inclusion

Since the self learning materials are self-inclusive, they conduct the learner towards a better learning approach. SLMs are designed on the principle of learners’ autonomy and variance in the style of learning of different learners. Keeping up with these principles, SLM suggests different kinds of tips and methodologies to be implemented by different learners for better learning.

3.2.4.11 Learning Tasks and Activities

The inclusion of immense learning tasks and activities makes self learning materials different from the conventional materials. Even conventional materials are
equipped with a few tasks within the text which aim at promoting learning, but the number of activities in self learning materials is gigantic. The inclusion of these plentiful tasks is due to another important characteristic of SLM i.e. ‘Learning Activeness.’ Naz in her research paper “Employing Self through Self-Access and Self-Learning Materials in Classrooms: Reinforcing Autonomy in Language Learning” argues that “… it is not sufficient to simply provide the learner with the required information on the topic. The material should make the learner interact with it to result into effective learning” (138). Learning activeness refers to constant active involvement of the learners into the learning by making them do the tasks and activities. Self learning materials make the learners ‘think’ by putting forward question, ‘write’ by setting up exercises and ‘do’ by practical exercises and activities. Retention of knowledge when followed by practice and application leads to a positive learning. Kinaesthetic is an important contributory strategy of learning which claims that learners retain that knowledge best which they attain by practically doing. SLM provides the opportunities for the learners to use the language which strengthens the bond of acquisition.

3.2.4.12 Self Assessment Opportunity

The conventional material or the traditional material rarely provides opportunity for assessing one’s progress. On the other hand, the format of the self learning materials puts major emphasis on the self-assessment of the learners’ progress after considerable time intervals. It allows the learners to keep a constant check on their progress. This characteristic of SLM makes it interactive and strengthens learners’ autonomy. The learners develop confidence by regulating their learning process and keeping a check on their process without an external support.

3.2.4.13 Feedback

It has been observed that conventional or traditional materials merely provide the information on the topic that needs to be dealt with. They lack an interaction with the learners on various important occasions. One of these important instances is the ‘feedback.’ Learner does not only need a source of knowledge; rather, it is an important demand of the learning process to know whether the learner is moving in the right direction or not in the form of the feedback from the more experienced ones. SLM provides its users with a constant feedback on their learning progress in the
form of ‘self-check progress’ and various scales to measure where the learner stands in the trek of learning. The mechanism of giving feedbacks includes the integration of self-assessing activities, providing with sample answers, referring to page number which consists of explanation of the task etc. Feedback can be given in the form of appreciation as well as criticism, though constructively. Constructive criticism not only checks upon the learners, but it also motivates and inspires them to get better.

3.2.4.14 Further Recommendations

A good self learning material does not only guide the learner with the content within the text; rather, it also provides guidance beyond the text by suggesting more books and websites to provide them information on what might be useful to them if they need more assistance.

While all the above mentioned differences between self learning materials and the conventional or traditional materials are significant ones, all the significantly distinct features might not exist within a single SLM. A good SLM however contains majority of the above mentioned distinctions within.

3.2.5 Pedagogy vs. Andragogy

Caruth and Caruth in their research paper “Toward an Understanding of Andragogy’s Role in the Online Curriculum of the US Higher Education System” define the term ‘pedagogy’ as the educational system where “the teacher is the leader and is completely responsible and accountable for all learning decisions such as: what is to be taught, how it is to be taught, when it is to be taught, how learning is to be measured . . .” (36). The term pedagogy is made up of the Greek words paid which means ‘child’ and agogus which means ‘leader of.’ Hence, pedagogy literally refers to the teaching or guiding of young children. However, today the term is used to refer to the art of teaching in general. In pedagogical scenario, the learner is dependent upon the teacher for learning as well as evaluation.

In 1833, a German educator Alexander Knapp coined a term andragogy that meant ‘methods or techniques used to teach adults.’ The etymology of andragogy suggests that the word is made from the Greek word andra which means ‘adult’ and agogus that means ‘leader of.’ Andragogy is a self-directed method of teaching and learning in which learners set their own schedules of learning, and are pre-motivated
for their learning task. Self evaluation is an important characteristic of adragogical approach.

The current study aims to develop the self learning materials for the undergraduate learners in the Aligarh Muslim University courses. It is therefore curtailed to escape the term *undergraduate* from the consideration. Usually, learners in the undergraduate courses vary from 17 to 21 years of age. They come from highly diverse cultural and educational background. These learners are adults, and hence, they cannot be dealt with in the manner which suits children, and therefore, the difference between andragogy and pedagogy comes to play its role. Adult learners differ vastly from children when it comes to learning habits. Laid below are a few points which are peculiar to adult learning.

- Adult learners are largely self-directed in their learning process. They are responsible individuals who take the load of their learning and plan their steps accordingly. Children, on the other hand, are more dependent on adults who show them the way and guide them during the learning process.

- Adult learners undoubtedly have more experience of life than children. This is both advantageous as well as detrimental for them. Their prior experiences can aid in pattern recognition and other lower order thinking. At the same time, these experiences can also form rigid patterns in adults which become difficult to break.

- Adult learners find it difficult to break through their comfort zone and can prove to be unwilling to accept new forms as compared to children who readily take up what is directed to them.

- Adult learners often show more motivation towards learning as compared to children. This is because adults are aware of the relevance and immediate application of the course they are enrolled in. Therefore, they are always sincerely motivated to perform their best. Children, on the contrary, are engaged in the educational processes without a clear sense of direction and need. For children, taking education may often appear to be a monotonous and irrelevant schedule of daily life.
Adults are often impatient with their learning process. They expect to meet the fruits of their learning immediately, and they want their time to be utilized well. In doing so, they often get too judgemental. Children, in contrast to it, learn because they are asked to learn. Grades are the best answer to their hard work.

Adults often belong to different age groups, come from different educational and cultural backgrounds, and possess variant proficiency levels. As a teacher it becomes more challenging to deal with such a variant group of adult learners in contrast to the children who usually share same age groups and educational backgrounds.

Adult learners and children differ in their areas of interest while they learn. For children, topics like fairies and robot may prove to be more appealing; whereas, for adult learners, topics based on more practical applications and intellect are more captivating. Adult learners are more motivated for opinion-based and subjective topics.

The orientation to learning differs greatly among adults and children. While adults are more oriented towards a learning that is organised around life and work situations rather than the contents of the unit, children learn contents that are sequenced according to the subject.

Hence, while designing study materials for adult learners, it is necessary to keep the cognitive skills of learners in consideration and develop material accordingly. For developing the self learning materials for the undergraduates, it is essential to focus on the practical needs of the learners and hence design the tasks to enhance the skills within the light of their needs and interest. The principle of andragogy meets the principles of self learning materials, and hence, it can be employed in designing the SLM.

3.2.6 Sample Self Learning Materials

Self learning materials have revolutionised the field of education over the last few decades. The flexibility in terms of study methodologies and study time offered by SLMs has managed to get attention of a big number of students. In the current era, internet has become the biggest source of information that has managed to spread its reach even in the remotest areas of the world. Today, there are innumerable websites
that follow the format of self learning materials to deliver interactive and well framed education to their users, and they have made it possible to attain the desired education at any place and any time.

![Image of Grammar Exercise 4](Image)

### Fig 3.2 Online IELTS exercises based on the SLM format
The fig. 3.2 (from IELTS Worldwide) is a sample of self learning material, a screenshot of free grammar worksheets available on the website ‘IELTS worldwide.com’ that offers free worksheets to practice IELTS tests. Following are the key features in the material:

- The instructions of exercise are framed in a very simple and comprehensible language.
- Each instruction guides for the next step in the learning process.
- In order to guide the learners towards the required learning, the worksheet provides a list of regular and irregular verbs in the beginning of the exercise.
- The learners are instructed clearly to change these verbs in the past tense and fill in the appropriate places.
- The exercise is provided with the answer key, which forms a key component of self learning materials.
- The material ends with the recommendation of the supplementary resource materials to be referred by the learners in future for clearing their doubts regarding the topic if not cleared.

The self learning materials do not only form a component of informal education; rather, formal education setups also exploit the features of the self learning materials to maximise the learning among the learners. The University of Edinburgh is one such institution that utilises the self learning materials for formal educational setup. The university offers the distance online course for effective learning. The website of the university contains a separate domain for English language learning under the title ‘English Language Teaching Centre’ which offers independent study materials for the all the skills of the language to assist the students enrolled in the course.

Fig. 3.3 (from Lynch and Anderson) shows a screenshot of one of such self learning materials present on the website of the university.
In the above sample material, the unit begins by relating to the previously taught knowledge. There is an element of connectivity not only within the unit, but also between the different units in the same text. Also, the unit is progressing in the guiding manner and learners are provided with model structure to make them aware of what is expected of them. Like an ideal interactive SLM, the material does not only
settle with the preaching outlook, it also makes the learner actively involved by giving them tasks to perform after every considerable point of time.

Like University of Edinburgh, various universities and colleges in the world like University of Manchester, University of Liverpool and University of Southern Queensland are currently offering education using the self learning materials. In India also, Indira Gandhi National Open University, English and Foreign Languages University, Lovely Professional University and Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning are some of the many universities which are offering self learning materials to their learners.

3.2.7 Advantages and Disadvantages of Self Learning Materials

Like every material, SLMs also have many pros and cons. Some of these advantages and disadvantages are listed below.

Advantages

- Self learning materials are woven around the tasks and feedback mechanism which puts the learner from the passive to the active role in the learning process.
- SLM allows the learners to have control on their pace of learning and time of learning.
- The contents and activities of the entire study unit of self learning materials are cohesive and tightly organised.
- SLM helps in making learners develop a sense of responsibility towards their own learning. The learners can choose to explore the material on their own time and own pace.

Disadvantages

- Keeping in view that self learning materials are key components of distance education system, learners’ distance from the teachers put them at a loss in majority of the cases. Learners are left on their own, and they do not have any assistance to turn to when in need.

However, the current study suggests the inculcation of the self learning materials in the regular classrooms. When self learning material would be used in practical classrooms, this prominent disadvantage of the SLM users i.e. to be at
distance from the teachers is also expected to disappear. This experimentation would not only lead to the lessening of burden of being the ‘supreme bank of knowledge’ from the shoulders of the teachers, but also lift the learners from their shells and participate in their own learning actively. Roles of the teacher, in such a scenario, would shift from being the lecturer, instructor and performer to manager, designer and facilitator.

3.3 Integrated-skills Based Language Teaching

One of the primary functions of the language is to use it to perform social interactions. In the practical world, for the purpose of successful communication, language is used in its four forms—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills of language also include associated skills like vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and pronunciation. Traditional approach to language teaching advocates in teaching the four skills of language in isolation from each other. One of the major examples of such an approach to language teaching is the ‘grammar-translation method’ in which learners are taught to analyse and learn the grammatical structures of the language in order to gain command over it. Such methods of language learning confines skills of language to narrow and non-communicative functions which provide hindrance in the use of language in practical situations. The communicative approach to language teaching emphasises on the integrated-skill based teaching of all the four skills of language in a collaborative manner in order to develop practical language using skills. The integrative approach to language teaching provides the authentic environment for learners to use language and develop all the four skills of language collaboratively in a meaningful context.

3.3.1 Forms of Integrated-skill Instructions

The integrated-skill can be introduced in the classes through a medium of the following two forms of instructions.

3.3.1.1 Content-based Instructions

In the content-based instructions, the learners’ primary focus is to deal with the content of the text, and while doing so, they practice all the skills of language viz. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. There are three models to perform content-based instructions. ‘Theme-based model’ allows the learners to practice language
skills by integrating it within the study of context with the help of interesting exercises like ‘Based on the theme of the chapter, discuss with your partner . . . .’ ‘Adjunct model’ allows the language and content to be taught separately, with a careful-logical relation between the two, such as ‘In this chapter you saw the use of idioms like . . . .’ ‘Sheltered model’ allows the subject matter to be taught in simplified language according to the proficiency level of the learners in order to ensure the maximum understanding of the subject and revise the learners’ language skills.

3.3.1.2 Task-based Instructions

David Nunan defines tasks as “the activities that can stand alone as fundamental units and that require comprehending, producing, manipulating, or interacting in authentic language while attention is principally paid to meaning rather than form” (qtd. in Oxford 1). The task-based instructions involve learners in participating in the communicative tasks in the target language. In task-based instructions, students’ pair-work and group-tasks introduce many instances of students’ interactions and promote use of integrated skills in classrooms. Some of the examples of language tasks in which learners integrate their language skills and perform in target language include ‘problem solving,’ ‘decision making,’ ‘information gap activities,’ ‘opinion exchange,’ ‘sharing personal experiences’ and ‘role plays’ etc.

3.3.2 Principles of Integrated Language Teaching

In integrated language teaching, the learners are exposed to the authentic situations of language use, and they are expected to communicate in the natural way using the target language. The integration of skills in the language teaching prepares the learners for real life situations. The principles of integrated language include the following.

- Language should be taught collectively as a whole and not in discrete chunks like reading or speaking etc.
- Language should not be taught as a subject; rather, it should be used as a tool to perform a task and achieve the desired goal.
In place of learning detached skills, integrated skills of language can be acquired when learners are exposed to useful language to develop acquaintance with the language.

Students’ prior knowledge and experience should be exploited as a trigger to encourage them to use language in an integrated manner to talk about their experiences and opinions.

3.4 Evaluation of the Existing Compulsory English Study Material of Aligarh Muslim University

In Aligarh Muslim University, hundreds of students enrol every year in the Bachelor’s courses both in the regular and distance mode. To all these learners, English as a compulsory subject is offered and taught at undergraduate level in all their Bachelor’s courses. The intention behind making this course compulsory is to equip the learners with the necessary working knowledge in the language and also to brush the existing knowledge of English language by providing provisions for practice. Over here, it is important to take note of the fact that Compulsory English classes at Aligarh Muslim University have varied group of heterogeneous learners belonging to different cultural and educational backgrounds. While some of these enrolled learners come from a good English medium background, there are more than a few who have acquired their previous education in Urdu, Hindi or any other regional language as the medium of instructions. There are many foreigners as well in the Compulsory English classes. These learners have different mother tongues viz. Arabic, Thai, Bengali etc. They are devoid of any common language except English in which they lack fluency. These learners, though very hardworking and talented in their respective main subjects, possess a fear of the English language due to innumerable reasons some of which have already been discussed in the first chapter.

The Compulsory English classes at undergraduate level are mostly overcrowded with sixty to one hundred and fifty students in big lecture theatres. Under these circumstances, it would be unfair and unmerited to expect from the Compulsory English teacher to produce the best desirable outcomes. Theoretical subjects like Geography, Biology and even Mathematics demand teachers’ explanations and mugging down of notes. The same is not the case with effective learning and acquisition of any language. Language acquisition, unlike other theory
based subjects, is a skill. A skill cannot be acquired well unless practiced sufficiently and individual doubts are dealt with. In such a case, out of the many possible solutions, the next important responsibility comes on the teaching materials which are expected to be the second source of knowledge after the teacher. These materials are expected to teach learners what the teacher is unable to because of such a big number of classes with diverse groups of students.

The current concern raises questions like ‘Are the current Compulsory English materials equipped well to take up the aforementioned responsibility?’, ‘Can the current material, that is being run parallel among regular and distance students, be trusted with providing relevant knowledge in the most explanatory fashion for the varied group of learners that are enrolled in Aligarh Muslim University?’ and many more. For the answers to many such questions, this section intends to evaluate the existing teaching materials spread across first to third academic semesters in the undergraduate courses laid in the faculty of Arts, Social Sciences, Commerce and Science in Aligarh Muslim University.

3.4.1 Checklist for Evaluation

Before evaluating the Compulsory English materials being run at the undergraduate level in Aligarh Muslim University, following Brian Tomlinson’s advice of developing one’s own principled criteria for evaluating material in place of using an idealistic and impractical one, a material-evaluation checklist has been created for the same. This checklist is based on researcher’s understanding of learning and teaching language which is inspired by communicative and integrated language teaching, and various material evaluation checklists provided by scholars like Adrian Tennant and N. Grant. The evaluation checklist consists of objective questions which can be answered in either yes, partly or no out-rightly, and it is devoid of any subjective question in order to ensure a more transparent and non-opinion based evaluation. Listed below is the checklist developed by the researcher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material Layout</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Partly</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the layout and appearance of the Compulsory English teaching material presentable?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the material provided with adequate free space around the text to</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow the learners to make notes if necessary?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the units supplied with appropriate illustrations and pictures to assist comprehension?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the material contain well-defined objectives before or in between the units to make the learning more directed?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do the tasks or activities outlined within the text match with the objectives of the unit?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Use-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the language of instructions used within the text clear and precise?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the structure of language used for explanations in between the text simple and comprehensible?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the material occasionally interact with the learner?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary User-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can the material be used by the learner without much external help?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the instructions of the material directed towards the learner?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the material show signs of dependency on teacher to teach a few segments?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradation-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the topics covered within a study unit cohesive and appropriately graded from known to unknown and simple to complex in a scaffolding manner?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the activities and tasks graded to move the learner from lower order thinking to higher order thinking?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance and Appropriateness-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the material deal with topics which are relevant and practically useful?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the tasks and examples used within the material appropriate and relevant for the level of learners?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks and Activities-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the activities and tasks actively engaging learners in the</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
learning process?

Does the material provide exposure and practice to the integrated skills of the language?

Do the tasks and activities provide opportunities for authentic and real-life use of language?

Are there sufficient tasks to develop critical thinking among learners?

Are the tasks and activities within the material offering enough occasions for higher order thinking?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Framework-</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Partly</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the material provide sufficient examples as a part of explanations of the text?</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do learners find the examples and situations used within the text familiar and comprehensible?</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the material provide positive and constructive feedback to the learners?</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the material provide enough revision opportunities?</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the language teaching material spun around the different needs of the different learners?</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the unit within the material provide learners with necessary linguistic explanation and grammar points occasionally?</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.2 Evaluation

In Aligarh Muslim University, Compulsory English is taught for a minimum of three semesters of all the Bachelor’s courses, in regular as well as distance mode. For the respective semesters, Aligarh Muslim University has prescribed two study materials in the form of two booklets that have been developed specifically for the purpose. Based on the evaluation checklist devised above, this section attempts to evaluate the material qualitatively.
3.4.2.1 Material Layout

The study material used at Aligarh Muslim University has been developed on the topics outlined in the prescribed syllabi for the undergraduates. Although the topics of the syllabi have been well covered within the material, outlined with some useful activities and tasks, the overall layout of the material faces predicament at the level of arrangement of the units. The study materials appear to be a set of complex structure of text put together in a booklet. The headings and subheadings within the unit mixes with the text at many instances as they lack foregrounding such as bold text, underlined text or a different font-sized text. The activities within the units also show lack of congruence in numbering. Some activities have been left unnumbered which does not let them distinguish themselves from the other text. An example can be seen in the book-I on page number 12 with an activity covering the ‘understanding of phrases.’ Here, the exercise to make the learner practice the concerned topic is preceded by some very valuable points of explanations, guiding the learners on how to go around the same. Since these points are written in continuation with the introductory text, they get overshadowed without being noticed. This is because not many learners are motivated to read a lengthy and monotonous text. Hence, the good material suffers at the hands of poor layout. However, in book-II, different font style has been adopted for technical definitions and subheadings in the first unit of the material. The material is not provided with any graphics, organisers and pictures which give it a slightly dull and dense look. Though economically a little expensive, colours and useful illustrations could add to the comprehension factor of the units laid within the material.

Apart from the appearance aspect of the material, it needs an urgent revision due to many other ineludible factors. One of the major causes for the intimidating mien of the material is the disorganised arrangement of the study units within the material. The syllabus for each of the semesters, revised recently, contains three units comprising of the basic essential skills required by an undergraduate learner to communicate in the real world effectively. The first unit of book-I titled “Reading Strategies and Vocabulary Building” is reserved for essential skills like skimming, scanning, guessing meaning, and reading comprehensions. This unit has been well covered in the material for undergraduates. However, the single unit has been distributed across the material under two units, one covering six strategies of reading...

Moreover, the second unit mentioned in the first semester’s syllabus for the undergraduates includes paragraph writing on given topics, information and data etc; whereas, only describing people and places are the areas covered in the material and that too under ‘Unit 4.’ This ‘Unit 4’ in book-I is preceded by ‘Unit 3’ covering topics of ‘Note Making and Note Taking Skills,’ ‘Summarising’ and ‘Précis Writing.’ These topics no longer form the part of the first semester syllabus for the undergraduates and have been removed when the syllabus was recently revised. The ‘Unit 3’ in the first semester’s syllabus that has been assigned for ‘Oral Communication,’ is the most disorderly unit in the material—both book-I and book-II. In book-I, this unit has been covered under the two parts of unit five, ‘Part A’ of which has unfortunately been put between the ‘Unit 1’ and ‘Unit 2’ of the material. The second part i.e. ‘Part B of Unit 5’ has been sandwiched between ‘Unit 2’ and ‘Unit 3’ of the material; whereas, rest of the content of this unit has been placed at the end of the material. In book-II, the oral communication unit again becomes ‘Unit 5’ distributed as ‘item 1,’ ‘item 2,’ ‘item 3’ and ‘supplementary material’ covering ‘expressing points of view,’ ‘generating dialogues and discussion,’ ‘argumentative discussions’ and ‘group discussion’ respectively in four different chunks in the material. All this broken distributions of the units in the materials have made the material not only complicated, but also incomprehensible.

Apart from the erroneous sequencing, the book-I contains pages where both top and bottom of the page are paginated, one of the examples of which is Page 90, which has also been numbered page 5 at the bottom. There are many such pages across the material which may lead to making the learners confused and wasting their time in searching for the correct page while the rest of their class may begin the unit all the same. In the same material, in the sequence of the page numbers 23, 24 and 25, a random page number ‘24a’ creates bewilderment for the users of the learners. On page 42 in the book-I, the random print of “Price Rs 7/-” in bold letters adds to the learners’ confusion as the tag has no relation with the question with which the tag has been printed.
Furthermore, the page number 95 of book-I contains an exercise for ‘Spellings and Vocabulary,’ but ironically, the exercise itself contains a spelling mistake in one of the sub-headings where plurals has been misspelt or rather misprinted as “Plulals.”

![Fig. 3.4 An extract from Page 95 of Book-I](image)

On a similar note, on page 29 and 30 of book-II, two questions demand learners to carefully study the chart and write a paragraph on the basis of its readings. The irony is that in place of the chart, there is a blank box on each instance, wasting both the questions. The entire sequencing of the units within the material with regard to the syllabus and other errors showing signs of carelessness on the part of the material designer and editor are highly unfortunate and should be urgently revised to save the university from infamy.

### 3.4.2.2 Objectives

Though the syllabi of Compulsory English outline the objectives for each of the three units separately, there is no mentioning of any such teaching and learning objectives before or in between the units of the materials. As discussed earlier, objectives play a crucial role in making the learning more directed and focused. Exclusion of objectives from the TLMs not only leads to directionless learning but also creates problems for the teacher and material designer while creating the material. This is evident in the designing of topics of the second unit of the syllabus for the first semester i.e. paragraph writing. Although the unit outlined in the syllabus aims at training learners in how to develop paragraph on various topics, information and data, due to no outlining of objective before the commencement of unit, the learners do not achieve the desired goal. The unit in book-I is successful only in giving practice in describing people and places; whereas, the other areas are left unexplored. Rather due to lack of guiding objectives, the material, being outdated,
deviates from the prescribed line of conduct and introduces practice for extra topics which have not been prescribed.

3.4.2.3 Language Use

The study material currently being used at the undergraduate level has employed a very interactive language while writing instructions. Addressing to the learners in second person, one of the basic characteristics of self learning materials, the material is successful in creating a familiarity with the learners. The instructions are guiding and response-eliciting in their formats. The language used in instructions is mostly clear and precise, and learners are able to comprehend what the material instructs them to do, though at some of the instances, the case is not the same. The language of instructions is misleading when on page number 10 of book-I the instruction says “Now read the article on the next page. . .” while the article is actually a six-point list and written right under the instruction instead of the next page. A similar example can be seen on page 47 of book-II where learners are instructed not to use “vowbastic and archaic words” while writing essays; whereas, the term *vowbastic* itself remains beyond the cognition of many learners at Aligarh Muslim University.

The following points may be borne in mind while writing an essay on any topic:

1. Use very simple contemporary language. Avoid the use of vowbastic and archaic words and terminology.
2. Avoid the use of lengthy sentences consisting of many clauses.
3. Be relevant and avoid circumlocution, repetitions and digressions.

Fig 3.5 An extract taken form Page 47 of Book-II

The language of the instruction should not be too decorative and ambiguous. When learners find it difficult to comprehend the instructions, it automatically discourages them and they may lose their confidence in solving the current exercise. This also deprives them of gaining control of the particular skill as well.
3.4.2.4 Primary User

Though the material interacts continuously with the learners throughout the course, at occasional instances, it is observed that the instructions of the material do not aim to instruct or guide the learner in what to do next; rather, these instructions addressing the teacher, directs them in what the teacher shall make the learners do. An example of the same can be drawn from one of the instructions on page number 76 of book-I where teacher is instructed on how to teach ‘Describing Persons’ to learners.

The above picture proves that the particular material has been designed with the vision of teachers as the primary users of the material and not learners. Similar kinds of observations were made at various instances in book-II where material gives hints to the teacher on what is to be done next. Apart from various notes to the teacher, one of the instructions laid on page 34 of book-II shows signs of dependency on the teacher for the learning, and hence, it deprives autonomy in the learning. Here, after instructing on how to give instructions, the material has left a topic to be explained by the teacher.

Apart from the instructions, the exercises and activities laid in the units suggest that the material designer designed the material keeping in mind the supposed
dependency of learners over teachers. At numerous instances, the unit appears to contain a set of complex and technical key terms which have been casually used without their explanation. Unit on oral communications in book-I, for instance, contains intricate and complicated rules laid on the pages that not all level learners can comprehend. This makes them naturally anxious, and hence, they look for a teacher who can help them in dealing with the unit. In the same material, page 41 carries an activity numbered V.A.1.2 in which the instruction to solve the given question is incomplete. This shows that the activity requires a teacher to decide what to fill in the place to make it a complete instruction.

It cannot be hence said that learners are the primary users of the material as learners have to depend upon taking occasional external help from teachers. This scenario is even worse for the learners enrolled in the Centre for Distance Education as they are devoid of the facility of the external help in the form of the teacher. The teachers, on the other hand, due to time constraint, cannot supervise all the activities in the allotted time and often either skip some activities or ask learners to do some at their homes.

3.4.2.5 Gradation

A good material is the one which contains exercises well graded from known to unknown, involving learners’ mental progression from lower order thinking to higher order cognitive domain. In the current material of English language teaching for the undergraduate learners, most of the tasks and activities are well graded and assist in expediting the learning process in the positive direction. Page 9 of book-I contains three activities viz. activity 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 which are well graded from simpler ‘remembering’ to ‘analysing’ level of Bloom’s taxonomy. Similarly, activities 3.1 to 3.9 in reading comprehension strategy ‘Finding Your Way around a Text’ of book-I are sequentially well graded from lower order thinking to higher order thinking. The activities deal with useful topics such as pronouns, sequence words, conjunctions etc, and they take the learners to the level of creating from what they have recently dealt with. Similarly, book-II also contains exercises which are presented in well graded and connected manner. Page 6 of book-II is one of the many examples where linguistics explanation has lead to an exercise where learners are expected to apply the recently learned knowledge and solve the question.
The units dealing with the writing skills, especially ‘Describing Places’ and ‘Describing People’ are very skilfully graded. The activities listed under these topics provide learners with practice in controlled writing to guided writing activities, which later takes the learner to free writing as well. However, the grammatical structures for creating sentences are introduced at the very later stage in the material which shows poor gradation of linguistic components in the material. The inclusion of grammar items in book-II has been graded well with the writing part as these grammar points have been practically applied in the language structures of the writing sections.

As far as other reading comprehensions are concerned, in book-I, the activities listed under the four passages and two poems lack a fruitful gradation from simpler to complex, known to unknown etc. The questions listed at the end of the passage merely restraint themselves to the analysing level of cognitive domain, and are unable to take the learners to the level of applying, evaluating, and creating. In book-II, however, the reading comprehensions not only serve the purpose of providing text for testing comprehension, but each comprehension provides the learners with different styles of text. These reading comprehensions cover different genres of writing from historical paragraph to descriptive text, poem, conversation, and short story. This does not only provide flavours to the comprehension texts, but also exposes the learners to different styles of writing. However, all these reading comprehension exercises of book-II as well take the learners from ‘understanding’ to ‘analysing’ and ‘creating,’ but the creation exercises are merely in the form of paraphrasing and summarising of facts and figures, and hence, they do not provide any opportunity for developing critical thinking.

3.4.2.6 Relevance and Appropriateness

The users of the current English material in Aligarh Muslim University are the undergraduate learners varying from seventeen to twenty one years of age on an average. These learners are a diverse group with highly mixed competence levels. On the broader view, for the ideal set of learners the Compulsory English material contains very useful and practically relevant study units appropriate for the learners’ age groups. Learners can equip themselves with basic communicative competence if the prescribed objectives of syllabi are met. However, coming from diverse backgrounds, there are many learners who lack the necessary entrance behaviour for
the course; hence, they find the current material difficult to use. The needs of such learners cannot be ignored. On the contrary, these learners are the users for whom the course has been devised. Therefore, the introductory units of the material must contain some basic exercises to teach common structures of the language which learners are expected to possess. This shall help in raising the entrance behaviour of the weaker group of learners at the same time working as a revision exercise for those who are already equipped with the knowledge. In book-I, these linguistic structures are scanty in number and come at a much later part of the material. However, in book-II page 1, explanation of phrases is followed with its linguistic structure and examples to explain further. In writing section as well, a framework of ‘paragraph writing’ and ‘giving instructions’ provided in book-II helps the learners comprehend the structure of particular pieces of writing.

Evaluating the relevance and appropriateness of the units in the material from a more critical eye, it is observed that much of the topics covered in the material, especially book-I, are not prescribed in the syllabus and its objectives; hence, they are irrelevant in the course. Examples of such topics, as discussed in the sections 3.4.2.1 above as well, include note making, note taking, summarising and précis writing. These topics, on the contrary, are listed under the syllabus of next semester, but they do not find a place in book-II. Apart from the irrelevant topics in the material, some relevant and useful units seem to contain some unrelated activities as well. One of such activities is on page number 88 of book-I which has been shown in Fig. 3.8. It randomly tests learners’ general knowledge competence and links nowhere with the language learning.

![Fig. 3.8 An extract from page 88 of Book-I](image-url)
At the same time, examples used within the material are mostly contextually familiar to the learners and provide appropriate connections between the text and the learners’ comprehension. The reading comprehension texts chosen for book-II such as the first Indian woman to climb Mount Everest, the struggle of an Indian woman freedom fighter and a section of Rabindranath Tagore’s Geetanjali etc are rooted in Indian context which makes it easier for the learners to relate with.

The inclusion of the teaching of oral communication skills in the material designed for undergraduate learners is praiseworthy though. Some important and practically relevant topics have been allotted a place within the material, comprehension and acquiring of which can promote communicative competence among the learners. However, it must be acknowledged that the oral communication skills such as letter-sound relationships, stress and intonation etc form a very technical aspect of oral communication, and they need immense practice and models from real life examples. These skills cannot be mastered upon by few lines of descriptions. Learners at undergraduate level are novice and phonetic symbols and terminologies of phonetics are extremely foreign concepts for them. However relevant it may be, the presentation of the unit is not appropriately designed which makes the learners dependent upon an external aid for clarifications.

3.4.2.7 Tasks and Activities

The tasks and activities presented within the material for teaching English to the undergraduate learners in Aligarh Muslim University deserve appreciation as most of the time they engage learners actively in the learning processes, especially in the units dealing with reading strategies. Activity 1.3 on page 2 of book-I exemplifies this characteristic as it compels the learners to read and comprehend the idea of the text in general and reach to the analysing level of cognitive domain in searching for the answer. The activity not only provides the learners with clear and precise instructions, it also presents a model on how the learners are expected to perform in the upcoming exercise. On the similar lines, before asking the learners to read and comprehend the reading passages, the materials put forward pre-reading questions to activate the schemata and bring learners in the mood of learning by eliciting answers.

However, the activities do not make learners attend to the evaluation and creation exercises in book-I. The book-II exercises though make the learners create,
the creation is on grounds of existing facts and reports. Due to this, critical thinking among learners is not engaged well which leaves the learners with half-achieved objectives. Except for the writing skills’ unit, there are not much occasions in the material where outlined activities and tasks encourage higher order thinking. It is also unfortunate to notice that none of the activities or tasks within the material provides exposure and practice in integrated skills. On an average, it is the reading and writing skills that have been focused on while creating the material. There is no unit in the current English language teaching material that has been devoted to developing listening skills or even in giving practice for the same. Oral communication unit though has been allotted its place in the English language teaching material; in book-I, it has taken the form of the reading conversation in which sample conversations are asked to be read by the learners and answer the questions that follow. In all the seven situational conversations, not a single activity asks the learners to prepare their own set of dialogues on the similar pattern or situation, neither are they asked to listen to the recorded ones. On the other hand, in book-II (as seen in Fig 3.9), learners are provided with samples of ‘expressing points of view’ and ‘argumentative discussion,’ and they are asked to use similar structures in generating debates and group discussions. This provides them an opportunity to create a new utterance on the basis of their understanding.

![Fig. 3.9 An extract from Page 33 of Book-II](image)

There are a few exercises in between the units in which real-life authentic structure of language is tested. Such activities are supported with a preceding or following explanation of the rules that apply. Although communicative approach to language teaching advocates the exclusion of any form of grammatical and structural description of language to encourage natural acquisition from the exposure to it, the more recent theory of eclectic approach encourages using a mixture of approaches that can assist to yield the desirable result. It is also believed that learners, especially adult learners, demand logical explanation of what they learn. If they are informed
what common structures of language are helpful in carrying out the desired function, they acquire the structure comparatively easily, and they are more satisfied with the learning. Hence, activities such as activity 4.1.4 on page 77 in book-I, testing the subject-verb concord, ‘making negative sentences’ on page 91, ‘framing tag question’ on page 117 and some others would have been more fruitful if preceded with a reasonable explanation of the structure that goes into framing such responses. Similarly, questions numbered 1, 2 and 3 on page 24 of book-II deal with very technical aspects of the language which could have been preceded with an explanation of such graphemes in place of putting up random testing question. This would have served the purpose for making learners practice a skill which has been taught rather than testing what learners might not be aware of.

3.4.2.8 General Framework

The general framework of the Compulsory English material is outdated and complicated to some extent. There are some examples that are provided within the text that help the learners in comprehension of the context, only few of them are based in the cultural context of its users i.e. undergraduate learners in Aligarh Muslim University and talk about some unfamiliar context altogether which is difficult to identify with. As opposed to the relevant examples, Compulsory English material is equipped with immense activities to engage the learners in the learning, which is highly commendable; they lag behind when it comes to providing feedback for the activities and assist learners in self-evaluation. The exercises do put learners to continuous test, but are not followed by any answer key for self-check. It leads to a gap in learning. An example to it is the brain-storming questions on page 41 of book-II. These questions are not only schemata-activating; rather, they contain the essence of the characteristics of the topic being taught. Such questions should be followed with answers to let the learners know what they lack in knowledge. Self-evaluation is not only a form of checking and correcting one’s mistakes, it reinforces positive learning. Learners have the right to know the correct answers to the questions they have attended to, and at the same time, to learn while they know their mistakes.

The current material also does not provide revision opportunities for language items learned. Activities do not refer back to the ones taught earlier, thereby not connecting the two; hence, they do not allow any revision at any level. As far as
different needs of learners are concerned, the activities in the material are diverse and tend to cater to different needs of different learners like pronunciation and accent practice, descriptive writing, reading practice and more. There are still a few needs that could not be matched. Some learners require the linguistic explanation of the grammar points they learn in course of their study, others learn through kinaesthetic and visual inputs to comprehend. The material, built on a very traditional framework, if revised skilfully can cater to diverse needs and produce positive results from the very positive course.

### 3.5 Conclusion

The current chapter has cast a deep insight into one of the recently popular forms of education i.e. open and distance education, and its backbone—the self learning material. The crux of the chapter has been devoted to the theory of the self learning materials. Exploring what is meant by the SLM and what scholars say about the same, the chapter delves deep into the features and characteristics that make a material self learning material. The self learning material cannot be put on the same platform with the conventional or traditional teaching materials. The current study has outlined some basic differences between the two and followed with pros and cons of using the self learning material.

Objectives, being one of the significant features of the SLM, have been discussed thoroughly in the current chapter with all its theory and science in the light of the famous Bloom’s Taxonomy. The research found that self learning materials are designed following an instructional design, and hence, the current chapter has conferred upon the instructional design as well. Since language skills cannot be taught in isolation, the study of integrated skills and its principles form an important aspect of the current chapter as well. The study claims that adult learners cannot be taught on the same pedagogical patterns as that of children. While teaching adults, there are a few psychological hurdles that a teacher needs to cross. For serving the purpose, the current chapter also differentiates between the pedagogy i.e. teaching of children, and angragogy i.e. the teaching of adults.

Discussing the aforementioned theories in details, the study has taken up the evaluation of the current English language teaching material for the learners at undergraduate level in Aligarh Muslim University. To serve the purpose of material
evaluation, the researcher devised a material evaluation checklist which has been inspired from the evaluation checklists of various scholars. The researcher responded to the evaluation checklist in either yes, partly or no qualitatively after a thorough examination of both book-I and book-II of the material for Compulsory English, and provided with detailed explanation of the correspondent response along with citing examples from the material. The evaluation conducted in the current chapter shall form the basis of the designing of a sample self learning material in the upcoming chapter.
Works Cited


