

**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
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An Exploration of the Process of Materials Writing with reference to the Academic, Professional and Practical Needs of English Language Training (ELT) writers in the Sultanate of Oman

Submitted by Anthony (Tony) Edward Waterman to the University of Exeter as a thesis in part fulfilment for the degree of Doctorate of Education (EdD) in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in March, 2015. This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Materials writers' activities are informed by personal language-learning experience together with personal principles of second language acquisition (SLA), input received from English language training (ELT) courses for teachers, and from classroom experience. This study aims to examine how these factors affect writers' production of materials and to document a range of best practices resulting in effective materials. The study is aimed primarily at English as a foreign language (EFL) materials writers and teachers who are currently writing or who are thinking of embarking on materials production.

This exploration is situated within the interpretative / social constructivist paradigm using an exploratory methodology and employing surveys and interviews to collect data from the participants all of whom were practising materials writers working in the Sultanate of Oman. The findings present quantitative and qualitative data which is then analysed and interpreted with reference to the literature review.

The findings suggest that whilst the writers plan and produce materials in a professional manner, most of them acknowledge a need for further informed input on ELT writing processes. From the findings it emerges that writers often work without a clear view of the theoretical and pedagogic underpinnings to their materials production in terms of approach and methodology. The findings also highlight that writers use procedures for needs analysis (NA) and materials' evaluation which lack breadth and efficacy in terms of best practice.

These findings are then discussed in relation to the relevant literature and the study concludes with implications arising from the discussion chapter together with recommendations for supporting writers' professional activities. Whilst the study was based in an Omani context, the literature review, findings, implications and recommendations are all generalizable to writers the world over as local contexts will pose similar challenges to those presented here.

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my parents. My mother, Violet Waterman and my father, Ted Waterman have always supported my endeavours and have taken great pride in my academic and professional achievements throughout my career in ELT. From enabling me to travel to France and Germany when I was studying languages at grammar school, to encouraging me to leave the heady world of international banking to embark on a university degree in Scandinavian languages, my parents were always supportive and understanding.

Mum and Dad helped wherever they could during my initial year working as an English teacher in Helsinki, Finland and they subsequently enjoyed their visit to Barcelona, Spain while I was working there. They were happy to share their home during my several periods of work in Bournemouth, England and they continued to enjoy my professional progress on ELT contracts in Indonesia and Brazil. Celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1997, Mum and Dad came to the Sultanate of Oman and were enchanted by its friendly people and the beautiful landscapes. They returned to Oman in 1999 fully understanding my enthusiasm for the country and greatly appreciating their experiences of Salalah and the Dhofar region in the south of the country.

Mum and Dad were delighted when I was published by Garnet in 2013 and they have proudly spoken of my academic achievements: attaining my master's degree and doing this doctorate. They were very excited to learn I had passed the doctoral viva in April.

Sadly, Dad passed away before my doctorate was conferred but I am sure he knew that I would complete my studies. Dad supported my every decision in life and was particularly encouraging throughout my doctoral studies. He is greatly missed by all who knew him and is remembered as a charming man who would help others wherever he could and who loved family life and the comfort of a lovely home with my amazing Mum by his side, two very special people who inspire me every day.

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# LIST OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	02
Dedication.....	03
Acknowledgements.....	04
<b>LIST OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS USED.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1 The Need for Materials Production.....	15
1.2 Educationally-effective Materials Production.....	18
1.3 Rationale for the Study.....	20
1.4 Aim and Research Questions.....	20
1.5 Organisation of the Study.....	21
<b>2 CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1 Overview.....	22
2.2 Tertiary Education.....	22
2.3 Primary and Secondary Education.....	23
2.4 ELT Professionals in Oman.....	24
<b>3 LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1 Approaching Materials Production.....	25
3.2 Writer Factors.....	26
3.3 Needs Analysis.....	28
3.3.1 Needs Analysis for Mediated Materials.....	28
3.3.2 Needs Analysis for Unmediated Materials.....	29
3.3.3 Stakeholders in the Educational Process.....	30

3.3.4 Present / Future Situation Analysis.....	31
3.4 Syllabus Design.....	32
3.4.1 Institutional Requirements.....	33
3.4.2 Objectives and Outcomes.....	33
3.5 Course Content.....	34
3.5.1 Level of Difficulty: Language; Content; and Task... ..	35
3.5.2 Relevance to Present and Future Situation Analysis.....	36
3.5.3 Cultural Appropriacy and Relevance.....	36
3.5.4 Authentic Materials versus Created Materials.....	37
3.6 Second Language Acquisition Research and Pedagogy ... ..	38
3.6.1 Using SLA Research.....	39
3.6.2 A Sociocultural Approach to Classroom Teaching .....	39
3.6.3 Language Practice in the Classroom .....	40
3.6.4 Types of Classroom Instruction .....	40
3.6.5 Language Practice in Pairs and Groups .....	43
3.6.6 Implications for Materials Writers .....	43
3.6.7 Teacher Support.....	44
3.6.8 Learner Support.....	46
3.6.9 Incremental Learning.....	46
3.7 Learner Factors.....	47
3.7.1 Affective Engagement.....	48
3.7.2 Cognitive Engagement.....	51
3.7.3 Noticing.....	52
3.7.4 Identity.....	53
3.7.5 Learners' Voicing of Own Cultural Experience.....	54
3.7.6 Linking the Classroom to Learners' Lives Outside.....	54
3.7.7 Motivation.....	55
3.7.8 Participation, Interaction and Collaboration.....	57
3.8 Desktop-publishing Design.....	59
3.9 Evaluation of Materials' Effectiveness.....	60
3.9.1 Communities of Practice / Collegiality.....	61
3.9.2 Piloting.....	62

3.9.2.1	Pre-piloting.....	62
3.9.2.2	Piloting Material.....	63
3.9.2.3	Revising and Re-piloting.....	65
3.9.2.4	Difficulties with Piloting.....	66
3.9.3	The Reflective Educationalist.....	67
3.10	Recent Studies of Materials Writers in Action.....	69
3.11	From Academic Knowledge to Writers' Activities.....	73
<b>4</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>75</b>
4.1	Overview.....	75
4.2	Research Framework.....	75
4.2.1	Philosophy of Research.....	75
4.2.2	Theoretical Orientation.....	76
4.2.2.1	An Interpretative Stance.....	77
4.2.2.2	A Social Constructivist Stance.....	77
4.3	Methodology.....	78
4.4	Research Objectives and Research Questions.....	79
4.5	Methods.....	79
4.5.1	Participant Questionnaires.....	82
4.5.2	Interviews.....	86
4.5.3	Data Collection Tools Used in Unison to Address RQs... ..	88
4.6	Participants / Sampling.....	90
4.6.1	Identifying the Population of the Study.....	91
4.6.2	The Participants and their Materials Writing Experience.....	92
4.7	Procedures.....	93
4.8	Credibility and Trustworthiness.....	97
4.9	Position and Role of the Researcher.....	98
4.10	Data Analysis.....	99
4.10.1	Quantitative Data Analysis.....	100
4.10.2	Qualitative Data Analysis.....	100
4.10.2.1	Coding and Collating Spoken Data and Written Data.....	101
4.10.2.2	Organizing Codes.....	104
4.10.2.3	Categorizing Codes.....	104

4.10.2.4 Constructing Themes.....	105
4.11 Ethical Issues.....	105
4.11.1 Ethical Issues Relating to the Participants.....	105
4.11.2 Ethical Issues Relating to Procedures and Processes.....	106
4.12 Limitations of the Design and Methods.....	107
4.13 Reflexive Good Practice.....	110
<b>5 FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>111</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	111
5.2 Key Aspects of Materials Production.....	112
5.2.1 Needs Analysis .....	112
5.2.2 Local Learning Context.....	116
5.2.3 Teaching Objectives and Learner Outcomes.....	120
5.2.4 Writer Creativity.....	124
5.2.5 Evaluating Materials.....	125
5.3 Writers and Theoretical Knowledge.....	128
5.3.1 Keeping Current in Academic Theory .....	128
5.3.1.1 Writers Using Academic Theory to Underpin their Materials.....	129
5.3.1.2 Writers <u>Not</u> Using Academic Theory to Underpin their Materials.....	131
5.4 Writers and Pedagogic Knowledge.....	132
5.4.1 ELT Pedagogy.....	133
5.4.2 Producing Tasks.....	135
5.4.3 Teacher Notes / Books.....	137
5.5 Writers and Practical Knowledge of DTP.....	139
5.5.1 Design and Face Validity .....	140
5.6 Key Influences on EFL Writers.....	143
5.6.1 Personal Principles.....	144
5.6.1.1 Principles Derived from Personal Language Learning.....	144
5.6.1.2 Principles Derived from EFL Experience.....	147
5.6.2 EFL Training.....	149
5.6.3 EFL Experience.....	151
5.7 Priorities when Planning Materials.....	154
5.7.1 Addressing Stakeholder Requirements.....	154



5.7.2	Syllabus Design.....	156
5.8	What Writers Feel They are Lacking.....	159
5.8.1	Continuing Professional Development for Writers.....	159
5.9	Additional Themes Emerging.....	161
5.9.1	Working with Colleagues on Materials.....	161
5.9.2	Producing an ibook.....	162
5.10	Summaries of Less Significant Themes.....	163
5.10.1	Using Authentic versus Created Materials.....	163
5.10.2	Recycling and Incremental Learning.....	164
5.10.3	Addressing Learning Styles.....	164
5.10.4	Using Technology.....	165
<b>6</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>167</b>
6.1	Key Aspects to Producing Effective Materials.....	167
6.1.1	Writer’s Knowledge: Theoretical; Pedagogic; and Practical... ..	168
6.1.2	Conducting a Needs Analysis.....	170
6.1.3	Producing Tasks.....	173
6.1.4	Creating Teachers’ Books.....	174
6.1.5	Addressing the Local Learning Context.....	175
6.1.6	Evaluating Materials.....	177
6.2	Key Influences on Writers’ Materials Production.....	179
6.2.1	Writers’ Principles, L2 Learning, EFL Training and Experience.....	179
6.2.2	Syllabus Design.....	180
6.3	Writers’ Perceived Needs for Further Improvement.....	181
<b>7</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>183</b>
7.1	Implications and Recommendations.....	183
7.2	Contribution to Knowledge.....	189
7.3	Weaknesses and Limitations of the Study.....	190
7.3.1	Low Number of Respondents to Questionnaires.....	190
7.3.2	Large Number of Interviews Conducted.....	191
7.3.3	Potential Alternative Data Collection Tools.....	191
7.4	Further Study.....	193

7.5 Final Reflection and Future Action.....	194
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<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>195</b>
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Appendix 1: Data Collection Survey Booklet.....	195
---	-----

Appendix 2: Example of a Personalized Interview Guide.....	204
--	-----

Appendix 3: Participant Profiles.....	207
---------------------------------------	-----

Appendix 4: Interview Statistics.....	213
---------------------------------------	-----

Appendix 5: Possible Categories / Themes in Ranking Questionnaire.....	214
--	-----

Appendix 6: Example of Sub-section of the Ranking Questionnaire..	215
---	-----

Appendix 7: Likert-type Questionnaire with Possible Coding Labels.....	216
--	-----

Appendix 8: Collated Results for Ranking Questionnaire.....	218
---	-----

Appendix 9: Likert-type Responses Collated Results – Analysed.....	222
--	-----

Appendix 10: Example of coded Open-ended Written Responses.....	225
---	-----

Appendix 11: Example of a Coded Transcript.....	226
---	-----

Appendix 12: Examples from the Code Book.....	243
---	-----

Appendix 13: Categories Derived from Codes (an Example).....	244
--	-----

Appendix 14: Themes Derived from Categories (an Example).....	245
---	-----

Appendix 15: Consent Forms.....	246
---------------------------------	-----

<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>250</b>
------------------------	------------

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 3.1: Upper levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.....	49
Figure 3.2: Cognitive motivational psychology framework.....	56
Figure 3.3: The place of evaluation.....	60
Figure 3.4: Questions for the analysis of tasks.....	66
Table 4.1: Example ranking item for aspects of materials production.....	85
Table 4.2: Example Likert-type question for aspects of planning materials... .	85
Table 4.3: Examples of follow-up interview questions.....	88
Table 4.4: How data collection tools addressed research questions.....	89
Table 4.5: Ranking items relating to pedagogic considerations .....	89
Table 4.6: Likert-type questions relating to pedagogic considerations .....	89
Table 4.7: Quantitative data presented in tabular form .....	100
Table 4.8: Example of a colour-coded transcript .....	101
Table 4.9: Code book example of reading between the lines.....	102
Table 4.10: Example code book entry under Additional themes.....	104
Table 5.1: Themes addressing key aspects of materials production.....	112
Table 5.2: Importance of doing a needs analysis (RAQ2).....	112
Table 5.3: Time spent doing a needs analysis (LQ8).....	113
Table 5.4: Importance of the learning environment (RAQ17)	
Appropriacy and relevance to the local context (RAQ23)	
Learners’ backgrounds and identities (RAQ33)	
Linking the classroom to learners’ lives (RAQ35).....	116
Table 5.5: Focussing on learners (LQ12).....	117
Table 5.6: Institutional requirements (RAQ18)	
Meeting objectives and outcomes (RAQ19).....	120
Table 5.7: Meeting learning objectives (RAQ19).....	121
Table 5.8: Being creative when writing materials (RAQ15).....	124
Table 5.9: The importance of evaluating materials effectiveness (LQ14).....	125
Table 5.10: Piloting materials (RAQ43)	
Critically reviewing materials (RAQ45).....	126
Table 5.11: Themes addressing writers’ views of theoretical knowledge .....	128
Table 5.12: Writers assessing their personal ideas on materials (RAQ1).....	128

Table 5.13: Themes addressing writers' views of pedagogic knowledge.....	132
Table 5.14: Pedagogic considerations for classroom success (RAQ5), choosing appropriate methodology (RAQ25) and providing learner support (RAQ28).....	133
Table 5.15: Context- and needs-related tasks (RAQ26).....	135
Table 5.16: Teacher support (RAQ27).....	137
Table 5.17: Themes addressing writers' practical knowledge of DTP.....	140
Table 5.18: The importance of DTP skills (RAQ7).....	140
Table 5.19: Practical knowledge of DTP (LQ7).....	140
Table 5.20: Appearance of materials (LQ13).....	141
Table 5.21: Themes addressing key influences on writers.....	143
Table 5.22: Influence of previous learning experiences (RAQ9).....	144
Table 5.23: Influence of personal language learning (LQ3).....	144
Table 5.24: Examples of writers' language learning histories .....	145
Table 5.25: Re-assessing personal theory with current theory (RAQ1) Writers' beliefs about SLA (RAQ10) Influence of a writer's identity and background (RAQ14).....	147
Table 5.26: Influence of writer's personal beliefs (LQ4).....	148
Table 5.27: Importance of professional training (RAQ11).....	149
Table 5.28: Influence of ELT training on writer's approach (LQ5).....	149
Table 5.29: Importance of professional experience (RAQ12) Professional expertise (RAQ13).....	152
Table 5.30: Influence of ELT experience on materials writing (LQ6).....	152
Table 5.31: Themes addressing what writers prioritise when planning.....	154
Table 5.32: Awareness of stakeholders (RAQ16).....	155
Table 5.33: Designing an appropriate syllabus (RAQ3) Overview of results for institutional requirements (RAQ18) Overview of results for meeting TOs and LOs (RAQ19).....	156
Table 5.34: Writers considering syllabus design (LQ9).....	157
Table 5.35: Themes addressing what writers feel they are lacking.....	159
Table 5.36: Emerging themes not addressing a research question.....	161

## ABBREVIATIONS USED

BANA	= Britain, Australia, and North America
BERA	= British Educational Research Association
CELTA	= Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
CLIL	= content and language integrated learning
CLT	= communicative language teaching
CPD	= continuing professional development
DELTA	= Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
DTP	= desktop publishing
EAP	= English for Academic Purposes
EBP	= English for Business Purposes
EFL	= English as a Foreign Language
ELT	= English Language Training
EOP	= English for Occupational Purposes
ESL	= English as a Second Language
ESP	= English for Special Purposes
FL	= foreign language
FSA	= future situation analysis
GUtech	= the German University of Technology
IATEFL	= International Association of Teachers as a Foreign Language
IELTS	= International English Language Testing System
INQ	= interview questions
LO	= learner outcome
LQ	= Likert-type question
L1	= first language
L2	= second language
MATSDA	= Materials Development Association
NA	= needs analysis
NNS	= non-native speakers
NS	= native speakers
OAAA	= Oman Academic Accreditation Authority
OJT	= on-the-job training

## ABBREVIATIONS USED

PGCE	= Post-graduate Certificate of Education
PPP	= presentation-practice-production
PSA	= present situation analysis
QU	= open-ended written question [used in the code book]
RAQ	= ranking survey question
RQ	= research question
RSA	= Royal Society of Arts
SIG	= special interest group
SLA	= second language acquisition
SQU	= Sultan Qaboos University
S <sup>2</sup> R	= Strategic Self-Regulation Model of language learning
TBLT	= task-based language teaching
TEFL	= Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	= Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
TO	= teaching objective
UAE	= the United Arab Emirates

# 1 INTRODUCTION

English language training worldwide has become a huge industry in recent years. Concurrently, global coursebook sales have increased and current approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (Savignon, 2002), amongst others, rely on materials to deliver ELT courses. In light of this, Stenhouse's view of writers being change agents (1975) brings the importance of materials writing into sharp relief. Wenger not only concurs with this view but claims that educationalists are the architects of tomorrow (1998). Clearly, materials writers are an integral part of ELT.

## 1.1 The Need for Materials Production

ELT materials come in two forms: mediated materials commissioned by publishing houses for a large market; and unmediated materials produced for use within an institution or group of institutions and hence focussed on local, often-specific needs without the influence and control of a publishing house.

The need to produce in-house materials derives from three scenarios. The first scenario is the following. Whilst published materials, in the form of coursebooks, supplementary skills books, activity books, and stand-alone materials, have enjoyed increased sales, they may also present teachers and learners with problems in three main areas. One problem is in relation to SLA theory since 'the classroom and the textbook can never fully reflect the stages that interlanguages go through' (Cook, 2008, p32). Another problem is methodology, as published materials rarely promote 'locally appropriate methodology' (Harwood, 2010, p19). A further problem concerns cultural appropriacy (Gray, 2010) with globalised material including content which may be inappropriate for particular groups of learners. These problems can occur in courses for General English, English for Young Learners, English for examinations, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and many other forms of ELT. In such instances, a decision will then be made to adapt,

supplement or replace the offending material and ELT personnel will be assigned the task of producing materials to exclude such inappropriate or ineffective content. However, materials development activities are rarely undertaken by experienced writers so the onus falls on classroom teachers to produce material to satisfy the institution's needs with delegation of such work not always based on expertise but on who is available.

A second scenario is that an institution may be required to deliver a specialised course for which no suitable, published coursebook is available. In this scenario, both syllabus design and materials production will be needed and ELT personnel will be required to produce documentation and material accordingly.

A third scenario prompting materials writing is when teachers themselves decide to become involved in materials development resulting from a perceived need to present material which is more relevant to their learners (Allwright & Hanks, 2009; Brumfit, 2001) than pre-selected coursebooks may be since these are 'particular constructions of reality' (Apple and Christian-Smith, quoted in Gray, 2010, p174) and may be totally alien in terms of appropriacy, concept, culture, learner-experience, and relevance.

It is important to make clear the distinction between materials writers and syllabus designers as used in this study. Materials writers include ELT educationalists who produce units and / or pages of coursebooks, worksheets, activities and other supplementary materials. Syllabus designers are ELT educationalists who plan and prepare the input / output of complete English language courses. They are often also materials writers who are engaged on projects to plan, prepare and produce not only the syllabus specifications but also the classroom materials which enable learners and teachers to fulfill the objectives and outcomes as outlined in the course specification. In my experience, ELT teachers usually begin their materials writing activities as a means to ensure their learners get what they really need to be successful. Such informal activities can be formalised as per institutional requirements and, later expanded to include syllabus design.



Whichever writing activities the ELT educationalist is engaged in, the effectiveness of the materials produced will depend on the individual writer's intuitive decision-making process drawing on his / her personal language learning history, professional education history and personal ELT writing history (McGrath, 2002). Such decisions may result in effective learning materials, or may produce texts, tasks and activities which are ineffective and / or inappropriate.

With many ELT professionals worldwide producing materials and courses who may not have sufficient knowledge of theory and pedagogic practices, it is clear that there needs to be a focus on improving the effectiveness of these writers. However, until recently little research has been done into practical aspects of materials production. The most notable exceptions to this are the activities of Brian Tomlinson (2003, 2008, 2011, 2013) and his colleagues at Leeds Beckett University, UK, formerly known as Leeds Metropolitan University, Tomlinson & Masuhara (2010) and a few other authors (eg. McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara, 2012). The afore-mentioned authors' focus on practical aspects has led to innovations in the form of a Master's programme in materials writing at Leeds Metropolitan University (as detailed on the university website), the recent formation of the Materials Development Association (MATSDA, 2013) in 2004, and the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) Writers' Special Interest Group (MaWSIG) (IATEFL, 2013) in 2012.

The ELT industry's clients and consumers invest time, energy and money in their studies expecting to receive learning-effective materials and coursebooks produced by informed writers whose work is grounded in best practice, as advocated by Lutzker (in Tomlinson, 2013). Such informed materials production, as promoted by the innovations noted in the previous paragraph, is key to promoting a professional industry in which quality is ensured through ELT professionals having the requisite knowledge of theory and pedagogic practices.

## 1.2 Educationally-effective Materials Production

To ensure ELT writers are producing educationally-effective materials, they should be informed by classroom research of principled materials production (Tomlinson, 2013). This includes theoretical, pedagogic and practical perspectives as examined below.

Theories of SLA are barely covered by CELTA and DELTA courses, which focus on classroom practice. It is no surprise that Allwright and Hanks contend 'classroom reality lags behind best practice' (2009, p7) when SLA theory gets so little coverage on professional training courses. Clearly, writers should be informed by a principled approach to both teaching and writing as advocated by Tomlinson (in Harwood, 2010). This needs to include both an overview of recent SLA theory and approaches combined with a focus on the latest theories informing ELT effectiveness.

Locally-based ELT writing suffers from being the forgotten area (Dubin, 1995) of the ELT industry with limited academic literature covering the area and very few academic or professional qualifications ensuring an informed population of writers on a professional track (Byrd, 1995). The literature on SLA, teaching, assessment, and teacher education in particular repeatedly gives 'insufficient attention ... to the role of materials in language teaching' as pinpointed by Richards (2010, p10). Gieve and Miller, talking about knowledge makers (2006), exclude writers altogether. Yet the power of coursebooks (Littlejohn, 2011; Richards, 2014; Tomlinson, 2003a) and materials to influence what happens in classrooms, in examinations, and in teacher education is pervasive for, as Hutchinson and Torres point out 'in many places there is no formal written curriculum, and so materials such as coursebooks constitute a de facto curriculum in themselves' (1994 in Johnston, 2003, p36). Indeed, McGrath contends that 'curriculum materials are seen to constrain and control both knowledge and teaching' (Apple and Jungck, 1990; Ball and Feiman-Nemser, 1988, cited by McGrath, 2013, p87) so it would be wise for educationalists to

heed Cunningsworth's contention that 'coursebooks are good servants but poor masters' (1984 quoted by McGrath, 2002, p215).

Global coursebooks emanate mainly from the UK and the center communities (Canagarajah, 1999). These coursebooks present all-manner of potential problems for educationalists and their learners in their local contexts in the periphery (ibid). Combine the power of the global coursebook with the variable professional knowledge of teachers producing materials locally and the need for professional certification becomes a major issue for the ELT industry. Moreover, formative and summative assessment tools often mirror these global coursebooks thereby imposing external and inappropriate tests rather than allowing negotiation of testing tools by the writers, teachers and learners to ensure validity and relevance to local needs and contexts.

Materials writers would benefit from both seeing and evaluating materials but also from being involved in the production of effective materials in keeping with Piagetian psychology: 'I see and I remember, I do and I understand' (Piaget, 1970, quoted in Edwards & Mercer, 1987, p37) to have theory translated into practice.

The plethora of coursebooks delivering language learning according to the multiplicity of approaches and methodologies over the last sixty years bears testament to the evolving nature of SLA theory and practice. Perhaps the most detailed treatment of an approach to-date has been that of task-based language teaching (TBLT), (Nunan, 1998, 2004; Willis and Willis, 2007). These authors aimed to inform ELT educationalists of pedagogic aspects of effective materials production. Such expert input is essential to connect academic theory with classroom practices and cannot be overrated in its importance to effective learning.

What is workable in the classroom is usually only apparent once the materials have been used with learners and teachers. As such, even though published coursebooks have been piloted by multiple users in multiple institutions worldwide, these global courses still present individual users with specific

problems. As Jolly and Bolitho have identified ‘the ‘further away the author is from the learners, the less effective the material is likely to be’ (2011, cited by McGrath, 2013, p44). Locally-written materials should already be grounded in local classroom expertise. Enhancing this local knowledge with practical aspects of text / task design should be a pre-requisite as suggested by numerous check lists aimed at writers (for examples see: Richards, 2001; Tomlinson, 2003, 2008, 2011, 2013).

### **1.3 Rationale for the Study**

As a materials writer myself, informed by thirty-plus years in the EFL industry as a teacher, teacher trainer, examiner, and coursebook and examinations writer, I was confident of my knowledge, expertise and capabilities to produce educationally-effective materials. However, from my doctoral reading at the assignment writing stage of the Ed syllabus, it became apparent that, despite my extensive EFL experience, I was largely unaware of current best practice grounded in academic theory and pedagogic expertise relating to materials production. Naturally, this came as a shock professionally. Therefore, it seemed both logical and essential for me to pursue more in-depth knowledge of materials writing for the EFL classroom with a view to improving my own materials as well as allowing me to offer informed guidance to other EFL educationalists in the future. Moreover, as a result of this personal epiphany, I became eager to engage with other writers in similar contexts to my own here in the Sultanate of Oman and explore how they approach their ELT writing.

### **1.4 Aim and Research Questions**

This study seeks to explore the process of ELT materials production in the post-method era (Akbari, 2008) from a socio-cultural standpoint (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) and to examine how this part of ELT-life is approached from a theoretical,

pedagogic and practical perspective by ELT professionals. To achieve that aim, this study seeks to answer the following research questions (RQs):

- 1 What do ELT educationalists view as key aspects to their producing effective materials for their learners?
  - a How do they view the importance of theoretical knowledge?
  - b How do they view the importance of pedagogic knowledge?
  - c How do they view the importance of practical knowledge of desktop publishing (DTP)?
- 2 What aspects of teaching and learning influence writers in the process of producing materials for their learners?
  - a What do they prioritise when planning materials?
- 3 What do ELT educationalists feel they are lacking and would like to be better informed about in respect of materials production?

## **1.5 Organisation of the Study**

There are 7 chapters in this study. Introduction (1) describes the importance of materials production, provides the rationale for the study, and states the research questions. Context (2) details the local educational scenarios within which the sample of writers work. Literature Review (3) covers the key concepts underlying materials writing. Methodology (4) describes the research framework and methodological components of this study. It also gives details of the sample, data collection and analysis, and discusses ethical dimensions of the study. Findings (5) presents results covering key areas of concern and relevance to educationalists in relation to materials production. Discussion (6) considers the analytical findings in light of the literature and their consequences within the context of the study. Implications and Recommendations (7) presents key implications arising from the study's discussion chapter and recommends actions that might be taken in terms of ELT as a worldwide industry. It also suggests avenues of further research in respect of the findings and discussion. Finally, the author reflects briefly on his learning journey occasioned by this study.

## 2 CONTEXT

### 2.1 Overview

This study was conducted in the Sultanate of Oman which is located on the south-east coast of the Arabian Peninsula. It has borders with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the north-west, Saudi Arabia in the west, and Yemen in the south-west (the Sultanate of Oman, <http://www.omansultanate.com>). The areas of population are split between Muscat and the north of the country, made up of the regions of Muscat, Al Batinah, Ash Sharqiyah, Ad Dhahirah, and Ad Dakhiliyah and the south of the Sultanate, which is made up of the region of Dhofar with its regional centre of Salalah. Separating these two areas of major population is the desert region of Al Wusta. The Musandam region is separated from the rest of the country by the UAE. For the purposes of this study, participants live in the northern regions and work in public and private educational institutions, with the majority working in tertiary education and a few working in secondary or primary education.

### 2.2 Tertiary Education

Tertiary education falls mainly under the auspices of the Ministry of Higher Education, established in 1994, whose mission and vision statements are:

**The Ministry of Higher Education Vision Statement:**

To ensure quality Higher Education that meets the requirements for sustainable development.

**Mission Statement of the Ministry:**

To promote a Higher Education system that: a) keeps pace with developments and changes in today's world; b) meets the requirements of sustainable development in the Knowledge Era, while preserving the cultural identity of Omani society; and, c) contributes to the progress and development of humankind.

(<http://www.mohe.gov.om>)

The majority of higher education institutions require their students to undertake a foundation programme, usually lasting for one year, which is made up largely of an English course to support school leavers to attain the required level of English and study skills competence to successfully embark on diploma and degree courses.

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) was founded in 1986 and remains the only public university in the Sultanate. There are now other, private universities including: the University of Buraimi; Dhofar University; the German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech); the University of Nizwa; Sohar University; and the Arab Open University.

Other higher education institutions in the Sultanate include: the Higher College of Technology in Muscat; Colleges of Technology in Al Musanna, Ibra, Ibri and Shinas; Caledonian College of Engineering, Muscat; Colleges of Applied Sciences in Ibri, Nizwa, Rustaq, Salalah and Sur; Modern College of Business and Science, Muscat; Oman Medical College in Muscat; military colleges and training wings and other tertiary-level institutions. Many of these institutions not only offer diploma and bachelor's degree courses but also some master's and doctoral programmes.

The Ministry of Manpower has responsibility for Vocational Training Centres to prepare Omani candidates to operate in vocational fields. There are currently five centres in A'Seeb, Saham, Sur, Ibri and Shinas (e-Government Services Portal, <http://www.oman.om>).

### **2.3 Primary and Secondary Education**

Before 1970, Oman only had three schools countrywide with a total of approximately 900 students receiving education. With His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said ascending the throne in July, 1970, education was made a priority so that by the academic year 1975 / 1976, 207 government schools

were educating some 55,752 students. For the academic year 1985 / 1986, these numbers had risen to 588 schools with 218,914 students (Ministry of Education, <http://www.moe.gov.om>). The most recent statistics available from the 2011 / 2012 academic year show the number of schools at 1,040 with 517,041 students attending (Ministry of Information, <http://www.omanet.om>).

In tandem with the number of schools for Omani children, many private schools offer education to expatriate children including: The British School; the American British Academy, the American International School of Muscat; Indian Schools, Pakistani Schools and others. By 2012, there were 445 private schools and 39 international schools (Ministry of information, <http://www.omanet.om>). The vast majority of these schools include English language training as part of their core curriculum.

## **2.4 ELT Professionals in Oman**

The requirements for gaining employment vary between institutions. As an example, the Colleges of Applied Sciences have comprehensive listings of the requirements for the various academic positions in their academic hierarchy with ELT personnel requiring specific qualifications, experience and skills:

a qualification in English Language Teaching (e.g. PGCE, CELTA or Trinity TEFL certificate, DELTA); an MA in English (TESOL, ELT, ESL, EFL or Applied Linguistics); 3 years of English Language Teaching experience at tertiary level; and a first degree preferably in a related field. For ESP teachers, first degrees in relevant subjects such as Communications, Design, Engineering or IT would be welcome.

(condensed from Colleges of Applied Sciences, 2014)

This ensures that ELT professionals have the pre-requisite training, experience and skills for teaching duties. However, a significant number of these professionals are subsequently re-assigned to materials development activities often with little or no professional experience of this specialised area of ELT.



### **3 LITERATURE REVIEW**

ELT materials writers need a clear understanding of what research tells us about the process of language learning in order to produce materials which will be grounded in sound theory and practice and therefore enable effective teaching and learning to take place in the classroom. Theories of SLA (Dixon et al, 2012; Ellis, 1994, 2001; Han & Ellis, 1998; Lightbown, 1985, 2000; Lightbown and Spada, 2006; Lyster, Saito & Sato, 2013; Long, 1985, 1991; Masuhara & Tomlinson, 2008; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Ortega, 2011; Schmidt, 1993; Spada, 2011, 2015; Tomlinson, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978; White, Muñoz & Collins, 2007) should inform all stages in the materials writing process.

#### **3.1 Approaching Materials Production**

The process of materials production begins with the need for materials which are planned and produced according to the findings of a needs analysis (Long, 2005). These findings inform the design of the syllabus (Apple, 1990; Basturkmen, 2006; Fenner and Newby, 2000; Harwood, 2010; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Markee, 1996; McGrath, 2002, 2013; Nunan, 1998, 2004; Richards, 2001; Tomlinson, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2010, 2012; White, 1988) at which point decisions are made as to content and pedagogic considerations which are affected by learner factors (Arnold, 1999). Syllabus design then becomes the driving force behind each and every unit, page and task / activity produced. The physical design of the material, the DTP stage, plays a key role in influencing learners' and teachers' attitudes to the materials. Once the materials have been piloted, the writer engages in the process of evaluation and revisions to ensure effectiveness of the materials for future users.

Together, these factors and stages combine to make the materials writing process an effective vehicle for learner success if all stages are informed by sound principles of SLA. Before I consider each of the above factors and stages, it is important to state that, whilst this literature review places these

stages in a logical order sequentially in the writing process, empirical studies of writers and writing projects do not necessarily correspond to such an order. In the following sub-sections, I consider each stage in turn and then I examine several examples of actual processes of materials production, as documented by researchers, which do not necessarily adhere to a logical order of the process of materials production.

### **3.2 Writer Factors**

ELT writers have usually been classroom teachers so that they have assumed an expanded role (Cheng, 2001). Their writing activities will be informed by previous learning experiences which influence personal teaching theory and practice (Bailey, 1996; Sendan & Roberts, 1998; Borg, 2001; Donahue, 2003) and can often engender highly culture-specific approaches to teaching and learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Pennycook, 1995; Tollefson, 2000).

ELT writers are also influenced by professional training. ELT educationalists' continuing professional development (CPD) should, according to Day & Sachs (2004), lead to learning which maintains their skill sets, improves them or even fosters new approaches or skills. The knowledge gained from CPD should promote professional knowledge according to Cochrane-Smith and Lytle's three concepts of knowledge: knowledge-for-practice ... ; knowledge-of-practice ... ; and knowledge-in-practice (adapted, 1999, cited extensively in Day & Sachs, 2004) which writers demonstrate in the materials they produce.

As they develop, ELT writers have the opportunity to expand their professional expertise. Freeman and Johnson's claim for teacher education also resonates for writers in that CPD should deliver on-the-job (OJT) training (1998) to build a knowledge base (Larsen-Freeman, quoted in Mann, 2005). By acquiring greater knowledge specific to a specialized area (Ferguson and Dunno, 2003) such as producing effective materials for their own local context, writers should become more context sensitive (Bax, 2003).

This locally-situated pedagogic knowledge enables writers to engage in principled eclecticism (Lewis, 1997) and produce appropriate and relevant materials for learners and teachers. To do this, they employ pedagogic reasoning skills to combine their creative and imaginative abilities with appropriate, effective pedagogy (Harwood, 2010).

An ELT writer's personal beliefs (Borg, 2006) and hence the professional decisions he / she makes about second language learning are formed from a priori factors such as learning experiences labelled as apprenticeship(s) of observation (Lortie, 1975, Borg, 2004, quoted by Farrell, 2009) and initial pedagogic training, now commonly renamed as teacher preparation (Mann, 2005). These beliefs underpin an educationalist's thought processes and subsequent actions (Borg, 2001) and influence how a writer will select an approach or an eclectic blending of approaches (Prabhu, 1990) to underpin his / her materials production. Moreover, a writer not only plans and produces materials based on his / her beliefs but may also introduce or justify his / her actions by articulating his / her core approach to SLA, thereby fulfilling Borg's point about beliefs-in-action arising from espoused beliefs (ibid). In this way, a writer's tacit knowledge is made explicit (Nonaka & Takeuchi, cited by Sackney & Walker, 2006), as exemplified by syllabus design and materials produced.

For native speaker writers working outside of their own cultural and educational background, their educational identities will have been formed in Britain, Australia and North America [BANA countries] (Canagarajah, 1999) so there will be issues of local practices to take into account. This will require them to adapt and negotiate (Senior, 2006) when planning and producing materials. For non-native speakers working in their own cultures but grappling with the requirements of global or centrist BANA countries' syllabus design and classroom pedagogy, such a scenario may present professional and even moral difficulties (Johnston, 2003) as to which professional approach to follow: one's own beliefs combined with a clear sense of their educational identity; or those of another, alien educational system.

### 3.3 Needs Analysis

Needs Analysis (NA) is a necessary aspect of syllabus design, and hence materials production, according to Dubin and Olshtain (1986). Indeed, Benesch sees NA as a fundamental defining criterion in terms of ESP (2001) and should be undertaken to discover learners' genuine needs (Richards, 2001). Munby (1978) presents a comprehensive treatment of language needs for specific courses and Nunan (1988) outlines the roles methodology, materials, skills and evaluation play in NA and course design. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) expand on Nunan's work with their multi-disciplinary approach to NA including ESP, EAP, English for Business Purposes (EBP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) course design. Waters and Vilches (2001) recommend a framework for NA which includes both areas of priority and neglect to provide a fuller range of potential learner needs and Long's extensive treatment of NA (2005) outlines all aspects of accurate and essential data collection to inform syllabus design whilst also advising writers not to rely solely on their intuitions (2005).

Long's admonition for writers to go beyond their intuitions applies to both mediated materials, that is material produced for a publisher or large institution for global or widespread dissemination, and unmediated materials, that is material produced for a local context and usually used in a single institution. Both types of NA are examined in the following sub-sections.

#### 3.3.1 Needs Analysis for Mediated Materials

Singapore Wala (2003) describes the inception of an ELT textbook for a ministry of education with an initial *market survey questionnaire* leading to the inclusion of prospective users, that is ministry teachers, at the planning stage who can offer practical solutions to actual problems (Nisbet, 1975). This initial NA data enabled the project team to make a number of significant and innovative decisions relating to what the textbook, and supplementary materials

and resources, contained in response to teachers' *actual* prior problems with materials. The initial NA data was then supplemented by engaging some teachers in focus group sessions.

Singapore Wala (2003) relates how these sessions both confirmed initial ideas and clarified other teacher-concerns, in other words addressing teachers' wants and needs (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). This NA data collection process enabled the project team to make relevant design decisions covering areas such as: the principles, approach and methodology underlying the new textbook; the place of grammar in each unit of material; localised, regional and global text content with a focus on authentic texts; and training support for teachers organized by the publisher. As Singapore Wala says, quoting Gower and Bell (1998) having such *meeting points* as focus groups allows for the essential dialogue between writers and teachers to ensure needs and wants are indeed met.

In contrast, Timmis (2104) outlines a top-down approach to NA, where the publisher handed down a briefing document listing key specifications. These specifications included apparently *reasonable* ideas for unit construction but also *problematic* topics insisted upon by the end-user – a ministry of education. Such a scenario may present challenges for the writer to ensure appropriate mediated material is produced to facilitate successful learning. Producing unmediated material does not face such challenges as I examine in the next sub-section.

### **3.3.2 Needs Analysis for Unmediated Materials**

The literature has a number of studies referring to mediated materials production (Amrani, 2005; Feak & Swales, 2014; Hadfield, 2014; Singapore Wala, 2003; Stoller & Robinson, 2014) although only Singapore Wala gives any detail as to the form the NA process took. Referring to unmediated materials, there is a dearth of relevant literature. Cowling's (2007) case study of the NA process preceding the writing of a short, intensive business English course for a client - an industrial company, sheds light on the actual NA process.

Cowling collected NA data from: key client management personnel; client training personnel; client English language instructors; and company learners. Cowling used unstructured, open-ended interviews with client personnel, representing domain experts (Long, 2005), but found that they were not forthcoming and expected the course designer to take responsibility for course design independently of client needs. Conversely, the client language instructors, representing non-experts (ibid), were more receptive and offered limited data relating to the target learners' present abilities and future needs. Distributing open-ended questionnaires to company learners who then worked through them in groups with their company instructor gleaned some data and led to Cowling including a further stage in the NA process - open-ended, structured questionnaires to be completed by company learners working in conjunction with senior employees who had already received business English training. In this way, Cowling was able to gain data from personnel working in the target situation which enabled him to prepare a content-based and notional-functional syllabus, with an emphasis on authenticity and cultural aspects, to address learners' actual and future needs.

From his description of the NA process Cowling contends that NA requires careful planning and an ability to adapt to the local scenario which may be constrained by such issues as: time constraints; cultural differences; and influence of stakeholders other than end-users.

From Cowling's description, it is clear that writers need to triangulate collected data from multiple sources: published and unpublished literature; learners; teachers and applied linguists; and domain experts (see Long, 2005). Key amongst these domain experts will be stakeholders in the educational process and it is on these that I now focus my attention.

### **3.3.3 Stakeholders in the Educational Process**

Conducting a professional NA should involve all stakeholders in the process of ELT for the local context, be it general English, EAP, ESP or other course-

forms. With the potential for the collecting of a considerable amount of data at this stage, the writer needs to make informed decisions as to which stakeholders' input should be prioritized and therefore be allowed to influence the design and content of the syllabus (Macalister & Nation, 2011).

### **3.3.4 Present / Future Situation Analysis**

A present situation analysis (PSA) collects data from learners and teachers as to current language performance and immediate needs allowing the writer to pitch material at the appropriate level of difficulty. Conducting a future situation analysis (FSA) (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) allows the writer to collect linguistic data, including any contributory factors affecting this analysis (ibid) of future institutional and learner needs. According to Basturkmen, such an analysis should also provide detailed and accurate description (2006) of the target environment by collecting examples of target discourse to enable the identification of prototypical structures occurring (Long, 2005), be it the language of the workshop, hospital or academic institution. This focus on future needs then leads to syllabus design and materials development to assist learners join the discourse village (Wright, 2005) of their future career, studies or living environment with greater success.

Accurate NA data allows the writer to meld together the three aspects of ability, needs, and wants by coordinating what the learners currently know and can do, what they need for their futures and what the materials they currently have cover (McGrath, 2013). This should then encourage learners to become owners of learning (Tomlinson, 2008) and attain learning readiness (ibid) leading to learner success.

Informed by a detailed analysis of the data emerging from an NA, a writer is in a position to select the language, skills, texts, tasks, and assessment tools to produce an appropriate and effective syllabus design.

### 3.4 Syllabus Design

Syllabus designers plan and prepare a document, the syllabus, which outlines the teaching objectives (TOs) and learner outcomes (LOs) of a course. A syllabus (Apple, 1990; Basturkmen, 2006; Fenner and Newby, 2000; Harwood, 2010; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Markee, 1996; McGrath, 2002, 2013; Nunan, 1998, 2004; Richards, 2001; Tomlinson, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2010, 2012; White, 1988) can be structured in many ways to inform the materials writer(s) of what is to be covered by teachers, learners and quite probably test writers as well. Whilst it is common for the syllabus designer to also be the materials producer, the two roles can be mutually exclusive, depending on practical considerations within any particular educational institution, such as a private sector language school / college as opposed to a public body such as a government ministry of education. In both cases, it is important for the materials writer to understand the needs of the learners as expressed within the syllabus and be able to produce materials to ensure learner success accordingly.

Using both the PSA for selecting the linguistic input language and the FSA for ensuring input relevant to future needs places ELT syllabus design within what Stern labels a means-ends view (1983) with the aims of a course being the future objectives arising from the FSA (Widdowson, 1983).

Stemming from a detailed NA, a syllabus designer focuses on general categories first: design; overall clarity of organisation; design layout; target language; and language skills (adapted from list on evaluating coursebooks in McGrath, 2002, p43). The designer can then determine specific criteria (ibid) and be in a position to employ a fine-tuned checklist (ibid) to compile a syllabus framework as proposed by Richards (2001) to ensure prioritised needs and wants are met. This framework will then allow for additional features such as an integrated syllabus as well as suggest potential course content (ibid).

Course design has been extensively covered in the literature (Basturkmen, 2006; Canagarajah, 1999; Harwood, 2010; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Long,



2005; Macalister & Nation, 2011; Markee, 1997; McGrath, 2002, 2013; (McKernan, 2008, Nunan, 1998, 2004; Tomlinson, 2003, 2008, 2011, 2013; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2010; White, 1988). With the focus on learning-centredness as espoused by Holliday (1994) and supported by Hutchinson and Waters (1984, quoted in Holliday, 1994), Tomlinson's advocacy of experiential activities (2008) represents a key component in combining current SLA theory with informed practice in materials production and classroom practice. As Tomlinson suggests, 'ideally the materials should follow the principles of the experiential approach in which apprehension is followed by comprehension' (Kolb, 1984, quoted by Tomlinson, 2008) thereby engaging learners by encouraging a personal response (ibid) and leading them to participate in purposeful communication (Mishan, 2005).

### **3.4.1 Institutional Requirements**

Syllabus design can be affected by specific institutional requirements based on the institution's vision and mission statements, its curricula and course objectives and its syllabi and syllabus outcomes. These can dictate educational approach and classroom methodology thereby influencing syllabus design. Likewise, aspects of culture, religion, learner and societal needs, and appropriacy can all have a bearing on linguistic, skills and knowledge outcomes. Therefore syllabus designers need to satisfy Savignon's call for an appreciation of the broader cultural environment (Savignon, 1991, alluded to by Holliday, 1994).

### **3.4.2 Objectives and Outcomes**

Course objectives and outcomes derive from the NA with writers drawing on educational taxonomies (Bloom, 1956; Marzano, 2007) to aid construction of these elements in syllabus design. Once overarching TOs and detailed LOs have been selected, the designer must consider learnability (White, 1988) to avoid undue complexity of linguistic input unless it is specifically required,

before finalising an outcomes list. Similar selection procedures are relevant to grammatical and functional / notional target language (Wilkins, 1976; Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983) and appropriate / essential exponents thereof.

Required skills and sub-skills should correlate with the importance placed upon them by stakeholders. Norquest (2007) provides a learner-friendly formula for outcomes: specific; measurable; attainable; realistic; and timely, [SMART] and Basturkmen (2006) highlights the need for ESP writers to identify microskills relevant to particular ESP-learner needs.

Particularly relevant to ESP syllabus design is Basturkmen's call for writers to be working in close proximity to communities which are using the required target discourse (2006) to more accurately select and include not only linguistic and skills outcomes but also content knowledge outcomes according to what writers observe in such communities.

### **3.5 Course Content**

The syllabus represents a powerful influence on what learners and teachers do in the classroom. It provides lessons with frameworks of control (Tudor, 2001) and the materials, in the form of texts and tasks, present a learning environment which can be closely controlled (ibid). Materials selected to fulfill the requirements of the syllabus can also lend both predictability and stability (van Lier, 1996) with similar tasks and activities re-introduced throughout the course. Materials help in defining objectives (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) for learners as well as providing face validity (ibid), that is, showing the learners the relevance of the content to their current studies and future needs, with realia and visual aids adding to the sensory experiences of learners and teachers (Wright, 2005). Materials also exemplify the discourse and concepts for particular EAP or ESP courses (Abuklaish, 2014).

### 3.5.1 Level of Difficulty: Language; Content; and Task

Materials writers need a keen sense as to what constitutes the appropriate level of difficulty of the language, content and task presented and used in the ELT classroom. Coyle et al (2010) identify a key concern of content and language integrated learning (CLIL), which is also relevant to ELT, that the learners' language ability and cognitive skills will clearly influence not only the level of the language but also the level of complexity of texts and tasks from a cognitive standpoint and the resultant requirement for writers to grade texts and tasks thoughtfully (McGrath, 2002). On the other hand, Tomlinson advises educationalists not to underrate learners' abilities (2011) as he suggests global coursebooks do. Moreover, Tomlinson favours the use of activities which present challenging and stimulating problem scenarios but which increase learner confidence by being pitched a little above their level of ability: linguistic; skills-wise; and cognitively (ibid).

#### Language

Grading language for learners is a key aspect of producing material and writers need to be aware of a range of applicable criteria, for example, Wilkins' list of criteria for lexis including: 'frequency, range, availability, familiarity and coverage' (1976, p4) whilst for grammatical content Wilkins has 'simplicity, regularity, frequency and contrastive difficulty' (ibid). These are both valid lists of criteria to which Wilkins adds further layers of 'appropriacy to the classroom and teachability' (ibid) with a view to the pedagogic perspective of what will, and will not, work in the classroom.

Tomlinson calls for natural language (2011) as used by native speakers (NS) to be presented. This resonates with Smith and Patterson's contention that if the teacher (and the material) engages the learners cognitively, this will give learners a genuine need to use and acquire the relevant language (1998, quoted in Coyle et al, 2010). In this way, learners are encouraged to produce what Swain calls pushed output (Swain, 1985, cited in Tomlinson, 2011; Mackey, 2012).

## Content

Wong-Fillmore is concerned to ensure learners receive copious input matching their current level of ability (1985, quoted in Ellis, 1994) which invokes Krashen and Terrell's notion of finely-tuned input (1992) and supports Basturkmen's rejection of using technical texts with ESP learners (2006) as being too challenging linguistically. Materials writers need to carefully, sometimes painstakingly, assess potential content for the classroom and make 'principled compromises with realities of context' (Bell & Gower, quoted by Tomlinson, in Harwood, 2010, p83) by regulating content according to the linguistic abilities of the learners.

## Task

The pedagogic requirement of grading tasks (Nunan, 1988) is essential and necessitates a balancing act to be successfully carried out by the writer between text input difficulty and task complexity (Samuda & Bygate, 2008) to ensure that meaningful communication leads to successful learning.

### **3.5.2 Relevance to Present and Future Situation Analysis**

Materials production comes with a demanding set of criteria inherent in the syllabus design to account for the PSA and fulfill the needs as informed by the FSA. Writers must ensure that materials help create a learning environment in which personal requirements, wants, purposes and abilities (Dewey, 1938) foster learner success. As Ellis points out, teachers (and writers) must provide a learning environment which will maximize learning (in Burns & Richards, 2009) with writers needing to ensure their materials predict and cater for the classroom's inherent complexity and situatedness (Gieve & Miller, 2006).

### **3.5.3 Cultural Appropriacy and Relevance**

When writers produce material far removed from the cultural setting of the classroom for learners and teachers who will use them, there is a risk that such

material might contain culturally inappropriate and / or irrelevant content with incomprehensible situations and even offensive behaviour presented. The selection and use of global coursebooks containing culturally-determined practices (Gray, 2010) may well require writers to include locally-appropriate English language teaching methodologies (ibid) in line with beliefs, attitudes and expectations (Tudor, 2001) of learners and, potentially, local teachers too.

#### **3.5.4 Authentic Materials versus Created Materials**

The use of authentic materials versus ELT writers' created materials requires careful thought by writers in the selection and production process, particularly for the receptive skills of reading and listening.

According to Thornbury (2005), authentic material provides realistic preparation for real-world text encounters and Richards writes

they provide authentic cultural information ... they provide exposure to real language ... they provide a link between the classroom and students' needs in the real world ... and support a more creative approach to teaching.

(2001, p253)

However, Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) contend that a text is not necessarily relevant because it is authentic and they also point out that texts are very often beyond the ability of the majority of second language learners (ibid). Moreover, Coyle et al (2010) contend that authentic material may necessitate so many changes that it becomes a new piece of material. These created materials, as Richards (2001) observes, can be motivating and also superior to authentic materials since they have been created in response to a graded syllabus and therefore offer a systematic coverage of teaching items.

Richard's (ibid) advocacy for both authentic materials and also for created materials, as exemplified above, shows the complex nature of the debate for using either one or the other. Indeed, Richards takes issue with those who

espouse a negative opinion of ELT writers to produce materials which are pedagogically-sound resources for learning (ibid). Here is the crux of the issue for materials writers – to produce material which is seen to be of a high quality and, crucially, is promoting learning in an informed, professional and well-designed way.

In practice, ELT practitioners use both authentic and created materials (Richards, 2001; Harwood, 2010), following a continuum of lower levels using more created materials and higher levels tackling more authentic material. Harwood contends that designers are needed who are capable of writing materials at a local rather than a global level. Such writers are able to connect their materials with the local context and the learners' lives (2010) and produce created materials for successful learning particularly at lower levels.

This sub-section ends with an overview of materials production from Harwood:

materials writers will therefore need to consider their purposes and priorities carefully when choosing texts and balancing the authentic against the inauthentic. (2010, p6)

Materials writers need a keen awareness of the trade-off between using authentic material, which may offer Mishan's concept of currency (2005) in terms of being up-to-date and topical, against potential problems of linguistic difficulty and cultural inappropriacy when making the decision to use, adapt or write for the classroom.

### **3.6 Second Language Acquisition Research and Pedagogy**

So far, this review has focussed on materials themselves: their content and content-related aspects of planning and writing tasks and activities. In this sub-section I step back to include a review of the wider picture of materials production with reference to recent studies of the literature in terms of SLA and pedagogy.

### **3.6.1 Using SLA research**

Lightbown sets the tone for examining, and indeed using, SLA to inform pedagogic practice. She states that

only research which is pedagogically based and which asks pedagogical questions can be expected ... to answer pedagogical questions. (1985, p183)

This is important when surveying SLA literature because much has been researched which does not have a direct application to pedagogy simply because that was not the researcher's brief. Moreover, Lightbown cites Hatch's call that research findings in this area need to be applied with caution (1978) that is, they may seem useful but may not actually have relevance to a particular learning context.

How then should writers consider SLA research? Ortega suggests Hatch's (1978) 'apply' requires a search for relevance and 'with caution' (ibid) needs critical agency and reciprocity. In other words, educationalists must make judgements about the relevance of research to their particular learning context as well as opening a two-way dialogue with researchers to further SLA knowledge which addresses issues from the classroom. Ortega's keynote speech (2011) focuses on aptitude as an example of how research has uncovered two areas in which teachers (and writers) can increase learner aptitude for learning English using strategies to improve memory and analytical ability. Conversely, Ortega highlights research on error correction as lacking sufficient empirical evidence to inform pedagogy with any precision (ibid).

### **3.6.2 A Sociocultural Approach to Classroom Teaching**

Dixon et al (2012) provide an extensive review of research studies on L2 acquisition, from 1997-2011. One interesting finding they present, in respect of a sociocultural approach to L2 learning, is a focus on helping learners to find their own, individual ways to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts.

This has implications for educationalists of ensuring any given syllabus includes relevant language for contexts in which learners will need functional and / or specific target discourse. Another more global finding, made by Dixon et al, concerns optimal conditions for L2 acquisition, which forms a cornerstone of SLA. They observe that

optimal conditions for acquiring an L2 for different populations vary according to learning contexts, pedagogical goals, program setup, learner characteristics, and the interactions among these contextual variables. (2012, p36)

This corroborates my choice of aspects relating to materials production as embodied in this literature review and heeds Dixon et al's identification of the importance of well-designed and professionally-implemented language courses designed specifically for L2 learners (ibid).

### **3.6.3 Language Practice in the Classroom**

Lightbown defines 'good' practice as follows:

When 'practice' is defined as opportunities for meaningful language use (both receptive and productive) and for thoughtful, effortful practice of difficult linguistic features, then the role of practice is clearly beneficial and even essential. (2000, p443)

This definition corresponds to the need for meaningful practice (Tomlinson, 2005) which engages the learner cognitively (Tomlinson, 2012) and which provides challenging content (Masuhara & Tomlinson, 2008) to promote effective language acquisition.

### **3.6.4 Types of Classroom Instruction**

Lightbown (2000) reminds us that the notion of learner interlanguage (Selinker, 1972) forms the heart of modern SLA research. Addressing this notion of



interlanguage, Lightbown proceeds to examine the efficacy of form-focused instruction in the classroom. She refers to Long's (1991) distinction between a *focus on forms* – the teaching of discrete items of grammar, and a *focus on form* – drawing learners' attention to particular items of language - words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns, in context. Long (1991) contends that such a focus on form, or the encouragement of noticing (Batstone, 1996; Schmidt, 1993) and consciousness-raising (Ellis, 1997b; Nitta & Gardner, 2005), is beneficial to language acquisition whereas Long considers that a focus on forms, with its explicit teaching of language rules is not. Other research, cited by Lightbown suggests that learners knowing the rule aids language development (Han & Ellis, 1998). This is supported by the paper presented by White, Muñoz and Collins (2007) and the review of L2 research studies produced by Dixon et al (2012). Spada provides a detailed definition of form-focused instruction as

any pedagogical effort which is used to draw the learners' attention to form either implicitly or explicitly ... within meaning-based approaches to L2 instruction [and] in which a focus on language is provided in either spontaneous or predetermined ways.

(2011, p226)

Spada then refers to her meta-analysis of forty-one SLA research studies which indicates that explicit form-focused instruction supports learners' conscious knowledge of target language and enables them to use this language in unanalysed, spontaneous ways. These findings supplement those presented by Norris and Ortega (2000) which cover explicit and implicit instruction. Explicit instruction is described as analysed, conscious and declarative, and is developed by intentional learning of rules and patterns (Spada, 2015). Implicit instruction is defined as unanalysed and intuitive, gained by exposure to naturally occurring input (ibid). Norris and Ortega present findings which indicate explicit instruction promotes more effective language acquisition than implicit instruction. Moreover, they found that language acquired from explicit instruction is more durable (ibid).

Spada (2015) reviews the work of researchers representing two polar opposite views of SLA. The first, as exemplified by the Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) and the Procedural Syllabus (Prabhu, 1987) advocates a rejection of form-focused pedagogy, exemplified by the presentation-practice-production (PPP) model of the 1980s (Tomlinson, 2012). The second, based on more recent research findings, indicates that instructed SLA, including formal classroom instruction of discrete items and corrective feedback is both necessary and beneficial for classroom learning (Spada, 1997; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Ellis, 2001). Spada (2015) suggests, based on findings from empirical studies, that using both form- and meaning-based classroom instruction results in enhanced learner success rather than a focus on one or the other. Furthermore, Spada asserts that instruction and corrective feedback can enhance learners' analysed grammatical knowledge and their spontaneous language use in communication interaction (Spada, 2011; Lyster, Saito & Sato, 2013).

This concurs with the notion of a strong interface position which enables the conversion of explicit knowledge, gained from formal instruction, to implicit knowledge which facilitates meaningful communication in communicative language teaching (CLT) activities and real-world interactions (Spada, 2015). This was confirmed by Spada's own findings which found that learners, who had received explicit grammar-based instruction over a long period of time, can access their explicit knowledge automatically, thereby making it indistinguishable from implicit knowledge (2015). Use of explicit knowledge, Spada suggests, has relevance for L2 pedagogy as

a more realistic and obtainable goal for L2 instructors is to create conditions that will help learners to proceduralize their explicit knowledge. This is even more important in the FL [foreign language] context where few or no opportunities exist for extended input in the target language beyond the classroom setting. (Spada, 2015, p78)

Here, Spada exemplifies the practice of classroom-based research with findings which are relevant and usable for classroom teachers [and writers]. Her findings

suggest communicative activities within the purview of CLT but subsequent to form-focused instruction, which harks back to the pre-CLT era of PPP.

### **3.6.5 Language Practice in Pairs and Groups**

Lightbown (2000) synthesizes studies on pair and group work to arrive at useful conclusions which strengthen the pedagogic practice of providing such activity-types for learners in keeping with Long's (1985) hypothesis of modified interaction in SLA. Lightbown (2000) emphasizes the importance of the role of social learning (Vygotsky, 1978) and the need for learners to be engaged in interaction to enhance language development (ibid).

### **3.6.6 Implications for Materials Writers**

Materials writers, and in particular syllabus designers, need to be aware of and select appropriate methodology according to the context of the learners and teachers and the pedagogic needs and requirements as outlined in the syllabus.

Pedagogic traditions such as didactic, teacher-fronted, product-oriented methodology may be at odds with centre traditions of inductive, collaborative, process-oriented, task-based, communicative methodology (Holliday, 1994). So syllabus designers and writers need to be informed as to local preferences to take into account Stevick's assertion that learning should be assigned greater importance than teaching (1980).

Whether the ELT learners are in a BANA or a periphery classroom, Canagarajah (1999) observes that there has been scant focus on how language uptake is affected, in either a positive or negative way, by learners' backgrounds, linguistic or cultural. This places an obligation on writers and teachers to ensure a positive, productive link between classrooms and relevant contexts beyond them such as FSA information, learner needs and wants, and learners' lives.

In the field of ESP, selecting activities which correspond to discipline-specific needs in ESP (Tomlinson, 2008) ought to be self-evident and yet published and bespoke material is still replete with pedagogic tasks which have little or no relevance to learner- and course-contexts and therefore fall short of the fitness for purpose stipulated by Gieve & Miller (2006). Bygate et al's (2001) list of elements forming construct validity of tasks is a useful tool to help writers produce context-relevant materials and avoid displaced contexts (Edwards & Mercer, 1987). The afore-mentioned list includes: the impact of task design and task conditions on performance; the impact of task selection and use on learning; and the relationship of tasks to underlying processing factors (Bygate et al, 2001).

### **3.6.7 Teacher Support**

An ELT teacher's main role in the classroom is to facilitate the learning process. This role requires a large number of professional and personal attributes if teaching and learning is to prove effective. As Scrivener points out,

an aware and sensitive teacher ... who concentrates on finding ways of enabling learning ... goes a long way to creating conditions in which a great deal of learning is likely to take place.

(1994, quoted in Allwright & Hanks, 2009, p68)

Without doubt, this already complex role is either hindered or helped by the materials used in the classroom and, as Edge and Garton (2009) point out, the teacher's primary duty is to teach his / her learners with materials serving a subsidiary role to support learning. This agrees with Allwright's call for materials to be for learning rather than teaching (1981) with the corollary that teaching learners requires teachers to become mediators between the materials and the learners (McGrath, 2002). So writers need to focus on materials which are user-friendly for teachers, and also learners. At this point, it is the writer's professional knowledge, or craft knowledge as Eraut calls it, (1994) which should inform the production of effective materials.

Coleman (1986), in his study evaluating teachers' guides, found that most of the guides he reviewed lacked sufficiently detailed assumptions as to the nature of language and language use or sufficient detail as to the theoretical underpinnings to the particular ELT approach the writer is claiming to adhere to. This lack of theoretical clarity or clarification of methodology accompanying the *approach* is unlikely to help teachers seeking support with what could be a new approach to them. Indeed, Mol and Tin (2008) found that EAP materials' teachers' guides focused on the *what to teach*, not the *how to teach*. They advocated the inclusion of current SLA research findings related to particular stages in the materials including presentation and practice activities to maximize effective learning. Furthermore, both Coleman (1986) and Mol and Tin (2008) prioritised inclusion of cultural aspects relating to the use and exploitation of materials together with potentially challenging or problematic areas of cultural divergence between teacher and learners and between learners in multi-cultural classes. Interestingly, Nicol and Crespo (2006), examining teachers' guides for pre-service mathematics teachers, found that those guides studied failed to render sufficient support to novice teachers in using and adapting textbooks based on sound pedagogical judgements. These researchers went further by advocating teachers' guides and teacher education programmes be more closely linked. Nicol and Crespo (ibid) found that not only pedagogic knowledge was needed by pre-service teachers but that the inclusion of subject knowledge would also add further, needed support.

Returning to pedagogic support, Bell and Gower (2011) note that teachers' books should include: suggested procedures; prompts; sub-tasks; options for exploiting the materials; alternative procedures; optional supplementary tasks/sub-tasks; and answer keys. Yet an attempt, conscious or sub-conscious, for writers to produce teacher proof materials (Burns & Richards, 2009; Giroux, 2011; McGrath, 2002) or even a teacher proof curriculum (Stenhouse, 1975; Littlejohn, 1992, 2012) can result in an excess of teacher notes which will simply be ignored by teachers. Tomlinson believes that it is far more productive to give both support and flexibility to teachers and thereby cater to a teacher's own needs (2011) depending on his / her experience and training.

### **3.6.8 Learner Support**

Learners need support in the same sense that teachers do. Clear instructions for each task are essential, not only to inform learners as to the goal of the task for them, but also as another type of content input which can have considerable value since instructions are relevant to most educational / instructional contexts. Moreover, instructions augment the shared repertoire of routines (Gieve & Miller, 2006) which build up more effective ways of working on a course, as well as training learners to perform to higher standards than they have done previously.

In addition to clearly worded, logical and transparent instructions, learners need other types of support (Basturkmen, 2006; Breen & Littlejohn, 2000, Coyle et al, 2010; Ellis, 2012; Vygotsky 1978, Wright, 2005). These can take several forms: examples to exemplify task requirements in linguistic terms; models to be followed but adapted in terms of linguistic or content output; prompts to encourage more extensive spoken or written production by learners; and visual stimuli to assist learner output. Writers need to predict what learners will need in order to complete tasks to an acceptable level and / or encourage excellence in learner production of English in keeping with Hinkel's concept of assisted performance (Hinkel, 1999) and Allwright and Hanks' call for learner opportunities (2009). Also essential for learner success is the inclusion of schema building exercises (Nunan, 2004) to utilise learners' existing knowledge and prime them for subsequent tasks.

### **3.6.9 Incremental Learning**

Using the same language but in new ways is considered a cornerstone of SLA theory with Meddings and Thornbury's (2009) advocacy of learners being encouraged to use recently learned language in a variety of scenarios requiring 'new' uses of grammar and lexis. This requires writers to ensure that use of previous linguistic input is encouraged on a regular basis within syllabus design. This is no easy task for a writer to design a range of tasks and activities to

recycle language [and possibly content] but is essential to provide multiple affordances for language use (van Lier, 1996).

### **3.7 Learner Factors**

The research literature is extensive on learner factors and writers need to take into account a number of these factors which can be positively affected by effective materials production. These include encouraging learners to engage affectively in classes by increasing positive feelings towards learning and minimising negative ones. Moreover, affective engagement is linked to cognitive engagement as is addressing learner identity (Jenkins, 2007). Ensuring learners have a voice to express their own, personal cultural experience also exerts a positive effect on learning. This can be further enhanced by linking what learners do in the classroom to their lives outside of the educational institution. Learner motivation influences learner effort, performance and success at all stages in the learning process and can be enhanced by increased learner participation, interaction and collaboration. All of these factors will be reviewed in this study.

Learners attend ELT courses for diverse reasons but how effectively they approach their time in the classroom, their teacher(s), the course materials, language practice, learning and acquisition, and outside activities related to their course, will depend on one or more factors. Writers should appreciate that 'students are individuals whose interaction with learning activities is influenced by a variety of cognitive, psychological and experiential interaction with the learning process' (Tudor, 2001, p94). As Tomlinson (2013) contends, learners need to be engaged cognitively and emotionally if language acquisition is to occur.

Lantolf & Thorne (2006) identify three motives for learners wanting to learn: social, to communicate with others; self-related, such as personal development and well-being; and cognitive, either learning for a result [passing a test] or

emerging from intrinsic interest (ibid) which closely aligns with Oxford's (2011) dimensions of second language (L2) learning being cognitive, affective, and socio-cultural. It therefore behoves writers to place considerable importance on these factors when selecting content, linguistic input, skills work and task types.

Writers should also be aware of learners' language learning mindsets, (Murray et al, 2011), that is a learner's personal beliefs and perception of his / her learning talents and abilities and how this supports deep learning (Coyle et al, 2010) with its critical analysis of new ideas, connecting them to already-known concepts (ibid). As Holschuh & Aultman state:

students who adopt deep approaches to learning tend to personalize academic tasks and integrate information so that they can see relationships ... (which) allow the learner to build on previous knowledge in a meaningful way that facilitates long-term learning.

(2008, p123)

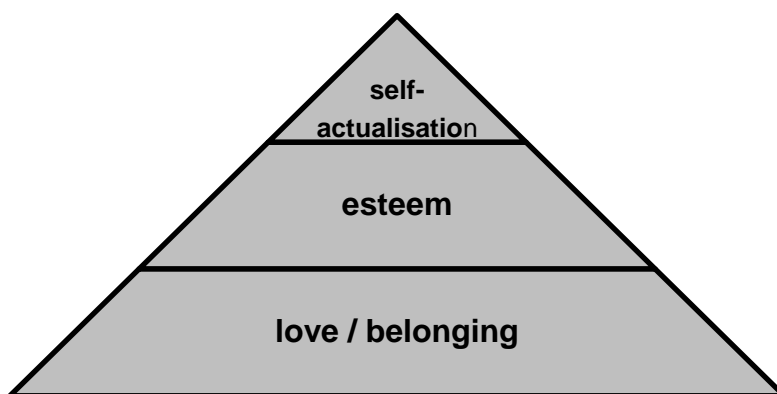
Writers need to include materials and tasks which promote such deep learning approaches (Moon, 2004) wherever possible and thereby engage the learners' own cognitive ecosystem (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) which is seen as crucial to SLA in adults. As Ushakova describes it, 'second language is looking into the windows cut out by the first language' (1994, p154) so the onus on writers is to be aware of ways to make those windows larger and clearer. Writer knowledge of local context and first language (L1) can only help the learners in their attempts not only at surface learning (Oxford, 2011), i.e.: memorizing language, but also at deep learning.

### **3.7.1 Affective Engagement**

All classroom teachers know the negative impact which a learner without any interest in a class can wreak. So avoiding such a potentially negative scenario should occupy writers to consider and ensure, as best they can, that the materials they produce foster learners' positive engagement in the classroom.



Examining the upper levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid in Figure 3.1, it becomes clear that language, including the effective use of a second language, can facilitate the range of an individual's needs at the upper levels: from obtaining and keeping employment; to starting and maintaining friendships; to increasing self-esteem and confidence which can then engender respect of others; to supporting creativity, spontaneity, problem solving and acceptance of facts.



(from Maslow, 1954, p236)

*Figure 3.1: Upper levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs*

Maslow's upper levels of needs interlinks with Stevick's identification of what he labelled

five main strands of 'overlapping components' in humanistic thinking which ... have underpinned most humanistic approaches to language teaching.

(Stevick, 1990, quoted in Tudor, 2001, p65-66)

The following strands, 'feelings', 'social relations', and 'self-actualisation', mirror Maslow's categories closely whilst 'responsibility' and 'intellect' are also pertinent to classroom learning where a learner's linguistic performance is often on public show. This is when language anxiety (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993, quoted by Mitchell & Myles in Candlin & Mercer, 2001) can negatively affect the learner's linguistic performance hence the pressure, perceived or not by individual writers, to produce material which reduces the provocation of learner anxiety arising from poorly-produced tasks and texts.

With regard to the emotional relationships of the classroom, Wright (2005) suggests that a learner's commitment to learning can be affected according to the degree of importance and relevance in the relationship perceived by the learner to the learning opportunity. Wright continues by speculating on the existence of

important connections between motivation and learning and the emotional domain, both of which have a strong influence on how we manage engagement in learning contexts.

(2005, p21)

Writers only have a concretised influence on one of the three areas as outlined above, that of providing 'affordances (in the form of) learning opportunities for the learner' (Gibson cited by van Lier, 1996, p52) with materials which have been specifically designed and produced for the learners. In this respect, writers should be aware of the power of affective factors, as posited by Oxford (2011), consisting of emotions, beliefs, attitudes and motivation. Helpfully, Oxford proceeds to list both affective strategies and meta-affective strategies which will help learners grapple with this important factor in their second language learning career (ibid). Whilst encouraging learners to accept and employ these strategies is primarily the work of teachers, it should also be a pre-requisite that materials writers allude to and provide information about some of these as the need and opportunity arises. Such strategies can be included in teachers' books / notes at appropriate points in the syllabus.

To encourage positive influences of affect, writers need to ensure their material is intrinsically interesting or meaningful (Krashen & Terrell, 1992) for learners, that it presents important, useful information and that it enables further tasks during which learners are given the opportunity to combine information and language to communicate purposefully. Therefore writers should have as clear an understanding of what will motivate and engage learners as is possible (Arnold, 1999). Such understanding should encourage members of the classroom community to also invest emotionally, socially and psychologically in the situation (Wenger, 1998; Norton, 2000; Breen, 2001, cited by Wright, 2005) which, when combined with the cultural element learners bring to the

classroom, constitutes Wright's notion of the inner domains (2005) of learner behaviour. Engaging with the course material cognitively is crucial to language acquisition which is the subject of the next section.

### **3.7.2 Cognitive Engagement**

To enable ELT writers to engage learners cognitively presupposes, for writers, an understanding of the importance and workings of cognitive psychology. Savignon (2002) highlights the contribution of cognitive psychology to constructivist theories of learning in that 'every individual uses prior knowledge and experiences to process, store, and retrieve new information in his or her own way'. Savignon continues by presenting a clear view of learning as proposed by Boekaerts and Simons (1995) and Lowyck and Verloop (1995) that:

learning takes place in the continuous interaction between practical and theoretical knowledge because learners link their practical knowledge to the theoretical knowledge made available to them, and vice versa. In this way, learning can be seen as a continual process of construction and reconstruction.

(in Savignon, 2002, p171)

With so much neural activity occurring during SLA, it is not surprising that intelligence has been correlated with second language learner success (Mitchell & Myles in Candlin & Mercer, 2001). From a writer's approach, however, it is essential to plan and produce material which is cognitively engaging to all learners on a particular course. Encouraging learners to use the range of cognitive skills (Tudor, 2001) already available to them in their L1 seems both logical and essential.

Oxford's S<sup>2</sup>R Model lists six cognitive strategies (2011) which are used by highly successful language learners in the classroom and which have considerable applicability to materials production: using the senses to understand and remember; activating knowledge; reasoning; conceptualizing

with details; conceptualizing broadly; and going beyond the immediate data. Murray et al go further by focusing on metacognitive strategies relevant to ELT classroom learning including learners: planning; monitoring; and evaluating their learning (Wenden, 1998, alluded to by Murray et al, 2011).

Additionally, writers need to plan tasks during which learners engage cognitively (Tomlinson, 2008) as well as presenting materials which require learners to use high level skills such as interpreting and evaluating. By combining these two aspects of a learner's cognitive engagement, Tomlinson asserts that both language acquisition and the development of learner-language are made possible (ibid).

If learners are to enact Dewey's call for intelligent effort for effective learning (1913, cited by Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011) then writers should produce materials which address affective and cognitive factors of classroom learning. Noticing is another important factor in SLA and it is to this that I now turn.

### **3.7.3 Noticing**

Schmidt and Frota (1986) presented the notion of 'noticing the gap', that is, for noticed input to become intake (Schmidt, 1990), learners take what they observe and compare it with what is in their current interlanguage system. Schmidt went on to assert that there are three senses of conscious: consciousness as awareness, with degrees of awareness including noticing; consciousness of intention; and consciousness as knowledge (1990, quoted by Ellis, 1994). This places noticing at the centre of the SLA process and also adheres to Hall's stages in the development of interactional competence: noticing; reflection; formulation; knowledge development; and development of alternative uses of the new language (in Hinkel, 1999). This has a considerable impact on how writers plan materials to present and practice new language to provide experience and practice so learners become able to access information quickly and even automatically following the cognitive psychologist Segalowitz's model for information processing (2003, quoted in Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Clearly, writers need to employ a coherent and systematic approach to SLA in terms of texts, tasks and other activities to facilitate acquisition. As Lewis (1997) contends, educationalists need to make 'the catching process effective and efficient' where *catching* means noticing.

### 3.7.4 Identity

Materials writers must have a clear picture of learners' identities in terms of: nationality; regional and ethnic backdrops; tribal affiliations; cultural and religious backgrounds; gender and sex-related orientations; age-related, job-related and study-related backgrounds; and others.

Richards (2006) considers three aspects of identity in conjunction with ELT which are useful in informing writers of roles learners assume independently of their personal identities when in the classroom. *Situated identities* refer to the roles played out in lessons, i.e.: teacher – student roles. *Discourse identities* refer to the moment-by-moment roles taken on by class participants such as listener, partner, and questioner. *Transportable identities* refer to those real-life roles learners have which they may bring into classroom conversation either by chance or when required to by the teacher or materials (adapted from Richards, 2006, cited by Ushioda in Murray et al, 2011). Of these, it is the transportable identity which features strongly in socio-cultural theory of language learning where,

under the dialogic lens ... it brings real-life understanding on the part of the speakers engaged in a particular flow of speech ... the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance or utterances.

(Vološinov, 1973, quoted by Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p10)

Learners engaged in relevant, meaningful communication with other learners will automatically include aspects of their transportable identities and it is this rich area of motivational output that effective materials can promote.

### **3.7.5 Learners' Voicing of Own Cultural Experience**

For learners to reach Hall's (2001) fifth stage in the development of interactional competence, namely using newly-learned language for alternative uses, Pennycook's (2001) advocacy of a pedagogy of inclusion in which learners are encouraged to develop their own voice and find possibilities of articulation (ibid) presents writers with a crucial duty to promote classroom activities which 'help learners participate in authentic, communicative interaction that involves context-appropriate meanings' (Oxford, 2011, p90) as well as giving learners a sense of agency (ibid) when they feel in control of their learning.

### **3.7.6 Linking the Classroom to Learners' Lives Outside**

To help learners develop their own voice in the classroom and give them a sense that they are, to some extent, in control of their learning, it is essential for writers to produce materials which engage 'the organic connection between education and personal experience' (Dewey, 1938, p24). Material which connects classroom learning with the outside world of the learners should be a pre-requisite for much of what writers produce thereby matching Wenger's (1998) claim that practice should promote meaning in relation to learners' real-world lives.

Talking about critical pedagogy, but being applicable to pedagogy in general, Giroux states that

any viable approach to critical pedagogy suggests taking seriously those maps of meaning, affective investments, and sedimented desires that enable students to connect their own lives and everyday experiences to what they learn. (2011, p82)

Giroux's comment highlights the need for materials which enable learners to produce appropriate language for real-world activities as clarified by Willis and Willis below.

On a general level ... the opportunity to engage in producing meanings which will be useful in the real world ... *meaning* ... at another level they will be practising a kind of discourse which is very common in everyday life ... *discourse* ... at yet another level they will be engaging in an activity which could quite easily occur in the real world. (2007, p15)

Willis and Willis's focus on activities learners undertake in their real worlds makes clear the beneficial nature of covering such discourse as these activities require since learners already know the situation and hence the meaning in their L1 but not in English. As Assis Sade points out

language educators bring the students' communities of practice into the classroom – such as those formed around sports, leisure activities, ethnicity or other things that students value.

(in Murray et al, 2011, p54)

This is pertinent to a writer's approach to materials production. Moreover, McIntyre et al's supposition that 'authenticity of (learners') learning experiences could be enhanced by bringing tasks closer ... with the mental and social worlds that they inhabit both inside and outside the classroom' (2007, p154) reinforces the notion of linking classroom learning to real-world use by including both authentic texts and authentic tasks (Mishan, 2005). It also suggests that doing so increases learner's feelings of agency and ownership (McIntyre et al, 2007). Learners experiencing agency (Harmer, 2012) and ownership (Holliday, 2005) will have a powerful motivational effect on learning, to which I now turn.

### **3.7.7 Motivation**

Learners attend ELT classes for many reasons yet motivation for their language learning does not derive only from their reasons. As Dörnyei and Ushioda define it, motivation 'is responsible for: why people decide to do something [choice]; how long they are willing to sustain the activity [persistence]; and how

hard they are going to pursue it [effort]' (2011, p4) with these three motivating factors exerting considerable effect on learner success.

As we saw with *affect*, emotional, social, and psychological factors influence learner performance in the classroom and Dörnyei & Ushioda (2011) argue that these can affect a learner's cognition, behaviour and achievement to a considerable degree. To this can be added the cognitive motivational psychology framework:

$$\boxed{\text{expectancy}} \times \boxed{\text{value}} = \boxed{\text{motivation}}$$

(created from Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p13)

*Figure 3.2: Cognitive motivational psychology framework*

This framework not only invokes the notion of rewards for success [expectancy] combined with the efficacy of performing a task [value] to create instrumental motivation but also illustrates, implicitly, the damaging nature of learners not perceiving any value to a learning task or activity.

Similarly, Covington's theory that people hold a strong sense of self-worth (1992, quoted by Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) highlights another balancing act writers have to grapple with by ensuring materials are motivating without being condescending or threatening to learners in any way, with the caveat that much of what goes on in the classroom is, of course, dependent on the classroom teacher's approach to his / her learners.

Dörnyei & Ushioda proceed to include learner perception of the 'utility value of tasks ... (when) students are able to perceive a clear instrumental relationship between current academic task and the attainment of personally valued long-term goals' (2011, p19). Clearly, this has ramifications for the design of tasks, in particular for ESP materials, for as Pintrich & Schunk reveal,

research attention has typically focused on identifying those features which promote intrinsic motivation and a mastery orientation by



stimulating interest and offering an optimal or moderate level of challenge.

(Pintrich & Schunk, 2002, cited in Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p26)

Dörnyei's framework of L2 motivation (1994, presented in Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011) lays out three levels for consideration. At the *language* level, although the integrative motivational subsystem has been credited with being the most powerful (Gardner, 1985) surely the instrumental motivational subsystem is the more prevalent. Around eighty per cent of English communication worldwide is between non-native speakers (NNS) (Beneke, 1991, quoted in Jenkins, 2005), so it is unlikely that integrative motivation is a factor for most learners in non-BANA countries. At the *learner* level, the need for achievement which promotes self-confidence stemming from perceived L2 competence, is listed with self-efficacy – learners' assessment of their ability to perform particular tasks (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011) and placed against language-use anxiety (ibid). At the *learning* situation level, course-specific, and therefore materials-related, motivational components include: interest; relevance; expectancy of success; and satisfaction relating to successful outcomes.

Combining all these aspects to promote learner motivation is the responsibility of the writer, in the first instance, with the classroom teacher being fundamentally important but at a later stage in the development / use of materials.

### **3.7.8 Participation, Interaction and Collaboration**

Participation precedes interaction and having interactive classroom tasks enables learners to engage with language in terms of producing contextually-appropriate discourse to develop real-world fluency made up of language which exhibits suitable pragmatic meaning (Ellis, 2005, quoted in Oxford, 2011). According to Tomlinson (2011), materials need to promote the learner's investment in his / her learning and hopefully also enable what Willis and Willis

label 'golden moments' (2007, p9) when learners invest personal effort in their learning which increases feelings of confidence and linguistic progress.

To engage learners relies on a number of contributory factors: affective; cognitive; motivational; noticing; identity; and links between learning and real-world experience. Ensuring the materials are humanizing, that is, making them meaningful for particular learners, requires writers to provide tasks and activities which they understand and can engage with in a range of ways: on a physical level by using their hands or moving about; on an intellectual level by engaging high level skills; on an aesthetic level by being challenged to make judgements and evaluations [again high level skills]; and on an emotional level by engaging personal feelings towards an argument, a societal value (Tomlinson, 2003).

Humanizing the materials and hence encouraging learner participation and interaction requires collaborative learning tasks (Hall, in Hinkel, 1999) to promote a community of learners who take responsibility for their learning (ibid). As far as Allwright and Hanks (2009) are concerned, second language acquisition is facilitated not simply by learners interacting with each other but more importantly by the quality of such interactions. Indeed, as Donato (2004) surmises,

dialogic interaction has the potential to foster appropriation of linguistic knowledge by individuals who together form something of a collective expert, and who subsequently are able to accomplish tasks collaboratively that they might not have the ability to carry out individually. (quoted in Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p283)

This brief review of the literature relating to materials production shows how many factors influence SLA. My personal view is that the more writers are informed as to the learners and learning contexts for which they are producing materials, the more effective these materials are likely to be.

### 3.8 Desktop-publishing Design

The visual design of materials and courses is an important element for learners and their learning, and for their teachers (Thurairaj & Roy, 2012), who may use the material on more than one occasion and who will need to have their sense of plausibility (Prabhu, 1987) engaged to promote learner investment (ibid) in the materials in the classroom. Working with material which looks shoddily put together is not going to engage affective factors, nor motivate learners to do their best when, patently, the writer has not done his / hers. McGrath (2002) emphasises that the design of materials should be visually pleasing and appeal to learners. He suggests two key tools writers, particularly novice writers, can refer to and use: published materials for inspiration and informed practice which can be adapted or re-invented to produce bespoke materials; and software packages such as Adobe InDesign, QuarkXPress and the ubiquitous Microsoft Word by which to produce materials.

Tomlinson (2011) concurs with McGrath when saying that the appearance of materials should be motivating and facilitate classroom learning. He continues by advocating that

teachers engaged in writing materials need to develop the same care and attention to presentation that one would expect of good publishers.

(ibid, p110)

Indeed, the physical appearance of materials not only enhances learner [and teacher] motivation but serves other purposes simultaneously. Learners and teachers take these materials into the wider world so they become representative of their institution and can be used to market their English courses. In this way, they demonstrate the commitment of educational excellence which is likely to impress potential custom as well as interested stakeholders.

### 3.9 Evaluation of Materials' Effectiveness

The process of producing materials, and specifically courses, presents ELT writers with a set of diverse challenges. Crucial amongst these challenges is evaluation of the syllabus in general and the materials in particular. Writers need to apply pedagogic best practice throughout the evaluation process. White (1988) offers a clear overview of the evaluation process at every stage in Figure 3.3:

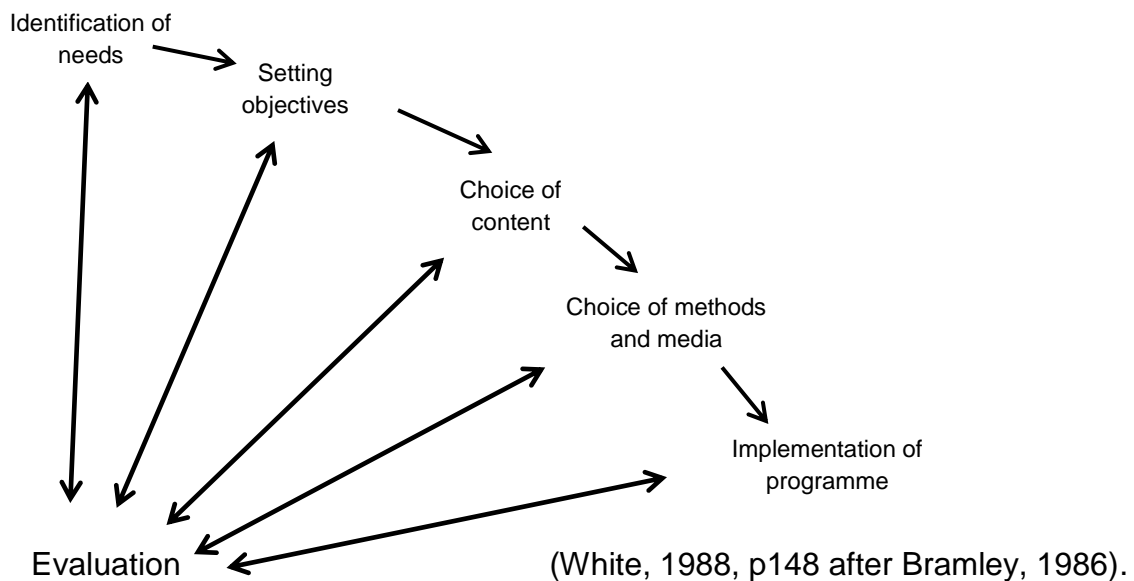


Figure 3.3: The place of evaluation

This requires the evaluation process to be both reactive to feedback and formative in terms of revisions and re-writes (White, 1988), with all stages in the process needing careful consideration before, during and after the materials have been produced. This fulfills Cronbach's (1975) call to observe effects in context and concurs with Tomlinson's notion of evaluating materials not only by analysing them but, crucially, analysing them when they are materials-in-action (2011) by observing materials being used in the classroom, done either by the writer-as-teacher himself / herself or from feedback from another teacher.

Evaluation is not only focused on the materials, the learners and their teachers in the classroom, however. Evaluation also needs to take into account key

stakeholders as identified by the NA process to ensure the course is delivering the language, skills and content relevant and essential to the present and future needs of the learners. As van Lier (1996) has reminded us, stakeholders require reassurance that a new educational project is progressing well. Furthermore, these audiences for evaluation, as Richards (2001, after Elley, 1989) labels them, can provide valuable feedback at all stages of the process, in particular domain experts for ESP courses.

### **3.9.1 Communities of Practice / Collegiality**

For writers, the most useful input they can receive during the writing process is from their colleagues. These may be the other writers, or teachers who proofread material and offer linguistic, pedagogic and academic feedback on the writer's work. Lave and Wenger describe this collegial activity as follows:

a community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage. Thus, participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning. (1991, p98)

Clearly then, working with colleagues can lend writers considerable support in terms of informed feedback for, as Hargreaves reports,

one of the most powerful resources that people in any organisation have for learning and improving is each other. Knowledge economies depend on collective intelligence ... including ways of sharing and developing knowledge among fellow professionals. Sharing ideas and expertise, providing moral support when dealing with new and difficult challenges, discussing complex individual cases together – this is the essence of strong collegiality and the basis for professional communities. (2003, p84)

Collecting and collating professional input from peers provides a rich source of information ideal for problem-solving during the writing process. McKernan views this process as follows:

the field of curriculum, both theory and practice, depends to a large extent upon evolving a critical process of research and development by teachers (and writers) using other professionals to support their work. (2008, p214)

Lenning and Ebbers advocate the creation of a learning community which enables members to:

learn from and with others, incorporate and value diversity, share a culture / (cultures), encourage participation and sharing of leadership, and engage in product-oriented activities, i.e. activities which are related to their immediate surroundings, real needs and issues. (quoted in Tin, 2006, p256)

Such a learning community is going to be more attuned to the needs of ELT learners and take into account all the above aspects of the learning context, the better to meet the specificity (Long, 2005) of learners' current and future needs in the local context.

### **3.9.2 Piloting**

#### **3.9.2.1 Pre-piloting**

As we have seen, the writing process emanates from a need for material and a needs analysis to inform a detailed syllabus. Even at this early stage in the writing process, Hutchinson and Waters (1987), suggest a four-step process to enable effective evaluation of materials: defining criteria; subjective analyses; objective analyses; and matching in line with Ellis' notion of pre-use or predictive evaluation (1997a). As is often the case, striking an effective interrelationship between the four steps outlined above is essential to completing an effective materials evaluation process bearing in mind that local

constraints and changing circumstances may well impact on the materials actually required to fulfill developing needs.

### 3.9.2.2 Piloting Material

Piloting material is when the writer receives feedback on what he / she has produced. Richards makes the following points on the value of piloting feedback:

it provides effective ways of using the materials, some of which the writer him/herself may not have envisaged; it affords feedback on how/how well/if the materials work; it enables the collection of a record of additions, deletions, and supplementary materials teachers may have used with the materials; and it assists other teachers in using the materials.

(expanded from Richards, 2001, p270)

This feedback needs to be combined with other ways of monitoring, preferably by the writer(s), including: classroom visits; feedback sessions; written reports; and teacher and learner reviews. All of these ways should have the aim of gathering teaching / learning experiences, reactions and suggestions (Richards, 2001). Donovan (1998) in reference to mediated material but also applicable to unmediated material, includes a crucial addition to the above list of feedback activities, namely the writers themselves teaching the materials before, as he states, the piloting of mediated materials is conducted at a distance from the writer(s) using teachers whose feedback is overseen by publishing editors (ibid).

As Macalister and Nation (2011) observe, if course design and course implementation are carried out by different educationalists, then the intentions of the course writer may not be realised by the teacher / piloter. Addressing such potential divergence in materials-use requires considered and deliberate revision of material in line with Kerfoot's (1993) appeal to involve both teacher-

and learner-evaluations. Anything less is purely intuition and not necessarily helpful to learners, teachers or other stakeholders.

Stoller and Robinson (2014) list a variety of piloting methods including: semi-structured telephone interviews with learners; pre-tests to obtain learners' current abilities and needs; post-tests administered to learners to evaluate the materials' effectiveness; learners' written work in the form of mock journal articles; and regular meetings of the writing team.

Donovan (1998), adding the publisher's perspective to the literature, identifies constraints which can affect mediated materials but may not impinge on unmediated materials, such as the publisher's development schedule and limitations on how much material is actually piloted by classroom teachers who simultaneously have to fulfill their institution's syllabus requirements. Such piloting can include the completion of questionnaires by end-users, a written report of materials in-use in the classroom and interviews between piloting teachers and publishing personnel (ibid).

Building on Donovan's view of mediated materials piloting in the 1990s, Amrani (2011) gives an updated view of the ELT publishing world. One key aspect which emerges from that study is the ability of the classroom teacher to review and refine material after classroom use. This is a process available to writers of unmediated materials but not to publishers who necessarily evaluate material based on their suitability for the widest range of possible users with an eye to the highest possible financial return on the publisher's investment (ibid). Indeed, Amrani indicates that the piloting process is also used as a marketing tool to introduce a new product into the marketplace. Amrani, like Donovan, relates current publishers' piloting procedures requiring teachers to annotate unit pages and produce a teaching diary. These digital artefacts can then be sent to the editor for compilation, to which the feedback from experienced reviewers of materials is included and can then be discussed by focus groups. In this way, market research can identify and address issues arising from the use of a minimum of three / four methods to collect data (ibid).



To the above key methods currently used by publishers, Amrani adds: expert panels; engaging academics and materials developers; editorial classroom observations; and competitor analysis (ibid). Yet even with all these methods for collecting piloting data, Amrani postulates that

evaluation will become less of a clear-cut stage prior to publication and be more of an ongoing process where materials are refined and even changed throughout the life of a product. (2011, p295)

This would seem to be not only a logical process to adhere to but also an acknowledgement that effective materials need to be adapted in line with theoretical, pedagogic, technological and topical aspects of our world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### 3.9.2.3 Revising and Re-piloting

Once feedback input has been received, Ellis (1998) suggests the writer needs to approach any revision of materials / courses in two distinct ways: macro- and micro-evaluation. Macro-evaluation will be primarily concerned with accountability to stakeholders or to the development of, for example, further courses or to curricular planning and writers may wish to focus on general aspects of the syllabus such as: principles of selection and sequencing; types of teaching / learning activities; participation, who does what with whom; and teacher / learner roles (after Littlejohn in Tomlinson, 2011). Micro-evaluation will focus on particular aspects of the materials or even a single task as shown by Figure 3.4 below:

- |   |
|---|
| <p><b>I What is the learner expected to do?</b><br/> A. Turn-take<br/> B. Focus<br/> C. Mental operation</p> <p><b>II Who with?</b></p> <p><b>III With what content?</b><br/> A. Input to learners<br/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form</li> <li>• Source</li> <li>• Nature</li> </ul> B. Output from learners<br/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form</li> <li>• Source</li> <li>• Nature</li> </ul> </p> |
|---|

(Littlejohn in Tomlinson, 2011, p189)

*Figure 3.4: Questions for the analysis of tasks*

By asking the above questions, writers and teachers can assess the effectiveness of particular tasks relative to the stated learner outcomes and, as Ellis asserts, having a formulized evaluation process which is well thought out and rigorous facilitates a more effective process of materials development (1997a, in Harwood, 2010).

3.9.2.4 Difficulties with Piloting

Singapore Wala (2003) details the piloting of a single unit of a new coursebook, including the piloting of the accompanying CD-ROM, the teacher’s notes and worksheets for that unit. This limited piloting was made necessary because of constraints imposed on teachers: time; syllabus requirements to cover all necessary existing course objectives and outcomes; and the teachers needing to produce lesson plans for the new material (why they needed to prepare lesson plans when teacher’s notes were included is not explained). Singapore Wala then relates the difficulties in persuading principals, heads of department and teachers to take part with only a few schools agreeing to participate. Even then, these schools did not allow the writing team to observe lessons so feedback was obtained exclusively from pilot feedback forms completed by the

teachers. Of the five schools involved in the pilot, only three returned written feedback with one supplying oral feedback.

### **3.9.3 The Reflective Educationalist**

As Schön points out, a writer's default setting of knowing-in-action (1987) is often challenged by surprise (*ibid*). The writer's reaction to such surprises - in the form of piloting scenarios or feedback from teachers and learners - should then engage retrospective reflection-on-action (Akbari, 2007). This, in turn, should result in anticipatory reflection (Freese, quoted in Akbari, 2007) whereby the writer's imagination and creativity is activated to find more effective ways to secure enhanced learning outcomes (Akbari, 2007). The resultant materials will reveal the writer's personal theories which can then be examined, questioned, evaluated against published theory, and then validated or restructured (Griffiths & Tann, quoted in Akbari, 2007).

The above process thus fulfills Akbari's (2007) assertion that reflection is a means to an end and that by engaging the imagination, an outstanding practitioner is demonstrating his / her wisdom, talent, intuition, or artistry (Schön, 1987). This resonates with Szesztay's (2004) belief that teachers [and writers] use their skills, knowledge, and intuition concurrently. Moreover, syllabus designers will employ a form of the helicopter view (Bee and Bee, 1998, quoted in Szesztay, 2004) as an external observer of the appropriacy of the whole course they have produced, with a wider appreciation of how individual tasks, units and language input are combined to form the course syllabus. In this way, Akbari's (2007) recognition that problem identification needs trained eyes is supported by theoretically- and experientially-informed pedagogy (Breen, 2001) which Breen alludes to regarding established language teachers (*ibid*), and which should include writers.

The way educators [and writers] view their mission is also intertwined with their view of their self. As Akbari states,

this self is closely linked with teachers' affective domain, since the definition we come up with for who we are is largely shaped by our emotional reactions to the environment and the people around us ... to reflect on our profession, we need to learn to emotionally and cognitively reflect on ourselves, too. (2006, p203)

Producing materials for learners will always provoke teacher / writer reactions during the writing and piloting phases and / or when receiving feedback from other colleagues.

The ALACT model for experiential learning presented by Korthagen (1985) crystallises a usable, and useful, reflective model for writers: Action; Looking back on the action; Awareness of essential aspects; Creating alternative methods of action; and Trial. This is both a clear process for professional development and also a model of renewal. As Day (1999) reminds us, educationists who set challenges for themselves will probably enjoy greater professional fulfilment and be less prone to exhaustion and disillusionment if they are systematically reflecting on their actions. This reflection needs place and time set aside to be effectively undertaken and is best facilitated in what Huberman (1993) calls common havens for professional reflection. Having the opportunity to reflect within such a *common haven* should be rewarding both professionally and personally for writers whose work is on public display amongst their educational colleagues.

The factors and stages covered in this literature review necessarily needed to be put in an order for presentation. However, it is important to state that, whilst this literature review places them sequentially, empirical studies of writers' actions do not necessarily correspond to such an order. In the following subsection, I examine several examples of actual processes of materials production as documented by researchers.

### 3.10 Recent Studies of Materials Writers in Action

The literature contains various frameworks for the process of materials production (Penaflores, 1995; Rajan, 1995; Jolly & Bolitho, 2011; Johnson, 2003; Tomlinson, 2003; Prowse, 2011). Such frameworks neatly encapsulate necessary steps in the process and form useful checklists which can guide writers. However, several empirical studies present actual data which shows such frameworks often bear little resemblance to writers' actual processes. Indeed, Jolly and Bolitho (2011) mandate the inclusion of optional pathways and feedback loops to provide a materials production process which is both dynamic and self-regulating. Samuda, referring to producing language teaching tasks, goes further when she comments

the process of task design is certainly not a matter of working through ... a task ... in a linear fashion, nor does it entail orderly progressions through checklists of guiding principles. Task design is a complex, highly recursive and often messy process, requiring the designer to hold in mind a vast range of task variables relating to the design-in-process. (2005, p243)

Talking about tasks, but applicable to materials production in general, Samuda highlights a range of crucial attributes inherent in the writing process. The writer has to consider theoretical, pedagogic and practical, DTP design aspects simultaneously. He / She also has to think about the future in terms of future use of the materials, whilst focusing clearly on the work at hand as well as being prepared to look back to previously-produced materials which may need revision based on decisions made in the present. Being both recursive and forward-looking, simultaneously with an eye to the three general aspects of time listed above, describing the process as 'often messy' is not surprising. Indeed, Hadfield (2014) observes her own writing practices as being similarly messy whilst referring to Finke's (1996) notions of chaotic thinking and ordered thinking. Hadfield goes further by agreeing with Smith et al (1995) that these dichotomous ways of thinking alternate during the creative process of her writing to which she assigns the idea of *chaosmos* (Pope, 2005). Hadfield rejects the criticism that this alternation between types of thinking is a fault

suggesting such alternation is 'a process that entails a high degree of flexibility and responsiveness' (2014, p347) to problems and challenges occurring. Moreover, she aligns flexibility and responsiveness to her use of *dialogues*. She maintains that having an imagined dialogue with an imagined reader, or audience, both solves problems and provides justifications for her actions. Likewise, she advocates engaging in personal dialogues with the task, input texts and external commentators in keeping with Brophy's assertion (2009) that the writer can act as the reader before any other stakeholder sees the materials and that this pre-use evaluation can be repeated as often as required. Hadfield views such imaginings of materials-in-use scenarios through dialoguing as fundamental to effective writing.

Hadfield's self-monitoring study involves the production of mediated materials. Indeed, all of the studies included here, except for the Johnson (2003) study, cover mediated writing requiring writers to mediate with a publisher to produce a coursebook (Singapore Wala, 2003; Atkinson, 2013; Feak & Swales, 2014; Hadfield, 2014; Stoller & Robinson, 2014; Timmis, 2014).

Mediated coursebooks are the subject of Feak and Swales (2014) who detail their experiences producing EAP coursebooks highlighting the publisher-author-end-user relationship. These authors focus on the need for compromise and conciliation with particular reference to the non-educational stakeholders who exert considerable influence: the acquisitions editor; the development editor; and the copy editor. To this list, the authors Feak and Swales add other possible stakeholders: survey respondents; manuscript reviewers; focus groups; expert panels; and future audiences being made up principally of teachers and learners. With so many stakeholders having a degree of influence on the materials production process, Feak and Swales describe restrictions placed on them together with the need to constantly refer back to already-re-written material to ensure content and pedagogy satisfy key stakeholders' requirements.

On a micro level, Stoller and Robinson (2014) detail the extensive piloting, feedback and revisions they were required to do when producing units of

materials for an interdisciplinary textbook. This resulted in their linear framework for production of units of material being disrupted by the input from both the piloting of material and from other stakeholders. These authors also found their macro framework for approaching materials, from needs analysis to evaluation and revisions, needed to evolve as systematic piloting, trial and error, reflection, changed expectations and interaction with individuals and groups impacted on their materials production. This led the authors to construct frameworks relating to such areas of syllabus design as: authenticity of purpose; target genres; and discourse analysis. These, in turn, formed checkpoints for consistency. Being a mediated textbook, Stoller and Robinson show two parallel processes outlining the steps they followed to a) develop the textbook itself and b) to have the textbook published. Once again, they emphasize the reality of producing a mediated book showing these intertwined and concurrent processes where steps in each process influence each other and influence steps in the other process, making for a non-linear approach to materials design and publishing.

Timmis (2014) also outlines aspects of mediated materials production involving what he terms *principled compromise*. Working in a team of writers, he ensured the project had frameworks covering areas such as: design specifications; methodological principles; layout; and presentation. These frameworks embodied educational principles and ensured quality and consistency. However, as the project proceeded, Timmis and the writing team were repeatedly required to re-visit and re-write materials to satisfy previously unstated requirements of key stakeholders including: content, both textual and linguistic; pedagogy - discovery approach versus explicit grammar focus; and cultural appropriacy of texts and tasks. Timmis concludes that compromising their original frameworks was necessary to satisfy stakeholder requirements but that the final product comprised a balance between continuity and change and between familiarity and innovation.

Singapore Wala (2003) examines her own process of producing a mediated coursebook and highlights compromises she was obliged to make balancing educational importance against time constraints placed upon the writing project by government requirements. Based on these necessary compromises,

Singapore Wala quotes Tickoo's (1995) observation that a perfect textbook can only be an ideal when dealing with publishers. With severe time constraints set by the Education Ministry, at a micro level, coursebook units were produced concurrently rather than sequentially and were therefore in a constant state of flux. This is exemplified by a comprehensive re-framing of a scheme of work for the project subsequent to feedback from a focus group. The afore-mentioned non-linear process of producing units was exacerbated by limitations imposed at the macro level of the author not being able to trial or pilot material thereby having to forego quality control checks which feedback enables.

Atkinson's (2013) case study of an expert writer's activities reveals a cyclical approach requiring the revisiting of certain activities on multiple occasions to guarantee 'continuity, substance, variety and repetition' (ibid, p8). Additionally, Atkinson found that the writer also adhered to the logical steps in materials production if not always in a linear fashion. Interestingly, this writer was commissioned to produce a textbook involving an area of education about which he knew very little thereby necessitating his reliance on domain experts to inform content and pedagogic decisions. In the same way that Hadfield and Feak and Swales described imagining their future audiences, Atkinson also observed the expert writer's ability to conceptualise how his textbook would be used by learners to learn and by teachers deriving personal development from it. The writer then facilitated these diverse outcomes with comprehensible format. This exemplifies Johnson's (2003) characteristic of maximum variable control whereby an expert writer is sensitive to a range of issues and constraints such as: fulfilling overarching TOs and LOs; recycling target vocabulary; and enabling teacher and learner autonomy.

Johnson (2003) undertook a detailed study of expert and non-expert writers of ELT tasks which detailed divergent practices between expert writers and non-specialist writers. I include five key findings here which emerged from his study. First was the finding that experts have concrete visualisation capacity which enables them to imagine classroom eventualities and simulate both input and potential learner output. Such visualisation also allows them to explore and select possibilities related to task design rapidly. Second, expert writers appear



to have an easy abandonment capacity which allows them to discard tasks or components thereof, even after much effort has been expended on them, if the writer concludes they do not meet the design specification or do not suit the needs of the task to provide effective learning. Third was Johnson's identification of a range of ways in which writers use their time. These include time spent on analysing task design, exploring possible task types, genres and scenarios as well as the time-saving strategy of selecting procedures, tasks and materials from their professional repertoire. Fourth was the finding that expert writers work cyclically by reviewing each new task component in relation to what has been produced earlier and they exhibit great individual variation in their task design with a fifth finding being expert writers' ability to keep the local learning context in sharp relief throughout the process of materials production. Together, the above-mentioned strategies enable expert writers to take account of a wide range of variables and constraints which apply to any particular writing scenario. This allows them to produce richer, more complex tasks, what Johnson (ibid) labels as *complexifying tasks* for increased learner success.

### **3.11 From Academic Knowledge to Writers' Activities**

The literature reviewed in this chapter informs materials writers as to potentially useful and relevant best practice during the process of producing mediated ELT material. What have not been covered in any detail are the activities of writers who produce unmediated materials, particularly unmediated coursebooks. This study aims to examine this important area of materials production, including as it does, a large number of writers, both in Oman and worldwide, who do not deal with publishers or large organisations but who are accountable to their colleagues and the institutional hierarchy they work in.

This study presents the activities of writers in Oman, most of who produce unmediated materials but with a few participants offering insights into mediated materials production here in the Sultanate as well to allow for a comparison of

the two scenarios. To this end, methodology and methods of data collection are presented to answer my research questions as detailed in the following chapter.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Overview**

This chapter lays out the methodological approach and methods selected to collect and analyse data to address the study's aim. The chapter outlines the rationale for the methodological approach stemming from my epistemological and ontological positions. This leads into a brief discussion of the theoretical orientation and resultant theoretical framework used. Appropriate methodological components are presented and then examined in detail against current literature. This examination covers the selection, preparation, piloting, administering and analysis of the components, including practical and ethical aspects of data collection and analysis. Throughout this process, I tried to ensure collection of both quantitative and qualitative data which would prove relevant and / or pertinent to the aim of the study.

### **4.2 Research Framework**

#### **4.2.1 Philosophy of Research**

According to the online Oxforddictionaries (2014), epistemology is 'the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion'. With respect to educational research, epistemology is the set of assumptions made concerning the 'very bases of knowledge – its nature and forms, how it can be acquired, and how communicated to other human beings' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p7).

My personal view of social reality and knowledge of social behaviour is firmly post-positivistic in respect of knowledge both in its nature and its forms. The epistemological approach underpinning this study is subjectivist to 'discover how different people interpret the world in which they live' (after Barr Greenfield, 1975, adapted by Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p10). I also view such a

discovery of knowledge and the way we acquire it from a socially-constructed viewpoint with people constructing realities as they attempt to make sense of their surroundings (Pring, 2004), with these realities constructed from social interaction. The epistemological focus of this study should encompass the relationship between the researcher and those realities (ibid) as they emerge from the data collected. Such exploration should then enable better understanding of the ways in which materials writers interpret their world and construct common understandings (after Richards, 2003) which leads into the realms of ontology.

The online Oxforddictionaries gives the definition of ontology as ‘the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being’ (2014). In terms of educational research, ontology is the set of assumptions made concerning ‘the very nature or essence of the social phenomena being investigated’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p7). The post-positivist view sees ‘knowledge as personal, subjective and unique’ (ibid). Therefore the ontological approach adopted by this study seeks to examine ‘how things really are’ and ‘how things really work’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p108) to make sense of the nature and forms of knowledge (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). This is fundamental to understanding materials writers’ realities which are constructed from the social interaction they engage in with the world around them and how such interaction affects their approach to materials production.

#### **4.2.2 Theoretical Orientation**

For this study, I have taken the view that theories applicable to the practices of being an ELT writer will emerge from data collected from individuals. These data represent writers’ behaviours and the co-construction with other colleagues and with learners of their reality as writers. In this regard, the positivistic paradigm has no meaningful place. Nor is the study dealing with injustice or inequality so the critical paradigm is not appropriate here, either. This study seeks to focus on the meanings ELT writers assign to their professional activities and how they understand the process of materials production in

relation to these meanings. Therefore, I have applied the tenets of an interpretivist paradigm to the study whilst also engaging a social constructivist approach to include writers' realities which are: *local*, in terms of working in Oman; *specific*, in terms of the disparate groups of learners for whom they are writing materials; *socially-constructed*, either with other colleagues or with their learners or both; and *experientially based*, in terms of the process of producing, piloting, evaluating and re-writing which effective materials require. Therefore, this study is informed by both an interpretive and a social constructivist framework towards educational research.

#### 4.2.2.1 An interpretive Stance

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2009, p22) interpretive researchers 'begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them'. The theories emerging from such understanding 'should be grounded in data generated by the research act' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p22), with such data presenting the 'subjective meanings' (Pring, 2004, p98) of research participants. Researchers then 'devote their time to revealing the interpretations of the situation of the social actors' [participants] (ibid). Pring continues by asserting that 'social reality is a construction (which) reflects the subjective meanings of both the agents themselves [participants] and those who interpret what the agents do' (ibid, p103). Therefore, it is important 'researchers recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation' (Creswell, 2009, p8) to generate meaning from the data collected.

#### 4.2.2.2 A Social Constructivist Stance

Research needs to examine data collected in terms of the local context to fully appreciate the meanings and importance which localised materials writers ascribe to theoretical assumptions, educational realities and professional practices. Examining data from individuals should fulfil Creswell's assertion

(2009) that social constructivists rely on participants' views which are negotiated socially and historically through interaction with others, their colleagues and learners. Collecting participants' views requires social constructivists to 'ask questions about ... identities, practices, knowledges and understandings' (Rapley, 2007, p4) from which researchers can then make interpretations.

### **4.3 Methodology**

The role of methodology, as interpreted by Wellington, is 'the activity ... of choosing, reflecting upon, evaluating and justifying the methods' (2000, p22) used in a study. This research is situated within the interpretive and social constructivist paradigms and uses an exploratory methodology. By employing an exploratory approach, the study seeks to examine the underlying theoretical, pedagogic and practical aspects of materials writers' activities to allow a picture to emerge of how this loose but specific community of practice (Wenger, 1998) view their professional activities (Creswell, 2009).

Employing methodological pragmatism (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973), I selected a sequential mixed-method design (Creswell, Plano, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003), to match the inherent logic of the research project (Punch, 2009). This design fulfills the question-method fit (ibid, p298) closely linking the research questions to the literature review and the majority of the themes resulting from the data collected. Such a design for data collection thereby exemplifies what Punch calls 'the overall logical chain within a piece of research' (2009, p75) linking research questions to the literature review to the data collected and analysed. In this way, 'tight logical connections are (made) between all levels of abstraction in that chain' (ibid). Moreover, the design also fulfills the requirements of an exploratory approach outlined by Wellington (2000) by asking 'how and why' questions (ibid, p49).

## 4.4 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to examine which aspects of materials production ELT educationalists most need to be aware of when preparing, producing, piloting and evaluating materials. To achieve this aim, I have formulated the following 'clear and explicitly formulated research question(s)' (Flick, 2007a, p22):

- 1           What do ELT educationalists view as key aspects to their producing effective materials for their learners?
  - a       How do they view the importance of theoretical knowledge?
  - b       How do they view the importance of pedagogic knowledge?
  - c       How do they view the importance of practical, desktop publishing (DTP) knowledge?
  
- 2           What aspects of teaching and learning influence writers in the process of producing materials for their learners?
  - a       What do they prioritise when planning materials? Why?
  
- 3           What do ELT educationalists feel they are lacking and would like to be better informed about in respect of materials production?

## 4.5 Methods

The research questions outlined above emerged from the literature review and I have taken a pragmatic approach (Punch, 2009) to method selection by looking at the research questions and then deciding the most appropriate data collection tools to enable myself to answer the study's aims encapsulated in those research questions.

The post-positivist paradigms seek out subjective data accrued using qualitative methodology. Such subjective data take the form of 'empirical information about the world, not in the form of numbers' (Punch, 2009, p87). These empirical data,

in the form of words, offered the prospect of collecting rich data of a subjective nature for interpretation and construction of social theory to answer my research questions.

Therefore my main approach to data collection was qualitative in keeping with my subjective view of the social world. However, as Pring reminds us, 'researchers must be eclectic in their search for truth' (2004, p33) so I decided that reliance on qualitative data alone would not reveal sufficiently rich data for analysis and hence *good research*. This resulted in the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to add greater validity (Greener, 2011). Combining both quantitative and qualitative methods also allows for Hammersley's notion of facilitation (1996) by combining complementary research strategies (ibid) 'to promote quality in qualitative research' (Flick, 2007b, p52). This pragmatic approach to data collection addresses the principle of 'appropriateness' (Becker et al., 1961, quoted in Flick, 2007a, p5) with the majority of the data collected being qualitative in nature.

As Denzin observed 'methods must be selected with an eye to their theoretical relevance. ... to maximize the theoretical value of their studies. Investigators must select their strongest methods' (1970, p308-310). In order to obtain relevant data, surveys and interviews were, in my view, the clear options enabling interview data to 'both illustrate and illuminate questionnaire results' (Gillham, 2008, in Dörnyei, 2010, p109). Therefore I selected a ranking questionnaire to canvass respondents and sensitize them to key aspects of materials production before they completed the Likert-type and open-ended questions of the second questionnaire. The interview allowed for detailed follow-up on respondents' initial, written responses together with the potential to explore new practices and concepts as they arose during the interviews.

I selected questionnaires and interviews for the above-mentioned pragmatic reasons in terms of obtaining data to address my research questions focusing on materials writers' activities. I considered other data collection methods but, for reasons explained below, decided that they were not feasible or appropriate for this study.



The tool of think-aloud, or concurrent verbalisation, has been used to collect SLA research data on a wide range of issues arising in the classroom (Gass & Mackey, 2000). Think-aloud can make covert processes overt (Johnson, 2003), that is, think-aloud would require a writer to exhibit mental processes through oral description. Clearly, think-aloud can provide a wealth of rich data but I feel this lends itself to the study of one or a few writers. Moreover, the scope of the study, examining writers' activities during the complex process of materials planning and production is too broad to be covered in a one-to-two-hour think-aloud session. Therefore I chose not to use this method for the study.

Likewise, stimulated recall, also known as retrospective reports or postprocess oral observation (Gass & Mackey, 2000) enables subjects of *think-aloud* to supplement initial data with retrospective thoughts, usually prompted by a videotape of the subject's original think-aloud activity presenting both the documentation produced, a plan, a fragment of a syllabus, a piece of material, and the enunciated think-aloud commentary. In this way, both a writer's thought processes and strategies can be recalled and expounded upon by the subject him / herself with visual, video cues and stimuli to enable the subject to recall and elucidate with added accuracy and depth (Bloom, 1954). As with think-aloud above, this data collection tool cannot cover the breadth of aspects related to materials production in a single session. However, an examination of the materials produced by writers can provide rich data as I discuss in the next paragraph.

Collection and analysis of documentation in respect of materials writers' activities focuses on the physical, or digital, artefacts produced. In the Johnson (2003) study mentioned above this equates to the actual tasks designed by the writers. Such artefacts enable a comparison between the writer's thought processes and the actual material produced. Having access to such material also facilitates the construction of interview questions seeking further detail on the whys of materials production. Collecting such documentation might have been a further tool to use to enable triangulation between the quantitative and qualitative data already collected and hence provide evidence of practices followed as exemplified by the materials. However, I discounted this method

fearing it would appear threatening for writers of varying experience and confidence to have their work evaluated in the public domain.

A further method of data collection which I considered was classroom observation of materials in-use. Taking discussion of actual materials to a further level of complexity in terms of data collected, the researcher can observe materials actually being used in the classroom (Ellis, 1997). This would connect the writer's thought processes and validate, or otherwise, the writer's ability to produce effective learning scenarios. However, here in Oman, there is considerable resistance to lesson observation, both at a personal and institutional level. It is not the purview of this study to offer reasons why this is so but personally I have only observed three lessons in twenty-one years in the Omani military and have heard numerous anecdotal accounts confirming this picture in other ELT institutions. Therefore, I deemed this method impractical for the local context.

An extension of classroom observation would be the canvassing of the end-users, the learners and teachers, who use the materials (Lightbown, 2000). Extending data collection in this way would enable triangulation of aspects of materials production such as relevance to local contexts, motivation, effectiveness and much more. As with lesson observation however, institutional policies here in Oman are highly-restrictive, particularly in respect of non-institutional researchers being given access to teachers and learners so I excluded this method accordingly. In view of the above comments on other methods of data collection, I selected questionnaires and interviews, as detailed below, to collect data which would address my research questions.

#### **4.5.1 Participant Questionnaires**

I selected questionnaires as the most appropriate quantitative data collection tool as they offer a highly efficient way of collecting and processing numerically-based data (Dörnyei, 2010). Furthermore, questionnaires are versatile as can be seen with the two, distinct designs used in this study: ranking; and Likert

scale. These designs facilitated a cross-sectional approach (Greener, 2011) to the materials-writer population here in Oman with the total number of participants in the questionnaires representing a significant percentage of the perceived total population of approximately forty writers Oman-wide.

Having selected questionnaires according to their suitability for this study, I had to ensure negative aspects of questionnaire design were addressed to ensure validity of the results obtained. Questions had to be both 'simple and straightforward' (ibid, p7) as participants would be responding to them in isolation with no recourse to researcher-explanation. Participants might also miss out or misinterpret unclear or ambiguous questions. I also had to ensure analysis of results highlighted potential respondent-mistakes or acquiescence bias (ibid, p9) which could be checked or clarified during the interview [for those participants who had one].

I selected the open-ended questions accompanying the Likert-type questionnaire to allow for qualitative data collection, in particular from participants who would not subsequently be involved in an interview. Despite the potentially-inherent superficiality of such responses (Dörnyei, 2010) or a reluctance to provide long answers, I wanted to allow all participants the ability to clarify or extend their quantitative answers.

As Dörnyei advocates 'the initial stage of questionnaire design should focus on clarifying the research problem and identifying what critical concepts need to be addressed by the questionnaire' (2010, p22). Since the study's research questions have emerged from the literature review, the sections of the ranking questionnaire closely reflect the critical concepts emerging from my literature review in line with Rapley's contention that 'the actual content of the list of questions is initially generated in negotiation with the relevant academic and non-academic literature' (2007, p38-39). Likewise, the information-gathering questionnaire focuses on collecting data to address both the research questions themselves and the critical concepts arising from the literature review.

The participant questionnaires (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Greener, 2011; McDonough & McDonough, 1997) enquire about specific areas of materials production which respondents may or may not have thought about in any great detail themselves. Therefore, as researcher, I made the conscious decision to present a synopsis of a range of aspects underpinning informed materials production, emanating from this study's literature review, in the text of the questionnaires.

The 'self-completion questionnaires' (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p172) were carefully designed to collect both quantitative data, using ranking questions and Likert-type tick-box questions (Likert, 1932) and qualitative data, using limited open-ended questions seeking extended written answers, which would address the issues inherent in the research questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

The surveys (Appendix 1) together covered the range of data identified by Dörnyei namely, 'factual, behavioural, and attitudinal' (2010, p5). The ranking questions collected data about the writers' beliefs in respect of educational best practices and related behaviours when applying these beliefs to materials production. The Likert-questions sought to collect factual and behavioural data and the accompanying open-ended questions presented participants with the opportunity to offer further, factual, behavioural and / or attitudinal data.

Each questionnaire was carefully written as 'every questionnaire requires the development of its own unique assessment tool that is appropriate for the particular environment and sample' (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011, p214). The two questionnaires taken together aimed not only to explore and explain writers' actions but also to act as 'confirmatory' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p207) agents in respect of current practice as outlined in the literature review. These questionnaires also enabled writers to present a 'wider picture' (Wellington, 2000, p101) of their views on their professional activities within their local contexts.

In order to effectively operationalize the questionnaires, their primary objective (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) of providing data to address the thesis' research questions was ensured by closely aligning questionnaire items to research questions. This ensured the literature review generated 'a theoretically driven list of main areas to be covered' (Dörnyei, 2010, p127). For example, research question (RQ1b): 'How do they view the importance of pedagogic knowledge?' was addressed as follows:

a) by item 5 (RAQ5) in Section 1 of the ranking questionnaire:

	<b>Aspects of materials production</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
5	Pedagogic considerations: what works in the classroom and leads to successful learners	

*Table 4.1: Example ranking item for aspects of materials production (RAQ5)*

b) and by item 11 (LQ11) of the Likert-type questionnaire:

Key: a = none    b = a little    c = some    d = quite a lot    e = a lot

Item 11	a	b	c	d	e
How much importance do you give to pedagogic considerations (ELT approaches and methodology) when you are planning materials?					

Please expand on this: \_\_\_\_\_

*Table 4.2: Example Likert-type question for aspects of materials production (LQ11)*

This approach to data collection was in keeping with Denscombe's point that 'approaches are selected because they are appropriate for specific aspects of investigation ... they are chosen as 'fit for purpose' (1998, p3-5).

In this way, the key areas of interest contained within the research questions were covered more than once (Sellitz et al, 1976) to allow for initial sensitizing of the participant to an area [the ranking questionnaire] before asking for more factual data [the Likert-type questions] followed by qualitative data collection to expand on the Likert-type items.

Since these data collection tools were to be emailed to materials writers from a materials writer myself, it was incumbent on me to produce documents whose appearance encouraged participants to engage with the material in the same way as I would hope learners would do with my ELT learning materials. Therefore I undertook this process with care to present what Kvale labels 'the craftsmanship of the researcher' (2007, p34) so I applied the same procedures and standards of work as I do to my ELT course production.

Emailed to participants, these documents represented the initial interface between the researcher and the respondent and hence 'format and graphic layout carry(ied) a special significance and ha(d) an important impact ... in eliciting reliable and valid data' (Dörnyei, 2010, p13).

#### **4.5.2 Interviews**

I selected participant interviews (Kvale, 2007; Radnor, 2001) as a research tool to complement the questionnaires stemming from Kvale's declaration that:

In a postmodern epistemology the certainty of our knowledge ... is a matter of conversation between person(s) ... (with) an emphasis on the local context, on the social and linguistic construction of a perspectival reality where knowledge is validated through practice.

(Kvale, 2007, p21)

I selected interviews as the most appropriate qualitative data collection tool as they afforded the opportunity for me, as researcher, to 'understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' own perspectives' (Kvale, 2007, p10). A semi-structured design (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) allowed me to address my research questions by asking focussed questions whilst also obtaining further, related data using follow-up questions. The interview also enabled me to include questions relating back to both the quantitative and qualitative data already collected by the questionnaires.

The primary aim of interviewing a selection of those participants who had already completed and returned their questionnaires was to collect rich, qualitative data related to the focus of the study, especially as the codes, categories and themes would not be developed until after interviews had been transcribed. This included the collection of data relating to the research questions, as well as enabling the researcher to collect data contrary to theories prevalent in the literature and / or surprise data to emerge which might challenge or expand ideas and knowledge relating to materials writers' activities (Kvale, 2007). This process of interview question-formation fulfilled Kvale's perceived need to thematise an interview study (2007) to engage theory clarification with the formulation of research questions which then require interview questions (INQs) to collect relevant data. These INQs were then amended and added to with potential *follow-up questions* subsequent to detailed reading of the surveys to personalize each interview guide (Flick, 2007a) in keeping with Flick's stipulation that 'a good research design should ... be sensitive, flexible and adaptive' (ibid, p50). The resulting semi-structured, one-to-one interview guides (see Appendix 2 for an example) allowed a series of foci within 'an open-ended ... approach to maximise opportunities for dialogical authoring' (Bakhtin, 1981, quoted in Barkhuizen, 2011, p8).

During the interviews themselves, I combined initial questions with follow-up questions to form a route map for a 'professional conversation' (Kvale, 1996, p5) between the researcher and the participant. Such individualisation of interview design for each participant adhered to Flick's call for 'openness for diversity' (2007a, p63) whilst also enabling the collection of critical comments as evidenced in the *Additional themes* section of my codebook to allow the researcher to collect 'new insights and ways of seeing things' (ibid, p64). Furthermore, the INQs sought to 'lead the subject towards certain themes, but not to specific opinions about these themes' (Kvale, 2007, p12) in keeping with openness as mentioned above.

Follow-up questions could be inserted at relevant moments into the interview and link what the participants had already offered while completing the questionnaires. Moreover, they allowed the researcher to not only 'look for

confirmatory (or contradictory) practices’ (Flick, 2007b, p113) but also use inferences arising ‘purposively if researchers orient themselves in questions in an interview on what they have learned’ (ibid) from earlier data collection. Table 4.3 below presents example follow-up questions pre-prepared for Diane’s interview.

Interview question 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How much materials writing have you been involved in?</li> </ul>
Potential, pre-prepared follow-up question(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How did you go about conducting a needs analysis for the Explore Writing project?</li> <li>▪ You included the notion of inserting grammar and games in response to learner wants. How did the Explore Writing project balance learner wants and needs with institutional requirements?</li> </ul>
Interview question 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What do you think makes for effective materials?</li> </ul>
Potential, pre-prepared follow-up question(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ You wrote that learning English should be strongly connected to students’ lives and experiences outside the classroom. How do you ensure this happens in your materials?</li> </ul>

*Table 4.3: Examples of follow-up interview questions*

This technique was particularly effective when interviewees were struggling to find a response to primary questions and invoked Kvale’s assertion that interviews need ‘a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge’ (2007, p7).

#### **4.5.3 Data Collection Tools Used in Unison to Address RQs**

The formulation of the questionnaires and interview questions required careful planning and multiple revisions to ensure effective instruments for data collection. These tools addressed the research questions as follows:



Research Questions	Ranking Questionnaire	Information-gathering Questionnaire	Interview Questions
1	✓	✓	✓
1a	✓	✓	✓
1b	✓	✓	✓
1c	✓	✓	✓
2	✓	✓	✓
2a	✓	✓	✓
3	-	-	✓

Table 4.4: How data collection tools addressed research questions

For example RQ1b ‘How do ELT writers view the importance of pedagogic knowledge?’ was addressed as shown below.

In the ranking questionnaire:

	Pedagogic considerations	Ranking
25	Choosing an appropriate methodological approach	
25	Context-related and needs-related tasks	
27	Teacher support: answer keys, suggested procedures, alternative ideas, further optional materials	
28	Learner support: ways to help the learners be more successful with activities and with their learning	
29	Incremental learning: building on what learners have done before in previous units / courses	

Table 4.5: Ranking items relating to pedagogic considerations

In the information-gathering questionnaire:

Key: *a* = an enormous influence    *b* = a lot of influence    *c* = some influence  
*d* = a little influence    *e* = not much influence

Item 5	a	b	c	d	e
How much influence does your ELT training have on your materials production?					

Item 6	a	b	c	d	e
How much influence does your ELT experience have on your materials production?					

Key: a = none    b = a little    c = some    d = quite a lot    e = a lot

Item 11	a	b	c	d	e
How much importance do you give to pedagogic considerations (ELT approaches and methodology) when you are planning materials?					

Table 4.6: Likert-type questions relating to pedagogic considerations

and by the INQs:

INQ3) What do you think makes for effective materials?

INQ6) What makes for effective teaching and learning in the classroom, what aspects of pedagogic knowledge do you think are key to planning and writing materials that are effective?

INQ8) Which aspects of English language training (ELT) do you view as fundamental to the process of planning materials production?

By providing multiple opportunities for participants to offer data, both quantitative and qualitative, at various stages in the collection process, I hoped to accrue sufficient, rich data for analysis.

## 4.6 Participants / Sampling

This study focussed on a small percentage of working ELT practitioners, materials writers, as the majority are involved primarily with classroom teaching activities and few are engaged in materials production outside of requirements for classroom preparation. Writing cells are few and far between in the Sultanate of Oman despite the deficiencies of global coursebooks (Gray, 2010) in respect of linguistic, cultural, religious and societal norms prevalent in the local learner population.

The participants represent a 'purposive sampling' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p114) coming from a 'membership' (Rapley, 2007, p3) of active writers with varying degrees of experience to allow the researcher to collect 'rich, thick description' (Creswell, 2009, p191). Once I had publicized my study at several researcher-led workshops, my purposive sampling was supplemented by a 'snowball sampling' (Flick, 2007a, p28) as writers and other ELT professionals put me in touch with other writers.

Active writers were then selected based on the following methodological and practical aspects: experience; type of materials being produced; and accessibility. This is in line with Miles and Huberman's 'tight' research design (1994, p16-18) focussing on the clearly defined constructs covered by my literature review yet with an element of openness and flexibility (Flick, 2007a) to allow for unforeseen practices and ideas to emerge.

I wanted to collect data to cover a range of writer experience in line with Rubin and Rubin's suggestion for 'finding knowledgeable people' (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, quoted in Flick, 2007a, p80) which would then enable detailed analysis of the varying requirements writers might have for further development. This led to the inclusion of: primary, secondary and tertiary education writers; writers working in both the public and private sectors of education; and writers of General English, ESP and EAP materials 'for extending the results and their coverage' (Flick, 2007a, p80). I sought ease-of-access to writers in terms of communication modes with face-to-face interviews being the preferred methodological tool for collecting spoken data. This restricted the geographical area covered to the north of Oman, mainly centred on writers working in or near the capital, Muscat.

#### **4.6.1 Identifying the Population of the Study**

To begin to identify the potential population of this study (Creswell, 2009), I contacted three materials writers I had interviewed for a previous EdD assignment. These writers, in turn, put me in touch with colleagues, friends or

persons known to them and these contacts led to other writers. Concurrently, I led four workshops and two conference presentations on materials production in the Muscat area, from February to May, and invited members of the audience to contact me if they were producers of materials themselves and would be interested in being involved in the study. Together, these actions resulted in 33 potential participants who were then sent requests for participation.

The sending out of pre-interview questionnaires and interview times and locations were carefully timetabled to ensure minimal mortality due to writers disappearing for Ramadan and / or the extended summer break, June-September.

The selection of participants and the collecting of data from them, as outlined above, was undertaken to ensure a wide range of materials writers' activities would be included in the research thereby allowing findings to be meaningful beyond local, Omani parameters and hence contribute to knowledge of ELT materials production. Some participants were chosen even though they came from a primary or secondary background in order to extend results to include a wider range of experience and expertise (Rapley, 2007) because 'those few participants who produce radically different or contrasting talk can often be central to modifying (one's) theories' (ibid, p38).

#### **4.6.2 The Participants and their Materials Writing Experience**

Below are the pseudonyms and gender of the participants, who ranged over three distinct groups in terms of years of writing experience:

- experienced writers (1-5 years' experience)
  - 3 female (Diane, Lulu and Heather)
  - No male participants
- highly-experienced writers (6-10 years' experience)
  - 3 female (Rosie, Julie & Tara)
  - 5 male (Sam, Steve, Victor, Ray and Ron)

- expert writers (more than 10 years' experience)
  - 3 female (Bonnie, Florence & Gina)
  - 6 male (Naithan, Don, Simon, Sidney, Orson and Keith)

(Total: 9 females; 11 males)

Of these 20 participants, 14 were subsequently interviewed as listed below.

- experienced writers (1-5 years' experience)
  - 3 female (Diane, Lulu and Heather)
  - No male participants
- highly- experienced writers (6-10 years' experience)
  - 3 female (Rosie, Julie and Tara)
  - 2 male (Steve and Ray)
- expert writers (more than 10 years' experience)
  - 1 female (Bonnie)
  - 5 male (Naithan, Don, Sidney, Orson and Keith)

(Total: 7 females; 7 males)

Of the twenty participants, only two produce, or have produced mediated materials in conjunction with publishers. More detailed descriptions for each participant are presented in Appendix 3. These include: ELT biographical detail; materials production activities; and personal language learning history.

## **4.7 Procedures**

The questionnaires, and accompanying letter of introduction, were produced and revised before being piloted and overseen (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). During this process, instructions and questions were scrutinised for 'clarity, brevity and a logical progression' (Greener, 2011, p43). The piloter was an ELT colleague with a Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Diploma and twenty-plus years' experience and the overseer was my supervisor at Exeter. Together they performed an essential set of tasks to operationalize the data collection tools. In particular, they focussed on: clarity and readability levels for participants; the elimination of ambiguity and irrelevant text; the length and complexity of

questionnaire formats and content; and the layout of the questions and answer spaces (taken and adapted from Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p341). Likewise, my piloter scrutinised the interview questions and highlighted several ambiguities which were amended to ensure the questions were clear as to the information they sought to gather.

Data were collected over a period of two months from May to June, 2014 depending on availability and at the convenience of the participants. Initial contact with potential participants was made either by phone, texting, email or through a third party. All potential participants were either known to me or to a colleague, friend, or friend of a friend.

Surveys with introductory letters and University of Exeter ethics forms were sent out by email and, with recipients not known to myself, initial contact included a personal email outlining the aim of my study, the type and amount of time required to complete the questionnaires and thanks in advance. The surveys were presented as Word documents for ease of completion and returned as email attachments (Appendix 1).

Materials writers form a small population within the ELT community here in the north of Oman but even so I became aware of approximately forty writers. Thirty-three of these were sent emails with the questionnaires 'to leave a decent *margin* to provide for unforeseen or unplanned circumstances' (Dörnyei, 2010, p63) and indeed there was a variety of unplanned circumstances including: surveys being disqualified as they were not accompanied by ethics forms; potential respondents were too busy or on sabbatical; and some who promised to send the surveys by the closing date but failed to do so. I could not contact all forty writers as, in one case, my intermediary contact left the country early on completion of contract, and for some potential locations such as a distant university, I failed to find an intermediary to help with initial contact.

### Questionnaire metadata

Of the thirty-three materials writers who received questionnaires, twenty-two were returned representing a 67% response rate. However, it was necessary to exclude two questionnaires making for a new total of twenty and giving a revised response rate of 61%. The two returned questionnaires were discounted because Paul had failed to send a completed ethics form and Ali, the only Omani respondent, had not been engaged in materials writing for several years. Regarding Ali, I conformed to 'an iterative process' (Flick, 2007a, p30) of exclusion when a participant is found to be less suitable than others. I was satisfied with the final number of twenty but was disappointed that only one of the four Omani writers had responded and that he no longer wrote materials. The window for collecting data was closing as educationalists reached the final examinations period of the academic year here in Oman so further emails or phone contact would not have yielded much in the way of positive response at this, the busiest time in the academic calendar. Respondents answered 45 ranking items, 14 Likert-type questions and supplemented their Likert-type responses with qualitative, written answers amounting to a total of approximately 10,500 words from the 20 participants.

### Interview Metadata

Interviews were scheduled at the participants' convenience by email, text messaging or phone. Times and locations were suggested and negotiated with participants to minimise travel constraints. Participants were always offered the option to conduct the interview at a coffee shop or other food and beverage outlet so that the researcher could pay for anything as a way of thank you. Participants were also made aware of the probable length of the interview: 45-60 minutes. Interview locations included: coffee shops; hotel lobby coffee shops; university social clubs; my own home, in the case of personal friends and colleagues; a parked car with the AC on; and my Royal Air Force of Oman Officers Mess, for dinner.

Interviews were preceded by a few minutes of small-talk to build the personal interrelationship between interviewer and participant (Kvale, 2007) which can affect the amount and quality of the data collected. Likewise, it was important

for myself as researcher to 'address the interpersonal dynamics within the interview' (ibid, p14) to maintain a positive feel throughout and thereby increase the likelihood of obtaining usable data whilst offsetting any participant feeling of negativity brought on by the power asymmetry of the research interview (ibid). As Kvale describes the interview process of data collection, 'interviewers are seen as active participants rather than like speaking questionnaires' (2007, p74). This is an opportunity for researchers to collect rich data if interviews are conducted to maximize participant input. Interviewees were given sufficient time to say all that they wanted to in terms of the INQs and other themes emerging. This necessitated numerous 'on-the-spot decisions' (ibid, p34) as to when to follow up participant statements for further clarification.

All interviews were recorded on an Olympus WS-650S Digital Voice Recorder or a Samsung Galaxy S2 phone and then transferred to my personal laptop computer where they were transcribed into Microsoft Word documents. Using these recording devices rather than taking notes, enabled me to interact with the participants in a more natural way (Rapley, 2007).

A total of fourteen interviews were conducted. The total number of transcribed words was approximately 73,000. The total elapsed time of interview recordings was approximately fourteen-and-a-half hours with interviews ranging from thirty-one to seventy-nine minutes (see Appendix 4).

I transcribed the interviews as soon as possible after each one and completed this process within three days of interviewing all the participants. Interviews were transcribed verbatim including pronunciation, syntactical and lexical errors together with other spoken features in parentheses where applicable. Data were excluded which was deemed as irrelevant to the aim of the study as per Gibbs' suggestion that 'it is not necessary to transcribe all ... the information you have collected' (2007, p11) as well as fulfilling Kvale's recommendation to answer the question: 'What is a useful transcription for my research purposes?' (2007, p98).



## 4.8 Credibility and Trustworthiness

According to Flick (2007b) the credibility of a research process can be developed by its reflexive documentation. Flick continues by highlighting the need for 'method-appropriate criteria' (ibid, p18-19) for collecting and interpreting data. To address the criteria of credibility and trustworthiness, I selected various strategies. Such strategies included the formation of an auditing trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the tools, documentation, and processes leading to the collection of data and the construction of findings emerging. Documenting this trail fulfilled Flick's assertion of the importance of 'transparency' (2007b, p137) to allow readers to understand the research process: 'what was done for promoting quality and how it was done and the results to which it led' (ibid, p139).

Since a significant amount of the research data was collected using qualitative tools and an interpretive approach to analysis, member checking of the transcript and codes used to identify themes was essential to allow participants the opportunity to review what they had offered. This was done after coding had been completed which allowed for respondent validation of facts, meaning and interpretation (Bloor, 1997; Gibbs, 2007; Kvale, 2007; Rapley, 2007) in line with the concept of 'beneficence' (Kvale, 2007, p28) to ensure no harm came to the participants stemming from the study's findings and that their ideas and comments had been faithfully rendered by the researcher.

In addition to member checking, I invited a recent recipient of a University of Exeter EdD to check how I had defined and used the codes to ensure both efficacy and consistency and avoid 'definitional drift in coding' (Gibbs, 2007, p98). This was done by sending him an example coded transcript and my list of themes with their definitions. His comments on reducing the number of themes whilst at the same time re-examining the transcripts for further coding was perceptive advice and was acted upon during the analysis stage in keeping with Flick's definition of quality in research as 'something to be developed, maintained and produced throughout the whole project' (2007b, p139).

## 4.9 Position and Role of the Researcher

Gibbs admonishes researchers to 'recognize that their work inevitably reflects their background, milieu and predilections' (2007, p104) so I was conscious of my own professional history as a materials writer combined with my recent doctoral reading and writing and how this would undoubtedly have an impact on the data collection and analysis process. However, bearing in mind Richards' suggestion to researchers to 'be sensitive to your own views and the development of these' (2003, p129), I endeavoured to maintain a position of 'qualified naïveté' (Kvale, 2007, p12) to allow for participants' meanings to be collected and analysed. To achieve such a position, it was necessary for me, as researcher, to address the issues identified by Gibbs relating to the researcher's role as follows.

Firstly, there is the 'issue of authority' (Gibbs, 2007, p36) when a researcher's own informed view / interpretation can affect interview content by inserting leading or confirmatory questions thereby influencing a participant's response. To try to avoid influencing the participants' responses with my own informed views and understanding of ELT, I not only wrote, re-wrote, piloted and amended the questionnaires and interview questions, I also practised a form of self-regulation during the interviews. This took the form of responding to participant responses in a non-judgemental way combined with avoiding the subsequent use of leading follow-up questions.

Secondly, there is the issue of reflexivity (Rapley, 2007) demanding the researcher be aware of and acknowledge his / her role in the construction of knowledge. Such reflexivity was required when formulating the *Implications and Recommendations* chapter, at which point I synthesized my own ideas with those of the participants and with the literature.

## 4.10 Data Analysis

I approached the process of data analysis with a view to accurately presenting the responses of the participants to 'do justice to ... the participants ... that (were) ready to take part in (the) research' (Flick, 2007b, p8). Therefore, I used a manual process to analyse all the data from the four collection tools employed: the ranking survey; the Likert-type survey; the limited open-ended written questions; and the interviews.

The formation of the quantitative data collection tools was underpinned by my research questions with the framework of the ranking questionnaire having categories relating to materials production (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) which were similar but not the same as the sub-sections of my literature review (see Appendix 5). As initial categories, I should make it clear that I was ready to amend these categories according to what the data presented (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

These categories or themes were then sub-divided to give respondents a number of features to consider, (see Appendix 6 for an example showing possible coding labels). In this way, it may appear that I prepared this initial data collection tool according to a research-then-theory model (Allwright, 1998), but with the caveat that I was well aware that this initial framework, or start list of codes would change and expand as I analysed the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Likewise with the second quantitative data collection tool, the Likert-type questionnaire, items were framed to address my research questions, as shown in Appendix 7 including possible coding labels. These questions did not in themselves represent categories or codes but invited respondents to choose from the options available, thereby undergoing a sensitizing process covering various aspects relating to materials production, before offering more expansive, qualitative written data.

#### 4.10.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the ranking and Likert-type surveys were straightforward to collate (Appendices 8 and 9) and present as numerical data in tabular form following Greener’s recommendation to make the data ‘reader-friendly’ (2010, p105). The data were analysed using numerical results representing the writers for each item with ‘n’ equally all 20 respondents unless otherwise stated as shown below in respect of the theme of personal language learning:

Key: *a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important*

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ9	How previous learning experiences (with English or another language) affect a materials writer n = 20	4	7	7	2

Key: *a = an enormous influence b = a lot of influence c = some influence  
d = a little influence e = not much influence*

LQ3: How much influence does your <u>own</u> <u>experience as a language learner</u> have on your materials production?	a	b	c	d	e
Total n = 20	2	8	3	4	3

Table 4.7: Quantitative data presented in tabular form

#### 4.10.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data from the written responses to the Likert-type survey and the interviews were coded (examples shown in Appendices 10 and 11) and placed together in a codebook (an example is shown in appendix 12). I decided to construct a comprehensive record of the written and spoken extracts including all necessary data to enable me to find and analyse the participants’ original responses in context by including the participant’s name, the open-ended questions each written response came from or the transcript page number for spoken responses.

#### 4.10.2.1 Coding and Collating Spoken Data and Written Data

First, I coded the written responses, and constantly referred back to previously coded extracts to ensure consistency (see Appendix 10 for an example). Then, I transferred these coded extracts into my code book. Although the written data had already been coded, the richness of the data collected during the interviews provided the majority of the data analysed to produce the study's qualitative findings.

I coded the interview transcriptions using the codes already devised from initial analysis of the written responses and assigned further codes where necessary to delineate ideas offered by the participants (see Appendix 11 for an example of a coded interview transcript). When a piece of transcribed text was coded, I used a colour-code to indicate: confirming data with blue font; disconfirming or contrary data with red font; and highly supportive data with green font. For example in Julie's transcript:

Transcript	Coding
<p>Int: And when you say engage learner emotionally, you're tapping into their emotions, their lives outside, what their interests are, what's important for them?</p> <p>Julie: Well, absolutely. I'm not a Muslim but I can see that for many of my students this religious aspect really is a driving force. So, ... recently I had an experience with my public speaking course when my students were looking at figures of speech, scholastic devices, for persuasive presentations and the examples that were given to illustrate those scholastic devices in the book – they were complete rubbish! You know ... the coursebook is American, the examples were given from the speeches of American politicians – the students could not get it! What one of my students did, he went on line and he found bits from the Koran that have those devices!</p>	<p>Localizing materials Authenticity + local culture</p>

<p>Scholastic devices and this is a much better way of delivering these devices to a Muslim audience! You might not as non-Muslim appreciate it, however, your learners will! So like in my case, I believe that I put too much of my own personality into the job and that's not right, I believe. I really have to focus on my learners and what their expectations are.</p>	
--	--

Table 4.8: Example of a colour-coded transcript

The above extract also shows a piece of transcribed text being assigned two codes as Gibbs (2007) advocates when necessary. Julie refers to the importance of Islam to her learners [coded as localizing materials] with her attempts to use aspects of her learners' religious life to encourage increased learner engagement with her course [coded as authenticity and local culture].

I took care not to simply use codes for description as 'meaning coding' (Kvale, 2007, p105) but, as Gibbs makes clear, 'codes and their meanings should be not only descriptive but also theoretical and analytic' (2007, p41). This required careful reading between the lines to assign the appropriate code and hence copy the transcribed extract to the appropriate theme in the code book. For example:

Recycling language / skills	Participant	Question/ Page
<i>The inclusion of recycling tasks on a course</i>		
But also the built-in repetition they need to help them acquire the language and then for me I think the progression is very important (inaudible) more the spiral progression	Tara	12

Table 4.9: Code book example of reading between the lines

Although Tara does not mention *recycling*, she uses both the phrase 'built-in repetition' and 'spiral progression' to indicate the learners' need for recycling on the course.

The above example also exemplifies Gibbs' notion of 'concept driven coding' (2007, p44) arising from: the literature review; the research questions; the data from the participants' surveys; and from the data resulting in response to the interview guide. This intensive reading helped in the process of getting 'beyond the self-presentations of the subjects (to) critically examine the personal assumptions and general ideologies expressed in their statements' (Kvale, 2007, p38).

As can be seen in the example of a coded transcript (Appendix 11), some data was not coded. There were several reasons for this. First, data relating to classroom teaching but with no direct relevance to materials writing was left uncoded. This included: narratives of classroom activities unrelated to materials' use such as Rosie's comments on scaffolding and phonics; training experiences which focused on classroom pedagogy and management without mention of materials or teachers' books; anecdotal narratives of other colleagues' activities without reference to materials; and the verbal expression or participant dissatisfaction with no connection to materials development.

Second, when participants narrated previous learning scenarios in other parts of the world which had no clear relevance to either the Omani learning context or to materials development, they were left uncoded. For example, Rosie described some of her EFL classroom experiences in China and Turkey which remained uncoded whereas Ray narrated his ESP writing experience in Qatar with relevance to the Omani (i.e.: Arab) learning context as well as to ESP materials development so this was coded.

As the number of codes increased with each interview coded, it became necessary to check previous codes and re-code some where necessary to ensure consistency and accuracy to make sure I had consistently applied my coding across all the data using the constant comparison method (Glaser, 1965).

When I, as interviewer, engaged a qualified naïveté (Kvale, 2007), I was careful to accept unexpected phenomena and further detail when necessary. These were then coded under the title of Additional themes. For example:

Add Self-publishing	Participant	Question/ Page
<i>The advantages of self-publishing</i>		
Well, if you've got an idea for a book and you think it's a good idea then you can go ahead and that's very empowering. Of course whether you can actually get it together to market it and distribute it is another question. This is where publishers are obviously good but in terms of satisfaction and enjoyment, ... I've found it very liberating.	Sidney	11

Table 4.10: Example code book entry under Additional themes

#### 4.10.2.2 Organizing Codes

The resultant codes included: descriptive codes; situation codes; perspectives held by participants; process codes; activity codes; strategy codes and methods codes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). During the coding process, I used memos to outline the concept of each code (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Glaser, 1978). I then compiled my codebook (see an example of extracts collected under a single code in Appendix 12).

#### 4.10.2.3 Categorizing Codes

Initial coding of the written responses and interviews yielded a large number of codes so it was essential to amalgamate, reduce or exclude codes following Flick's advice to 'reduce the study to the essential issue for answering the question' (2007a, p50) as well as to ensure consistency (Miles & Huberman, 1984). In this way I placed the codes into categories (see Appendix 13) and by so doing, I was able to notice and understand how writers' action and thoughts



combined, related to each other or diverged (Rapley, 2011). I also attempted to ensure 'validation becomes a matter of the researcher's ability to continually check, question and theoretically interpret the findings' (Kvale, 2007, p87).

#### 4.10.2.4 Constructing Themes

I then placed the categories into themes (see Appendix 14), the better to present underlying principles and make the findings coherent and intelligible (Shank & Brown, 2007). This then enabled me to discuss the findings presented by key themes in Chapter 5 by writing about one aspect of materials production at a time, even though aspects are often closely related (Saldaña, 2009). By constructing each theme from categories containing newsworthy ideas (Rapley, 2007), I endeavoured to generate valid and reliable findings (Flick, 2007b).

### 4.11 Ethical Issues

#### 4.11.1 Ethical Issues Relating to the Participants

To encourage participants to provide both professional and personal data relating to their professional ELT writing activities, I provided explanatory notes with the questionnaire, and verbal reassurance both supported by consent forms, which allowed for the informed consent of the participants, and to guarantee the 'confidentiality, anonymity, and non-traceability' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p318) of the data they offered. I also submitted a Certificate of Ethical Research which was approved by the University of Exeter ethics committee. This study has been conducted according to the updated guidelines issued by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) including 'an ethic or respect for: the person; knowledge; ... the quality of educational research; and academic freedom' (BERA, 2011, p4) with particular reference to the treatment of research participants in respect of: openness and disclosure; the right to withdraw; incentives for participants; detriment arising from

participation; privacy; and disclosure. Examples of consent forms and certificate are attached in Appendix 15.

Participants were also provided with an outline of my study with the verbal addition of comments to highlight the potential of the research to both inform and improve their situation as writers, thereby providing a sense of 'beneficence' (ibid) and a guarantee that the research would not lead to 'non-maleficence' (ibid). I also drew participants' attention to their right 'to withdraw at any stage or not to complete particular items on the questionnaire' (ibid). I outlined the potential uses of the data collected not only for my thesis but also in any subsequent journal articles, published works or conference presentations.

A process of 'anonymization' (Gibbs, 2007, p12-13) was assiduously adhered to with regard to: questionnaire analysis and writing up; interview transcripts, coding and writing up; and peripheral documentation, with only a single document in my thesis file listing participants' actual names with pseudonyms used (approximately 50 files and over 300 documents held in the thesis file on my password-protected laptop). Likewise, overviews of the participants and their institutions were glossed over using general terms (Rapley, 2007).

The interviews were conducted in an appropriate, non-stressful, non-threatening manner (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p382) with participants already well-primed as to potential INQs having completed the surveys.

#### **4.11.2 Ethical Issues Relating to Procedures and Processes**

This study seeks to add to the knowledge base of ELT, and of ELT writers' expertise in particular. As such, the onus for 'promoting the quality of research' (Flick, 2007b, p8) is on myself as the researcher and this responsibility represents 'a precondition of ethical research' (ibid, p36). In respect of data analysis, Gibbs highlights 'issues of accuracy, fidelity and interpretation' (2007, p11). Accuracy is of paramount importance in this study where participants have offered their thoughts and practices and these have been collected, coded

and analysed as accurately as possible, as borne out by the research archive. Likewise, fidelity to the participants' own views of their professional world have been portrayed according to their descriptions. By interpreting the participants' data, I have sought to analyse and encapsulate key concepts as they are presented or emerge from the data. Furthermore, as Gibbs reminds us, research 'should produce some positive and identifiable benefit' (2007, p101) not only in terms of generalizability but also for individual participants. This was evident for a majority of the participants at the end of their interviews when they requested further time to discuss issues relevant to their own writing scenarios but also in the sense that they had enjoyed the experience of reflecting on their professional writing activities both before and during the data collection process.

#### **4.12 Limitations of the Design and Methods**

This study presented challenges of both a methodological and practical nature (Flick, 2007a). From a methodological perspective, the quantitative collection tool was included mainly to sensitise writers to the topic and encourage them to think of aspects of the writing process, which I had formulated as they arose from my literature review. Therefore the numerical data obtained were limited and not open to in-depth analysis. Another challenge was analysing the wealth of qualitative data arising from the limited, open-ended questions questionnaire and the interviews. This required well-organised documentation and systematic transcription, coding and archiving together with careful analysis to allow confirming, disconfirming and unexpected categories and themes to emerge.

Using surveys and interviews to collect both quantitative and qualitative data yielded a considerable amount of rich data. However, I am aware that surveys are usually selected as research tools to canvass a large number of respondents. In this case, the potential total sample of active materials writers working in the north of Oman was small in number and out of the total canvassed, I received a response rate of 61%. Regarding the relatively large number of interviews (14) out of a total sample of 20 respondents to surveys, I

realise that this represents an unusually high proportion of the total sample but I felt that collecting data from writers engaged in a range of educational scenarios would be valuable to the study's findings.

I am also aware that using other tools for data collection to enrich the findings might have strengthened the implications I highlight and the recommendations I suggest in chapter 7. Whilst tools such as think-aloud, stimulated recall, an examination of materials produced, classroom observation of materials in-use, or feedback from learners and teachers all have their merits for research purposes, I have highlighted their limitations in respect of the requirements of the research study and / or the local context in section 4.5 above. However, the breadth and depth of data collected would have been enhanced by the use of follow-up second interviews, conducted either face-to-face, on the phone, or digitally on software such as Skype. Utilizing this tool would have allowed me to: check anomalies, seek clarification; encourage expanded responses; pursue surprise responses in more depth; and obtain further detail of neglected aspects of the writers' working practices.

From a practical perspective, ELT teachers produce materials as part of their educational duties but teachers who engage in writing more than occasional worksheets represent a small percentage of all ELT professionals. Therefore the pool of potential participants for this study was small in number. I myself was aware of only a few active writers in Muscat / the north of Oman and consequently assumed a representative number to be involved in this study would also be restricted. However, through publicizing my study and benefitting from the snowball sampling already described above, I became aware of approximately forty potential participants. Unfortunately, the timing of the data collection process was not ideal as most ELT professionals were involved in end-of-year revision and exams preparation and, because the surveys lacked a 'return-by date' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p223), participants may not have been sufficiently aware of the need to return the documentation when it was needed.

A significant aspect of the data collection process was the lack of any participation from Omani educationalists. Although thirty-three writers were contacted, including four Omanis, only one responded and he was subsequently excluded because he had not produced any EFL materials for several years. This resulted in the sample of twenty writers all being expatriate to the Sultanate of Oman, even though a few were not English native-speaker educationalists.

The content of the questionnaires and interview did not present particular challenges. Participants found the surveys straightforward to complete, thereby vindicating the piloting and review process, with only one participant initially misunderstanding how to complete the ranking questionnaire. The only questions which proved problematic for a large number of the participants covered the DTP aspect of materials production, Item 7 of the limited, open-ended questions questionnaire: *How much influence does your practical knowledge have on your materials production?* Likewise, the INQs referring to the same aspect of materials production, INQ6: *What aspects of pedagogic knowledge, that is effective teaching and learning in the classroom, do you need to know and understand well?* It was not possible to amend the limited open-ended survey question but the INQ did receive considerable data once it had been explained with examples given by me.

The number of initial codes was in excess of one hundred and fifty and this presented a major challenge to reduce, amalgamate or discard these to a manageable eighteen which form the body of the findings together with four less significant themes also being included. This process resulted in several interesting but individualistic ideas being amalgamated or discarded including: learner lack of general / world knowledge; and making materials comprehensible for teachers. The first, while being expressed by a number of writers, has been covered by the themes of the local learning context, syllabus design and evaluating materials. The second was only mentioned by a single writer and has been covered by the theme on teacher's notes / teacher's books.

### **4.13 Reflexive Good Practice**

This study examines a broad range of aspects underpinning materials writers' practices with forty-five items emerging from the literature review and included in the ranking questionnaire and an initial total of 150+ themes emerging from the qualitative data. Using four distinct data collection tools required an organised schedule of contact between researcher and participants with a systematic collection, collation and coding process to enable a research archive of rich data to be compiled. Throughout this process it was essential for myself, as researcher, to appraise the systems, processes and documentation required to control and make sense of the incoming data and in so doing engage in reflexive good practice (Gibbs, 2007) which provides 'validity as reflexive accounting' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p278). In this way, the data were compiled to allow for analysis resulting in the findings presented and discussed in the following chapter.

## 5 FINDINGS

### 5.1 Introduction

The findings presented in this chapter emanate from both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were collected using the ranking survey and closed questions on the questionnaire whilst the qualitative data were collected using the open-ended questions on the questionnaire and the interviews as detailed in chapter 4. The design of these data collection tools was informed by the literature review in chapter 3. This design was then aligned to my research questions to ensure the collection tools would indeed provide rich data to address the questions.

Extracts of qualitative data have been selected to exemplify both expected and unexpected writer views and activities with accompanying participant comments and justifications. This is in line with Gibbs' assertion:

a key commitment of qualitative research is to see things through the eyes of respondents and participants ... Our analyses are themselves interpretations and thus constructions of the world.

(2007, p7)

I report quantitative data first to provide a preliminary view of participants' responses. I then report qualitative data and proceed to: describe and collate these quantitative and qualitative results; explain what they tell us about these writers' activities; and interpret what they present about these writers' approaches to producing materials. I have rounded off each theme-driven section with a short summary giving an overview of the data and including my own interpretations and resultant theorising. The chapter concludes with a general discussion of important findings (Rapley, 2007) in relation to writers' materials production which then leads into Chapter 6, where I will theorise on the interpretations presented here.

## 5.2 Key Aspects of Materials Production

From the data collected and coded I devised five key themes to address my initial research question (RQ1) as outlined in the table below. Results for each theme are then reported, described, collated, explained and interpreted in the sections which follow.

RQ1		
What do ELT writers view as key aspects to their producing effective materials for their learners?		
	Theme	Code book definition
1	Needs analysis	The process of identifying actual learner / stakeholder needs
2	Local learning context	Addressing the local learning context
3	Teaching objectives / Learner outcomes (TOs, LOs)	Focusing on TOs and LOs whilst producing materials
4	Writer creativity	The importance of creativity in the materials' production process
5	Evaluating materials	The process of evaluating own or others' materials

Table 5.1: Themes addressing key aspects of materials production

### 5.2.1 Needs Analysis

I collected data on the first theme, needs analysis (NA), using three collection tools: ranking question number 2 (RAQ2); Likert-type question number 8 (LQ8); and interview responses.

Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ2	Doing a needs analysis n = 20	16	2	1	1

Table 5.2: Importance of doing needs analysis (RAQ2)



Key: a = none    b = a little    c = some    d = quite a lot    e = a lot

LQ8: How much time and effort do you spend on needs analysis before you plan material for learners?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <span style="float: right;">n = 19</span>	1	5	6	4	3

Table 5.3: Time spent doing a needs analysis (LQ8)

Responses to RAQ2 in table 5.2 show that the majority of the writers view NA as ‘essential’ (sixteen respondents) or ‘very important’ (two respondents). In contrast, LQ8 garnered a range of responses which could have been prompted by the replacing of the word ‘course’ in RQ2 with the word ‘material’ in LQ8. The use of the two differing words between the questionnaires made the results somewhat disconnected. This was due to poor researcher oversight of the data collection tools in this instance. However, such varied responses should not be surprising as NA is closely linked with course design with its TOs and LOs whilst producing individual pages / activities for a particular class will be driven by the relevant LO or a more immediate learner want or perceived need.

Steve described an NA process he had undertaken to exemplify his point:

I did a questionnaire which went out to (departmental managers): (with) sensible questions as to where they thought the students were failing ... I had a feedback sheet for students ... saying whether something was useful, where they thought it wasn’t useful, how they thought you could improve, whether it delivered what they were hoping.

Steve canvassed two key stakeholders to collect valuable NA-data. By asking *sensible* questions, Steve was able to collect data which allowed him to plan a course addressing some of the key learning requirements in terms of their future needs. By focusing on current and former learner failings, Steve gave departmental managers the opportunity to offer key data for addressing actual shortcomings in the present training scenario. Steve’s second NA-data collection tool, asking learners for feedback [presumably once they had begun their professional training although this is not mentioned] is another potentially productive way to gain insight into what the English syllabus needs to focus on.

Some participants mentioned the difficulty of getting information from all of the interested stakeholders, and how this can be a hindrance to carrying out effective needs analysis. Heather related problems trying to produce an effective EAP course:

we've requested doing a needs analysis, and there's an incredible bureaucratic protocol that needs to be followed and approved in order to do something like that, it's a huge, huge hurdle, and there just seems to be a real lack of interest in bridging the communication necessary to perform a needs analysis.

Heather describes her situation of having almost no contact between her English department and the faculty she was attempting to produce materials for. She cited bureaucratic protocol as hindering any NA process combined with a perceived lack of interest from faculty members in becoming involved in an NA. She is understandably exasperated at not being able to produce a syllabus which caters to her learners' future, academic needs. Moreover, her professional performance is being restricted by others' lack of understanding as to the importance of basing an EAP syllabus on a comprehensive NA. Additionally, she identifies a further problem in her institution with completed needs analyses and syllabi being handed down from senior management. These documents do not, in her view, enable her to produce an effective course to address her learners' actual needs. Such a top-down approach to NA shows that senior staff can wield a very negative impact on NA and hence on syllabus design. Such decisions impact on the professional activities of writers as outlined by Feak and Swales (2014) although with unmediated materials production, there may be no prospect of 'compromise and conciliation' (ibid) if a writer's senior line-manager is responsible for such decisions.

The difficulty experienced by Heather can be contrasted with Keith's description of a much more autonomous NA process he conducted for medical assistants:

I focused ... on looking at their curriculum and identifying their needs as understanding what their lecturers were going to say to them. In other words the theoretical side rather than the actual language they would need in the hospital.

Keith's focus on the medical curriculum exemplifies another aspect of NA: covering the topics of their medical course using actual, medical documentation

to identify theoretical topics for which the English course can provide preparation in language skills and content.

Whilst the above participants used a range of methods for collecting NA data if they had access to key stakeholders, some participants appeared less aware of ways of collecting accurate and useful NA data. Julie cited common sense as a mainstay of her personal approach to NA yet common sense, I would suggest, equates with intuition and using intuition can lead to totally inaccurate ideas about what learner needs actually are according to Long (2005). Without undertaking a comprehensive NA by using a range of data collection methods and consulting all key stakeholders, resulting syllabus design decisions will be based on potentially erroneous ideas. However, Julie then adds the following, contradictory information:

Plus working with business students for many, many years in [her mother country] and continuing here. I have lots of contacts with industry. I have collaborative projects with industry I know what industry wants! I know for sure which skills they are looking for which they are not getting in fact because there are no proper materials teaching materials that will train the students and put them in the context, setting where they will practice these skills.

Here, Julie outlines the basis of an effective NA in terms of involving key stakeholders. It is a fault of the study's design that I did not follow up this information offered with a question to discover how exactly she collects such NA data from industry and what some of their particular requirements might be in terms of English language training.

Not all the participants in this study demonstrated clear understanding and use of some of the NA tools available to collect beneficial NA-data. Rosie talked about an NA process where she wanted to consult each of her students but that this had been impossible because of time constraints. This suggests that Rosie is unaware of NA collection procedures which involve consulting a wider range of stakeholders and sources such as professional / academic documentation.

Examining the NA activities of the writers included above, it is clear that these writers consider NA as an essential step in the process of materials design.

Some engage in best-practice NA data collection. Some approach key stakeholders. Some consult documentation pertaining to future professional or academic needs. However, there is little evidence to suggest that NA is being done comprehensively using a range of data collection tools combined with consultation with all / most of the key stakeholders to best-understand the learners' present and future needs, albeit with the caveat that this study's data collection did not always press for details on the hows and whys of participants' NA activities.

### 5.2.2 Local Learning Context

All the research participants are working in institutions in the north of Oman with eighteen out of the twenty involved in tertiary education, teaching on or writing for either EAP or ESP programmes. Therefore this area of EFL - the local learning context, was a rich area for data collection with participants offering a wide range of ideas and practices with respect to their materials production for their local context.

Data were collected on the theme of the local learning context using four collection tools: ranking questions RAQ17, 23, 33 and 35; Likert-type question LQ12; written answers to Likert-type questions; and interview responses.

*Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important*

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ17	To be aware of the current and future learning environment(s)	11	6	2	1
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ23	Appropriacy and relevance to the local learning context	10	8	2	-
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ33	Taking into account the learner's backgrounds and how they see themselves 'learner identity' n = 19	8	7	4	-

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ35	Linking the classroom to the learners' lives outside	11	4	5	-

*Table 5.4: Importance of the learning environment (RAQ17), appropriacy and relevance to the local context (RAQ23), learners' backgrounds and identities (RAQ33), linking the classroom to learners' lives (RAQ35)*

RAQ17 showed that seventeen respondents considered the learning environment as 'essential' or 'very important' when planning and producing materials while RAQ23 yielded a total of eighteen respondents who assigned ratings of 'essential' or 'very important' to appropriate and relevant course content in terms of the local context of learners and their learning.

RAQ33, considering learners' backgrounds and identities, was seen to be 'essential' by eight participants with 'very important' receiving seven with RAQ35, linking the course material and classroom activities with learners' lives outside the classroom, giving a spread across a range from 'essential' to 'very important' and 'important' of eleven, four and five respectively. Together these results illustrate the importance this sample of writers place on local context. The results from LQ12 below were equally emphatic with eighteen focussing on their learners either 'quite a lot' or 'a lot'.

*Key: a = none b = a little c = some d = quite a lot e = a lot*

LQ12: How much do you focus on the learners as part of the process of producing materials?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <i>n</i> = 20	-	2	-	9	9

*Table 5.5: Focussing on learners (LQ12)*

With all twenty participants offering multiple ideas and examples for this aspect of materials production, it was necessary to focus on a few insightful descriptions of writers' practices. One of Diane's written answers stated that learning should be strongly connected to students' lives outside the classroom. She then expanded on this in her interview:

... the reason why we started this writing project was that we were really not happy with the materials we were using, and they were outrageously unreal in the tasks for the students! ... Would I have to ever say this or read this, or write this in my life? And if I say no to that then I'm not going to ask anybody else to do it! ... so in today's world: emails, loads of emails.

Diane identifies several key aspects to the setting of materials within the local learning context. Her description of materials as *outrageously unreal in the tasks* pinpoints the importance of providing real-life tasks for classroom practice which can then be exploited by learners outside of class time such as her suggestion for *emails*. Not only do the tasks appear unreal but Diane states that the language component, spoken or written, is likewise unreal and echoes Harwood's (2005) call for language input to be based on relevant corpora whenever viable.

By using emails, Diane attempts to link the classroom to the learners' world outside by ensuring tasks are real and relevant. Moreover, Diane described her production of video material aimed at providing study skills set in the learners' own context as undergraduates. This video showed a Palestinian student coping with the rigours of academic life in her institution and focused mainly on study skills. Such locally-focused material, featuring an Arab student, and presenting real-world scenarios should be engaging and motivating to Omani learners whilst also providing essential skills work.

This approach was prevalent in all the participants' responses with Julie offering the following interview response 'culture is extremely important ... it has to be taken into consideration when you produce materials otherwise you will lose your learners / customers'. This notion of *losing the learners* is closely linked to motivation and engaged learners.

Keeping your *customers* engaged is a fundamental aspect of Keith's materials preparation. He outlined how he focuses on his learners' backgrounds, interests, and what they respond well to. In this way Keith is also feeding into affective factors in respect of motivation and engagement. Furthermore, he

attempts to offset negative factors such as excessive difficulty and the overt inclusion of problematic language, skills or tasks which can prove detrimental to learner motivation.

Bonnie brings up another important aspect of materials production linking the selection of suitable content, activities and level of language difficulty not only to affective factors concerning the learners but also ease-of-use for teachers.

Clearly, producing materials is not solely about the learners. Writers must also consider the teachers' use of the materials. This will include such aspects as user-friendliness when the aim(s) and procedures of materials are transparent for teachers, especially for inexperienced teachers. A further aspect is the suitability of the content and task-type. Clearly, what is suitable for primary learners differs from teenage learners, adults, EAP undergraduates and business students.

Awareness of local culture also involves adapting to what might be considered constraints, an aspect which Bonnie comments on regarding the production of ELT material here in Oman:

we do have a restriction here about, we can't be free, we can't put anything we want into the materials because we have to be aware of the cultural restrictions.

Being aware of cultural mores and subsequent restrictions is vital for a writer if they are to produce material which engages learners without offending their cultural sensibilities. Bonnie is obviously aware of and takes into account differing forms of culture such as learners' and teachers' indigenous values. She goes on to explain how she takes into account these cultural mores by consulting her Omani colleagues. Involving her colleagues exemplifies an NA method of acculturising (Saraceni, 2008) her materials, the better to engage rather than offend her learners.

The above examples of how participants address the local learning context demonstrate their commitment to inclusivity in terms of learner motivation which can be enhanced by linking the classroom to their worlds outside. These writers

have identified and addressed key areas in respect of: learners' culture including potentially offensive or problematic topics; learners' interests but also their weaknesses; including real-world tasks; and producing materials to support teachers. Such attention should facilitate effective learning with learner outcomes showing greater success. It is to TOs and LOs that I now turn.

### 5.2.3 Teaching Objectives and Learner Outcomes

Teaching objectives (TOs) state the overarching aims of a course / syllabus. For example: *to enable learners to talk about past experiences using a variety of grammatical and lexical exponents*. Learner outcomes (LOs) state specific aims for example: *learners can communicate orally using past simple and past continuous verb forms with the appropriate time markers – ago, in, last ..., when ..., while ...*. I collected data on this theme using two collection tools: ranking questions RAQ18 and 19; and interview responses.

Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ18	Being aware of institutional requirements: specific language; skills; exam results	8	9	3	-
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ19	Understanding and meeting learning objectives and outcomes	13	6	-	1

Table 5.6: Institutional requirements (RAQ18) and meeting objectives and outcomes (RAQ19)

Institutional requirements (RAQ18) were rated highly with seventeen respondents viewing institutional requirements as 'essential' or 'very important'. Teaching objectives and learner outcomes (RAQ19) were rated even more highly with nineteen respondents grading them as 'essential' or 'very important'. Simon emphasized how important he rated this aspect of materials production as shown in his response below with his '4444' ranking:



19	Understanding and meeting learning objectives and outcomes	4444
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*Table 5.7: Meeting learning objectives (RAQ19)*

He then followed this up with a written response to LQ4 - how his own personal ideas about ELT influence his approach to materials production as presented here: 'BASING MATERIAL ON ACTUAL OBJECTIVES, graduated difficulty, integrated lessons, integrated and graduated vocabulary' (researcher's note: his capitalization). In this way, Simon leaves no doubt as to the importance he attaches to producing materials driven by clearly stated objectives and outcomes. His emphasis on having actual objectives suggests he feels there are issues with the syllabus / syllabi where he currently works. Unfortunately he declined to be interviewed to present further detail regarding his strongly expressed views.

In contrast, Don was both more pragmatic and more explicit in his description of work he undertook beginning with general objectives before moving on to detailed outcomes. His institution insists that the specific learning outcomes are covered in the classroom and then tested with the explicit requirement for materials to facilitate both learning and successful test-taking in respect of these LOs. Don highlights one key role that TOs and LOs take on when learners and teachers are working in a tertiary college with end-of-course examinations determining who receives certificates, diplomas and degrees. Don's institution appears to have all the elements of a structured syllabus in place: the outcomes; appropriate materials to facilitate learners can achieve these outcomes; and examinations corresponding to the outcomes and course material. However, Don continues by revealing a different aspect to having and being guided by TOs and LOs in materials production in respect of examinations. He relates being tasked to produce examinations without either a set of TOs and LOs but also without course materials. This unwelcome position required him to produce not only exams but also the course materials before he could start exam writing.

It is clear that the best-practice model Don outlined above does not match up with the reality of the course he is describing here and begs the question as to how often writers find themselves in these unenviable positions of following flawed processes because of pressing necessities.

Even as the ELT world is focussing on the learners, the requirements of institutions, examination boards, and accreditation bodies are of considerable importance to all stakeholders in the learning process. Don's description of his experience above highlights the need for syllabus design, comprising of TOs and LOs along with other aspects of course design, to lead into examinations rather than have examinations as a disconnected element at the end of a course.

Sidney, calling on his many years of producing published, mediated materials not necessarily leading into specific examinations, offers a different and detailed insight into how he constructs the TOs and LOs for a writing skills project:

Well, this is quite a difficult task and ... it's a very important task because it's the skeleton of the book ... so a writing course you'll want to think about what types of writing you want to include and what sequence they should go in, so writing an opinion essay for example, writing a compare and contrast essay, writing a problem / solution kind of text and so on and for each of those what sort of language should I focus on ...

Sidney's metaphor of the TOs and LOs as forming the *skeleton* of his book is apposite in terms of the literature on syllabus design examined in chapter 3. For Sidney decides which genres of learner writing will fulfill both overarching objectives, in terms of genres covered (Abuklaish, 2014) together with subsequent micro-analysis (Basturkmen, 2006) of the language and skills which each genre requires to arrive at LOs. He continues:

at the same time I'm trying to cover certain grammatical elements and I've decided to focus on clauses so I've been including different types of clauses trying to decide what fits in most naturally with that particular unit, and then I'm also focusing on certain writing skills: like thinking about the reader; and organisation of a report; topic sentences and so on.

Unlike comments made by other writers regarding the constraints they work under as represented by top-down syllabus design decisions, Sidney clearly enjoys considerable freedom as a mediated textbook writer to construct his own TOs and LOs which underpin syllabus design and course content and range from the general to the particular (McGrath, 2002). His focus on parts of sentences echoes Munby's treatment of language items (1978).

If Sidney views TOs and LOs as the indispensable framework of his books, Tara observes how her understanding of course design benefitted from her Master's:

I always had an outcome for my class but I don't think I ever really ... you know it was linguistically-based and then during my masters I kind of learnt also you might want students to develop critical thinking or critical literacy skills you might like what outcomes reflected to (inaudible) like learner reflection or goal setting you know like all the other elements of language learning not just the linguistic side of things.

Tara's inclusion of an example of Marzano and Kendall's level 4 in their taxonomy of thinking: 'knowledge utilization' (2007, p51) such as critical thinking, reminds us of the variety of TOs and LOs which could figure in an English language syllabus. This is an area of EAP course design in particular and was mentioned by most of the writers engaged in EAP materials production in the literature.

Keith mentioned a further element in his design of the TOs for a new elementary coursebook referring to the Common Framework of Reference for Languages (2015), A1 and A2 levels, as an important go-to source to aid his identification of relevant objectives.

Clearly, the participants are either writing materials to fulfill TOs and LOs as set out by other educationalists, or, in the case of Sidney, actually forming the TOs and LOs for his books himself. Many writers here in Oman will already have TOs and LOs explicitly stated as a central aspect of course design. However, with the advent of the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) in 2004, TOs and LOs have become externally-enforced requirements which all writers

now have to include and be ready to present and justify during the accreditation process.

#### 5.2.4 Writer Creativity

Few would disagree that when a writer / teacher begins producing worksheets for his / her learners, this typifies an element of creative action (Prowse, 2011). Data were collected on writer creativity using two collection tools: ranking question RAQ15; and interview responses.

Key: *a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important*

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ15	To be creative when writing materials	8	9	2	1

Table 5.8: *Being creative when writing materials (RAQ15)*

Results from RAQ15 show that seventeen respondents ranked writer creativity affecting a writer’s activities as “essential” or ‘very important’. Bonnie describes her course design process constructed in themes. Although Bonnie does not go into any detail as to the creative process, we do have a key element in her approach:

I think that you have to be very conscious that you’re writing materials for English language learners, but at the same time within those limits, you can be very creative as well. So what I would do, I would get an idea ... and then put it within the confines of English language.

By *confines*, Bonnie is highlighting the need for material accompanying tasks to be graded as challenging but achievable for the learners’ level of language ability. This concurs with Mackey’s notion of ‘learnability’ (1965, quoted in White, 1988, p50) and is a key aspect of either adapting extant texts and tasks, or creating totally new ones for learners. Keith points out that there is not necessarily the need to create new and original texts as there are many potentially useable materials already available for adaptation. For Keith, his many years of varied professional experience has made him an ‘expert’ (Johnson, 2003, p16) ELT teacher / writer who engages this hard-earned

expertise as he has acquired it (Tsui, 2003) when producing texts. Knowing what learners can and can't handle is a vital asset a writer brings into play.

Sidney outlines how he considers the use of his materials by teachers:

I try to visualise actually what are the steps involved, how will the teacher be using the material? ... you're trying to see how it will be in the classroom. I do that all the way through with every activity. Seeing how it will all work. Trying to run it through in my mind with classes I've had in the past and see how it would actually work out.

Sidney's visualisation technique echoes the *imagining* documented by Hadfield (2014) and Feak and Swales (2014) concerning how such pre-use visualisation informs writers during the planning and production stages of materials.

A writer's experience or *expertise*, as quoted earlier, enables him / her to temper his / her creative energy within the realms of: what will actually work in the classroom; what fulfills learners' needs and wants; what will be a suitable level of difficulty; and what will address institutional requirements.

### 5.2.5 Evaluating Materials

Evaluating materials involves the evaluation of material in terms of its role in promoting effective learning. I collected data on this theme using four collection tools: Likert-type question LQ14; ranking questions RAQ43 and 45; written answers to LQs; and interview responses.

Key: a = extremely important    b = very important    c = important  
       d = not very important    e = not important at all

LQ14: How much importance do you attach to evaluating the effectiveness of materials?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <span style="float: right;">n = 20</span>	12	6	2	-	-

Table 5.9: The importance of evaluating materials effectiveness (LQ14)

Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ43	Piloting new material / courses	13	5	2	-
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ45	Critically reviewing materials production	16	2	2	-

Table 5.10: Piloting materials (RAQ43) and critically reviewing materials (RAQ45)

Evaluating materials as covered by LQ14, RAQ43 and RAQ45 received high ratings with eighteen respondents selecting the ‘essential’, ‘extremely important’ or ‘very important’ options. For these writers it is clear that they evaluate their materials. Their processes of evaluation differ as shown by the examples reported here. Sam laid out a systematic approach to piloting new material including the rationale for such activities in his written response to item LQ14:

Only when the materials are put into classroom use can we get an idea of the real impact. Hence an effective evaluation through comprehensive analysis of learner outcomes and feedback of teachers and learners becomes imperative. The finding must be suitably utilized to modify/revise the materials for future use.

This impressive answer encapsulates what piloting involves, to gather extensive and detailed data from teachers’ and learners’ evaluations. Rosie adds the following to focus on the practical mechanics of such piloting, ‘one must observe the materials or activity in real-time by actual learners at that level to actually assess the effectiveness of the materials or the activity’. Classroom observation of materials, in other words, is another key component in the piloting process. Who conducts such observation is another important point. Steve advocates the writer being one of the teachers piloting material. This enables the writer to personally gain feedback data from the classroom and be in close contact with other piloting teachers to collect their feedback first-hand. However, from personal experience, it is rarely the writer of an unmediated coursebook who takes his / her materials into the classroom as he / she is invariably: engaged on the next level, starting an alternative project; or teaching back in the classroom. Furthermore, I would suggest it is almost never the writer of a mediated coursebook as he / she is busy with editorial requirements or

production of further resources. In light of the above, Steve's method of piloting his own materials is unusual but, I would suggest, absolutely crucial to obtaining accurate feedback. Keith adds a further layer of potentially useful feedback with his personal approach:

I also think it's quite useful to encourage or expect teachers who are using the book to contribute ideas so that it grows organically! ... how he has used an activity, how they've changed an activity, or what additions they've made. It should be a joint effort.

In this way, the materials production process can be enriched by other educationalists, emanating from evaluating materials-in-action. With teachers working with the writer(s), a sense of ownership and collegiality can emanate from such an inclusive approach to piloting. Of course, classroom observation is not the only method of evaluating material.

Lulu offered her personal approach to evaluation prior to using the materials with her learners. This involves a two-stage trialling process firstly with colleagues or friends and secondarily with students of the same age as intended users. This process can ensure major problems with the materials do not arise with the learners but are discovered and revised in advance of classroom use following a model of pre-use before in-use.

Gaining learner feedback is another important aspect of materials evaluation for writers. Tara's evaluation process allows for an informed approach basing her evaluation on literature espousing best practices which she can then tailor to her specific learning-situation the better to pilot, revise and re-pilot her courses. Indeed, she wrote down some of the piloting methods she employs including collecting feedback from learners and teachers, lesson observation and asking learners to do some simple tasks related to the learning outcomes of the materials. This final method evokes the notion of testing learners to ascertain their level of competence relative to the TOs and LOs and hence provide feedback on materials' effectiveness.

What emerges from these various approaches to writers evaluating their materials is a commitment to producing effective courses. Combining, or

triangulating, the collected feedback data from a variety of sources should enhance the materials writing process. Feedback data can also inform writers not only of present action required but also of potential problems to avoid on future writing projects.

### 5.3 Writers and Theoretical Knowledge

From the data collected and coded I devised one key theme to address my research question (RQ1a) as outlined in the table below.

RQ1a		
How do writers view the importance of theoretical knowledge?		
	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code book definition</b>
1	Keeping current in academic theory	Writers reading and being aware of current academic theory informing classroom pedagogy and materials writing

*Table 5.11: Theme addressing writers' views of theoretical knowledge*

#### 5.3.1 Keeping Current in Academic Theory

The extent of writers' awareness of academic theory and how this impacts, or not, on their materials production rendered a wide range of responses as collected using three collection tools: ranking questions RAQ1; written answers to Likert-type questions; and interview responses.

*Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important*

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ1	Re-assess my existing ideas about materials production with reference to current theory	4	5	5	6

*Table 5.12: Writers assessing their personal ideas on materials (RAQ1)*

The results from RAQ1 above produced a spread of responses indicating the varying degrees of importance and influence these writers assign to academic



theory. So it was not surprising that participants offered a wide range of dichotomous views to support these results. Therefore, I have divided the results for this theme into sub-sections according to the descriptions and explanations presented by the participants. These fell into two categories: writers who are influenced by academic theory when approaching their writing and those who appear not to take academic theory into account when producing their materials.

#### 5.3.1.1 Writers Using Academic Theory to Underpin their Materials

Diane wrote that writers should be guided by ELT principles such as task-based learning, the discovery approach or CLIL. Plainly, Diane's approach to her materials production is informed by academic theory as evidenced by her knowledge of recent ELT approaches although it has been argued that such approaches are not always underpinned by empirical evidence presented by SLA researchers (Harwood, 2014). In her interview, Diane emphasized her belief that it is an educationalist's responsibility to stay up-to-date, particularly as research brings about change in educational practices. For Diane, it is clearly a matter of maintaining her professionalism and to exemplify this, she related working with a famous academic and author on a coursebook project:

the approach in the Explore Writing, which we agreed with [the famous academic and author] ... was the interaction with the text first, the introduction to the task, allowing the students to write their first draft, and just to express their ideas, no focus on language and only then go back and discover some features of the language that might be useful and then students would be encouraged to apply what they learned to editing their first draft and producing their second draft.

From this narrative, Diane has been part of a writing team adopting the discovery approach (Bolitho & Tomlinson, 2005; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2010) and showing an inherent understanding of this relatively new approach to classroom learning informed by academic endeavour. Keith also offers practical advice on how to keep current.

...the course development cell ... should have a reference library of some of the recent publications, particularly the stuff done by

Tomlinson. And we should be members of MATSDA and have access to a journal. We should be able to have a look and see what people are saying about reading, vocabulary. And I got a lot of this from reading while doing my MA. ... I think it's an essential element and should be up-to-date ... and going to conferences.

Keith sees knowledge, and crucially, application of SLA research to his materials production, as very important. He would like to promote greater professionalism in his workplace by establishing a library for his writing cell, being a member of MATSDA and attending conferences with a view to making his and his colleagues' materials more effective. He also sees the need for a broad approach to materials writing. This broader approach harks back to his earlier, written response:

I think it is very important to be aware of different methodologies and particularly about recent research in SLA where it applies to various skills. New approaches to the teaching of listening have been slow to catch on following research findings in this area.

Keith's awareness of how current theory, gleaned from his recent Master's course, has influenced his own materials production is palpable. Tara goes further when she declares that producing materials not informed by pedagogic considerations would be meaningless. With the clarifying remarks in her interview linking the advantages of a broader approach to writing materials with her Master's studies, Tara continues by detailing pedagogic aspects of her writing which have been affected by her awareness of theory:

another thing that really influenced me was things like task-based learning. Before I did my Master's, I didn't really have any concept of that so afterwards I tended to think of writing in a way where you create tasks, and maybe follow different models of task cycles. Things like integration. How you integrate things like reading and writing skills or writing, speaking I think before I probably kept them quite separate but afterwards I kind of understood better.

Tara's day-to-day approach to her writing has undoubtedly been influenced by her studies to the point where she is not only confident to produce task cycles but can also describe them to others and justify the theory underpinning her choice. Moreover, she lists several ways by which she continues her professional development: reading journals for more theoretical input; and reading blogs for practitioners' practical approaches to teaching contexts. As a younger member of the ELT profession, Tara avails herself of digital sources to

gain insight into what professionals are experimenting with to complement her work underpinned by current theories of second language acquisition.

These are all potentially useful ways of keeping current and other ELT professionals, who may not be aware of the multiple sources of research and pedagogic practice which are readily available, might well benefit from knowing where / how to access such sources.

### 5.3.1.2 Writers Not Using Academic Theory to Underpin their Materials

Asking for writers' views on the place of academic theory in their materials production produced some impassioned responses. Steve wrote how his experience of 'tried-and-tested methodology' informs his writing. Steve's reliance on his experience is, perhaps, natural yet, during his interview, he outlined aspects of his experience which weaken his argument here.

Interviewer: What do you really need to know to in order to produce effective materials? From a theoretical perspective

Steve: I've read some of these books. They were on the CELTA course. Jeremy Harmer is one name that we all know. Other books I have Swann, I have ... they're all either more general, or books like Swann are very specific about how you should deliver certain aspects of grammar.

Neither Jeremy Harmer nor Michael Swan are academics and neither have put forward an approach to language acquisition so it becomes unclear how Steve underpins his materials from a theoretical or pedagogic standpoint. Indeed he seems to reject academic relevance to his materials and classroom.

I've got no theoretical hang-ups whatsoever. And a lot of people who are steeped in academia – they do have these very in-built convolutions as to what is the most effective way to teach. ... No, I mean academia is fine. It's a whole industry in itself. ... I am not hidebound by any theory. ... Theory matters not, results matter to me! ... because that's exactly what I'm expected to deliver here.

His description of academia exhibits his dismissal of SLA research as irrelevant to him and his learners but surely, if researchers construct theories which make for more effective materials and more successful learning in the classroom,

shouldn't Steve be open to ways of improving his learners' competence and hence their level of English attainment?

The above examples, of writers either underpinning or not underpinning their writing activities on academic theory, suggest there is a link between writers embarking on further studies (Master's) and their ability to describe and indeed endorse the importance of a theoretical grounding for their pedagogic choices when planning and producing materials. This also suggests that teacher education programmes (CELTA, DELTA) may not be emphasizing theory sufficiently to encourage writers to link theory with classroom practice and it is to ELT pedagogy that I turn to in the next section.

## 5.4 Writers and Pedagogic Knowledge

Although this aspect of materials production encompasses a large number of fundamental, pedagogic features, I devised three key themes from data offered by the research participants covering my research question (RQ1b) as outlined below:

RQ1b		
How do writers view the importance of pedagogic knowledge?		
	Theme	Code book definition
1	ELT Pedagogy	The pantheon of actions used in the ELT classroom to enable effective learning
2	Producing tasks	Planning and writing language-based and skills-based tasks
3	Teacher notes / Books	The notes / books specifically produced to support teachers when using materials

*Table 5.13: Themes addressing writers' views of pedagogic knowledge*

### 5.4.1 ELT Pedagogy

Examining writers' views on pedagogy, I was interested to examine how writers consider and interject pedagogic aspects of ELT into their materials. Data were collected on this using two collection tools: ranking questions RAQ5, 25, and 28; and interview responses.

Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ5	Pedagogic considerations: what works in the classroom and leads to successful learners	15	5	-	-
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ25	Choosing an appropriate methodological approach n = 18	7	8	2	1
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ28	Learner support: ways to help the learners be more successful with activities and with their learning n = 19	7	10	2	-

Table 5.14: Pedagogic considerations for classroom success (RAQ5), choosing appropriate methodology (RAQ25) and providing learner support (RAQ28)

Pedagogy was endorsed as a central aspect of materials planning and production by all of the respondents as either 'essential' or 'very important' in RAQ5, table 5.14. Similarly, appropriate methodology (RAQ25) garnered a total of fifteen respondents ranking this as either 'essential' or 'very important' and learner support (RAQ28) had seventeen respondents select the same options.

Such high ratings are not surprising as all the writers were or still are classroom teachers. Keith outlined his pedagogic approach, set within CLT, as follows:

Well, if I'm writing a General English course, then I would of course like to have multi-skills but I would really try to get them to comment a lot more on what they're reading or what they've written or what they're listening to using the spoken skill to produce language. And I would also try to get them to listen to more extended texts rather than just short, isolated de-contextualised bits so and ... I'm not

particularly skilled in the area of exploring task-based learning but I'm interested in doing more of that and I think there's a potential to involve our students more in that. And to try and get away from this fixation on accuracy and to accept some kind of ambiguity in the interest of fluency.

Keith's vision of a general English course follows several tenets of CLT covering skills work including sensitizing activities and questions directed at the learners to promote their thinking about why they are doing certain activities in the classroom. He also mentions the dichotomous arguments of fluency versus accuracy and the potential benefits of a task-based approach. What he also brings into the equation here is a focus on extensive listening (Renandya & Thomas, 2010).

Julie offers a different account of her pedagogic approach to addressing a key concept, in this case the concept of 'change' for her business students. Julie confidently describes the procedures she would use to set up a discussion of the target topic: change [in business]. By engaging her learners' own ideas before any material is presented, Julie is signalling the importance she places on her learners' input which in turn should increase learner motivation and expectation of what they are going to receive. She continues,

then I would give them an excerpt from an article, academic article for example, and ask them to read it and provide them with some questions before they start reading so they can read the article and keep these questions in mind.

In this way, the learners know why they are going to read the text so they have a reason to read as everybody who decides to read does in the real world. Julie describes her treatment of the information her learners have gleaned by having them work in teams to check and elaborate on their answers to the reading task. Grouping her learners into teams can provide further levels of motivation by introducing a competitive element. It also enables every team to be actively engaged in information gathering. Requiring team spokespeople to deliver ideas / answers is a further way of encouraging different learners to take greater responsibility for part of a class. Julie then gives the rationale for this type of activity.

It's not related to the language per se it's related to the concepts but at the same time the students are using English, they're involved in discussions.

Her aim is to provide affordances for discussion of a motivating, and relevant topic using English without the added stress of an accuracy focus. Julie continues by comparing her own EAP course with a general English one with her EAP course focusing more on concepts than on language. Patently, Julie makes pedagogic decisions when preparing her materials which are informed by best practices, which are in turn underpinned by SLA research. Having a clear vision of how she wants her learners to experience the topic of 'change' enables Julie to plan a series of tasks in some detail, always with an eye on the learner outcomes she wants her learners to achieve.

Both of these writers incorporate pedagogic best practices into their courses which are relevant and suitable for the course TOs, LOs, content and their learners. They both exhibit a willingness to exploit a range of pedagogic features depending on the learning context including a variety of task types, which is the focus of the next section.

#### 5.4.2 Producing Tasks

Many writers include tasks in their repertoire for producing materials. I collected data on this theme using two collection tools: ranking question RAQ26; and interview responses.

*Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important*

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ26	Context-related and needs-related tasks	8	6	5	1

*Table 5.15: Context- and needs-related tasks (RAQ26)*

Fourteen respondents gave task production (RAQ26) a rating of either 'essential' or 'very important' yet five viewed it as 'important' with one respondent rating it as only 'somewhat important'. To better understand this

spread of results, it is necessary to examine the qualitative data collected from the interviews. Heather outlined a possible series of tasks to promote vocabulary acquisition. Without going into detail, she describes a chain of tasks:

*Heather:* Vocabulary acquisition – they're just not getting enough exposure to.

*Interviewer:* How do you envisage writing some materials that would do that?

*Heather:* A task framing activity possibly. Introducing some vocabulary that is going to re-appear in some reading activities, that they will have to use in some writing tasks, some follow-up tasks, test them on it, let them know that they're going to be tested on it! That kind of thing.

Her awareness of both the need for learners to see vocabulary multiple times to facilitate acquisition and the variety of tasks shows her commitment to effective learning of vocabulary and to a task-based approach.

Julie describes a task-chain model she was trained to use by Nick Brieger at York Associates which she often employs in her materials preparation:

He gave us a very clear lesson plan so he told us how if you plan a lesson how you finish it. You open it with a warm-up activity, either a reading or listening, or speaking activity, which leads to either reading or listening and then you have controlled practice where you have an number of exercises; gap-filling or you know multiple choice exercises to give you some practice using the grammar or vocabulary that was introduced previously in the text and then close it with free practiced which is usually role play.

This chain of tasks concurs with the work of Nunan (2004) and Willis and Willis (2007). Use of a sensitising task to activate topic knowledge and, crucially, topic-related language leads into skills tasks followed by language foci, albeit gap fill and multiple choice tasks would seem to be less productive than speaking tasks which focus on forms as described by Long (1991).

Not all the participants mentioned tasks and some voiced hesitation as to how to construct tasks. As Keith admitted:

the trouble with task-based is you become prescriptive and more limited. Again it depends on the level, I guess. Beginners need to be more controlled, again Tony, I need to do more thinking on task-based work.



Plainly, Keith would benefit from more in-depth developmental work on his knowledge, construction and implementation of tasks.

The spread of results reported for RAQ26 in table 5.15 above suggests that whilst some writers such as Heather and Julie are informed, confident and successful at producing a chain of tasks, other writers are less well-informed and could profit from increased knowledge about producing tasks.

Of course, if this study had included a think-aloud or stimulated recall data collection tool, this section would carry both more examples of task production, as well as more depth in terms of how these writers plan and produce tasks. However, it is clear that writers have a range of tasks in mind when they plan materials, even if the range of tasks may not be wide and task production might be increased if writers possessed greater knowledge of how tasks and task chains can be produced to facilitate optimal learning.

### 5.4.3 Teacher Notes / Books

Data were collected on the theme of producing teacher notes / books using two collection tools: ranking question RAQ27; and interview responses.

*Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important*

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ27	Teacher support: answer keys; suggested procedures; alternative ideas; further optional materials	9	5	5	1

*Table 5.16: Teacher support (RAQ27)*

Participants had mixed views on the usefulness of teacher notes or teacher's books (RAQ27) with a total of fourteen respondents rating teacher support as 'essential' or 'very important' but five opting for 'important' and one respondent offering 'somewhat important'. From the interview responses, the following examples show a range of attitudes regarding teacher support. Julie's self-confidence shows in her initial dismissal of the need for a teacher's book.

I am not sure if many teachers would agree with her about not having an answer key, particularly for complex skills work. However, she does add the caveat 'for beginner teachers that might be a good idea,' thereby concurring with the notion of teacher's books as giving essential support to newly-qualified teachers or those lacking in confidence. Heather expands on this idea, 'in re-designing the book, the goal was to make it 'first-time teacher-friendly', for somebody who has never taught the course' thereby re-enforcing the importance writers in this study afforded teacher's books. Tara details her approach to producing a teacher's book as follows:

in the teacher's book ... don't use very wordy ... descriptions ... make it 'Ask students to recall words from previous lessons' or something like that! ... something very simple (with) direct instructions. ... I would always put exactly what was in the student's book and then the answers so it's quick and I always try, you know I write materials and assume the teacher might have ideas if they're brainstorming but the teacher might think 'I don't know!' or go in a different direction, which is fine but I would put suggested ... answers ... ideas. And I find ... good teacher's guides are a form of training, ... I always try to bear that in mind like how this help a teacher develop?

Tara's focus on simplifying instructions for busy teachers is evident, as is her mirroring of the student's book in the teacher's book for ease of reference. Inclusion of *suggested ideas* is also teacher-friendly making the instruction optional and available for inexperienced teachers whilst not seeming mandatory for more experienced, innovative teachers. Tara also voiced the notion of the teacher's book as a potential training tool which several participants iterated.

The mantra which these writers seem to be adopting in respect of teacher-book production is: clear; informative; and non-mandatory. Even then, teachers may not want to follow the new approach or use a new classroom technique. Diane related how some teachers resisted the use of the discovery approach and continued using a more traditional approach. In response, her writing cell tried to bring on-board these teachers who were clearly uncomfortable with the new approach by including extra support in the teacher's book. Their answer demonstrates aspects of best practice related to innovative procedures in education and potential variables, such as teachers' abilities and self-confidence to implement change:

We gave presentations to all the staff in the (institution) on the principles, on the background, on everything in the project. ... I feel you're right – there is a need every semester to do that since it's an important component of the first four levels of the foundation programme. Definitely, we need to have the teachers on-board!

With a large and constantly changing pool of teachers, Diane sees it as essential that induction programmes inculcate new teachers by explaining, encouraging and persuading them of the efficacy of the pedagogic innovation. Otherwise, teachers may resist or even ignore innovative pedagogy (Remillard and Bryans, 2004) and interpret and adapt the approaches according to their default teaching beliefs and style. Sidney went further with his comment on published teacher's books, which is also valid for locally-produced books: 'I always think a good teacher's book is like a training course for teachers, particularly inexperienced teachers'.

Having examined these writers' attitudes, it becomes clear that teacher's books or notes serve an important role in the delivery of courses, particularly for less-experienced teachers. The writers have a variety of ways to attract rather than repel teachers' use of these documents including non-mandatory ideas for extending tasks or exploiting the material in a variety of ways. Moreover, several writers expressed the important role teacher's books can play as teacher development tools. Only one writer, Diane, mentioned the inclusion of theoretical underpinnings (Coleman, 1986) to a particular ELT approach [in her case: the discovery approach]. Indeed, without having access to actual teacher's books produced by this group of writers, it is unclear if their work focuses merely on what to teach or also includes details of how to teach the material (Mol and Tin, 2008).

## **5.5 Writers and Practical Knowledge of DTP**

This aspect of materials production proved difficult to convey in the questionnaires and interviewees required considerable clarification before they could offer information about how they viewed DTP aspects of materials

production from the very beginning to the very end of the process. My research question (RQ1c) was subsequently more clearly phrased and this aspect covered the following major theme:

RQ1c		
How do writers view the importance of practical knowledge of DTP?		
	Theme	Code book definition
1	<b>Design and face validity</b>	How materials are laid out on the page including content, titles, instructions, visuals, page numbers and how the design of materials influences prospective readers initial appraisal of them

Table 5.17: Theme addressing writers' practical knowledge of DTP

### 5.5.1 Design and Face Validity

I collected data on the theme of materials' design and face validity using three collection tools: ranking question RAQ7: Likert-type questions LQ7 and 13; and interview responses.

Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ7	Desktop-Publishing Design: how each page / unit / coursebook looks	4	9	6	1

Table 5.18: The importance of DTP skills (RAQ7)

Key: a = an enormous influence b = a lot of influence c = some influence  
d = a little influence e = not much influence

LQ7: How much influence does your practical knowledge have on your materials production?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <i>n</i> = 19	7	9	3	-	-

Table 5.19: Practical knowledge of DTP (LQ7)

Key: a = extremely important    b = very important    c = important  
 d = not very important    e = not important at all

LQ13: How important do you consider the appearance of your materials?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <span style="float: right;">n = 20</span>	6	7	7	-	-

*Table 5.20: Appearance of materials (LQ13)*

Although thirteen respondents gave the aspect of DTP (RAQ7) a ranking of ‘essential’ or ‘very important’, it appeared not to be a priority for the remaining seven writers in the sample. The responses for LQ7, table 5.19, showed that sixteen respondents viewed their practical knowledge of DTP of how to produce materials for the classroom as either ‘an enormous influence’ or ‘a lot of influence’ in terms of using their skills, which undoubtedly vary in expertise, to render the appearance of materials. These views were supported by similar scores for LQ13 as presented in table 5.20: six respondents selecting ‘essential’; seven selecting ‘very important’; and a further seven selecting ‘important’. In contrast to the definite responses to Likert-type questions LQ7 and LQ13, the uneven results from RAQ7, table 5.18, require greater explanation by examining interview responses.

Bonnie expressed her opinion on the importance of material’s design as making the difference between whether a learner is interested in looking at it, and by association, interested in learning from it. Likewise, Heather stressed the importance of colour and other writers identified page layout, white space, font type/style/colour, and sufficient space for learners’ answers. Bonnie also drew attention to the need for legible font sizes and the inclusion of visuals citing poor materials presenting neither. Such poor design is particularly discouraging to Omani learners as Sidney commented on when referring to global coursebooks,

you find they are very busy, they’re full of different kinds of font, styles and so on – rather confusing for somebody who is not familiar with the script.

These writers maintain clear ideas as to what is important about materials design, as well as how the materials are viewed and used to promote motivated, successful learners. Although most of the participants identified DTP

design as an important aspect of materials, several voiced uncertainty as to their personal ability when engaged in DTP and several writers admitted they were in need of further training in design to be better-informed and feel more confident about the DTP design of their materials. As Ray stated in his interview:

I would really like to improve the technology aspect of my materials production. ... you hear about all those, QUARK and all those new software ... I wouldn't mind doing a course or something. You know, I can write the materials, but in order to get a picture or have a glossy effect, or when to put a watermark of the company logo or something, I do have to go to an IT person.

Clearly, Ray feels he would benefit from specific training in the use of appropriate IT software to enhance his skills as a materials writer and reduce his reliance on an IT professional.

Moving on to consider face validity, materials which appear attractive to learners, and teachers, have attained face validity. If materials are going to help to promote motivated, successful learning, their appearance needs attention. Ray asserted that materials should be neither drab nor so packed with DTP effects that these become distracting. Tara concurred when she wrote: 'if materials are aesthetically appealing, I think learners are more likely to engage with them and feel motivated by them'. Steve added a further layer to the notion of face validity suggesting that if materials look professional, then learners will value them more. If learners are looking at materials with a view to what those materials do for them, then surely Orson's point is crucial to learner success:

This is mainly concerned with face validity. If students can see that materials lead directly towards their final examination, or if they can work out the line between their core text and their supplementary materials, then they are far more likely to accept them and try to do well.

Orson is talking about his Omani learners who study within a system which is very exam-results driven. Orson is correct to highlight the obvious, but perhaps unpalatable truth for many teachers and writers, that the learners will be best-motivated if they can see the likelihood of success in their end-of-course examinations being increased by the materials [and / or by their teacher(s)]. Steve stated 'If I believe my material is good, I want it to look good, too. This is

logical professionalism’ and Gina emphasized her commitment to professionalism as arising from her ELT training:

I completed a CELTA course at the British Council over 15 years ago. They always stressed that any additional worksheets given to students should be presented in a professional manner. I try to make any worksheets look ‘business like’.

This wealth of comments highlights a wide range of elements which can affect the perceived value of materials for both learners and their teachers. These comments also exemplify the writers’ attempts to fulfill a professional requirement for materials which will indeed have face validity. This can affect how learners and teachers value the materials. What materials with effective DTP design and face value can also do is to advertise the institution and its courses in a positive light and reflect well on the writers who produced them.

## 5.6 Key Influences on EFL Writers

The research participants narrated diverse language learning and EFL experiences during the data collection process. From these, I have focused on three major themes to address my research question (RQ2) as detailed below:

RQ2		
What aspects of teaching and learning influence writers in the process of producing materials for their learners?		
	Theme	Code book definition
1	Personal principles	The principles a materials writer applies to materials production
2	EFL training	How ELT training affects a writer’s approach to materials production
3	EFL experience	The ELT experience writers apply to their materials production

*Table 5.21: Themes addressing key influences on writers*

### 5.6.1 Personal principles

Data were collected on the theme of writers' personal principles using four collection tools: ranking questions RAQ9, 1, 10, and 14; Likert-type questions LQ3 and 4; written answers to Likert-type questions; and interview responses. Here, I will examine two themes as mentioned by a number of the research participants: principles derived from personal language learning; and principles derived from EFL experience.

#### 5.6.1.1 Principles Derived from Personal Language Learning

Key: *a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important*

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ9	How previous learning experiences (with English or another language) affect a materials writer	4	7	7	2

Table 5.22: Influence of previous learning experiences (RAQ9)

Key: *a = an enormous influence b = a lot of influence c = some influence  
d = a little influence e = not much influence*

LQ3: How much influence does your <u>own</u> <u>experience as a language learner</u> have on your materials production?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <i>n = 20</i>	2	8	3	4	3

Table 5.23: Influence of personal language learning (LQ3)

Respondents gave a wide variety of responses in terms of how much their personal learning of other languages impacted on their materials production activities for RAQ9 and for LQ3 above. This suggests that participants' answers were highly-individualized depending on their personal language learning history as exemplified by a selection of details as tabulated below:



Name:	Language learning history:
Diane	Three European languages
Lulu	No second language learning
Rosie	One European language One Asian language
Julie	Two European languages (including English)
Naithan	Two European language Three Asian languages

*Table 5.24: Examples of writers' language learning histories*

Participant responses have been sub-divided into positive and negative personal language learning experiences to enable clear comparisons and contrasts.

#### Positive Language Learning Experiences

Several participants viewed their language learning experience as highly influential on their materials writing. Tara wrote that her own language learning experiences help her contextualise theory related to SLA and materials production.

Tara has linked the theoretical knowledge she gained on her Master's to the practical, pedagogic reality of producing materials thereby allowing her to underpin approaches she selects to both her knowledge informing these approaches and her experience validating procedures, tasks and activities. Together, theoretical knowledge and personal learning experiences inform her writing:

As a learner, I like activities in which we are allowed to experiment with language without any pressure to perform or produce the language completely accurately, so this is something I try and build into materials that I write.

Balancing fluency- and accuracy-based tasks for Tara has moved from tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge when using an informed process for selection and planning of texts and tasks. She also calls on her own learning experience to avoid materials which are too difficult or overloaded with new lexis.

### Negative Language Learning Experiences

Several participants recounted ineffective and de-motivating experiences they had had during their own foreign language learning. Julie rejected controlled practice as lacking in creativity and relevance when describing her own English learning scenario:

... it was a lot of controlled practice and there was not much creativity involved and there was no reference to the real world so when I actually graduated from the university and started communicating with English-speaking people, in real life with real English speakers, I realised that I was missing lots of phrasal verbs, and contemporary English.

Julie's negative feelings stem from several pedagogic practices used by her English teachers. She pinpoints the need for real, contemporary English to help her communicate with native speakers as well as the need to enrich her vocabulary with more colloquial language. She also wrote that

when I produce my materials, I always refer to my experience as a learner and try to produce something that would have excited me when I was a student myself.

Such a focus on her learners from her own learner's perspective can prove to be a valuable one which not all teachers can employ if they have not experienced being an L2 learner.

From the above anecdotal data, it would appear that writers base their personal principles in relation to language learning from both positive and negative experiences in accordance with Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship of observation. Memories of learning enable these writers to bring a more discerning eye to how they produce material for classroom learning.

### 5.6.1.2 Principles Derived from EFL Experience

Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ1	Re-assess my existing ideas about materials production with reference to current theory	4	5	5	6
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ10	To appreciate what a writer believes about learning a second language	6	10	3	1
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ14	To know how cultural identity and background influence a writer's approach to materials production	6	8	5	1

*Table 5.25: Re-assessing personal theory with current theory (RAQ1), writers' beliefs about SLA (RAQ10) and influence of a writer's identity and background (RAQ14)*

As we saw from RAQ1 analysed in section 5.3.1, respondents gave a range of ratings regarding their ideas about ELT related to current theory indicating a certain ambivalence to current academic theory. Nevertheless, respondents accorded greater importance to their beliefs on SLA (RAQ10) with sixteen choosing either 'essential' or 'very important'. When it came to rating the influence of a writer's cultural identity and background (RAQ14), the participants gave not dissimilar ratings as for RAQ10. Yet, LQ4 saw the majority of the writers (fourteen) consider their personal ideas about ELT exert either 'an enormous influence' or 'a lot of influence' on the materials production, as outlined in table 5.26 below:

Key: *a* = an enormous influence    *b* = a lot of influence    *c* = some influence  
*d* = a little influence    *e* = not much influence

LQ4: How much influence do your personal ideas about ELT have on your materials production?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <span style="float: right;"><i>n</i> = 18</span>	7	7	2	2	-

*Table 5.26: Influence of writer's personal beliefs (LQ4)*

It would appear that writers see other elements impacting on their personal principles. In her interview, Diane outlined how she tries to amend her personal principles of language learning based on her own experience and instincts, combined with effective theory and innovation in theory and practice, to produce the most effective materials she can. Her pragmatic view is clearly that a writer's principles are open to development depending on his / her judgement of the effectiveness of new ideas, theories and practices with past experience and educational instinct informing the selection and implementation of appropriate new theory and practice.

Sidney presented a contrary view, referring to his published, global skills books, of having a single framework onto which he pins his scaffolding and writing tasks. Answering LQ5 about the influence of his ELT training on his writing, he wrote:

The idea of input leading to language + skills + practice - leading to output. This is a model I picked up in my training and have used in my writing. The concepts of comprehensible input and the noticing hypothesis have also played a role.

Sidney believes he is delivering effective learning opportunities based on an eclectic mix of theoretical sources. As he said himself, 'I've been writing for so long, and teaching for so long, I think I've just amalgamated and come up with my own theory'. Tellingly, he appears unwilling to consider any new theory or practice: 'I would use this (interviewer's note: his personal theory) rather than looking at any new theory that comes along'.

Writers' principles will range from being set in stone to easily-amended, depending on experiences in the classroom and from feedback received from

teachers and other stakeholders using their materials. How these principles influence their writing activities will also be mediated by their EFL training and experience, which I examine next.

### 5.6.2 EFL Training

I collected data on the theme of EFL training using four collection tools: ranking question RAQ11; Likert-type question LQ5; written answers to LQs; and interview responses.

Key: *a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important*

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ11	Professional training (teacher training course, CELTA, DELTA, Master's)	5	10	4	1

Table 5.27: Importance of professional training (RAQ11)

Key: *a = an enormous influence b = a lot of influence c = some influence  
d = a little influence e = not much influence*

LQ5: How much influence does your ELT training have on your materials production?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <i>n = 20</i>	4	6	6	2	2

Table 5.28: Influence of ELT training on a writer's approach (LQ5)

Professional EFL training (RAQ11) was not ranked as highly as some aspects of a writer's activities but even so fifteen respondents thought this was either 'essential' or 'very important'. Equally, the responses for LQ5 show that a majority of the respondents consider their EFL training has had considerable influence on their materials production with four selecting 'an enormous influence', six choosing 'a lot of influence' and a further six opting for 'some influence'. However, four of respondents feel their training has had negligible influence.

Overall, the writers considered they had received variable support from professional training for their writing activities. Steve's experience of doing a CELTA exemplifies this in that he could not remember anything about materials production as he was completely focused on trying to satisfy course requirements. Steve's experience of his CELTA course seems devoid of any positive outcome in terms of his writing. In stark contrast, Lulu wrote that the CELTA had activated her creativity as well as opened up the possibility to facilitate both learning and fun simultaneously.

Such a constructive outcome for Lulu to reflect on her teaching and materials production can help to exert a strong, positive force on her planning of her materials. As she continued in another, written response:

Before CELTA, my worksheets and hand-outs were dry. After the CELTA, I've begun to think as a student, from the student's perspective and also look into the needs of the learner. There's more variety in tasks and what's required of the student, too.

The way Lulu reflects on learning appears to have been transformed by her experiences on a CELTA course. Not only does she now have the needs of her learners in sharp focus, she is producing a greater variety of tasks with a greater emphasis on the learners enjoying their learning. She outlined further benefits in her interview with the CELTA helping her to centre her approach to classroom teaching, and later materials production, around the learner rather than the teacher.

So the CELTA course changed her focus from teaching to learning and it offered an alternative to Lulu's previous training which she found much more preferable because it was learner-centred and motivational for both her learners and for herself. Similarly, Tara reflected on how her Master's had impacted on her materials production:

Gaining a more in-depth and specialist knowledge has had a fairly large impact on the types of tasks I design, the ways in which I sequence tasks, lessons and units, the learning objectives I create, the kinds of skills I try to incorporate into materials and the way I approach grammar.

From learning objectives and dealing with grammar, to selection of tasks, to construction of units of material, Tara's approach to her writing has, by her own admission, changed enormously as a result of her academic endeavours. Furthermore, she is now interested in digital sources tailored to materials production to enhance her own writing such as on-line e-courses, e-books and webinars. For Tara the digital age presents a wealth of possibilities for CPD as a writer and Lulu has also benefitted enormously from her EFL training. Clearly, a writer can reap rewards from teacher education courses depending on the course syllabus and delivery combined with the writer's own ability and readiness to learn.

As with successful English language teaching, successful English language teacher education requires a range of aspects related to planning and delivery to facilitate uptake of key input. Such uptake is dependent not only on the teacher / writer-as-learner but also on the teacher educators, the syllabus design and the course material. Aspects such as relevance (Wright, 2005), affective and cognitive engagement (Oxford, 2011), learner ownership (McIntyre et al, 2007), motivational factors (Arnold, 1999), learning affordances (Gibson cited by van Lier, 1996) and reflection (Akbari, 2007) all assume importance and therefore need to be addressed by educators to provide a learning environment (Dewey, 1938) which encourages writers to implement both theory and best practice in respect of their materials production.

### **5.6.3 EFL Experience**

EFL experience, initially as a classroom teacher before taking on responsibility as a materials writer follows on from EFL training and data were collected on this theme using four collection tools: ranking questions RAQ12 and 13; Likert-type question LQ6; written answers to Likert-type questions; and interview responses.

Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ12	Professional experience of teaching and writing	16	3	1	-
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ13	Professional expertise in writing materials / courses	5	7	7	1

Table 5.29: Importance of professional experience (RAQ12) and Professional expertise (RAQ13)

Key: a = an enormous influence b = a lot of influence c = some influence  
d = a little influence e = not much influence

LQ6: How much influence does your ELT experience have on your materials production?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <span style="float: right;">n = 20</span>	10	9	1	-	-

Table 5.30: Influence of ELT experience on materials writing (LQ6)

Nineteen respondents ranked EFL experience of teaching and writing (RAQ12) as either 'essential' or 'very important' in terms of its effect on a writer's activities with LQ6 collecting equally high ratings for those respondents choosing 'an enormous influence' or 'a lot of influence'. Somewhat strangely, professional expertise in writing materials / courses (RAQ13) received much lower ratings with only twelve respondents selecting 'essential' or 'very important'.

So these writers judge classroom experience as extremely important and influential in their materials production yet view their own expertise with less confidence. I would suggest that this is, in part, due to the prevalence amongst the writers to view their writing activities in a humble way with most considering themselves primarily as teachers and only secondarily as writers. Numerous of the writers had comments to make on this aspect of what informs their work. Gina wrote that her EFL experience:



is probably the most influential aspect; I know what works and doesn't work for me with the local students and I have heard from other teachers what works and what's a problem.

Gina's experience is not only based on her own classroom activities but also embraces the experience of both her learners and her colleagues. In the same way, Keith reflected on his 30-plus years teaching Arabic speakers which have enabled him to build up a repertoire of activities / tasks which address Arab learners' preferences and weaknesses. Keith's experience informs his writing in his quest to enhance learner participation and success with the contention that knowing learners' preferences and weaknesses is fundamental to the production of effective materials. Ray added a further layer to the influence professional experience lends to materials production:

*Interviewer:* You mentioned editing textbooks for MacMillan ... In what way do you think that experience added to you as a materials writer?

*Ray:* When I went back to teaching, it gave me a lot of critical perspective especially in a sense that I began to look at the materials that were being used in the classroom: teacher talk; how to introduce a lesson; how to lead in and; how do you test; how do you correct students? ...I had never asked the question: how did you use this textbook? Did you use the textbook creatively? Did you go beyond it? Or is the textbook good enough? ...

By asking questions from a *critical perspective*, Ray is engaging in continuous evaluation of his materials from two vantage points: as an editor; and as a practising teacher. Moreover, he attempts to control how much material he includes in any particular unit based on his critical analysis by having both an easy abandonment capacity (Johnson, 2003) for letting go of materials and also by appreciating how other teachers may use his materials. Like Ray, taking a critical perspective enables Tara to align the rate of progression in her courses to the abilities of her learners seen as fundamental to producing effective language acquisition. Her approach in this respect is to ask 'what's achievable, what's manageable, what's realistic' thereby focusing on her learners and their learning.

As with EFL training, how EFL experience impacts on a writer's activities depends on the individual's career path: what he / she does; who he / she

works with; how he / she reflects on his / her materials production. Clearly, EFL training and experience can lend potentially powerful support to a writer's activities, but only if this support is well-informed. Having EFL experience in areas other than teaching and writing can also enhance a writer's knowledge and skills-base: as an editor in Ray's case; or writing TOs, LOs, course material and examinations in Don's case as outlined in section 5.2.3 above.

## 5.7 Priorities when Planning Materials

The research participants offered a large number of factors affecting how they plan their materials. The two themes presented here represented the most influential as the writers reflected on their production of materials. My research question (RQ2a) for this aspect of a writer's activities was:

RQ2a		
What do writers prioritise when planning materials? Why?		
	Theme	Code book definition
1	Addressing stakeholder requirements	Taking into account the priorities of stakeholders: for further studies; future employment; professional training
2	Syllabus design	The planning of the English language syllabus for a particular course / set of courses

*Table 5.31: Themes addressing what writers prioritise when planning*

### 5.7.1 Addressing Stakeholder Requirements

Data were collected on the theme of addressing stakeholder requirements using two collection tools: ranking question RAQ16; and interview responses.

Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ16	To be aware of stakeholders in the educational process: teachers; learners; administration; examiners; possible employers	13	5	1	1

Table 5.32: Awareness of stakeholders (RAQ16)

Eighteen of the respondents rated having an awareness of stakeholders and their requirements (RAQ16) as either ‘essential’ or ‘very important’ in the educational process. Steve described his consultation process with stakeholders in respect of an ESP trade course by asserting that it was far more important what the stakeholders had to say than any personal view he held. Steve’s pragmatic approach shows he is open to listen and fulfill the specific requirements of the key stakeholders regarding his English course. He continued by giving further details of this approach:

... going to the officers in charge of the (trade section). ... I sat down with the lead instructor / the head of (the section) and discussed with them what I thought ... and I got them involved in chasing up the (sections) to get questionnaires with the feedback (from section heads). Only once I got that I sat down, a couple one weeks later I started to prepare the material.

This process included the section heads and the central head of all the sections. In this way, Steve covered some of the future needs as outlined by key stakeholders including domain experts (Long, 2005): namely the trade instructors; and heads of section. Keith outlined an alternative approach to consulting with stakeholders while preparing an ESP course. He examined the trade curriculum and then bought related books pitched at secondary school level on which to base his own ESP course material.

These two writers have both prepared their materials by consulting with stakeholders but whereas Steve engaged domain experts extensively in his NA process, Keith relied on documentation from stakeholders and from other sources in his NA. It is not clear from the data collected if they engaged in a more extensive consultation period or indeed gained access to key

documentation. This is an area of interest which would have benefited from further details being collected in second interviews.

A comprehensive view of learners' future needs can include: observation of professional training; noting down actual target language used; and collecting example documents used on the training course or in the job itself. Such tools collect potentially useful data on which to base syllabus design. However, writers also need to prioritise stakeholder input (Macalister & Nation, 2011) and input from other courses to ensure the most effective syllabus is designed for a particular learning scenario.

### 5.7.2 Syllabus Design

I collected data on the theme of syllabus design using four collection tools: ranking questions RAQ3, 18 and 19; Likert-type question LQ9; written answers to LQs; and interview responses.

*Key: a = essential b = very important c = important d = somewhat important*

Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ3	Designing an appropriate syllabus	15	3	2	-
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ18	Being aware of institutional requirements: specific language; skills; exam results	8	9	3	-
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ19	Understanding and meeting learning objectives and outcomes	13	6	-	1

*Table 5.33: Designing an appropriate syllabus (RAQ3), overview of results for institutional requirements (RAQ18) and overview of results for meeting TOs and LOs (RAQ19)*

Designing the syllabus (RAQ3) was viewed as an 'essential' or a 'very important' part of the materials production process by eighteen respondents with the same ratings for institutional requirements (RAQ18) and nineteen

respondents giving the same ratings to teaching objectives and learner outcomes (RAQ19).

Key: a = not at all b = a little c = some d = quite a lot e = a lot

LQ9: How much do you consider syllabus design when you are planning materials?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <span style="float: right;"><i>n</i> = 19</span>	2	2	3	7	5

Table 5.34: Writers considering syllabus design (LQ9)

The responses from LQ9, on the other hand, showed a wide range of answers as to how much writers consider syllabus design with twelve considering it ‘a lot’ or ‘quite a lot’, but four considering it only ‘a little’ or ‘not at all’.

These disparate answers were elaborated upon by participants during the open-ended written answers and interviews. From this written and spoken data, it is evident that many of the writers in the sample do not have any control over the syllabi they are working with. Many institutions have a top-down approach to this. I will first examine comments from writers who do exercise some control over the syllabus before moving on to examine the top-down scenario. Unlike the writers included in my literature review who produced mediated materials in conjunction with publishers / large institutions and who had considerable demands placed upon them, Sidney enjoys considerable autonomy when designing a design. He decides and then includes the following in his syllabus: structure and sequence of grammatical features; sub-skills; and lexical groups. Then he makes decisions as to where to insert these on a unit by unit basis.

Sydney’s approach is interesting in that his syllabus design is driven by consideration of the language and skills before there is any selection of themes or topics. His many years of experience writing published materials and having autonomy over syllabus design according to his perceived needs enables him to plan a seemingly, comprehensive document covering all elements needed to facilitate effective writing practice for learners.

In unmediated materials production writers may also enjoy autonomy to design a syllabus which focuses clearly and solely on learner and key stakeholder needs. However, writers may also encounter scenarios of a top-down nature, with writers being handed syllabi to work towards, a number of participants voiced negative feelings about this aspect of their professional scenarios. Bonnie confirmed, with a hint of disappointment in her voice, that ‘the materials I write for (my institution) have to be in line with the existing syllabus (Interviewer’s note: *I understood that she did not design this existing syllabus*)’.

Diane murmured that ‘we seem to have inherited the syllabus from ‘I don’t know when!’ clearly unhappy with the syllabus she has to follow and presumably the outdated nature of its content in our fast-changing, technological world. Tara wrote: ‘I have never been responsible for writing a syllabus’, following up this statement with:

here you are expected to write materials but the materials kind of are the syllabus so ... at the moment there isn’t a syllabus or a set of materials ... it’s a copy of the contents of the coursebook! And like, the tasks and objectives taken from each coursebook. I believe it was written coursebook to curriculum document, not written document to coursebooks!

Diane and Tara are expressing professional dissatisfaction here pinpointing both the out-of-date nature of the syllabus, ‘*I don’t know when!*’ and the mandated use of the contents pages of a coursebook. This top-down allocation of a set syllabus is clearly problematic for these writers.

Whether writers are producing mediated or unmediated materials and whether they have to acquiesce to top-down decisions regarding syllabus design, all these writers show how important they view not only having a detailed syllabus, unlike the majority of published ELT coursebooks, but having a syllabus which guides the materials writing process if the resulting coursebook is to facilitate relevant, motivating and effective material.

## 5.8 What Writers Feel They are Lacking

The majority of the writers had responses relating to my research question (RQ3) under the theme outlined below:

RQ3		
What do ELT educationalists feel they are lacking and would like to be better informed about in respect of materials production?		
	Theme	Code book definition
1	CPD for writers	Continuing Professional Development regarding the production of effective ELT materials

Table 5.35: Theme addressing what writers feel they are lacking

### 5.8.1 Continuing Professional Development for Writers

Data for this theme came from interview responses with respondents offering an eclectic mix of perceived developmental needs. Diane wanted more input about developing materials for reading and vocabulary development using a corpus. Her knowledge of corpora and materials production (Harwood, 2014) shows Diane has at least read about this relatively new area of academic and pedagogic endeavour. She would also appreciate more knowledge of frameworks since each major writing project needs to start with a framework to pin the materials on. Unfortunately, it is unclear whether Diane is referring to document templates or syllabus design ones. Nevertheless, increased knowledge of frameworks can certainly inform the planning of materials as long as they are principled frameworks (Tomlinson, 2003a). She continued however by stating that:

I suppose I would be interested in ... training of the whole process actually from designing needs analysis, I've no formal training in that, ... and then as you mentioned evaluating effectiveness. I need training in everything, Tony! (big laugh).

Diane's disarming way of reflecting on her CPD needs shows both her self-knowledge regarding materials production and her willingness to commit to

further training. Julie suggested joining one of the groups in LinkedIn that are focussing on materials production. She admitted she would also like to know best practice in materials production to see innovative approaches supported by some research in psychology and learning. Her desire for inter-disciplinary knowledge stems from her doctoral and post-doctoral work in ELT and here focuses on psychological aspects of SLA. Her reflective approach to her writing and teaching is again demonstrated when she stated:

You know you (Tony) made me actually think about it with your questions. I didn't think seriously about materials production. I was doing it intuitively and based on the training I received but I'm thinking now maybe I should follow the research and what the instructors do in real classrooms in order to see what is available ... and I can use it for my own materials production. So your research actually made me think so thank you very much for that.

This is very satisfying for me as the researcher to hear and illustrates Kvale's assertion that 'doing interviews can be a change in understanding for the participant interviewee' (2007, p13). Julie has flagged up two key aspects to materials production which need to be examined. Firstly, she admits that she paid little attention to her writing – just got on and did it as a requirement of her current employment scenario. This, I suspect, is the way many writers start out. Secondly, she uses the word *intuitively* (Kerfoot, 1993). This has an air of guess work to it and is diametrically opposed to informed writing based on professionally-conducted needs analysis and syllabus design grounded in academic and pedagogic knowledge. Orson worries about the way EFL training devotes so little time to materials development and in particular a lack of focus on evaluating materials. Similarly, Gina's admission that

I'm sure approaches and methodology have changed considerably and I am certainly behind the times and in need of a refresher course

is honest and suggests she is aware she would benefit from information as to which refresher course might best suit her CPD needs. The majority of the writers in this study stated their need for CPD in relation to materials production. Deciding where and how to get such developmental input will require advice to select the most appropriate sources for such specialized knowledge and will be dealt with in greater detail in chapters 6 and 7.



## 5.9 Additional Themes Emerging

The following two key themes emerged from the qualitative data collected from the writers and represent pertinent influences on writers in today's world with the second theme, producing an ibook, looking to the future of EFL in the digital age:

Additional themes		
	Theme	Code book definition
1	Working with colleagues on materials	Planning and producing materials together with other ELT writers
2	Producing an ibook	The process of producing an ibook

Table 5.36: Emerging themes not addressing a research question

### 5.9.1 Working with Colleagues on Materials

Putting the written word onto the page is a very private activity. So to work with others to produce materials, presumably courses rather than worksheets, will have implications for writers. Six of the participants offered their experiences of this aspect of materials production and two are reported here. Keith outlined several roles and considerations involved in working in a writing cell such as assigning areas of a coursebook to others and then editing their materials, besides producing his own area in consultation with the other writers to produce what he considered to be an improved product. Keith then went on to offer his thoughts on writing cells in general:

and I would say that maybe what you need is people who are interested in writing joining a cell ... for a provisional period of time and if they respond well, if they like it, and if their work can be used, because not everybody takes to it! Not everybody is happy working as part of a team. So I think you shouldn't necessarily appoint people without a get-out clause in that sort of section.

It sounds as though Keith has had experience of both writers who fitted into the writing cell's regime and those who did not. His advice would seem to be useful to administrators who oversee staffing to select writers for cells with due

consideration to their personalities and interpersonal skills. His suggestion of a probation period is also worthy of consideration as it allows either the writer or the educational management to curtail an individual's involvement in the cell.

Ray made two valid points about working in a writing cell: team members need to be aware of and work to outcomes and deadlines; and that scheduled peer review of materials is helpful and conducive to more effective use of time and effort. This suggests the need for adequate communication between writers on the same project, together with some type of editorial / managerial oversight to set and meet regular deadlines whilst simultaneously having all members apprised of progress and goals.

### **5.9.2 Producing an ibook**

Heather went into some detail about a project she is currently involved with producing an ibook. Her project is focused on engaging Omani learners who are unenthusiastic readers, hence the inclusion of a large amount of visual content. This project is promoting a great deal of development for the writers involved and Heather is obviously relishing her involvement:

I'm a task designer and editor ... we're hoping to pilot this in the fall. ... editors, great proof readers, creativity – I think I'm a very creative person. To come with all sorts of different ways of presenting things that hopefully are more interesting and more fun ...

Her creativity, linked to learning new software packages, is clearly energised by the project. Being an ibook, interactivity should be assured, although to what extent such a publication can replace the face-to-face time of the classroom is at present unclear. The interview carried on with another question:

*Interviewer:* What are your feelings about writing paper-based materials and now being involved in writing an ibook?

*Heather:* Well, I see advantages and disadvantages to the ibook version. ... there's all sorts of challenges regarding them as far as technology, teacher motivation, interest – that's a huge hurdle as well. ... 'Zero-paper classrooms' is a term that is kind of floating around these days.

Heather appears to be under no illusion as to the challenges facing this innovative project: practical aspects of technological hardware such as supplying all learners with ipads; motivating teachers by equipping them to use the new technology, both hardware and software; and the need to foster intrinsic and / or instrumental motivation amongst learners linked to the interest levels offered by materials content. Furthermore, Heather alludes to the need to train teachers and other ELT professionals such as materials writers, examinations writers and, in the first instance, the trainers themselves, not forgetting the learners, who will need to be inculcated into the rigours of autonomous learning. Whether zero-paper classrooms will be the future is yet to be substantiated. Certainly, the move towards i-materials presents challenges for teachers, examiners, teacher educators, administrators and, in particular, for writers who will need both the motivation and enthusiasm to embrace change supported by appropriate training. What is clear is that Heather is at the fore-front of a potentially powerful model for change in ELT.

## **5.10 Summaries of Less Significant Themes**

The above sub-sections cover the key themes addressing my research questions. Other, less significant themes included: authentic versus created materials; recycling and incremental learning; addressing learning styles; and using technology.

### **5.10.1 Using Authentic versus Created Materials**

The participants had a variety of views and practices relating to this with Heather relating that

we are using authentic research articles, and our programme does not simplify the articles. So the level of English is very, very high for the actual level of English of our students. ... So a solution is that we are working on authentic materials but we simplify the tasks. And that seems to work moderately well ...

This approach, creating easy tasks to address the challenging nature of authentic material for her learners is her response to a top-down decision to use only authentic texts. She does admit however, that 'probably some students, if not a lot, spend an enormous amount of time on articles and become slightly demotivated'. Steve's approach is quite different.

Well, the advantage of ones created by the EFL writers. They are in ways better because they are designed with specific language learning objectives in mind at a certain level. Authentic material could be extremely mixed.

His preference for materials specifically created for the classroom enables him to present comprehensible input which matches institutional requirements and learners' abilities.

#### 5.10.2 Recycling and Incremental Learning

All the participants considered these elements to SLA as very important with Julie explaining

at some point you have to bring all this together, maybe in the fifth week of the course ... you should have a session that will contain all the activities that will allow this integration [researcher's note: I think she means recycling and incremental learning] to happen: vocabulary-wise; grammar-wise; and then you move on ...

Julie's procedures are an attempt to ensure *integration* and it would have been enlightening if I had had access to examples of what the participants actually produce to gain a more in-depth understanding of ways these important aspects of the SLA process can be addressed.

#### 5.10.3 Addressing Learning Styles

Most of the participants attempt to address the complex issue of learners' disparate learning styles (Oxford, 2011). However, as Heather suggests,

you can't necessarily do it simultaneously, you have to have a little bit of everything, you know: writing; visual; Youtube videos for people to listen to ...

Heather continues by outlining an innovative approach to materials design which she is implementing with colleagues.

we're focussing on the visuals thing. I think it's fairly well-recognised that people are visual learners and we're trying to really cut down on the text because that doesn't seem to lend itself very well to the Omani style of reading a lot of text.

Their approach balancing text and visual elements for their Omani learners is an interesting one and something which could be disseminated more widely in the ELT writers' community in the Arab-speaking world.

#### 5.10.4 Using Technology

Tara offered numerous ways in which she is involving herself with technology in education. She has already taken a self-study, on-line short course and her new-found knowledge has encouraged her to learn more so she can apply it to future projects. As she went on to observe:

I don't think books will ever disappear but if you have knowledge about creating e-materials, it's going to be valuable in the future. ... especially with young learners ... because they've grown up with computers and ipads, phones, I think there's huge potential there ... I think if you had apps on an interactive whiteboard or ipads, you might ... boys might be more engaged than with a book. I don't know but I think there is a potential to try and catch them before they lose all interest!

Tara has already identified a major potential benefit of her being able to address a problem area in Oman – boys' low reading ability due to low motivation to read. For Tara, any future personal development she receives can immediately be employed in her materials writing for the digital age and the digitally-savvy. In this way, she is attempting to transform herself from a digital immigrant into a digital native like her learners (Prensky, 2001). As Wong (2013) states for classroom teachers, but which is also apposite for writers, is the pedagogic use to which technology is put by providing teachers (and writers) with both

theoretical and pedagogical competence to facilitate successful learning. Having greater working knowledge of EFL-based technological advances will become ever more essential in the digital age that is the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

From the wealth of collected data presented in this chapter, many details of how these writers approach their materials production show the range of challenges, successes and problem areas which writers encounter and I now move to a discussion of key aspects covered by these findings in the discussion chapter which follows.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

As stated in my introductory chapter, the aim of this study is to examine which aspects of materials production ELT educationalists most need to be aware of when preparing, producing, piloting and evaluating materials. From my own reading to facilitate the writing of my literature review, it became apparent that, despite my own extensive experience as an ELT professional, including the production of numerous ESP coursebooks here in Oman, there was a considerable gap in my working knowledge and practices in relation to current academic theory and espoused best practice relating to writing materials. The sample of writers currently active in the north of the Sultanate of Oman offered data of both convergence and divergence in terms of best practice grounded in theoretical, pedagogic and practical, DTP terms. By analysing these data, I have been able to report best practices whilst simultaneously gaining a better understanding of where writers' activities fall short of best practice informed by SLA theory. In this chapter I discuss both best practice and the most significant shortcomings presented in the findings with my research questions forming the focus of each section of the discussion. This discussion should clarify and expand on key findings whilst also highlighting important aspects of materials production which could then be applied in contexts beyond the geographical scope of this study to the worldwide community of ELT materials writers.

### **6.1 Key Aspects to Producing Effective Materials**

My first main research question (RQ1) elicited writers' views on key aspects involved in producing effective materials. In order to produce such materials, writers draw on their knowledge of learning and teaching. In this section, I begin by discussing the participants' appreciation of theoretical, pedagogic and practical, DTP knowledge. Such discussion mirrors the process of writing material which is, or should be, informed by theory from which teacher- and learner-practices are realised and form the basis of materials produced using desktop-publishing skills - writers' 'practical' knowledge. From this initial

discussion I move on to consider how effectively the participants approach several key aspects of materials production: conducting needs analysis; producing tasks; creating teachers' books; addressing the local learning context; and evaluating materials.

### **6.1.1 Writers' Knowledge: Theoretical; Pedagogic; and Practical**

Most of the study's participants identified academic theory as important in ELT yet many were ambivalent as to how they themselves should apply theory to their classroom practice and materials production. Writers need to engage pedagogic knowledge with their focus on the approach and subsequent methodology inherent in their materials. Whilst the participants placed much greater emphasis on pedagogic knowledge to inform their materials production, they found it difficult to enunciate which approach or methodology they selected and based their materials on. This is surprising as, depending on the length of time these writers have been in ELT, they will have been involved with a number of approaches such as: the lexical approach (Lewis, 1997); the communicative approach (Savignon, 2002); task-based learning (Nunan, 2004; Willis & Willis, 2007); DOGME (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009); and the discovery approach (Bolitho & Tomlinson, 2005; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2010). As with theoretical knowledge, pedagogic knowledge appears in rather vague terms for many of the writers and while some may be employing 'an eclectic strategy' (Cook, 2008, p235) in response to the local context, many of these writers find it difficult to describe and discuss either theoretical or pedagogic underpinnings to their materials.

Those writers who had already studied on a master's course were more effusive and clear as to their engagement with theory. These writers have multiple sources which they consult to produce materials underpinned by the latest theories on SLA, in particular, and ELT best practice in general. Many of these writers espoused practices which are based on a socio-cultural approach to L2 learning as surveyed by Dixon et al (2012). They also offered a range of tasks / activities ensuring learners receive relevant and motivating affordances for



meaningful language use (Lightbown, 2000; Tomlinson, 2012), engaging learners in interaction with others to enhance language development (Vygotsky, 1978) and offering the modified interaction needed in SLA (Long, 1985).

However, some participants presented descriptions of the theories underpinning their materials which were limited and vague. This should cause concern and yet Ortega (2011) highlights the need for educationalists to employ pedagogic practices based on suitability to their particular learning context and avoid automatic selection of any and all research related to the classroom since much of what is in print is not grounded on sufficient empirical evidence. Perhaps this accounts for the lack of clarity and even wariness some writers showed when discussing theoretical aspects relating to their writing.

None of the participants elucidated their theoretical or pedagogic approach to the practice of new target language. Whilst some writers clearly adhere to CLT or TBLT, they did not mention how their materials deal with learners practising new language. Again, this is not surprising for two reasons.

First, the long-running debate about *a focus on forms* (Han & Ellis, 1998) versus *a focus on form* (Long, 1991) does not give writers and teachers a workable approach to classroom practice although more recent overviews of SLA research have supported a focus on forms as promoting language acquisition which is more durable (Norris & Ortega, 2000) and which allows for greater success when required in spontaneous, natural use (Spada, 2011). Such spontaneous use of language should help learners to proceduralize explicit knowledge (Spada, 2015). This is the type of theoretical input writers and teachers most benefit from – theory which consolidates professional practices or offers innovative and proven practices for SLA success. Of course such a theoretical contribution to underpin pedagogic practice is very recent, requiring educationalists to ensure their professional knowledge remains current. This could be encouraged by including teachers, students (and writers) in the research dialogue (Lightbown, 2000) to promote research which is pedagogically-based (Lightbown, 1985).

Second, as an EFL teacher since 1982, I am aware that teachers' guides during this period have rarely expounded on the pedagogic, classroom practices which the coursebook writer sees as most efficacious to L2 learning. Such a shortcoming is addressed on CELTA and DELTA training courses with classroom practices presented by trainers and then practised by trainee teachers but this can be the sole time that teachers are actually 'instructed' or supported as to how to practice new language and how much practice is needed. So again, it is not surprising that this aspect of SLA is inadequately dealt with by writers.

Unlike theoretical and pedagogic knowledge, the writers in the study expressed a range of clear views on the importance of their having practical knowledge of desktop-publishing design. These writers offered the same recommendations: a pleasing layout (McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2011); colour versus black-and-white; judicious use of fonts; orthographic challenges presented by Roman script for learners used to using Arabic script (Swan & Smith, 2001); the importance and frequency of visuals; and space for learners to write in (Gray, 2010). Many of these writers stressed the link between pleasing design, user-reaction to such design and the positive affective factors which can result. They obviously see a level of professionalism as important in the look of their own materials but also prioritise content as having an overriding importance over appearance. A significant number of writers expressed their desire for further DTP training to enhance the quality of their materials.

### **6.1.2 Conducting a Needs Analysis**

Exercising a clear understanding and utilization of knowledge, writers are ready to tackle the initial step in the materials production process, needs analysis. NA provides the writer with defining criteria (Benesch, 2001) from which he / she can begin the process of syllabus design. The majority of the writers in the sample concur with the importance Benesch accords NA but their approach to collecting valuable data from a range of stakeholders would appear to lack the breadth and efficacy of best practice as outlined below.

Some writers outline partial coverage of key stakeholders, for example from domain experts (Long, 2005) - the trade instructors, the managers, and the learners themselves (Yalden, 1987; Nunan, 1988). However, simply asking stakeholders what language they perceive should be included in a syllabus does not necessarily collect sufficient data to make informed syllabus-design decisions even though such procedures accrue a limited amount of rich data about the learners' target environment (Basturkmen, 2006) and hence gain an understanding of what Long calls 'specificity' (2005, p1). However, by not canvassing the appropriate stakeholders sufficiently for a given educational scenario, writers are failing to acquire an extensive and accurate understanding of the language, content and skills required by learners.

In contrast, Cowling (2007), detailing his case study of a needs analysis process, exhibits both extended knowledge of NA data collection tools and a flexibility to adapt to a particular scenario and try to include stakeholders in the process. Cowling details how he approached an NA process using unstructured, open-ended interviews with key stakeholders [domain experts]. Yet these interviews yielded limited data as the stakeholders expected him, as an ELT expert, to produce a course independently of the company commissioning the said business English course. Therefore, Cowling approached the company's language instructors and later distributed open-ended questionnaires to learners which were filled in with support from company employees who had already received such language training. In this way, using such triangulation from multiple sources, Cowling collected sufficient data which allowed him to make informed decisions as to theoretical underpinning of a suitable approach [content-based using a functional-notional syllabus design] to produce course material.

This study's participants do not collect and analyse data to 'determine learners' prior experiences' (Mickan, 2013, p58), in the areas of language acquisition, content covered, methodology followed, skills work or study skills training. Similarly, these writers are not focussing on learners' future language needs as perceived by trade personnel by eliciting target discourse language and prototypical discourse structures (Chaudron et al, 2005) from expert insiders

(Long, 2005) such as trade instructors or faculty lecturers. With writers failing to canvass such expert insiders, content and appropriate skills may not always be relevant to future needs.

Whilst the study participants appear to be unaware of the full range of stakeholders to be canvassed and the variety and usefulness of various NA data collection tools, it is important to state that, due to limited data being collected for this study, it is not clear exactly how these writers approach NA. Whether or not they are aware of effective and appropriate or necessary procedures, they may encounter the kinds of problems outlined in the literature such as the two following examples. The first is when publishers and end-users such as ministries of education take a top-down approach with mediated coursebooks by insisting on having excessive, and potentially detrimental, influence on the NA process regarding mediated coursebooks (Timmis, 2014). The second is when stakeholders and institutions refuse or restrict syllabus designers access to stakeholders, end-users, or documentation, as mentioned in section 4.5 above.

To counter potential problems with NA data collection mentioned above, syllabus designers adopt a systematic approach to NA and aim for the collection of a range of data from various sources using a variety of collection tools. Writers need to be working from a detailed checklist, specifically-designed for each writing project, to ensure all elements in needs analysis design are covered. I would suggest that writers need to include non-participant observations of trade classrooms and on-the-job training (OJT) scenarios (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to collect and analyse content (Flowerdew, 1994) and discourse (Hatch, 1992). Collecting and analysing trade or academic documentation enables genre analysis (Swales, 1990) whilst corpus analysis (Carter & McCarthy, 1988; Sinclair, 1991; Flowerdew, 1994) ensures real language is selected, presented, practised and mastered on a course. Furthermore, the writers in this study make no mention of triangulation (Long, 2005) between the types of NA data collected from a number of stakeholders who, after all, represent 'multiple audiences' (Byrd, 1995, p6) and whose input may not all match in terms of relevance, accuracy or pragmatism.

An effective needs analysis will address the local learning context and all the research participants show a high degree of awareness as to the influence which the local learning context exerts on learners in keeping with Mican's call for 'texts (and materials) ... which excite, enhance and extend their meaning-making potential' (2013, p129). Writers, and indeed teachers, need to ask themselves the question posed by one of the participants, 'is this relevant for the learners' present and future lives?' and prepare material accordingly. In so doing, writers should be producing material which exploits the 'inner life of the students' (Thornbury, 2000, quoted in McGrath, 2013, p14) and 'maximises the chance of language emergence' (ibid). Such consideration of and for the learners should then engage them 'by encouraging intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement' (Tomlinson, 2003a, p21). This focus on the learners and their world exemplifies McGrath's notion of 'cultural localization' (2013, p67) and fulfills Garton and Graves' call not to miss the 'opportunity to promote positive attitudes towards both local culture and English' (2014, p6). Taken together, these suggest the need for 'intercultural competence' (Cortazzi and Jin, in Coleman, 1996, p219) which the writers in this study exemplify in the selection and production of their materials' content, design and accompanying tasks. By showing cultural sensitivity throughout this process (Rubdy, 2003), these writers take account of 'indigenous values, students' peer-group cultures, and teachers' professional values' (Canagarajah, 1999, p26) thereby adjusting materials to suit cultural mores and subsequent restrictions, seen as vital (Richards, 2014) to successful learning.

### **6.1.3 Producing Tasks**

Whichever approach and methodology these writers select, all described their inclusion of tasks in their materials. Some of the writers have a well-defined view of how to produce tasks for effective learning. They describe using authentic texts (Allwright & Allwright, 1977; Tomlinson, 2011) or adapting texts (McGrath, 2002) together with comprehension tasks which aid comprehension (Tomlinson, 2010). Indeed several writers appear confident producing chains of tasks (Nunan, 2004) whilst also adapting tasks according to the tried and tested

formula of producing an easy task for a difficult text, or the opposite scenario of devising a more difficult task for an easy text (Skehan, 1998; Willis & Willis, 2007). Some writers acknowledge the need for learners to see vocabulary multiple times to facilitate acquisition (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000) in accordance with recycling and incremental learning already discussed. However, the writers do not mention tasks which encourage and / or require learners to use recently-presented language so that they internalize it (Cook, 2008) and gradually acquire it (ibid). Neither is there much reference to the planning and production of tasks which facilitate practice of new language (Nunan, 1988; 2004).

I can only deduce that this lack of clarity for producing language practice tasks is connected to the disjointed nature of many writers' theoretical and pedagogic knowledge, perhaps exacerbated by the recent and confusing range of EFL approaches and methodologies as mentioned above. There is plainly a need for greater support for writers in respect of task production for the classroom and writers would benefit from published work such as Johnson's practical list of attributes of a good task designer (2003, p129-137) and Hadfield's (2014) more esoteric self-reporting of her writing process.

#### **6.1.4 Creating Teacher's Books**

Having produced materials for the classroom, writers usually supply teachers with accompanying notes or even a teacher's book. The majority of the participants view these as useful support in the teaching / learning paradigm and several studies have been done on their effectiveness (Cunningsworth & Kusel, 1991; Ellis, 1997a; Hemsley, 1997; Sheldon, 1998). Writers tend to view such support as particularly necessary to assist newly-qualified teachers or those lacking in confidence (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; Masuhara & Tomlinson, 2008) in a clear, informative and non-mandatory way with instructions simplified (Bell & Gower, 1998) for busy teachers.

Coleman's study (1986) of teachers' guides found that there were neither detailed assumptions regarding the nature of language and language use, nor detailed descriptions of the theoretical underpinnings of the ELT approach selected by the writer which then dictate the pedagogic methodology of the coursebook. Whilst teacher's guides have changed since Coleman's study, Mol and Tin's study (2008) of EAP materials identified teachers' guides as still focusing on *what* to teach rather than *how* to teach it. This lack of a focus on materials' theoretical underpinnings echoes findings above which indicated many of the writers in this study were unable to elucidate their personal principles relating to SLA or the approach underpinning their materials.

Several writers concurred with the notion of potential variables in the teaching / learning paradigm as identified by Jordan (1997), such as teachers' abilities and self-confidence to implement change. Indeed, some writers cited examples of when a teacher's book can support teachers who are resistant to pedagogic change and who may employ 'the typical pragmatic response ... to interpret and adapt the approaches according to their local context' (Littlewood, 2007 cited by Garton & Graves, 2014, p9).

A number of writers also identified teacher's books in terms of CPD in accordance with Harwood's forceful suggestion that 'textbook writers should see (teacher's books) as potentially powerful tools for teacher development and learning' (2014, p27). Stoller and Robinson (2014) relate how they set up a website to act as a teacher's support source – a potential innovation not just for mediated but also for unmediated coursebooks in the future. Teacher's books can make a big impact on classroom practice yet, according to Harwood's overview of the literature, 'very little research has been done on ELT teacher's guides' (2014, p9).

### **6.1.5 Addressing the Local Learning Context**

With their focus on their local learning context as classroom teachers in the first instance, many of the writers in this study view appropriate content as an

integral part of materials production. Some writers engage in an 'authenticity-centred' (Mishan, 2005, *ibid*) approach by selecting authentic material and then producing worksheets to make tasks challenging (*ibid*) but doable for their learners. This enables them to write material which presents real world situations (Johnson, 2003), relevant to learners' future needs (Long, 2005). The argument of whether to use authentic or created materials has recently come to an accommodation of both views by promoting a pragmatic approach to selection and production (Carter, 1998, cited in Harwood, 2010, p5) and this is what the writers here in the Omani context engage in.

Many of these writers focus on ensuring material which presents comprehensible input (Krashen & Terrell, 1992) and some endeavour to cover a range of relevant or required schemata (Cook, 2008; Graves, 2000). Some writers believe in planning an English course to challenge their learners: linguistically; cognitively; and emotionally (Tomlinson, 2003a). However, some writers voiced their concerns regarding the use of authentic and challenging material because their learners' level of English and study skills are so poor. This scenario is highly relevant to this study but requires its own research project to ascertain the reasons why the Omani education system continues to produce learners with such poor levels of achievement after many years of development and consultation with educational experts. What does result from this scenario is the careful approach to level of difficulty of content which keeps the input of language at or below Upper-Intermediate level with secondary and tertiary courses usually pitched at Intermediate level. Moreover, these writers, working in Oman, viewed the inclusion of a variety of form(s) of English (Jenkins, 2009) in the course content as much less important than presenting simple, clear language to enable limited success at the levels of English alluded to above. This limitation within the local learning context (McDonough et al, 2012) affects content selection and course design to a considerable degree.

Clearly, these writers address the local learning context strengthened by their prior / current experience in the Omani ELT classroom. Unlike many aspects of materials production, which set writers new challenges outside of the remit of



classroom teaching, this aspect causes no additional challenge to these teachers / writers.

#### **6.1.6 Evaluating Materials**

With writers having already been, or continuing to be, classroom teachers the theme of materials evaluation was seen as vital to the production of effective learning. Teachers constantly evaluate the materials they are using and writers draw on this professional experience and apply it to their own materials. These writers described a range of techniques for evaluating and revising materials (Singapore Wala, 2003).

One writer outlined pre-use trialling on her family and other colleagues following McGrath's (2002) model of pre-use before in-use. Another technique mentioned was to analyse learner outcomes (Stoller & Robinson, 2014) showing the level of success the materials engender. Collecting and acting upon 'teachers' and learners' evaluations' (Kerfoot, 1993, cited in Harwood, 2010, p19) was also seen as essential by some writers although only a few gave details as to how they accomplish this, in particular with lower levels of English. Some writers pinpointed classroom observation of materials, that is 'test(ing) material out genuinely' (Tomlinson, 2011, p274) with both the writer and teachers piloting and observing although detail as to how this would be executed was scant. Several writers collect ideas for amendments and additions from piloting teachers thereby enriching the materials production process from evaluating materials-in-action (Tomlinson, 2011). Indeed, when producing unmediated material, it is much easier for writers-as-teachers to make amendments immediately after piloting in a particular class (Amrani, 2011) or for writers to receive immediate feedback from teachers who are colleagues.

Most of the writers are aware that affective factors (Arnold, 1999) exert considerable influence on the success, or otherwise, of a course and evaluate their materials in terms of learner engagement and motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Several writers also alluded to the role of teachers in the

learning paradigm in terms of tailoring an evaluation process, similar to Jolly and Bolitho's notion of optional pathways and feedback loops (2011). This allows for an informed approach tailored to a specific learning situation (Tomlinson, 2013a), the better to pilot, revise and re-pilot new courses.

Surprisingly, none of the writers included themselves in the piloting process, seen as a crucial source of feedback (Donovan, 1998) particularly when the writer is physically near to the classroom (*ibid*), usually a feature of unmediated materials production when the writer is working in the institution where the materials will be piloted and used. Likewise, only one participant alluded to pre- and post-tests to evaluate the effectiveness of materials (Stoller & Robinson, 2014) although the practical difficulties of this can be considerable in an institution where there are limited classes at a particular level. Furthermore, stakeholders may be nervous as to potentially detrimental effects that using untried material may have on examination results. None of the participants mentioned the production of a teaching diary (Amrani, 2011) or a writer's journal (Richards & Farrell, 2005) as a means of recording amendments arising from the piloting process.

These writers approach the evaluation process of new materials in a professional way and employ a number of techniques for collecting feedback which can then inform revisions. For a course to be effective and user-friendly, every page has to be piloted and then evaluated post-use (McGrath, 2002) before being re-piloted. Gaining a complete picture with the inclusion of all major stakeholders allows for maximum focus on producing materials and courses which effectively meet the needs of all concerned (Long, 2005).

Taken together, this sample of writers employs a range of evaluation techniques. However, it is also clear that their evaluation processes could be improved by implementing a wider range of techniques and I would surmise that the reason they do not, is either because they face practical challenges impeding effective piloting or because they are unaware of the range of techniques available to conduct an effective piloting process.

Practical challenges can include those listed by Singapore Wala (2003) such as: the reluctance of administrators and educationalists to allow classroom piloting of material; the syllabus requirements to cover all TOs and LOs on a course which may not be covered by new material; and the dependence on busy teachers to complete pilot feedback forms when classroom observation is not available.

If writers are unaware of the range of piloting techniques available, then they should first, have recourse to sources of knowledge which highlight their limited range of techniques and second, build a broader range and deeper understanding of piloting processes with which they can expand their working practices, the better to select appropriate and suitable procedures according to their contexts and needs.

## **6.2 Key Influences on Writers' Materials Production**

The second main research question (RQ2) elicited writers' views on aspects of teaching and learning that influenced them most in the process of producing materials. Principles derived from personal language learning or from EFL training and experience were seen as critical, as were the exactitudes of syllabus design.

### **6.2.1 Writers' Principles, L2 Learning, EFL Training and Experience**

A writer's principles in relation to ELT are formed by a number of experiences. Personal language learning provided many writers with a number of significant ideas about the teaching / learning paradigm. Many recounted memorable language learning experiences, both positive and negative, according to what Lortie (1975) described as an apprenticeship of observation.

Participants' EFL training and experience were, understandably, a considerable influence on their writing. Many writers alluded to the need for a pragmatic approach to ELT in Oman. They judge classroom experience as extremely important (Byrd, 1995) and informative for their subsequent materials production. One participant narrated how her tacit knowledge became explicit knowledge when using an informed process for selection and planning of texts and tasks (Nonaka & Takeuchi, cited by Sackney & Walker, 2006) to suit her local context. Her approach is to ask 'what's achievable, what's manageable, what's realistic' thereby focusing on her learners and learning (Hutchinson & Waters, 1984; Holliday, 1994). In this way, she takes a critical perspective to align the rate of progression in her courses to the abilities of her learners, seen as fundamental to producing effective language acquisition (Schön, 1987). Clearly, EFL training and experience can lend potentially powerful support to a writer's activities, but only if this 'wisdom of practice' (Shulman, 2004) is well-informed.

### **6.2.2 Syllabus Design**

As a third key influence, writers viewed relevant, learning-centred syllabus design as crucial to a successful course. However, as we have seen, planning a syllabus on a comprehensive NA is not always feasible (Donovan, 1998). These writers, producing materials in a wide variety of institutions, cannot always follow professional procedures but have to adapt to local constraints (ibid). It became clear during the interviews that many of these writers are required to produce courses according to top-down decision-making processes (Feak and Swales, 2014) which impose syllabi, or specific requirements thereof, which the writers consider as inappropriate in terms of: learner and stakeholder needs; learner level of English; appropriacy of theoretical and pedagogic approach; sophistication of content and tasks; pace of progression; and lack of correspondence to examination requirements. Such scenarios call for the principled compromise deriving from experience advocated by Timmis (2014). Moreover, the recent necessity for a clearly-laid out syllabus with TOs and LOs in response to the accreditation requirements of the *Oman Academic*

*Accreditation Authority* has caused much resentment where writers perceive the resulting document as not addressing learners' actual needs but simply fulfilling bureaucratic box-ticking.

### **6.3 Writers' Perceived Needs for Further Improvement**

My third main research question (RQ3) elicited writers' perceived needs for further improvement. Whilst writers offered a wide range of individual needs, the overriding need expressed was for dedicated materials writers' input.

Classroom teachers' initial training equips them with an extensive working knowledge of classroom-related techniques. Conversely, materials writers' initial activities as writers require them to acquire a new range of techniques, hopefully underpinned by academic theory and pedagogic practice to facilitate successful learning. It is hardly surprising, then, that they are clear as to their CPD needs in some areas and yet less aware of their needs in other areas. Writers regularly face new challenges requiring informed input yet they often work in isolation, have scant knowledge of the literature available, are sometimes wary or even dismissive of academic theory and are restricted by all manner of constraints: time; known sources of informed best practice; and knowledgeable colleagues or even mentors.

Participants' narratives of their experience and training provide a picture of an uneven, indeed disorganized career path for materials writers. Few of the writers in this study have received any formal training in materials production. Some mention their CELTA course, viewed by the ELT industry as a key initial training course in ELT (Thornbury & Watkins, 2007) but only in terms of the lack of concrete developmental input for writing activities. Only four of the writers have the DELTA or equivalent and none mentioned receiving any materials development training during that course. Similarly, writers did not identify materials development input on PGCE, Bachelor's or Master's courses, with only two exceptions relating to a Master's task-based learning assignment and

an on-line digital authoring course. Yet most of these writers recognise the need for specific training related to producing materials whether it falls within the remit of a specialist course or whether it involves a mentor or being a member of a SIG, for example the IATEFL materials writing SIG or a professional organization such as MATSDA.

From the above discussion of the study's findings, I will proceed to outline implications and make recommendations in my concluding chapter.

## 7 CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Implications and Recommendations

Teachers do not become materials writers because they want an easier professional life. These teachers-cum-writers / teachers as course developers (Graves, 1996) lay bare their professional expertise when disseminating their materials to other educationalists such as teaching colleagues, learners, examiners, teacher trainers, administrators, other writers, and personnel in authority. In so doing they undertake extra professional duties and extra responsibility for learning and teaching usually without any added financial or promotion-linked inducement. Materials writers are driven by a professional desire, equating to intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) to produce materials, and possibly courses, which they hope will enhance the teaching / learning paradigm. As has been apparent from the findings of this study, much of what the sample of EFL writers do to plan, produce and implement their materials follows well-informed practice grounded in sound theory and successful classroom experience which is usually locally-focused.

The material which the writers in this study produce addresses a range of needs and requirements, principally in tertiary education, here in Oman on General English, EAP and ESP courses. However, what also emerged during this study were shortcomings in the approaches of some writers in theoretical, pedagogic and practical, DTP terms. Many of these shortcomings were pinpointed by the participants themselves and showed they had engaged in professional reflection (Schön, 1987) on their writing activities. Moreover, these same participants followed up such reflective insight (Johnson, 2003; Moon, 2004) with an admission of the need for further knowledge to enable them to improve their materials production activities. Clearly there is a need to address this shortfall in professionalism if ELT professionals are to deliver effective learning 'to substantiate a claim to professional status' (Widdowson, 1990, p6) by ensuring 'that curriculum development must rest on teacher development and

that it should promote it and hence the professionalism of the teacher' (Stenhouse, 1975, p24).

Materials need to be produced so there is a need for writers to be informed in terms of: SLA theory (Ellis, 1994; Mishan, 2005; Tomlinson, 2008); principles of effective teaching based on empirical evidence from class-based research (Nunan, 2004); pedagogic best practice (Larsen-Freeman 2011); local relevance (Markee, 1996); and practicality (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) with regard to innovative materials as represented by materials 'converting them into doable, into the workable' (ibid, p132) to ensure they facilitate successful learning. Yet syllabus design and writing expertise is currently gained on an ad hoc basis with educationalists worldwide lacking access to professional communities (Coyle et al, 2010) which would promote collegiality (ibid) seen as an essential aspect of principled materials production (Tomlinson, 2013). In my experience, writers frequently work in isolation without recourse to expert input, feedback or evaluation, with only one SIG (IATEFL, 2013) and a single magazine (MATSDA's Folio) currently available.

Innovative material, syllabus design and curriculum development would benefit from on-going evaluation measures as espoused by Macalister (in Macalister & Nation, 2011) to include: analysis of test results; regular collection of teacher feedback; teacher record-keeping; and classroom observation to assess how the learners respond to the materials, as suggested by McGrath (2002).

Plainly, these writers value CPD and would welcome development opportunities such as self-monitoring; journal writing; critical incidents; portfolios; action research; peer coaching; critical friendships; support groups; and institutional workshops (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p14) which could augment their ability to produce materials to ensure successful learning. Such CPD would aim to fulfill what Byrd highlighted as the ELT writer's professional need for 'a substantial body of knowledge' (1995, p6) to better inform ELT materials production.

As Reinders and White (2010) point out, quoting Chappelle (2001), 'the development of materials is still largely a practitioner-led practice, not always



clearly informed by theories of learning' (in Harwood, 2010). This concurs with the aim of Borg's (2010) proposal that educational practitioners, that is to say teachers and writers, should engage in and with research plus the idea of reciprocity (Larsen-Freeman, 2009). Together, such a relationship between educational practitioners and researchers can result in synergy aimed at increasing pedagogic knowledge which empowers educationalists to deliver more effective learning (Ortega, 2011). As Lightbown (2000) affirms, SLA research can provide both educators and learners with valuable clues to support effective pedagogy. Lightbown refers to this as teacher-friendly research which heeds Pica's argument for a more symbiotic relationship between researcher and classroom teacher (1997). Such a relationship would hopefully lead to improved communication between researchers, material writers and teachers to ensure that theoretical insights with pedagogic significance find their way into language teaching materials (Tomlinson, 1998, in Gilmore, 2007).

It therefore seems self-evident that there is a need not only for developmental input for writers but also information as to what is available, what it covers and how relevant and useful it will be for writers in their specific professional contexts and / or future contexts.

Emerging from this study's findings, writers would benefit from greater development input to improve their materials production thereby concurring with Gibbs' view that good research 'may give rise to changes in practice ... that are to everyone's advantage' (2007, p101). Such developmental input would help meet the perceived and explicit needs in the first instance, of the writers featured in this study together with other writers in the Sultanate of Oman, and in the second instance, the potential needs of writers worldwide, who perceive they need CPD, in one form or another to increase the efficacy of their writing activities.

With the writers in this study usually working in isolation, the formation of local networks, with the benefits such localized communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) bring to members, would make available a shared body of

writers' knowledge for isolated writers to support their materials production. Furthermore, these networks would allow members to not only share ideas, challenges and solutions found to problems but also to build up professional bookshelves (Wright & Bolitho, 2007, p155), to promote professional practice underpinned by theoretical and academic knowledge. From such reading of teaching- and writing-related books, writers would become better-informed to produce more effective materials, as well as to take part in conferences as delegates or even presenters.

Such communities could be established within a single institution or between institutions, geographical regions of a country or between countries within a region of the world. Local, regional, national and international ELT educational bodies could be encouraged to facilitate contact between institutions and individuals within their geographical area of responsibility to encourage networking between writers. This, in turn, could lead to the setting up of localized communities of practice which could then form more formalized groups such as writers SIGs under the auspices of the relevant, local ELT organization. For Oman this would be TESOL Arabia.

A regional SIG could then offer input in the form of workshops, presentations, locally-focused journal articles and mini-conferences to enhance their knowledge (Moon, 2004) by involving writers who have availed themselves of professional bookshelves mentioned above. Such forms of CPD could cover areas identified by this study and offer strategies for circumventing bureaucratic obstacles, carrying out effective NA, developing appropriate syllabus design, appreciating how to incorporate assessment (Graves, 2000; Shohamy, 2001, 2008; Coombe et al, 2012; Weir, 2005) into the writing / learning paradigm, and much, much more. Additionally, such a localized SIG could further the establishment of informal communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) within or between institutions to facilitate greater discussion of local issues relating to materials production, the better to benefit from Hargreaves' notion of 'collective intelligence' (2003, p84).

Linked to the creation of locally-focused writers' groups, members of such groups could be encouraged to join an international writers' group such as MaWSIG (IATEFL Materials Writing Special Interest Group, 2013) from which the benefits for writers in terms of practical input and support are transparent and clear as laid out on the website at a global level.

Writers' groups could compile a database of writing-related courses available: face-to-face; distance; and on-line. Such data would include syllabus details including the main focus of the course in terms of theory, pedagogy, and / or practice since there is a 'lack of emphasis on materials development in teacher training programmes' (Canniveng & Martinez, 2003, p482). Writers could then have access to informed and tried-and-tested suggestions as to what is available to improve their professional knowledge in terms of theory, pedagogy and practical aspects of DTP. Moreover, writers would be in a better position to match their individual, perceived needs with what is available to address these CPD needs. Such databases could also be shared between communities, SIGs and ELT organizations to facilitate greater access at a local, regional, national and international level.

With several SIGs already established and with the materials development association, MATSDA, well-established, a further recommendation would be for such organizations to address Harwood's (2014) call for more researchers to write textbooks to enrich the body of knowledge relating to materials production. Conversely, writers may be encouraged to become researchers to lend a new perspective on how materials can be planned and produced to ensure greater learner success.

Related to the inclusion of more academics in materials writing, another recommendation, complementing the database alluded to above, would be the inception of an easy-to-use database of journal articles, published works, edited works, dissertations and conference papers which cover areas related to materials production. Such a database could then be made available either on-line, or through international organisations such as TESOL or IATEFL to their members. This would go some way to addressing the situation highlighted by

Bouton (1996) that poor communication between researchers and teachers means that potentially useful findings from research often linger in journals instead of making it into the classroom. This would then encourage and support educationalists unfamiliar with the rigours of academic research and search methods for sources of knowledge. This would address the reticence and lack of confidence many non-academic educationalists harbour to find relevant sources for their individual CPD needs. Such a focus on CPD corresponds to Pennington's contention concerning teachers but which also holds for writers that 'the success or failure of any particular program rests largely on faculty development' (1989, p109).

A final recommendation is the setting up of an accredited, certified writer's course. Teachers, international examiners and teacher educators are all required to have qualifications and / or be evaluated and accredited. The one area of ELT without any industry-wide system of certification or accreditation is syllabus design and materials development. As Stenhouse argued, 'although curriculum development and teacher education are often treated as separate issues, they are in fact indivisible' (1975 cited by Markee, 1997, p4). Unfortunately, being informed about either curriculum development or teacher education is often hampered, as Eraut maintains, by the 'tension between university and profession-oriented perspectives on knowledge' (1994, p8).

No accredited vehicle currently exists for delivering an industry-standard qualification for EFL materials writers with the rigour and credibility of a formally-recognised qualification. This could be conceived, planned, produced and offered as specifically tailored to bring ELT materials writers in line with other *qualified* ELT educationalists. In this way, writer certification following successful completion of a dedicated course (Dudley-Evans & St John in McGrath, 2013) for materials producers would not only offer considerable support but also be seen as being of direct relevance to writers in their diverse local contexts worldwide. Such a course could be undertaken either face-to-face or on-line and could be modular, offering a range of aspects relating to materials production so that writers could choose the course content and focus for themselves according to their perceived CPD needs. This flexible course

structure would echo, but not copy, Freebairn's notion of a 'skeleton coursebook' (2000, p5), whereby a few core modules would be incorporated into a much wider range of optional aspects relating to materials production. Such a skeleton coursebook could also form the basis from which a materials writer's handbook of best practice could be produced and published as a paper and / or on-line publication for those writers for whom attendance of a writer's course may be impractical.

Materials writers gaining an accredited qualification would encourage a more scholarly view of textbook writing (Alred & Thelen, 1993; Swales, 1995) to validate writers' knowledge and pragmatic abilities. This would not only benefit writers in practical, professional terms but also allow educational management to accord recipients of such a qualification with promotion, or increased financial remuneration, or other advantageous reward. In so doing, other ELT educationalists would notice such a reward and would be encouraged to value writers' activities more and perhaps even become more involved themselves in materials production.

## **7.2 Contribution to Knowledge**

This study has sought to explore the activities of ELT materials writers within the context of producing materials for learners in the north of the Sultanate of Oman. A set of factors affecting writers' principles regarding SLA have been examined and how these principles affect their approaches to materials production. As such, the vast majority of findings in this study should be transferable to other writers based worldwide notwithstanding the disparity in the needs and requirements of local contexts.

The writers in this sample have exhibited a wealth of knowledge, derived from experience and training, when describing and explaining their writing activities. Much of what they have offered has been attuned to current best practice and

other writers worldwide should have little difficulty empathising with the beliefs and practices presented in the findings.

How the writers in this study view the importance of academic theory to what they are producing has shown that there is a degree of reticence and / or lack of effort by a number of writers to link the theoretical to the pedagogic and use this as a basis for their writing activities. Having access to theory from previous courses or personal reading has impacted on writers' views on SLA and how materials / courses should be planned, produced and implemented.

I believe that this examination of writers' activities has highlighted the complex and multi-faceted nature of syllabus design and materials production with reference to theoretical, pedagogic and practical, DTP aspects. Combining all three elements empowers writers to tackle the diverse courses they write to ensure successful learning. Understanding and enhancing our knowledge of all three elements and disseminating this knowledge to current and future writers should lead to greater professionalism and the resultant respect this garners amongst educational professionals and indeed other professions.

### **7.3 Weaknesses and Limitations of the Study**

The data which informed my findings and discussion chapters is limited in a number of ways so it is incumbent on me, as the researcher, to acknowledge such limitations and highlight resultant weaknesses in the discussion and subsequent conclusions presented here.

#### **7.3.1 Low Number of Respondents to Questionnaires**

The response rate to the questionnaires was an acceptable 61%. However, the numerically-small number of respondents, at twenty, did not follow generally accepted practice for questionnaires to yield data from a large number of

respondents. There were two reasons why the questionnaires were not sent out to a larger potential audience. The first was the small number of writers within the ELT teaching community here in Oman. The second was the localised focus of the study on currently-practising materials writers in, or near, the capital, Muscat, where a large number and variety of ELT institutions are located. I could have canvassed materials writers across the Middle East or even widened the area to include other, Arab and Moslem countries in Asia and North Africa. However, de-localising the geographical scope of the study would have included a wider range of localised issues and presented numerous practical difficulties with the sequential design of engaging some respondents in interviews.

### **7.3.2 Large Number of Interviews Conducted**

As compared with the numerically-small number of respondents as detailed above, having a relatively large number of interviewees, at fourteen, did not follow generally accepted practice. However, I was keen to collect qualitative data from materials writers practising in a range of ELT institutions with diverse professional backgrounds in terms of language learning experiences, professional training, writer training (if any) and writer experience. Therefore, I interviewed fourteen writers who represented a dichotomous selection of educationalists as detailed in the participant profiles in Appendix 3. Interviewing these fourteen writers allowed me to collect data on a range of disparate writing scenarios each presenting a variety of challenges many of which writers worldwide will, I feel, relate to from their own writing experiences.

### **7.3.3 Potential Alternative Data Collection Tools**

A number of other data collection methods may be used in a study such as this, and they would have provided a different perspective on the topic. Second interviews can be used to fulfill a variety of researcher needs. They can clarify points arising during the first interview, enable the researcher to seek further

details of particular areas of interest and visit areas not covered by the initial interview but which have emerged during the transcription and initial coding process. Second interviews were not possible within the time frame of this study, as a number of interviewees became unavailable. In hindsight, second interviews would have provided valuable data such as additional explanations of practices; pertinent examples of processes and outcomes; and additional depth.

The reflective procedures of think-aloud and stimulated recall both provide data relating to what an educationalist is thinking when he / she is doing something. So, in the case of producing a piece of material, using these data collection procedures would have allowed for the writer's mental processes to be set against the actual documentation produced. This would have enabled a close examination of the writer's concurrent thoughts while producing the documentation [think-aloud] or supplemented these data with the writer's retrospective thoughts on his / her concurrent thoughts and documentation [stimulated recall]. Using these reflective procedures would have provided several different perspectives on the writers' approaches to materials production and would have formed the basis for a detailed examination of how writers thought processes translate into ELT documentation.

As with the examination of writer-produced documentation which think-aloud and stimulated recall would enable, analysing documentation in the form of writers' materials would have allowed for analysis, of a descriptive and / or evaluatory nature, to complement the findings of this study and lend both more depth and a different perspective to the findings.

Similarly, classroom observation of writers' materials in-use would have allowed the examination of the connection between the writer's thought processes and the validation, or otherwise, of the writer's ability to produce effective learning scenarios. Both these data collection tools would have accumulated insightful evidence of writers' practices to enrich the findings of this study.

Another approach to data collection could have been an evaluation of materials from learners and teachers. Such feedback would have illuminated areas



covered by this study: relevance to local contexts; design and face validity; addressing stakeholder requirements; and addressing learning styles. The data collected from such feedback would have enhanced the breadth of the findings and provided further triangulation to determine the effectiveness of materials produced.

Clearly, the above data collection tools allow the researcher to view materials production from various perspectives to examine and theorise on effective approaches and processes which result in materials which promote successful learning. Using a combination of these tools would allow researchers to study materials writers and materials to gain a better understanding of this key area of ELT and it is to potential further studies that I now turn.

#### **7.4 Further Study**

The sample of writers was made up entirely of expatriate educationalists working in the Sultanate of Oman, none were Omani or even Arab. Consequently, a study to examine how teacher / writers with Arabic as their L1, and in particular from my local context, Omani teacher / writers, might extend our understanding of the place of materials in the learning / teaching paradigm here in Oman, the importance of appropriate approaches and methods, methodological activities, content and the place and use of digital technology. Such a study might well inform ELT educationalists as to the selection and use of global coursebooks and indeed, shed light on sources of content for the Omani English classroom of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moreover, such a localised study might put into sharper focus the potentially problematic aspect of teachers' approaches to SLA and the possibility of locally-based resistance to the communicative approach (Garton et al, 2011; Mishan, 2005; Nur, 2003; Seferaj, 2014) or any other approach. From such a focus, locally appropriate communicative approaches could then be developed to address the local learning context (Husbands et al, 2003).

Further studies might focus on both teachers' (Garton & Graves, 2014) and learners' views (Yakhontova, 2001) and experiences of using ELT materials, both globally-produced and locally-conceived as well as the make-up and use of teacher's books in the Omani context (Harwood, 2014).

## **7.5 Final Reflection and Future Action**

Stemming from the revelations of my studying on the EdD course as mentioned in the Chapter 1 Introduction, I have gained a more in-depth knowledge of the theories underpinning SLA and classroom practice. This knowledge has led me to critically reflect on my own approach to the learning / teaching paradigm and inevitably directed my attention to my own materials production principles and practices. From this reflection, I have made significant transformations to my writing. In this way, I now feel that as a writer, teacher, teacher educator and examiner I have become more informed and consequently more professional. Moreover, I now feel able, confident and motivated to disseminate my enhanced expertise as an ELT writer to other writers. This would seem particularly apposite given the gaps I identified in my own knowledge, made apparent by my reading for the literature review, which also became apparent when collecting data from other writers.

Preparing for this thesis required not only reading around the topic of writing materials, the requirements of doctoral study also entail the interpretation of one's own philosophical view of education, together with a detailed knowledge and understanding of academic methodology and thesis construction. I am sure this newly-acquired knowledge and related skills will enable me to flourish in the academic world as I continue to reflect on and work in the ELT profession.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1

## Data Collection Survey Booklet

# EdD THESIS DATA COLLECTION

with reference to the  
academic, professional and  
practical needs of writers both  
experienced and inexperienced

Tony Waterman, Muscat, 2014

*for collecting  
data from  
participants*

Muscat  
April, 2014

Dear Participant

I am conducting a piece of research to support my doctoral thesis which examines the process of materials writing with reference to the theoretical, pedagogic and practical knowledge needed by English language training (ELT) materials writers.

I am asking you to be involved as you have experience of producing materials and I would value your input. The enclosed ranking and information-gathering questionnaires form part of my investigation. May I respectfully invite you to spend a short time on their completion?

The ranking questionnaire will take around fifteen minutes to complete and the information-gathering questionnaire will take approximately twenty minutes. Please write your name on the ranking questionnaire (page 2) but be assured that you will not be able to be identified or traced from the thesis or any subsequent journal article or conference presentation. ANONYMITY AND NON-TRACEABILITY ARE ASSURED. When you have completed the questionnaires, please return them to myself either by email or in person if you prefer. You also have an ethics form to read and sign. This form requires your signature, your printed name and the date. Please complete this form either by adding your digital signature if you have one, or by printing it out, signing it in ink and then scanning it so that you can send it back to myself with your questionnaires. Alternatively, you can complete it in ink and I will collect it from you at your convenience.

I will also be conducting interviews and would greatly value your participation in this phase of my research at a later date. If you wish to discuss any aspects of the study then please do not hesitate to contact me. I very much hope that you feel able to participate. May I thank you, in advance, for your valuable cooperation.

Yours sincerely

*Tony Waterman*

Contact details:

Address:	Officers Mess	Telephone	968-99616458
	RAFO Ghalla	Email:	tonyw@omantel.net.om
	PO Box 733, Seeb 111		
	The Sultanate of Oman		

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Ranking Questionnaire

Dear respondent, first please study the ranking system in Tables One and Two below.

<b>Key</b>	
<b>To be an effective materials writer ...</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
I think this is essential.	<b>4</b>
I think this is very important.	<b>3</b>
I think this is important.	<b>2</b>
I think this is somewhat important.	<b>1</b>

For example:

<b>Example</b>	
<i>Aspects of learning a language</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
<i>Reading and listening</i>	<b>4</b>
<i>Speaking</i>	<b>4</b>
<i>Writing</i>	<b>2</b>
<i>Pronunciation</i>	<b>3</b>

*“In other words I think reading, listening and speaking are essential aspects, pronunciation is a very important aspect and writing is an important aspect of learning a language.”*

Now rank the eight aspects in Section 1 according to the ranking system in the Key.

<b>Section 1</b>		
	<b>Aspects of materials production</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
1	Re-assess my existing ideas about materials production with reference to current theory	
2	Doing a needs analysis before planning a course	
3	Designing an appropriate syllabus	
4	Selecting course content (in readings, listening and classroom activities)	
5	Pedagogic considerations: what works in the classroom and leads to successful learners	
6	Factors affecting how learners approach their English learning	
7	Desktop-Publishing Design: how each page / unit / coursebook looks	
8	Evaluating the materials' effectiveness after it has been written	

Next, please use the same Key to rank the items in Section 2.

<b>Section 2: Detailed sections</b>		
	<b>Writers</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
9	How previous learning experiences (with English or another language) affect a materials writer	
10	To appreciate what a writer believes about learning a second language	
11	Professional training (teacher training course, CELTA, DELTA, Master's)	
12	Professional experience of teaching and writing	
13	Professional expertise in writing materials / courses	
14	To know how cultural identity and background influence a writer's approach to materials production	
15	To be creative when writing materials	
	<b>Needs analysis</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
16	To be aware of stakeholders in the educational process: teachers; learners; administration; examiners; possible employers	
17	To be aware of the current and future learning environment(s)	
	<b>Syllabus Design</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
18	Being aware of institutional requirements: specific language; skills; exam results	
19	Understanding and meeting learning objectives and outcomes	
	<b>Course Content</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
20	To decide which form(s) of English is going to be used (British; American; Indian, Singaporean)	
21	Level of language, content and tasks	
22	Relevance to present and future learner needs	
23	Appropriacy and relevance to the local learning context	
24	The use of authentic materials versus created materials	
	<b>Pedagogic considerations</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
25	Choosing an appropriate methodological approach	
25	Context-related and needs-related tasks	
27	Teacher support: answer keys, suggested procedures, alternative ideas, further optional materials	

28	Learner support: ways to help the learners be more successful with activities and with their learning	
29	Incremental learning: building on what learners have done before in previous units / courses	
	<b>Learner factors</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
30	Encouraging learners to approach their learning in a positive way “affective engagement”	
31	Encouraging learners to <u>think</u> as part of the learning process “cognitive engagement”	
32	Allowing the learners to see important and relevant pieces of language as part of their acquisition process “noticing”	
33	Taking into account the learners’ backgrounds and how they see themselves “learner identity”	
34	Learners voicing their own cultural experience during classroom-based activities	
35	Linking the classroom to the learners’ lives outside	
36	Learner motivation to learn English	
37	Participation and interaction on the course	
38	Collaboration between learners in the classroom	
	<b>Desktop-publishing Design</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
39	The appearance and layout of a worksheet	
40	The appearance and layout of a unit	
41	The appearance and layout of a student’s book	
	<b>Evaluating the Materials’ Effectiveness</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
42	Working on materials production together with colleagues	
43	Piloting new material / courses	
44	Revising new material / courses	
45	Critically reviewing materials production	

# Information-gathering Questionnaire

Dear respondent

Here is a second questionnaire concerning your materials writing activities. Please put a tick (✓) in the best box for the most appropriate answer for when you are producing English language training (ELT) materials. Then add any comments you have on the lines under each tick box. If you need to write more than the space on the lines provided, please continue your comments at the end of this questionnaire including the item number for ease of reference.

If you have any questions or doubts about the items, do not hesitate to get in touch with me. Many thanks in advance.

For example:

Example:	only 1	2-3	3-4	5-6	more than 6
How many different ELT coursebooks have you used with learners?		✓			

Please give some details: I have used Cutting Edge Beginner's several times and Headway Elementary twice but I am going to use a new coursebook with my next two courses as they will be Study Skills I and II in the college.

Now please do the same with the ten items below.

Item 1	less than 1 year	between 1-5 years	between 6-10 years	for more than 10 years
How long have you been producing materials for learners?				

Please give some details: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Item 2	<i>less than 1 hour</i>	<i>2-5 hours</i>	<i>6-10 hours</i>	<i>more than 10 hours</i>
How much time do you spend on materials production <u>each week</u> at work?				

Please give some details: \_\_\_\_\_

Item 3	an enormous influence	a lot of influence	some influence	a little influence	not much influence
How much influence does your <u>own experience as a language learner</u> have on your materials production?					

Examples of what has influenced you: \_\_\_\_\_

Item 4	an enormous influence	a lot of influence	some influence	a little influence	not much influence
How much influence do your personal ideas about ELT have on your materials production?					

Examples of what has influenced you: \_\_\_\_\_

Item 5	an enormous influence	a lot of influence	some influence	a little influence	not much influence
How much influence does your ELT training have on your materials production?					

Examples of what has influenced you: \_\_\_\_\_

Item 6	an enormous influence	a lot of influence	some influence	a little influence	not much influence
How much influence does your ELT experience have on your materials production?					

Examples of what has influenced you: \_\_\_\_\_

Item 7	an enormous influence	a lot of influence	some influence	a little influence	not much influence
How much influence does your practical knowledge have on your materials production?					

Examples of what has influenced you: \_\_\_\_\_

Item 8	none	a little	some	quite a lot	a lot
How much time and effort do you spend on needs analysis before you plan material for learners?					

Perhaps you could give some details: \_\_\_\_\_

Item 9	not at all	a little	some	quite a lot	a lot
How much do you consider syllabus design when you are planning materials?					

Please could you explain little: \_\_\_\_\_

Item 10	extremely important	very important	important	not very important	not important at all
To what extent do you select content material based on your understanding of the learners' needs and wants					

Can you give some examples: \_\_\_\_\_

Item 11	none	a little	some	quite a lot	a lot
How much importance do you give to pedagogic considerations (ELT approaches and methodology) when you are planning materials?					

Please expand on this: \_\_\_\_\_

Item 12	none	a little	some	quite a lot	a lot
How much do you focus on the learners as part of the process of producing materials?					

Please give some examples: \_\_\_\_\_

Item 13	essential	very important	important	not very important	not important at all
How important do you consider the appearance of your materials (How they look, are laid out)?					

Can you explain in more detail: \_\_\_\_\_

Item 14	essential	very important	important	not very important	not important at all
How much importance do you attach to evaluating the effectiveness of materials?					

Can you explain why and how: \_\_\_\_\_

*Once again many thanks for your participation.*

*Tony*

*Additional comments can be added here with the item number:*

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## APPENDIX 2

### Example of a Personalized Interview Guide

So, if we can begin with a few biographical questions:

- **ELT training**  
**You wrote about the influence of the model of: INPUT leading to Language + Skills + practice - leading to OUTPUT. How does this impact on a unit of material for example?**  
  
**You also mentioned both comprehensible input and the noticing hypothesis as playing a key role in your materials production. Can you elaborate a little on these?**  
  
**You wrote of unconscious learning from EFL training. Would you be able to pinpoint any aspects which come to mind here?**
- **Language learning**  
**You highlighted motivation as a key factor in your own language learning career. How do you ensure your materials will motivate learners when they are using your materials?**
- **ELT experience**  
**You wrote that you view your experience as a teacher as the key influence on your materials writing, can you give me some stand-out aspects of your teaching experience in respect of your writing activities?**  
  
**You also wrote that you imagine what your 'work' will look like in the classroom. How does this imagining work for you in practice and could you give a recent example or two?**
- **Materials writing experience and training**  
**You wrote that you started off writing supplementary materials and moved into published coursebooks later on. What are some of the highlights of your materials production career?**  
  
**What would you hold up as key moments in your progression as a writer?**  
  
**You wrote that you now work as a writer full time. Can you give some idea of what you are currently engaged in writing?**  
  
**Where do you typically find material you can incorporate into your coursebooks?**  
  
**How does the process of producing a coursebook for a (global) publisher differ from producing in-house materials for a local context?**  
  
**Do you still write material for a local context without the need to work with a publisher?**  
  
**Could you outline the process of planning and producing a unit of material, including needs analysis and syllabus design?**  
  
**You wrote of your preference for a step-by-step approach to materials production. Can you elaborate on that?**

**You identified your experience with teaching Arab learners at all levels as allowing you to predict what type of material / activities etc will be successful. Can you elaborate on this perhaps giving a couple of examples?**

**What do you think interest and motivate Arab learners, based on your extensive experience of being with them in the classroom?**

**You ranked working with colleagues as only 'somewhat important (1). Can you explain this ranking?**

**You ranked piloting new materials as only 'important (2). Can you explain this ranking?**

INQ1) How much materials writing have you been involved in?

INQ2) What type of materials have you written, General English, ESP, EAP etc?

INQ3) What do you think makes for effective materials?

**You mentioned 'immediate need' as being a key motivational tool. How do you ensure this tool does indeed exert a motivational influence on learners?**

**You wrote that seeing short term achievable goals motivates learners. How do you produce material which presents such goals?**

**You ranked both learners voicing their own cultural experience (Item 34) and linking the classroom to the learners' lives outside (Item 35) as 'important' a (2). Why did you not give these a higher ranking?**

INQ4) How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the materials you produce?

**You ranked this as 'important' a (2). Why did you not give this a higher ranking?**

**You state that publishers often give a low priority to evaluation and revision. How do you approach this stage in the production process to ensure the best possible materials in the long term?**

**What would you ideally like to see in terms of piloting and revision of materials?**

INQ5) There are numerous academic books on second language acquisition, what do you really need to know to in order to produce effective materials? (RQ1.1)

**You ranked this as 'important' a (2). Why did you not give this a higher ranking?**

**You wrote that you favour grammar and vocabulary. Do you feel that you published materials vary greatly from others on the market?**

**You mention non-native speakers who have become excellent in English without visiting a BANA country, etc. What have you learned from them and how has that influenced you when you plan and write your materials?**

**You ranked the use of authentic versus created materials as only 'somewhat important' a (1). Can you explain this ranking an a little more detail?**

INQ6) What aspects of pedagogic knowledge, that is effective teaching and learning in the classroom, do you need to know and understand well? (RQ1.2)

**You ranked this as 'important' a (2). Why did you not give this a higher ranking?**

**You wrote that you do not consciously give much importance to pedagogic considerations. Perhaps you could expand on this a little to exemplify how you deal with questions of appropriate approach(es) and methodology(ies) in your materials production activities?**

INQ7) Which areas of practical knowledge relating to materials production do you think you need to know how to do well? This could refer to: syllabus design; unit content; desktop-publishing (DTP) skills; literally the planning, writing and production of materials. (RQ1.3)

**You ranked all three sections of DTP as 3s, Can you explain this in a little more detail for me?**

**You wrote of Arab learners' preference for 'uncluttered pages'. How do you produce such material and why do you think this is?**

**You also wrote of the need to avoid numerous text styles. What would you view as key aspects to DTP to maximise learner engagement with materials?**

**You highlight the need for materials to be attractive in terms of layout. How can materials writers ensure a high level of quality in respect of visual appeal?**

**You also identified quality and suitability. How do you ensure these elements are inherent in your materials?**

INQ8) Which aspects of English language training (ELT) do you view as fundamental to the process of planning materials production? (RQ2)

**You ranked needs analysis as 'important' a (2). Why did you not give this a higher ranking?**

**You talk about having a feeling for the general needs of the market. How does this translate into syllabus design and materials produced?**

**Are the above materials for global coursebooks and/or how would material produced for a local context differ in terms of needs analysis?**

**You mentioned the process of syllabus design. How do you select grammar, vocabulary, sub-skills, themes etc for particular units of a syllabus?**

**You wrote about the balance between topics that will interest Arab learners versus the requirements of an academic coursebook (EAP?). What particular challenges have you faced along these lines and how have you overcome them?**

INQ9) Which aspects of materials production would you like to know more about so that it makes you materials more effective in the future? (RQ3)

*Well, those are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything else you would like to say about what we have been talking about?*

*Thank you very much for giving your time, energy and ideas to help with my doctoral research.*

## APPENDIX 3

### Participant Profiles (Interviews and Surveys)

Profile: Diane

Current position:	EAP Course coordinator in a tertiary institution in Oman
EFL training:	One-year Graduate Diploma
EFL experience:	3 years teaching English in European countries 6 years teaching in tertiary institutions (public and private sectors) in Oman
Materials writing input:	Some training sessions on writing mats
Materials production:	EAP materials
Language learning:	Three European languages

Profile: Lulu

Current position:	Teaching EAP in a tertiary institution in Oman
EFL training:	CELTA Currently studying on an MA Linguistics part-time
EFL experience:	2 years teaching EAP in a tertiary institution (public sector) in Oman 1 year teaching EAP at a tertiary institution (private sector) in Oman
Materials writing input:	None
Materials production:	Materials for own learners
Language learning:	-

Profile: Heather

Current position:	Teaching EAP in a tertiary institution in Oman
EFL training:	Bachelor's in TESOL Master's in EFL
EFL experience:	3 years teaching English in a European country 1 year teaching EAP in a European country 4 years teaching in a tertiary institution (private) in Oman 3 years teaching in a tertiary institution (public) in Oman
Materials writing input:	None
Materials production:	EAP materials
Language learning:	Two European languages

Profile: Rosie

Current position:	Teaching adults in a tertiary institution in Oman
EFL training:	CELTA IELTS teacher training course at the British Council Currently studying on an Master's course
EFL experience:	1 year teaching Business English in an Asian country 5 years teaching in a tertiary institution (private) in Oman
Materials writing input:	None
Materials production:	Materials for own learners
Language learning:	One European language One Asian language

Profile: Julie

Current position:	Designing and teaching EAP courses in a tertiary institution in Oman
EFL training:	BA in languages and education Masters in languages and education Phd in linguistics CEELT from the British Council Trained as a Business English teacher trainer
EFL experience:	2 years teaching in a university Business English department 1 year as teacher trainer of Business English teachers 2 years teaching in a tertiary institution (public) in Oman 8 years writing and teaching in a tertiary institution (public) in Oman
Materials writing input:	Teacher training course for Business English
Materials production:	EAP course design
Language learning:	Two European languages (including English)

Profile: Tara

Current position:	Writing in a tertiary institution (public) in Oman
EFL training:	Trinity Certificate in TESOL TEFL Q, (DELTA equivalent) MSc in TESOL
EFL experience:	3 years teaching in two European countries 1 year teaching in the UK 2 years teaching in an Asian country
Materials writing input:	Mentor: an experienced course writer
Materials production:	Course production in Asian Course production in Oman
Language learning:	One European language Two Asian languages



Profile: Steve

Current position:	Teaching/writing ESP in a tertiary institution (public) in Oman
EFL training:	CELTA
EFL experience:	2 years teaching in a European country
Materials writing input:	None
Materials production:	ESP course production in Oman
Language learning:	One European language

Profile: Ray

Current position:	Teaching/writing ESP in a tertiary institution (private) in Oman
EFL training:	Master's in TESOL
EFL experience:	6 years teaching in two Asian countries including Oman
Materials writing input:	Seminars
Materials production:	ESP course production three Asian countries including Oman
Language learning:	-

Profile: Naithan

Current position:	Teaching/writing EAP in a tertiary institution (public) in Oman
EFL training:	CELTA PGCE in ESL
EFL experience:	2 years teaching in two European countries 14 years teaching in three Asian countries including Oman
Materials writing input:	None
Materials production:	EAP course design in an Asian country EAP materials for own learners in Oman
Language learning:	Two European language Three Asian languages

Profile: Don

Current position:	Teaching/writing EAP in a tertiary institution (public) in Oman
EFL training:	PGCE in ESL
EFL experience:	2 years teaching in one European country 25-plus years teaching in three Asian countries including Oman
Materials writing input:	None
Materials production:	ESP / EAP in four countries
Language learning:	One European language One Asian Language

Profile: Sidney

Current position:	Freelance course writer/publisher based in Oman
EFL training:	IH Certificate Diploma in TESOL Master's in Applied Linguistics
EFL experience:	40-plus years teaching EFL
Materials writing input:	On-the-job training (OJT) Conference sessions
Materials production:	Global, published skills courses Locally-focused skills courses
Language learning:	Two European languages One Asian language

Profile: Orson

Current position:	Teaching/writing EAP in a tertiary institution (public) in Oman
EFL training:	Trinity College Diploma Master's in TESOL Master's in Applied Linguistics
EFL experience:	20-plus years teaching/writing in a tertiary institution (public) in Oman 2 years teaching in an Asian country
Materials writing input:	Former member of MATSDA Conferences and workshops
Materials production:	General English / ESP / EAP materials
Language learning:	-

Profile: Bonnie

Current position:	Writing coursebooks in a tertiary institution (public) in Oman
EFL training:	PGCE in EFL
EFL experience:	30-plus years teaching in two Asian countries 2 years teaching in the UK
Materials writing input:	None
Materials production:	Globally-published graded readers BBC radio series for EFL General English coursebooks
Language learning:	-

Profile: Keith

Current position:	Writing ESP courses in a tertiary institution (public) in Oman
EFL training:	IH Certificate Master's in Applied Linguistics
EFL experience:	30-plus years teaching/writing ESP in two Asian countries including Oman
Materials writing input:	None
Materials production:	Writing ESP courses in Oman
Language learning:	One European language

**Participant Profiles  
(Surveys only)**

Profile: Sam

Current position:	Course coordinator in a tertiary institute
EFL training:	Equivalent diploma to a DELTA Master's in English; Master's in Literature PhD in writing skills
EFL experience:	25-plus years in EFL in tertiary institutes in Muscat
Materials writing input:	None
Materials production:	Writing ESP and EAP for tertiary institutes in Muscat
Language learning:	None mentioned

Profile: Victor

Current position:	Teacher in a technical institute
EFL training:	None mentioned
EFL experience:	6-10 years producing materials
Materials writing input:	None mentioned
Materials production:	None mentioned
Language learning:	None mentioned

Profile: Ron

Current position:	Teacher in a technical institute
EFL training:	None mentioned
EFL experience:	6-10 years producing materials
Materials writing input:	None mentioned
Materials production:	None mentioned
Language learning:	One European language

Profile: Simon

Current position:	Teacher in a tertiary institute
EFL training:	BA in Education
EFL experience:	10-plus years producing materials Conducted numerous workshops
Materials writing input:	None mentioned
Materials production:	4 coursebooks
Language learning:	One Asian language

Profile: Florence

Current position:	Educational Administrator in a tertiary institute
EFL training:	CELTA
EFL experience:	20-plus years in EFL 10-plus years producing materials
Materials writing input:	None mentioned
Materials production:	Writing materials for other teachers as a course coordinator
Language learning:	Numerous but not specific

Profile: Gina - Handwritten surveys lost after recording her responses manually into the computer

Current position:	
EFL training:	
EFL experience:	
Materials writing input:	
Materials production:	
Language learning:	

## APPENDIX 4

### Interview Statistics

	Pseudonym:	Interview words:	Interview Time in mins:
Participants with 1-5 years of materials writing:			
P1	Diane	5,386	67
P2	Lakshmi	5,069	51
P3	Heather	5,813	79
Participants with 5-10 years of materials writing:			
P5	Rosie	4,882	46
P6	Yuliya	5,634	69
P7	Tara	6,557	67
P8	Steve	6,091	78
P10	Lohit	4,557	74
Participants with more than 10 years of materials writing:			
P12	Naithan	5,670	74
P13	Don	3,604	31
P15	Sidney	6,083	58
P15	Orson	2,750	62
P17	Bonnie	5,308	60
P19	Keith	5,388	56
	Total:	72,792 words	872 minutes (14 hours 30 mins approx)

## APPENDIX 5

### Possible Categories / Themes Inherent in the Ranking Questionnaire

Aspects of materials production
Writers
Needs analysis
Syllabus design
Course content
Pedagogic considerations
Learner factors
Desktop-publishing design
Evaluating the materials' effectiveness

Researcher's note: The above possible categories / themes emanated from my literature review and from my personal experience as a materials writer and ensured all major aspects of materials production were covered in ranking questionnaire.

## APPENDIX 6

### Example of the Sub-sections for One Inherent Category in the Ranking Questionnaire

Writers	<i>Possible coding labels</i>
How previous learning experiences (with English or another language) affect a materials writer	<i>Personal language learning</i>
To appreciate what a writer believes about learning a second language	<i>Writer's principles</i>
Professional training (teacher training course, CELTA, DELTA, Master's)	<i>EFL training</i>
Professional experience of teaching and writing	<i>EFL experience</i>
Professional expertise in writing materials / courses	<i>Materials writing experience</i>
To know how cultural identity and background influence a writer's approach to materials production	<i>Writer's identity and influence</i>
To be creative when writing materials	<i>Writer creativity</i>

## APPENDIX 7

### Likert-type Questionnaire Items with Possible Coding Labels

Item number	Question	Possible coding labels
1	<i>How long have you been producing materials for learners?</i>	<i>EFL experience</i>
2	<i>How much time do you spend on materials production <u>each week</u> at work?</i>	<i>Materials writing experience</i>
3	<i>How much influence does your <u>own experience as a language learner</u> have on your materials production?</i>	<i>Personal language learning</i>
4	<i>How much influence do your personal ideas about ELT have on your materials production?</i>	<i>Writer's principles</i>
5	<i>How much influence does your ELT training have on your materials production?</i>	<i>EFL training</i>
6	<i>How much influence does your ELT experience have on your materials production?</i>	<i>EFL experience</i>
7	<i>How much influence does your practical knowledge have on your materials production?</i>	<i>Materials writing experience</i>
8	<i>How much time and effort do you spend on needs analysis before you plan material for learners?</i>	<i>Needs analysis</i>
9	<i>How much do you consider syllabus design when you are planning materials?</i>	<i>Syllabus design</i>
10	<i>To what extent do you select content material based on your understanding of the learners' needs and wants</i>	<i>Content/ Learners' wants and needs</i>
11	<i>How much importance do you give to pedagogic considerations (ELT</i>	<i>Pedagogy</i>



	<i>approaches and methodology) when you are planning materials?</i>	
12	<i>How much do you focus on the learners as part of the process of producing materials</i>	<i>Learner-focused materials</i>
13	<i>How important do you consider the appearance of your materials (How they look, are laid out)?</i>	<i>DTP design / Face validity</i>
14	<i>How much importance do you attach to evaluating the effectiveness of materials?</i>	<i>Evaluating materials</i>

Researcher's note: the above possible coding labels emanated from my literature review and from my personal experience as a materials writer and ensured all major aspects of materials production were covered in Likert-type questionnaire.

## APPENDIX 8

### Collated Results for the Ranking Questionnaire

*n = 20 unless otherwise stated*

Section - Aspects of Materials Production					
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ1	Re-assess my existing ideas about materials production with reference to current theory <i>n = 20</i>	4	5	5	6
RAQ2	Doing a needs analysis before planning a course	16	2	1	1
RAQ3	Designing an appropriate syllabus	15	3	2	-
RAQ4	Selecting course content (in readings, listening and classroom activities)	14	5	1	-
RAQ5	Pedagogic considerations: what works in the classroom and leads to successful learners	15	5	-	-
RAQ6	Factors affecting how learners approach their English learning	7	9	3	1
RAQ7	Desktop-Publishing Design: how each page / unit / coursebook looks	4	9	6	1
RAQ8	Evaluating the materials' effectiveness after it has been written	16	3	1	-
Section - Writers					
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ9	How previous learning experiences (with English or another language) affect a materials writer	4	7	7	2
RAQ10	To appreciate what a writer believes about learning a second language	6	10	3	1
RAQ11	Professional training (teacher training course,	5	10	4	1

	CELTA, DELTA, Master's)				
RAQ12	Professional experience of teaching and writing	16	3	1	-
RAQ13	Professional expertise in writing materials / courses	5	7	7	1
RAQ14	To know how cultural identity and background influence a writer's approach to materials production	6	8	5	1
RAQ15	To be creative when writing materials	8	9	2	1
<b>Section – Needs Analysis</b>					
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ16	To be aware of stakeholders in the educational process: teachers; learners; administration; examiners; possible employers	13	5	1	1
RAQ17	To be aware of the current and future learning environment(s)	11	6	2	1
<b>Section – Syllabus Design</b>					
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ18	Being aware of institutional requirements: specific language; skills; exam results	8	9	3	-
RAQ19	Understanding and meeting learning objectives and outcomes	13	6	-	1
<b>Section – Course Content</b>					
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ20	To decide which form(s) of English is going to be used (British; American; Indian, Singaporean)	4	6	5	5
RAQ21	Level of language, content and tasks	18	2	-	-
RAQ22	Relevance to present and future learner needs	13	6	1	-
RAQ23	Appropriacy and relevance to the local learning context	10	8	2	-

RAQ24	The use of authentic materials versus created materials	-	7	9	4
<b>Section – Pedagogic Considerations</b>					
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ25	Choosing an appropriate methodological approach n = 18	7	8	2	1
RAQ26	Context-related and needs-related tasks	8	6	5	1
RAQ27	Teacher support: answer keys; suggested procedures; alternative ideas; further optional materials	9	5	5	1
RAQ28	Learner support: ways to help the learners be more successful with activities and with their learning n = 19	7	10	2	-
RAQ29	Incremental learning: building on what learners have done before in previous units / courses n = 19	11	8	-	-
<b>Section – Learner Factors</b>					
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ30	Encouraging learners to approach their learning in a positive way 'affective engagement' n = 19	10	8	1	-
RAQ31	Encouraging learners to <u>think</u> as part of the learning process "cognitive engagement"	13	7	-	-
RAQ32	Allowing the learners to see important and relevant pieces of language as part of their acquisition process "noticing"	9	11	-	-
RAQ33	Taking into account the learners' backgrounds and how they see themselves 'learner identity' n = 19	8	7	4	-
RAQ34	Learners voicing their own cultural experience during classroom-based activities	6	6	7	1
RAQ35	Linking the classroom to the learners' lives	11	4	5	-

	outside				
RAQ36	Learner motivation to learn English n = 19	14	4	-	1
RAQ37	Participation and interaction on the course n = 19	11	7	1	-
RAQ38	Collaboration between learners in the classroom	5	9	6	-
<b>Section – Desktop-Publishing Design</b>					
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ39	The appearance and layout of a worksheet	5	11	3	1
RAQ40	The appearance and layout of a unit	6	11	2	1
RAQ41	The appearance and layout of a student's book	5	12	2	1
<b>Section – Evaluating Effectiveness</b>					
Item	I think this item is ...	a	b	c	d
RAQ42	Working on materials production together with colleagues n = 19	4	7	5	3
RAQ43	Piloting new material / courses	13	5	2	-
RAQ44	Revising new material / courses	11	9	-	-
RAQ45	Critically reviewing materials production	16	2	2	-

## APPENDIX 9

### Likert-type Responses Collated Results - Analysed

*n = 20 unless otherwise stated*

Key: *a* = less than 1 year      *b* = between 1-5 years  
*c* = between 6-10 years      *d* = for more than 10 years

LQ1: How long have you been producing materials for learners?	a	b	c	d
Total	-	3	8	9

Key: *a* = less than 1 hour      *b* = 2-5 hours      *c* = 6-10 hours      *d* = more than 10 hours

LQ2: How much time do you spend on materials production each week at work?	a	b	c	d
Total	3	12	1	4

Key: *a* = an enormous influence      *b* = a lot of influence      *c* = some influence  
*d* = a little influence      *e* = not much influence

LQ3: How much influence does your <u>own experience as a language learner</u> have on your materials production?	a	b	c	d	e
Total	2	8	3	4	3

Key: *a* = an enormous influence      *b* = a lot of influence      *c* = some influence  
*d* = a little influence      *e* = not much influence

LQ4: How much influence do your personal ideas about ELT have on your materials production?	a	b	c	d	e
Total	7	7	2	2	-

*n* = 18

Key: *a* = an enormous influence    *b* = a lot of influence    *c* = some influence  
*d* = a little influence    *e* = not much influence

LQ5: How much influence does your ELT training have on your materials production?	a	b	c	d	e
Total	4	6	6	2	2

Key: *a* = an enormous influence    *b* = a lot of influence    *c* = some influence  
*d* = a little influence    *e* = not much influence

LQ6: How much influence does your ELT experience have on your materials production?	a	b	c	d	e
Total	10	9	1	-	-

Key: *a* = an enormous influence    *b* = a lot of influence    *c* = some influence  
*d* = a little influence    *e* = not much influence

LQ7: How much influence does your practical knowledge have on your materials production?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <i>n</i> = 19	7	9	3	-	-

Key: *a* = none    *b* = a little    *c* = some    *d* = quite a lot    *e* = a lot

LQ8: How much time and effort do you spend on needs analysis before you plan material for learners?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <i>n</i> = 19	1	5	6	4	3

Key: *a* = not at all    *b* = a little    *c* = some    *d* = quite a lot    *e* = a lot

LQ9: How much do you consider syllabus design when you are planning materials?	a	b	c	d	e
Total <i>n</i> = 19	2	2	3	7	5

Key: *a* = extremely important    *b* = very important    *c* = important  
*d* = not very important    *e* = not important at all

LQ10: To what extent do you select content material based on your understanding of the learners' needs and wants	a	b	c	d	e
Total <span style="float: right;"><i>n</i> = 19</span>	7	9	2	1	-

Key: *a* = none    *b* = a little    *c* = some    *d* = quite a lot    *e* = a lot

LQ11: How much importance do you give to pedagogic considerations (ELT approaches and methodology) when you are planning materials?	a	b	c	d	e
Total	1	4	4	5	6

Key: *a* = none    *b* = a little    *c* = some    *d* = quite a lot    *e* = a lot

LQ12: How much do you focus on the learners as part of the process of producing materials?	a	b	c	d	e
Total	-	2	-	9	9

Key: *a* = extremely important    *b* = very important    *c* = important  
*d* = not very important    *e* = not important at all

LQ13: How important do you consider the appearance of your materials (How they look, are laid out)?	a	b	c	d	e
Total	6	7	7	-	-

Key: *a* = extremely important    *b* = very important    *c* = important  
*d* = not very important    *e* = not important at all

LQ14: How much importance do you attach to evaluating the effectiveness of materials?	a	b	c	d	e
Total	12	6	2	-	-



## APPENDIX 10

### Example of Coded Open-ended Written Responses

Item 10		Coding
To what extent do you select content material based on your understanding of the learners' needs and wants?		
Keith	It is really important that content is appropriate – pitched slightly beyond the perceived current level of proficiency and designed to stimulate a response and arouse interest	Appropriate level for learners
Bonnie	I choose content material which will appeal to and engage learners of both sexes equally, and is suitable for their levels, and also take into account cultural differences.	Engaging learners
Heather	Oh dear – this is important isn't it...but mostly we are selecting content material based on the curricular requirements. <b>Our students are freshmen and don't know a thing about Medicine – not sure that they could suggest what they want/need.</b>	Learner wants and needs
Lulu	I tend to make different sets of material most times. One set is for the stronger students, containing exercises that are challenging also. The other is for weak group, where the focus is on reinforcing the concept and checking understanding.	Mixed ability
Keith	Learners need to identify with the material, react to it, use it constructively to offer opinions and give examples in their own lives.	Personalizing material

Researcher's note: these coded extracts were then put into categories and later themes in the codebook. See Appendices 12, 13 and 14 for further detail of this process.

## APPENDIX 11

### Example of a Coded Transcript

(46 minutes / 4,882 words)

Transcript	Coding
<p>Int: So if we begin with a few biographical questions ... if we think about language learning, you identified your own language learning experiences as providing perspective on materials production for learners. Could you give an example of this?</p> <p>Rosie:            Okay, well my first example would be learning French at junior high school with a very, I guess, didactic teacher who made us write verb conjugations twenty times and the end result was no one learned how to speak! (laughs) I could contrast that with learning Chinese in China and learning speaking actually, before grammar so it seemed a bit more practical.</p> <p>Int:            And what sort of methodology did the teacher use in China?</p> <p>Rosie:            More communicative much like TEFL classes use today. We did the standing up row taking lines ... for speech repetition and things like that ...</p> <p>Int:            And of course you produced that board game in the speaking session (British Council sponsored workshop led by the researcher) so did that, was that your own idea? The idea of the group you were sitting next to?</p> <p>Rosie:            Erm, no it was my idea. I convinced them of it but I ... used examples from books, I mean I don't think it was my original idea, I was just using an idea that I had seen working in class: a way to get repetition without boredom.</p> <p>Int:            If we move on to ELT training, your training that you've had. You wrote that being involved yourself in group work has influenced you. Was this in a Certificate course or in-house workshop? What were</p>	<p>Personal lang learning</p> <p>Personal lang learning</p> <p>Language tasks</p>

<p>you focussing on there?</p> <p>Rosie: I think all of them, even in my CELTA course we did examples of group activities to I guess experience ... but that was of course ten years' ago. Throughout that time I've done in-house workshops, even the latest I did the IELTS teacher training course at British Council ... within which we did several imitation activities ... it was train the trainer but the official name was IELTS ... (inaudible) something like that.</p> <p>Int: If we move on to your ELT experience – you said that you've got almost ten years', what types of teaching have you been engaged in?</p> <p>Rosie: Err, teaching mostly adults. I've done, like, private teaching, I've done small institute training and then the six years at the University of Nizwa: five years teaching the university and then the past year been teaching adults, business people. In Turkey I was primarily executives, corporate executives, on a one-to-one basis.</p> <p>Int: That was General English or business English?</p> <p>Rosie: Both kind of they were both General English level although they called it business English but they really needed general ... so I've done a bit of everything. What I haven't done is teaching children.</p> <p>Int: You wrote that your ELT experience has an enormous influence on your materials production. Could you illuminate this with a couple of examples?</p> <p>Rosie: I think what I meant by that was just my teaching experience has shown that what I think will work, may not always work! What I think students will enjoy, and find interesting may not be the case! (laughs)</p> <p>Int: So you would definitely not write certain things based</p>	<p>EFL training</p> <p>EFL training</p> <p>EFL experience</p> <p>EFL experience</p>
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<p>on your experience?</p> <p>Rosie: Oh definitely, in that way, yes, I would exclude certain things that I have found not usually to work, umm, but more often I take a different perspective. I try to step outside my perspective or what I enjoy writing like I have certain preferences but that's not always what works well in the class so ...</p> <p>Int: Could you give an example where you have a preference and then you've gone into the class with that material and you've found it doesn't work so well perhaps here in Muscat or in Oman?</p> <p>Rosie: Actually I do have an example: very open-ended conversations like to give them a dialogue with prompts and then expect the students to carry on and create a situation, whether they be little slips of paper or cards or cards or whatever I found they need more support. They need structure so it needs to be more scaffolded, ... I do like the word games because it forces each person to take a turn and they have to speak so some collaborative activities don't work because one person in the corner will always just sit and observe</p> <p>Int: When you say about conversation practice for example, what have you found you needed to do extra to scaffold some of these activities?</p> <p>Rosie: I've tried many things. I think what has worked best for me is to try to give examples but I don't want them to copy these examples so I've done things such as requiring the five question words – you must use them in some way ... or you must cover these verbs or you must ... giving them something more must be included so they have some sort of framework to work under and they don't have to produce something just off on their own</p> <p>Int: And have you found that your Arabic students here are radically different from Turkish students or Chinese students?</p>	<p>EFL experience</p> <p>EFL experience</p> <p>EFL experience</p>
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Rosie:

Different from Chinese students very much so ... my Chinese students ... it was a total immersion programme. They had mostly already studied English and came in at a somewhat higher but they had just memorised the grammar (laughs) so they were little grammar wizards, and yet couldn't really communicate in English either speaking or listening so whereas they would score very highly on reading, writing and grammar, their listening and speaking was low. Here it's everything! (lots of laughter)

Int:

I was just going to say if you labelled your Chinese students as grammar wizards, what would you label Omani students?

Rosie:

Not grammar wizards, but probably more comfortable with grammar and reading. The adults seem less comfortable with speaking for example the class I have now absolutely hates listening because they don't feel good at it.

Int:

Do you have an idea why they don't feel good about it?

Rosie:

My class in particular is level four and I know that the previous teachers didn't focus on listening – some didn't include it at all because they didn't feel it was necessary. It's my pet-peeve because I can't stand having conversations with people who can't understand ...

Int:

How do you scaffold listenings to make your students feel a bit more confident about it if they're not feeling confident in the first place?

Rosie:

That's, I'm experimenting with now ... because I do think it needs to be scaffolded. If it's done wrong, students become discouraged, you play something and they check some boxes and it's over and nothing accomplished so I try to make it, the second or third activity in whatever concept we're doing after they know some vocabulary if there are some grammar points say present perfect or something like that, they

<p>already know this – they’ve maybe done a reading or something so they have some familiarity with what they should be listening for and then let them listen first as discovery kind of but then point out specifically the second time what they should be listening for and what the meaning is. If present perfect is the example, then stressing the time frame; why would you use the present perfect? To express something that’s recently happened or ... instead of just blindly playing the CD and ... (laughs)</p> <p>Int: Moving on to materials writing experience and training, you mentioned producing materials to help students reach target outcomes, can you give an example of this?</p> <p>Rosie: I think ... in addition to the text book ... most of my materials production has been when I can’t find what I need in the text book, or they don’t have enough so I think that’s what I was referring to ... and that could be anything from ... extra listening more than was just in the text book, I try to take them from different series and add them but it could be something like a board game or a writing activity something like that ...</p> <p>Int: You wrote that you try and include a variety of activities to suit different learning styles; visual; auditory; etc, could you give a couple of examples of this?</p> <p>Rosie: Erm let’s see ... trying to incorporate video more ... in combination with the listening but the visual could be presentation of the information, it could be reading, it could be just like a grammar puzzle or something like that so they are visually inputting the concept or whatever it is. The listenings should, as my example, present perfect, erm ... they may have a puzzle or a game first to familiarise the vocabulary or the present perfect, then the listening would include present perfect and focus on it. I tend to like the reading as input, then either like a grammar activity or puzzle or game, and then listening and then a combination of speaking or writing.</p> <p>Int:</p>	<p>Need for materials</p> <p>Learning styles</p>
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... Do you include different varieties of activities for example kinetic where people are walking around or visual where they've got pictures or diagrams, plans and so on? Would that be part of your materials production?

Rosie:

Yes, sometimes – I find it difficult to get my students to get up and walk around much (laughs) especially the adults! The university kids are more

Int:

Why do you think that is?

Rosie:

I'm not really sure – I've chalked it up to stress. I have a fairly high energy level in the class so I don't know if it's lack of motivation but I think some of it is their prior education which consisted of sitting in a chair and listening to the teacher.

Int:

Right. So their experience as language learners, okay. Let's move on – what do you think makes for effective materials?

Rosie:

I think it depends on the students and their level ... I think the effectiveness is judged at the end. Have they learned anything or not? Has it been useful or do they find it useful?

Int:

When you're sitting down and preparing your own material, what sort of things come to mind as being important when you're aiming for an effective activity?

Rosie:

Now, I'm thinking about time a lot because we're being asked to teach too much in a limited time span – too much that's really normal for people to absorb so ... which is impossible so trying to think of the most time-effective way to get a point across without wasting time with useless activities that are just basic time-killers. So I try to think what is my main point, what is my main goal here? Objective – is it to learn comparative adjectives or what is the main point and how can I get there the quickest.

Evaluating own materials

<p>Int: When you say quickest, are you thinking in terms of efficiency? And could you perhaps give an example of what you think is a really efficient piece of material you wrote recently?</p> <p>Rosie: Okay, efficiency was, my meaning was to get students to be able to use the concepts so if it were comparative adjectives, I don't know! The easiest thing that comes to mind is to have different size objects if it's a beginner class and start working with simple adjectives: bigger; smaller; larger ... like that ... building to the more/less adjectives things like that so you could use realia, props, pictures, things like that for more advanced students, it could be more complicated: parts of geography is always good for comparative adjectives so just using a map and they have to create something ...</p>	<p>Using authentic materials</p>
<p>Int: When you say they have to create something, for example?</p> <p>Rosie: That's my example: I've had them create a geography quiz. This is for more advanced students so the map is a really a picture, realia, but they had to create the multiple choice quiz and I have pre-printed money ... that I give out to them and they love it!</p>	<p>Learner creativity</p> <p>Learner motivation</p>
<p>Int: Anything else to say about effective materials?</p> <p>Rosie: I think it just depends on the class, the students, their level.</p>	
<p>Int: And how do you evaluate the effectiveness of your materials?</p> <p>Rosie: I want them to enjoy it and not be bored but can they use the language after the activity or have they just filled in a bunch of gaps and circled multiple choice questions? Can they actually produce something using speaking and writing? That's how I've judged it.</p>	<p>Evaluating own materials</p> <p>Communicative teaching</p>



<p>Int: There are numerous academic books on second language acquisition, what do you really need to know about in order to produce effective materials in terms of academic theory?</p> <p>Rosie: I consider myself probably uninformed, not uninformed but under-informed. I think, as you mentioned there are so many books out there that it's so hard to know where to start. So, I learn something every talk I go to, every seminar I ... even magazine articles or journal articles I pick up .... Sometimes even just reading the newspaper oh this would be really good to use for say superlative adjectives something like that ... I would like more time for theory and I hope maybe once my Masters is finished, I can read voluntarily (laughs),</p> <p>Int: Is what you're doing on your Masters connected in any way with materials production?</p> <p>Rosie: No, it's just straight English literature. ... and some language ...</p> <p>Int: You ranked re-assessing your existing ideas about materials production with reference to current theory as only 'somewhat important'. Can you explain this ranking?</p> <p>Rosie: I ranked it lower because I think as I said I don't have enough time right now to read all that I want to. I do enjoy reading theory and would like the time to do so. I'm not ruling out doing a further degree and it would be more TESOL-related or TEFL-related or education-related so my ranking was based on the fact that I feel I can still create materials, some which work well, even with limited time for theories. So I think it's not absolutely necessary, it's great, helpful and advisable, but not mutually exclusive ...</p> <p>Int: Let's move on. What aspects of pedagogic knowledge, that is effective teaching and learning in the classroom, do you need to know and understand well in relation to materials production?</p>	<p>Awareness of academic theory</p> <p>Using authentic materials Awareness of academic theory</p> <p>EFL training</p> <p>CPD</p> <p>CPD</p>
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<p>Rosie: I think the biggest thing for me to learn has been the scaffolding aspects, not to throw an activity at students and expect them to perform immediately. So, an example would be a new concept: relative clauses or something for more advanced students to just say, introduce the concept a minute or two and then say, you know speak for five minutes and give me relative clauses!</p> <p>Int: So, for example in that situation, how would you scaffold a piece of material you'd prepared to help the learners?</p> <p>Rosie: My basic go-to method is some sort of reading first and they see it as discovery, a short piece of reading targeted towards the concept: relative clauses or something like that ...</p> <p>Int: And would this text originate from an English language teaching / training book, would it come from an authentic source, or would you create your own text?</p> <p>Rosie: I tend to take them from one of the first two – generally, I can't find exactly what I want in the book so I've got a collection of things either like news articles or video commercials, things like that I've found some of which came from textbooks or the accompanying CD-Rom ... so whatever it is, if it's targeting towards relative pronouns: who, that, which something like that, if I noticed a preponderance of them in the text, or in the video, I'll use something like that.</p> <p>Int: Would you adapt it or would you use it as is?</p> <p>Rosie: It depends if it suits what I want.</p> <p>Int: So you would adapt, you would change?</p> <p>Rosie:</p>	<p>Discovery approach</p> <p>Authentic versus created</p> <p>Authentic versus created</p>
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Yes, but with video, audio sources I can't really adapt. If it's just text, yeah.

Int:

You ranked deciding which variant of English as only 'somewhat important', a (2). Can you explain this ranking?

Rosie:

Okay, by variants of English, I assumed you were talking about British English, American ...

Int:

And Indian English, Singaporean ...

Rosie:

I use Omanglish (laughs)

Int:

So Oman English is there but you don't see it as very important for your ... ?

Rosie:

... I think some teachers overemphasise some minor points of grammar, in lieu of communication. So someone may communicate fully with me without proper subject-verb agreement. I can understand exactly what is meant ... that's more accuracy than variants ... if you're preparing students for academic then I think they need proper, either British, American or Australian English without the local variants ... EAP-specific.

Int:

You ranked context-related and needs-related tasks as only somewhat important (2), can you explain why? ... Context-related and needs-related tasks ...

Rosie:

I'm not really sure! ... Actually I consider them important because I think what's needed kind of governs everything else. ... I'm not sure, sorry ...

Int:

You ranked collaboration between learners in the classroom as only 'somewhat important', can you explain this ranking?

Rosie:

I think they're important ... I would have ranked learner outcomes or actual learning above the other two although they are important ... I guess that's my test-ticking (laughs).

Int:

You wrote that you include phonetics in your classes, do you also produce materials for this aspect of English language learning?

Rosie:

I would like to do more. I think it's been neglected I think that's part of problem with speaking difficulties in Oman and I don't find many materials in the text books or I don't find adequate materials to really teach it ...

Int:

Have you produced something recently dealing with phonetics?

Rosie:

I've tried my hand at it a little bit but I find that I don't have time to really devote to it and I think I need to research it a little bit more. I've tried to break down the sounds, tried to get similar-sounding words to contrast, especially for the vowels because they differ from Arabic a great deal so what I've managed to do it get groups of words to contrast such as the 'a' sounds. Like I said I haven't done as much as I wanted to do. I've found it important but lacking.

Int:

You mentioned your focus on trying not to waste class time and the idea of using open-ended, less prescribed activities. What did you mean by this?

Rosie:

Erm, using something more creative than simple gap fills I think it's really easy for teachers to just write twenty questions that are gap fills or write twenty sentences – choose the correct word and that was a fall back for a very long time but I found that it wasn't really working to produce speaking and writing and in that sense I call it a time waster! It has its purposes sometimes, but I think more open-ended activities, such as I said, create a conversation or do a role play, giving them enough scaffolding or ... we had a town meeting – actually the prompts were in the text book! But we enacted a whole town meeting. I

Skills tasks

<p>assigned roles and they had to read a blurb and prepare for it and then we had a town meeting and they loved it and I think a lot of the students actually got a chance to use the language in a productive way. After that they had to write a newspaper article supporting their opinions like as an editorial piece following the meeting. They had to convince the mean, evil corporate developers not to tear down part of the city (laughs). So I think it's something that's more open-ended and more creative and I think effective.</p> <p>Int: Let's move on. Another big area is practical knowledge of materials production. So the question is which areas of practical knowledge relating to materials production do you need to know how to do well? And this could refer to syllabus design, unit content, desktop-publishing skills, literally the planning and writing, the production of the materials.</p> <p>Rosie: Okay, do you mean specifically or people in general?</p> <p>Int: You as a materials writer.</p> <p>Rosie: Oh, okay I think all of it I think specifically though there is the planning aspect, how to create a syllabus. I think I've learned it just through osmosis because I've had no curriculum training or specific education for instructional design or ... I've had very good examples in my career, I think I'm very good at it but I've seen some teachers who are at a loss as to make a syllabus. I don't know how one would acquire those skills.</p> <p>Int: Have you done some syllabus design work recently?</p> <p>Rosie: Yes, because I told you the Lifelong Learning Institute has no structure, curriculum or anything. I did create what I use for my class and I ultimately had to supply the other teacher because the other teacher was unable to do so. ...</p> <p>Int: If we, keeping in the same area but, you ranked the</p>	<p>Learner motivation</p> <p>Learner creativity</p> <p>Syllabus design Materials development input</p> <p>Syllabus design</p>
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<p>appearance and layout of students' book as only 'somewhat important'. Why do you rank it like that?</p> <p>Rosie: I was thinking of adults when I did that. Currently, I'm teaching adults who have been through somewhere between ten and fifteen, eighteen years of instruction and still feel they cannot speak so ... and they still find themselves placed in lower levels on placement exams, they're at a somewhat (inaudible) point in language learning so I find their preferences are for anything that will help them learn. So it's nice if the book is colourful with nice pictures, and things like that but the students I've had really need to interact with foreign people speaking English outside Oman, they particularly the Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) students they were from various departments and they regularly have to interact with foreign people either through email or some are writing formal business letters actually on paper or through telephone conversations or in person and they find they lack the skills to really understand what's being said and express themselves even in reading and writing so they would accept and prefer less well-designed text book if it accomplished the goal. So that was my meaning there. It's important, more important for children maybe or teenagers</p> <p>Int: You wrote that you've become better with DTP, desktop-publishing. How could you improve your skills even more?</p> <p>Rosie: Similar to what I said before – more time every day, more practice. I've never actually taken a course ... try to develop through trial and error</p> <p>Int: When you say time do you mean time for you to learn Microsoft Word in more detail or time for you to do a course</p> <p>Rosie: I would like both but ... to do either a self-study course or to go to an official course or take some of the on-line tutorials or simply time to experiment a bit more. What I've learned has been through using it.</p> <p>Int:</p>	<p>Face validity</p> <p>Learner wants and needs</p> <p>Face validity</p> <p>DTP skills</p> <p>DTP skills</p>
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<p>Right, and what do you see as key to producing effective materials using DTP software?</p> <p>Rosie: Well, ... I think I'm limited by what I don't know what to do so whereas I might want to make, maybe not using Word, but I might want to make things move or something like that – I can't do that so I feel limited by that. I don't think it's the most important thing because I can still make basic and attractive materials with a medium skill-level. I think the most important thing is planning to make sure everything is organised, it's self-contained, and it's focussed without a lot of extraneous stuff.</p> <p>Int: Moving on. Which aspects of English language training do you view as fundamental to the process of planning materials production?</p> <p>Rosie: I'm not sure most of my training dealt with materials production at all. Most of my training was more activity-based communication, communicative activities</p> <p>Int: This was the CELTA?</p> <p>Rosie: Yeah, and some follow-up workshops. Actually, yours was the first workshop I've ever been to on materials writing, on materials creation. I can't say that much of my training at all has been devoted to ... I think that's why I feel a bit timid about it, I'm not ... or maybe I underestimate my ability in it.</p> <p>Int: Do you feel that if people are being trained to be teachers, they really should have some more training in materials planning and production?</p> <p>Rosie: Yeah, yes, I think it would help a lot.</p> <p>Int: You highlighted the importance of needs analysis. What would you like to do more of in this area, if you had time?</p>	<p>DTP skills</p> <p>Planning materials</p> <p>EFL training</p> <p>Mats dev input</p> <p>Mats dev input</p>
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<p>Rosie: That's it – the time! I think to do a needs analysis on the individual students and that's something I've never been given here. We generally just have huge placement exams at the university and then there are all evaluated, collated by a group of people and then the students are placed into classes who've never like had the time to individually assess the students ... because we have to jump right into the materials.</p> <p>Int: You wrote of the importance of keeping an eye on the big picture. In what ways can the syllabus influence the materials which you produce?</p>	<p>Needs analysis</p>
<p>Rosie: ... I think the syllabus keeps them on track instead of getting lost in the details, (inaudible) for perfection: one little aspect, subject verb ... I think most of the time the syllabus should be a timekeeper as you move on in the semester. That should influence your materials as an organisation tool ...</p> <p>Int: You listed: 'interest, motivate and seem useful' as being fundamental to making activities effective and successful. How do you try and ensure your materials do all of these things?</p>	<p>Syllabus design</p>
<p>Rosie: I think what I said at the beginning about perspective I try to consider what the students are interested not what I'm interested in to get their interest to get a topic an angle if they're bored they're not going to learn. The same with motivation – what's going to motivate them as opposed to me so those work hand-in-hand, then whether it's useful – I judge the usefulness by whether they've learned something and by whether they can use the language, whether they can produce it. So, as I said before, making a gap fill exercise is less useful in my mind than maybe playing a game that encourages speaking or actually using pictures or something like that.</p> <p>Int: You ranked working together with colleagues on materials as only 'somewhat important'. Can you explain why?</p> <p>Rosie:</p>	<p>Learner-focussed materials</p> <p>Learner motivation</p> <p>Evaluating own materials</p> <p>Communicative teaching</p>



<p>I think it's important, yes, ... I don't think it's absolutely necessary working together some people do not like making materials. Very often I will lose time trying to convince people of making materials or of things that don't work, for example using gap fills!</p> <p>.. On the other hand people who produce materials regularly, if they are of a similar mindset to me, I think working collaboratively is great. It enhances the project but I think it depends on the people in the team.</p>	<p>Working with colleagues on materials</p>
<p>Int: Which aspects of materials production would you like to know more about so that it makes you and your materials more effective in the future?</p> <p>Rosie: I think for me, my weaknesses are working with audio, ... I have a lot of material but don't know how to break it down and I can only do very basic things on a computer without ... If I had the technical knowledge, or more advanced technical knowledge, I could do a lot more. So I'm limited in that way.</p>	<p>Using technology</p>
<p>Int: Are you thinking for example about recording yourself? Or recording other colleagues to produce materials?</p> <p>Rosie: Doing that but even just, splitting what I am to find out this summer basically editing I know it's possible but similar to how I take parts of the text book out and combine them in different ways to get my purpose ...</p>	<p>Using technology</p>
<p>Int: Well, those are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything else you would like to say about what we have been talking about?</p> <p>Rosie: No, I think it's an interesting field actually and one that I hadn't thought much of and I don't think many teachers do ...</p>	
<p>Int: Why do you think teachers don't consider it very much?</p>	

Rosie:

I think some teachers are unsure. I was in the beginning ... it was only through experimentation and just actually having a lack of resources in the text books that I had to create other things. Some teachers really don't have the resources to do things like that either be it inadequate internet, bandwidth, things like that ... copier, scanner, the equipment is an element. Some teachers don't have time because they're doing too much assessment or too many teaching hours, different pulls on teachers. I think that's probably the biggest factor.

Int:

Thank you very much for giving your time, energy and ideas to help with my doctoral research.

Rosie:

Your welcome (laughs)

Constraints on writing materials in-house

## APPENDIX 12

### Examples from the Code Book

Researcher's note: Qu for Likert-type question responses and page numbers for Interview transcripts)

Learner wants and needs	Partic	Qu/ Page
<i>Memo: What learners would like to do on courses / need to learn and practise for their future English requirements</i>		
We learned from the needs analysis that our students want more grammar and games in their learning materials, so we made these an important part of the Explore Writing books.	Diane	Q10
So it's a very difficult thing to do. So the students wanted grammar, so there was a grammar component in every unit	Diane	p10
Oh dear – this is important isn't it...but mostly we are selecting content material based on the curricular requirements. <b>Our students are freshmen and don't know a thing about Medicine – not sure that they could suggest what they want/need.</b>	Heather	Q10
<u>I consider the language level and interest level of the learners involved while looking for and choosing appropriate sources.</u>	Sam	Q10
<u>I think the foremost goal is that students increase their language ability in all areas, not just speaking, for example. If the prescribed method or materials are not working for a particular class or student, then I try to find other materials. I believe materials should encourage and facilitate interaction with language and not bore students into apathy or fear of using a language.</u>	Rosie	Q12
I analyse learners' needs and learning styles before I produce materials.	Julie	Q12
Int: Right! You wrote that you've gained experience what to avoid introducing with your learners. Can you give some examples? Jul: Very simple answer! <b>Something that is not relevant to the students' needs. Ummm, general topics I would avoid</b> I would keep it to the business-related topics for sure. I would reduce the focus on grammar for business students. <b>I would just not have traditional classes with business student simply because they are disconnected from real life.</b> You have to take your students to the field ... you come into the students workplace and you run some classes there.	Julie	p11

## APPENDIX 13

### Categories Derived from Codes (an Example)

<b>Category: Appropriacy for learners</b>	
<i>Memo: Codes addressing a range of factors relevant to materials planning and production.</i>	
Codes:	
Affective factors	Learner motivation
Appropriate level for learners	Learner strengths
Arab learner problems	Mixed ability
Engaging learners	Need for materials
Learner-focused materials	Personalizing materials
Learner lack of knowledge	-
<b>Category: Appropriacy for teachers</b>	
<i>Memo: Codes addressing the needs of locally-based teachers.</i>	
Codes:	
Appropriate level for teachers	-
<b>Category: Appropriacy for the local learning context</b>	
<i>Memo: Codes addressing aspects of the local context which impact on the learners and teachers and therefore on the writers of the materials.</i>	
Codes:	
Appropriate relevance	Localizing materials
Authenticity + local culture	Real-world communication
Learner wants and needs	Real-world need
Learning context	-
<b>Category: Involving learners in course design</b>	
<i>Memo: Codes addressing the inclusion of the learners in the content and design of their course.</i>	
Codes:	
Learner creativity	Underestimating learners
Negotiating course input with learners	-

## APPENDIX 14

### Themes Derived from Categories (an Example)

<b>Theme: Local Learning Context</b>
<i>Memo: categories addressing a range of aspects, factors and needs related to the local learning context. In this study the focus is on non-Omani writers producing materials for Omani learners studying General English, EAP or ESP in the Sultanate of Oman.</i>
<b>Categories:</b>
<b>Appropriacy for learners</b>
<b>Appropriacy for teachers</b>
<b>Appropriacy for the local learning context</b>
<b>Involving learners in course design</b>

# APPENDIX 15

## Consent Forms



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

### CONSENT FORM

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project entitled:

An exploration of the process of materials writing with reference to  
the academic, professional and practical needs of writers  
both experienced and inexperienced

being conducted by

Tony Waterman

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....  
(Signature of participant )

.....  
(Date)

.....  
(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher: 00-968-99616458

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

The researcher, Tony Waterman, email: [tonyinoman@gmail.com](mailto:tonyinoman@gmail.com)

OR

..... Dr. Susan Riley: [S.M.Riley@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:S.M.Riley@exeter.ac.uk)

OR

.....Dr. Charles Hadfield email: [C.R.Hadfield@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:C.R.Hadfield@exeter.ac.uk)

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.



Graduate School of Education

## Certificate of ethical research approval

### STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS

You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/> and view the School's statement on the GSE student access on-line documents.

**READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER** (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name: Anthony Edward Waterman

Your student no: 610044033

Return address for this certificate: tonyinoman@gmail.com

Degree/Programme of Study: EdD in TESOL, Dubai

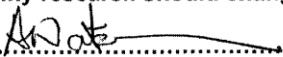
Project Supervisor(s): Dr Susan Riley

Your email address: tonyinoman@gmail.com

Tel: 00-968-99616458

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:  date: 02/04/14

**NB** For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must **not be included** in your work. It can be kept for your records.

# Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no: 610044033

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**Title of your project:**

An exploration of the process of materials writing with reference to the theoretical, professional and practical needs of writers both experienced and inexperienced

**Brief description of your research project:**

This study seeks to identify areas of theoretical, pedagogic and practical aspects to materials production and syllabus design which materials writers need to be informed of and explore which of these areas would be most appropriate to the perceived needs of the writers themselves and to the production of effective materials leading to successful learning. Linking academic research to the practical needs of materials writers by collecting and analysing data using questionnaires and interviews should result in a better appreciation of what writers would best benefit from in terms of training / input to improve their materials / course production.

**Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):**

The twenty participants will be adult English language professionals working in tertiary (and possibly secondary) education in the Sultanate of Oman. They will be a mixture of both expatriate teachers working in Oman or Omani nationals. Their experience of materials production will vary from novice to expert writer depending on their background, learning experiences, training and professional experience.

**Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:**

- a) **informed consent**: Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents).

All participants will be handed two copies of the consent form attached for signatures, one for them to keep and one for me as the researcher, and I will explain clearly details of what informed consent should consist of and be ready to answer any questions they may have regarding the uses the data may be put to (thesis; conference presentations, journal articles). Participants will be informed, both orally and in writing that they may withdraw from the study at any time.

- b) **anonymity and confidentiality**

Simultaneously with completing the consent forms I will cover how the participants' anonymity will be guaranteed, by the use of pseudonyms whenever quoting data provided by individual participants. Confidentiality will also be covered at this time with an explanation of how the data is collected and stored and how it is used without releasing the actual identities of participants at any point.

**Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:**

Data will be collected in two phases. First, by questionnaires as Word Documents sent out by email to educators who have volunteered for the study, for completion and submission to the researcher by email. These will then be stored on my personal password protected laptop using pseudonyms to label individual folders and files. The laptop itself is stored either in a



locked office at work or securely at home. From the collection of data in phase one, selection of participants for phase two will then be made. Interview questions will be sent out to these participants in advance and interviews will be conducted face-to-face or on the phone and recorded digitally with recordings being downloaded onto the same laptop and labelled appropriately to ensure anonymity. Later, member checking will be conducted either by email or face-to-face with all data protected and only pseudonyms used for filing.

**Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):**

As above all digital soft copies of documents and recordings will be stored on my personal password protected laptop and this will not be left in open areas, offices or vehicles. After the study, the data will be retained for further publications and will be kept securely on a hard drive in a locked drawer in my home. None of the participants have special needs either physical or psychological and so will not require special arrangements.

**Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):**

There should be no exceptional factors impacting on the data collection process as the participants are only being asked to comment on their own work as materials writers without reference to management, administration or other external body which might pose any professional danger to the participants.

---

*This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.*

*N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor*

---

**This project has been approved for the period:** April 2014 **until:** April 2015

**By** (above mentioned supervisor's signature): S. M. Riley **date:** 2nd April 2014

*N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.*

---

**GSE unique approval reference:** M/13/14/16

**Signed:** P. D. [Signature] **date:** 7/4/14  
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

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This form is available from <http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/>

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Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
updated: July 2010

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