Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The present chapter puts forward an overview of the present study. This chapter attempts to conclude the researcher’s study and the findings that have been presented across the chapters. The current chapter also intends to put forward some recommendations which, if implemented, may produce better results. The chapter finally concludes with a discussion on the limitations of the current study in the light of the practicality.

5.2 Overview of the Study

The world has been advancing with every passing moment. To share new discoveries, intellect and political ideologies, it needs a common language. Over the years, English has been successful in making itself recognised as one of the most internationally-acclaimed official languages by the United Nations. India is a country known for its multilingual culture. The New Indian Express published an online news article on 16th July 2013, in which it mentions about ‘The People’s Linguistics Survey of India.’ This survey was completed in December 2012. Recognizing the fact that “the country has lost nearly 250 languages” in last five decades, the survey claims that presently 780 languages exist in India which are used by a population of 1.21 billion Indians. Out of these 780 languages, none of them is given the status of ‘the national language of India’ by the Constitution of India. However, the constitution designates ‘Hindi’ and ‘English’ as the official languages of India. The popularity of ‘Hindi’ limits itself to the North and Central India, and suffers an anti-Hindi agitation in Southern parts of the country, especially Tamil Nadu. Amidst all this mayhem, English enjoys the privilege of being the ‘bridge-language’ connecting India.

The first chapter of the current study discusses the position enjoyed by English language in the world, especially in India, and at the same time throws light upon persisting poor condition of English language in India. To look into the reason behind the existing problem, the chapter discusses some of the major challenges that Indian learners face while learning or acquiring English. The chapter also discusses the
major factors affecting the acquisition of English language. These factors are both internal and external; some of which include age, motivation, cognitive ability, previous language knowledge, hemispheric dominance etc among the internal factors, and curriculum, syllabus, teacher, teachers’ instruction etc among external factors.

Among all these factors, the teaching-learning material is one factor that the current research believes can compensate up to some extent for the weaknesses of the other factors. Jocelyn Right, in an article “The Importance of Learning Materials in Teaching,” describes teaching materials as “a generic term used to describe the resources teachers use to deliver instruction. Teaching materials can support student learning and increase student success.” The second chapter, hence, is dedicated to the key term material. The chapter serves as the review of literature, and discusses what teaching-learning materials are and what role do they play in the teaching-learning process. Consulting the definitions provided by the scholars, an understanding of the teaching-learning material has been developed in the second chapter. The chapter also discusses various types of teaching learning materials differentiated on the basis of their purpose, format and creator.

The study believes that nothing new can be created until failure or success of the existing ones inspires the new creation. Since the current study aims to design a new teaching-learning material, a section in the second chapter has been dedicated to a detailed history of English teaching materials generated across the world from as early as the fifteenth century till date. The section discusses how the emergence of new approaches to language teaching have laid to the emergence of teaching-learning materials from ‘a bilingual manual’ for teaching important dialogues to the trading community of the fifteenth century to the ‘textbooks’ for creating communication opportunities in the present era. The second chapter also discusses some important aspects of material development such as ‘material evaluation.’ This section studies the scholars’ view on material evaluation, its types and the principles involved in the process of evaluating the material. ‘Material adaptation’ forms an intrinsic part in material development. Hence, the second chapter includes some discussion on material adaptation; why and when to adapt a material, and what the underlying principles in adapting the material are. Finally, the second chapter concludes with the discussion on another significant area of material development i.e. ‘material gradation.’
A new kind of material that has evolved recently over the past few decades is the self learning material. The third chapter of the study specifically covers this area of research, and therefore, it is dedicated to the self learning materials. In the third chapter, a quick glance into the evolution of distance education has been followed by a detailed discussion over the SLM. The ‘self learning materials,’ being a distinguishing characteristic of the distance education, are more explicit, explanatory and learner-oriented as compared to the other conventional teaching-learning materials. Apart from its features like self-contained, self-evaluating, self-directed and much more, the objectives of SLMs provide them with uniqueness and clarity in outlook. The third chapter discusses in detail about the ‘objectives’ in the material, and also throws light upon the Bloom’s Taxonomy of cognitive domains of learning. As discussed in the third chapter, these objectives are specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and testable. Apart from the objectives, the third chapter of the study deals with the ‘instructional design’ that forms the key component of the self learning materials. Self learning materials aim for developing learners’ autonomy. Therefore, the instructional design helps in constructing material according to the needs of the learners in place of forcing learners to adapt to the material.

Discussing a detailed list of points on which SLM differs from the conventional material, the third chapter highlighted that the SLMs are more user friendly. In terms of ‘text layout’ which is complex and claustrophobic in the conventional teaching materials, SLMs follow a more generous layout. Objectives, as mentioned earlier as well, make the SLM more directed and assist learners in preparing for the learning. The key feature of the SLM which makes it more effective is the simple language of instruction and constant address to the learners. The third chapter puts forward the highlights of the SLMs which make them more interactive and productive by providing feedback and self-evaluation opportunities.

The third chapter also throws light over the difference between pedagogy and andragogy. While pedagogy is defined as the science or art of teaching a child, andragogy deals with instructing the adult learners in the learning process. The current study aims at designing study materials for the undergraduates at Aligarh Muslim University. Therefore, it is a requisite to look into the principles underlying the distinction between the two terms before employing andragogy. Language is a performing skill which is a blend of four major skills—listening, speaking, reading,
and writing. To ensure an effective language development of an individual, all four skills of the language have to be dealt with inclusively. The third chapter discusses the forms and principles of the integrated language teaching for the same.

The critical evaluation of the existing undergraduates’ Compulsory English material being run at the Aligarh Muslim University forms the other half of the third chapter of the current study. Brian Tomlinson in his book *Developing Material for Language Teaching* emphasises on the creation of an evaluation checklist underlying the evaluator’s theory of language teaching and learning to ensure a more valid and reliable evaluation. He writes “it is very important that evaluations (even the informal ones) are driven by a set of principles and that these principles are articulated by the evaluator(s) prior to the evaluation” (17). Hence, for the purpose of evaluation, an evaluation checklist was formulated which was inspired by Adrian Tennant’s and N. Grant’s evaluation checklists. This evaluation checklist consisted of twenty six item questionnaire covering domains of material layout, objectives of the unit, language use in the material, primary users of the material, material gradation, relevance and appropriateness of the topics covered in the unit, nature of tasks and activities, and other general frameworks of the material such as feedback and motivation. The findings of the qualitative evaluation of the Compulsory material were laid in detail within the third chapter and substantiated with examples from the material.

Evaluation of the Compulsory English material revealed that the existing material consists of some very useful and relevant topics for the undergraduate learners with instructions laid in an interactive language. Although the material has many positive points, there are some major concerns that surfaced after the material evaluation. One of the major predicaments in the existing Compulsory English material is the erroneous layout of the material. The third chapter of the current study submits many evidences where the material has not only proven to be complex and intimidating, but also containing faulty spellings and misleading instructions. Apart from pages carrying two page numbers at various instances, the units within the material are disorderly. At the level of content, while some units carry unnecessary and irrelevant topics laid under them, there are some units which do not justifiably deal with some relevant topics. Listening skill is completely neglected, and the activities meant for speaking skills have taken the form of mere reading comprehension of dialogues. Excessive use of technical terminology and less focus on
creation suggest that the material being used currently is more inclined towards the ‘text-oriented learning’ in place of the ‘skill-oriented learning.’

In Aligarh Muslim University, every year hundreds of learners take admission in different undergraduate courses like B. A, B. Sc, B.Com, B. Tech, M.B.B.S and Diploma Engineering. Recently a new bachelors’ course has been introduced in A.M.U under the name of B. Voc. Apart from the regular set of learners, Aligarh Muslim University runs a Centre for Distance Education which adds to the number of learners enrolled in A.M.U. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the learners at A.M.U form an extremely heterogeneous group, both linguistically and culturally. In contrast to the learners who have a good language competence when they take admission in A.M.U, a number of entrants in graduation courses in A.M.U come from Madarasa background along with many who have acquired their education in some regional language medium schools. The Compulsory English material set for an ideal undergraduate level of learners can prove to be rather too difficult and intimidating for these learners and can discourage them.

The present study suggests that one of the solutions to the above mentioned problems can be the self learning material. As discussed in chapter three, the self-explanatory and self-contained features of the self learning materials provide a teacher available to the learners at any time and place that is suitable for them in the form of the available material. The chapter four of the present study presents a sample study material for the teaching of English language to the undergraduates of Aligarh Muslim University. This material, developed around the principles of SLM, has been developed following a theme-based learning format. For the same purpose, the texts, examples and the activities have been developed around the theme of the material incorporating the language items prescribed in the material. The theme has allowed for a smooth integration of all the skills of language viz. listening, speaking, reading, writing, and sub-skills like vocabulary and grammar, along with an enveloping skills i.e. the critical thinking. The layout of the material has been kept a generous one, with sufficient space around the text to put the learners at ease. The material has been provided with a list of objectives in the beginning of the unit. The colours, pictures and graphic organisers have been exploited to create a strong bond of association for the learners with visual cognitive intelligence. There have been many activities invoking to the logical thinking by the learners. The sample material contains
instructions laid in the simple and clear sentences. The material has been highly interactive, addressing the learners in second person, providing constant feedback and motivating the learners for the task to follow. The sample study material has been internally graded from known to unknown and simple to complex across the entire unit. The sample material follows a cyclic gradation pattern which allows the material to refer back to a language point taught or any textual information presented in the earlier parts of the unit. This technique allows the learners to be mentally attentive throughout the unit in the material.

Established in 1877, the Department of English in Aligarh Muslim University is one of the oldest departments of the Aligarh Muslim University. The Department of Aligarh Muslim University is the result of the vision of Late Sir Syed Ahmed Khan of empowering Muslim youth with the language of the world—English. Today, it has become the responsibility of the English department to fulfil the vision of its founder by looking into the existing problem under the mirror of practical situations, and revise the existing material accordingly.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the evaluation of the existing Compulsory English material and the understanding of the existing situation, the current study would like to present a few recommendations to be implemented in the material.

- As is discussed above, the entrants into the various courses at undergraduate level in Aligarh Muslim University are a mixed group having varied levels of competence. While some come with a sound working-knowledge of English language, there are many who face difficulties in framing simple sentences at length. To deal with the situation, the current study suggests developing the units of the study material in a graded manner, beginning from units for beginners to intermediates and finally moving towards advanced level. It is believed that such gradation will allow opportunities for learning for the learners of all the levels of competence. While for beginners, it shall be a learning opportunity, for others it can serve the purpose of providing revision opportunities. It shall ensure an inclusive growth in the classroom and lower the level of inferiority among the beginners.
In the course of the research, during evaluation of the existing Compulsory English material in A.M.U, it was found that the linguistic and grammatical points covered were highly relevant and useful; whereas, the topics were spread across the material in an ungraded manner. The study recommends that these topics should be divided into the three groups viz. ‘beginners,’ ‘intermediates’ and ‘advanced.’

Topics such as nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, punctuation, kinds of sentences and their general structure and tenses can form the part of grammatical items in the beginners unit. Simple reading passage like ‘Bansali and his train journey’ and simple poems like ‘There are three chairs and table’ can be adapted from the current material. While in writing, descriptive paragraph can be included along with giving feeds on ‘asking for information,’ ‘greetings’ and ‘taking leave’ along with ‘making learners construct their own simple dialogues’ to be included in the speaking section. A simple listening activity is a must for the ear-training of the beginners.

For intermediates, the unit can be made a little difficult by introducing topics such as phrasal verbs, modals, sequence words, prefixes and suffixes, active-passive, reported speech and articles among the grammatical syllabus. As a part of developing speaking skills, learners can be given training in vowel and consonants sounds, along with giving practice in expressing gratitude, agreeing and disagreeing, followed by asking them to produce their own debates and speech. For the reading comprehension, passages with a little difficult vocabulary and language structures can be adapted from the existing material, some of which are ‘Eucalyptus tree’ and ‘Penguins’ along with a poem such as about the old woman and the children on page 47 in book-I. The grammatical items dealt with in the units for intermediates, can serve as the prerequisites for the teaching of ‘new report’ and ‘article’ writing. A difficult listening comprehension involving learner’s analysing and evaluating skills shall be employed for the learners within the material. It is believed that learners with less competence will gradually climb the stairs with a gradual increase in the difficulty level in material.

For the advanced level, the units can be introduced with the maximum difficulty for all the level of learners. Grammar for the advanced level can
include the phrase structure and clause structure. The reading part of the advanced learners can adapt complicated poems requiring an intense comprehension of the message such as ‘The Gift of God’ and passages with complex vocabulary such as in ‘A Definition of a Gentleman’ and ‘The Battle of Waterloo.’ The figures of speech such as simile, metaphors and idiomatic expressions can be introduced along with the reading passages. Integrating the unit, these items can be made to be exploited in writing articles and essays by the learners. Stress, tone and intonation can be introduced in the unit for advanced level of learners, and hence, learners can be given speaking activities employing these. Listening comprehensions can include listening to comprehending the programs of native speakers with dialectal variations.

- The study recommends the revision of the existing Compulsory English material and the development of new material on the format of theme-based material. The theme-based material designing has been promoted in the study due to many reasons, one of which being themes allow the learners to connect more easily with the study material. While the learners’ interest is captured into the themes, learning of skills take place subconsciously through task-solving and analysing. Themes create more opportunities of meaningful participation prompted by the desire to know more and communicate one’s ideas based on the theme. Another reason for emphasising on theme-based material designing is that it allows a more integrative outlook to material development. Since the themes are selected from the practical situations, it demands the learner to participate more naturally. In day to day lives, learners communicate using more than one skill of language at a time. Hence, when real life themes are brought into the use for designing material, they allow the material designer to think of practically relevant activities involving all the skills of language. It also highlights that the theme-based materials provide opportunities to practice more practically useful language skills. Beyond language teaching, themes assist in creating opportunities for socially-responsible citizens as well.

- The study proposes the materials to be designed following a cyclic gradational pattern in place of linear gradation. An item once taught, is more liable to be forgotten as soon as a new item is introduced within the unit. Cyclic gradation
creates immense revision opportunities for the learners by forcing them to refer back to the linguistic or grammatical item taught once in the unit, and apply the understanding of it in solving the current task. The cyclic gradation helps in forming a link between various linguistic and grammatical items, and learners know the practical relevance of the topics they are introduced to. It allows promotion of subconscious learning and keeps the learners actively involved throughout the unit.

- The current study also recommends following the exercises and activities outlined in the material with a feedback statement or the answer key in the form of an answer sheet at the end of the unit. The study believes that testing is a form of learning. Activities help in testing of the learners’ comprehension. However, if the learners are kept devoid of the results of those tests, the effect of the test goes unrealised. Providing an answer sheet at the end of the unit shall promote self-evaluation opportunities for the learners. The study believes that even if the learners turn back to the end of the unit for copying the answers without trying to solve on their own, they do put their efforts in reading the question, turning back and searching for the answers, and copying the answers. In either of the cases, learning does take place.

- Another very significant change the current study would recommend is opting for a user-friendly and generous layout while designing the material. The use of illustrations, graphics, pictures and colours does not only confine to the young learners’ curricula, but is highly motivating for the adult learners as well. Using appropriate cliparts, pictures and graphics assist in strengthening the bond of association by the adult learners as well. Adequate spaces around the text put the learners mentally at rest, and they become more receptive to the information in place of being alarmed by the complex text. Using different font styles for instructions and information help learners in easily differentiating between the two. Also the use of different colours within the text helps in foregrounding the intended message, and hence, it aids in better retention.

- As the study recommends the designing of the material in the theme-based format, it is also suggested to include an author’s note before the commencement of the study unit addressing the learners. The author’s note
can serve the purpose of the study guide and assist in familiarising the learners with the new style of the material. The author’s note can inform the rationale behind the format used in the designing of the material and inform the learners about the prerequisites in dealing with the topic. Unlike the existing Compulsory English material, the current study suggests to commence the study units with an index marking all the topics along with the page numbers that the unit expects to cover. The study material developed following the recommended format will not only confine itself to the testing in the final examinations; rather, it can serve as the guide to clarify the doubts in future concerning the related topics.

- Listening skill is one of the most important skills to be developed within the learners of a language. Unfortunately, this skill has been completely ignored in the existing Compulsory English material. Most of the learners, even after spending 12-16 years of their lives in acquiring education from the English medium schools and colleges, are unable to comprehend the news reports in native English accent, watch an English movie without subtitles and listen to the English commentary while watching cricket. Needless to say, the inclusion of the activities to develop and enhance the listening skill is strongly recommended.

- For the inclusion of activities for the development of the listening skills in the study material, the current study suggests to exploit the authentic material such as English tele-series, movies, songs, commentary, speeches, and news reports. To include the listening material, the study advises the inclusion of a CD containing all the prescribed listening material along with the print material. The latest English language teaching materials such as Macmillan’s Fun with Grammar, Oxford Publication’s Spoken English for My World and Cambridge University Press’s Embark come with a CD attached with the book that contains all the prescribed audios and AVs for the listening activities. Not only private publication houses, but also other central government universities such as English and Foreign Languages University in Hyderabad provide a CD for the listening practice along with their course materials for various courses. An alternative of CDs can be online uploads of the prescribed listening materials. IGNOU exploits the use of technology by instructing the
learners enrolled in various courses to listen to the audios uploaded on their online portals like EduSat, e-gyankosh and ignou.ac.in. The Department of English in Aligarh Muslim University has its own online portal on the website of A.M.U i.e. amu.ac.in. This portal can be used in uploading the material for listening practice by the learners at their homes. Although in the current era, everyone has easy access to internet, still there can be many who would have some problems in accessing the website for the listening practice. For these learners, the prescribed audios can be saved in the computers put in the computer lab of the Department of English and allotted time table for the practice. If nothing works out, the audios can be uploaded in the computers of the Computer Centre of A.M.U where every student is liable for free computer access.

- Speaking skills, though included in the existing material, have not been judiciously incorporated in the material. Apart from giving information on the various aspects of speaking the language, development of speaking skills require a judicious practice in speaking along with assessment by a teacher. Although it becomes a little effort demanding, it is necessary to assess the speaking of the learners and provide them with constructive feedback. The Central Board of Secondary Education has launched the system of Assessment of Speaking and Listening in the curriculum of ninth and tenth class students. Under this system, learners are made to listen to an audio and asked comprehension questions accordingly to test the listening skills. For the assessment of the spoken skills, the videos of the learners are recorded and put in a CD which is sent to the board for the assessment. A similar kind of technique can be employed in A.M.U. as well. A portal for the assessment of the learners’ skills can be designed on the website of A.M.U where learners can upload their recorded videos for the assessment. This technique can prove to be affective for the regular as well as distance mode learners as well. Teachers can assess by watching the video and also upload a sample video to be viewed by all. Past few years have witnessed multidirectional advancement of the technology and many educational institutions have opted to exploit the improving technology for better education. The Department of English of Aligarh Muslim University should take up revolutionary steps and use the technology in bringing out the best results.
The final recommendation that the current study wishes to lay undertakes all the above mentioned points. It is recommended to produce the material for the teaching of English in the Department of English compiled in the form of a book. Currently the material being run in the Department of English, A.M.U is a set of worksheets compiled in the form of a booklet. The study proposes to publish an English language study material developed following the format of self learning material. The units of the material should be internally graded from simpler to complex and known to unknown; and also the material should be graded from units for beginners to those for intermediates and advanced level learners. The material should be equipped with relevant and interactive illustrations and pictures to motivate the learners. The current Compulsory English material is sold in the market in the form of two booklets at reasonable rates. The study recommends the publishing of the material for all the semesters in the form of one book, integrating all the skills of language along with the prescribed linguistic and grammatical items, presented in the theme-based format with colourful illustrations. Nowadays, interactive English course books provided with CDs are available in the market in affordable prices. If the Department of English adopts to publish its book, it will not be a big price difference for the learners. In fact, it will be a resource book and personal guide for the learners in future.

5.4 Limitations

Despite the pros and recommendations mentioned earlier, there are a few limitations of the suggested material. Some of these are mentioned below.

- For some buyers of the material, the study material in the form of a colourful book might appear to be a bit costly in comparison to the photocopied sets of booklets that are currently available.

- For the learners who are habitual of the typical ‘product-oriented’ teaching methodology, the ‘process-oriented’ self learning material set in the theme-based format might appear to be unsatisfactory and difficult to handle in the beginning. However, once the learners accomplish a few tasks and activities, handling the material shall not be a problem.
• It is easier to implement the speaking skills’ development classes in the practical-classroom teaching situation. However, developing tasks for teaching in the printed material is very challenging as speaking skill is one of the productive skills and requires continuous assessment.
• The activities for the development of the listening skills are highly dependant on technology and internet, which may prove to be a problem in practical situations.
• The use of colourful illustrations and adequate free space around the text require more number of pages than the material assorted in the complex manner.
• The material has made a generous use of coloured fonts at various instances within the text. This may prove to be an obstacle in making the monochromatic or Xerox copy of the material as the similar purpose would not be able to be realised.
• The development of the self learning material requires immense efforts and time from the part of the material designer. Although once created following the recommended guidelines, it shall prove to an assistant to the teacher in the regular classes, and a teacher to the learners enrolled in the distance courses.

To sum up, self learning materials are the vision that once incorporated in the curriculum may prove to be highly beneficial in raising the graphs of learning in every level of learners. Brian Tomlinson’s words from Materials Development in Language Teaching best sum up the current study where he remarks the following:

. . . we should not expect one research-based model of language acquisition to triumph over all others. We must therefore be careful not to prescribe applications of unsubstantiated theories. But this should not stop us from applying what we do know about foreign and second language learning to the development of materials designed to facilitate the process. (6)
Works Cited


