

Book Review:

Tomlinson, B. (2013). *Developing materials for language teaching*. London, UK: Bloomsbury. This book is also available from the publisher as an eBook (from August 2014).

Reviewed by *Mhairi Mackay (Wintec, Hamilton)*. *Mhairi is an academic staff member at the Centre for Languages with a special interest in learner autonomy and the pragmatic application of principled research-based SLA theory in the continuously changing language teaching and learning environment.*

Developing materials for language teaching (2nd edition) follows the first edition ten years later at a time of increasing interest in materials development and its relationship to the application of SLA theory to practice. The second edition is also informed by a desire to reflect the knowledge and experience of L2 teaching and learning practitioners as well as that of linguistic experts. This has led to a wide and interesting range of contributions that aim to inform, stimulate and provoke across a variety of materials development concerns. The contributors (twenty in all including the editor) give an international view of aspects of current practice and include New Zealand's Paul Nation (on vocabulary), Alan Maley (on writing from a creative perspective), Claudia Saraceni (on adapting courses), Ken Hyland (also on writing), and Duriya Aziz Singapore Walla (on systemic functional theory and course book design). Unlike other recent publications in this field (see for example the excellent McGrath, 2013) Tomlinson is not solely concerned with ESL, and language learning materials for learners of other languages are also covered including a chapter on beginner adult learners of Spanish.

The book is a bit of a door stopper with 543 pages of text and is presented as an eBook, in paperback and hardback. The latter is perhaps recommended where there will be many shared users although the paperback version is remarkably robust. The highly readable contents are presented in five main sections which respectively focus on:

- Evaluation and adaptation of materials;
- Principles and procedures of materials development;
- Developing materials for target groups;
- Developing specific types of materials ;
- and
- Materials development and teacher training.

Blended Learning (BL), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and other relative new comers to L2 delivery are discussed in several areas of the book (see for example page 176 for a summary of creative teaching approaches, and pages 207-221 which focus on BL) and are seen as reasons why many teachers will return to their current materials with a desire to rethink, develop, adapt, and create anew. For those of us facing any sort of change in our L2 teaching and learning environments this book provides thinking space as well as practical approaches to principled materials design.

Our tertiary institution, like many English language course providers throughout New Zealand, is in the process of offering new language qualifications, the New Zealand Certificates in English Language (NZCEL), and professional discussions in recent months have tended to focus on how the new qualifications will be delivered. As ESOL teachers, at all levels, we are intimately acquainted with materials development often adapting published materials to our own contexts and this book would provide an excellent resource for informed and robust discussion of the myriad decisions involved in adapting, creating and preparing materials. Harwood (2012) has also provided teachers with an excellent resource that combines theoretical and practical perspectives on materials design and development, and which further includes discussion tasks to deliberately stimulate this process of informed and robust materials design. In combination, these two texts provide, particularly for established practitioners, practically an independent study course in current practice in materials development in language teaching and learning.

Tomlinson (2013, p.x) emphasises the role of the “informed and reflective” language teacher directly in contact with language learners as the ultimate mediator between theory and practice as materials that are developed for language learners are validated by whether or not they work in the learning environment. The Materials Development Association (MATSDA), of which Tomlinson is the founder and current president, at its recent MATSDA/ University of Liverpool 2014 Conference took the theme, SLA and Materials Development. Many aspects of language learning, of the relationship between research and what happens in learning contexts, and of the impact of these on the development and principled design of materials were discussed. With powerful commercial interests publishing materials and courses, it is increasingly important that the community of teachers and learners are actively involved in the discussion of what actually works and what is needed to support SLA

in a wide range of authentic local settings. Therefore, this book also acts as an important access point for the L2 teaching practitioner seeking good materials to support useful L2 learning to the increasingly complicated world of SLA theory and academic expertise.

Tomlinson's voice is prevalent as he takes an active editorial role and introduces and comments on the contributions throughout the edited work. He has worked and published extensively in the field, to a great extent shaping the current state of materials development. His recent (2012) state of the art article in *Language Teaching* (45,2, 143-179) similarly titled 'Materials development for language teaching and learning' includes an extensive literature review of the field and is recommended for reading in association with this book.

This book is highly recommended to teachers in the L2 field and would be an excellent text to consider for anyone contemplating student resources for teacher training courses related to second language teaching. Trainee teachers should probably be recommended to purchase the eBook rather than the more expensive hard copy.

Harwood, N. (Ed.), (2012). *English language teaching materials: Theory and practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

McGrath, I.(2013). *Teaching materials and the roles of EFL/ESL teachers: Practice and theory*. London, UK: Bloomsbury.

Tomlinson, B. (2012). Materials development for language learning and teaching. *Language Teaching*, 45 (2), 143-179. doi:10.1017/S0261444811000528.