

Validating Self-Instructional Materials For Enhancing English Language Skills

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Abstract

A conducive teaching-learning environment is essential for educators and students to achieve learning goals. This becomes particularly significant in self-paced education, where instructional material is the core of the teaching-learning process. Such material should be interactive, engaging, self-directed, and self-guided to support effective learning. The primary purpose of this study is to validate self-instructional material (SIM) integrated with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to enhance the English language skills of BCA students at VSSD College, Kanpur. The validation of this self-instructional material was conducted through expert reviews. Key areas evaluated included the authenticity of the material, the clarity and organisation of the content, its practical utility for students, and the inclusion of activities for assessment. Following expert feedback, revisions addressed aspects where the SIM was less effective for learners. The revised material was deemed appropriate and effective in fostering English language acquisition skills. This study highlights the potential of well-designed self-instructional material to improve English proficiency, especially for students in a blended or self-paced learning environment.

Keywords: Self-instructional Material; CLT; Interactive Learning; Self-Paced Education.

INTRODUCTION



In an increasingly interconnected and competitive world, proficiency in the English language is not merely a skill but a necessity, particularly for students pursuing professional programs like Bachelor of Computer Applications (BCA). At VSSD College, Kanpur, where students come from diverse linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds, effective and accessible English language instruction is paramount. Despite the centrality of language skills in academic and professional success, traditional classroom-based methods often fail to address the unique challenges faced by these learners, particularly in accommodating varied learning paces and styles.


Self-instructional material (SIM) has emerged as a transformative solution, offering a structured yet flexible approach to learning. When grounded in the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), SIM becomes an even more powerful tool, fostering real-world communication skills through interactive, learner-centric content. CLT's emphasis on authentic communication ensures that learners not only

grasp theoretical concepts but also acquire practical skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing—critical for both academic and professional excellence.

This study focuses on the validation of a meticulously designed SIM tailored to the needs of BCA students at VSSD College. By incorporating expert feedback, the research evaluates the material's authenticity, content presentation, practical utility, and the effectiveness of its assessment components. The aim is to ensure that the material is not only pedagogically sound but also aligned with the aspirations and challenges of BCA students in a technologically driven academic setting.

In bridging the gap between traditional teaching methods and the demands of contemporary learners, this study seeks to demonstrate the potential of thoughtfully crafted SIM in enhancing English language acquisition. By doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on innovative pedagogical practices in higher education, particularly in fostering

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communicative competence among students poised to enter the global workforce.

Ahmad R. S. (2016) emphasised the pivotal role of the English language in unifying the diverse world, describing it as the thread that weaves together varied cultures and societies. He further highlighted how English serves as a "passport" to better education and enhanced employment prospects, underscoring its indispensable value in the global arena. Similarly, Rawung and Lynne Li (2008) argued that the rapidly evolving and competitive global landscape has necessitated significant reforms in English language education. These reforms aim to equip learners with the skills required to effectively participate in global communication.

To achieve this, learners must receive comprehensive exposure to all four key skills of English in an integrated manner using authentic and diverse resources. This challenge becomes particularly pronounced in distance education, where self-instructional material serves as the primary medium of interaction between teachers and students. Ensuring the effectiveness of such material is, therefore, critical in fostering meaningful and impactful language acquisition.

Various methods and strategies, including the Audio-Lingual Method and grammar-translation method, with their distinct strengths and weaknesses, have contributed to the shifting paradigms in language education. Among these, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has gained prominence as an approach that prioritizes the development of communicative competence over the mere mastery of grammatical rules.

Thamarana (2014) defines CLT as an approach that moves beyond teaching grammar in isolation, advocating for the use of the target language in meaningful contexts to help learners develop communicative competence. This approach bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world application, enabling learners to naturally acquire essential language skills. According to Savignon (1991), CLT draws on multidisciplinary perspectives, including linguistics, psychology, and sociology, to create methods and programs that enhance functional language ability through active participation in communicative events.

Furthermore, Courtney (2020) reinforces this perspective by describing the CLT classroom as

student-centred, fostering meaningful interactions that encourage learners to use the English language in authentic, interactive, and engaging activities. By focusing on real-life applications, CLT transcends traditional methods of rote memorization of grammar and vocabulary for drills or exams, instead emphasising the practical and dynamic use of language in everyday scenarios.

This pedagogical shift underscores the relevance of CLT in preparing learners for effective communication, not only within the confines of the classroom but also in diverse real-world settings. It is particularly suited to modern educational reforms that prioritize holistic and functional language acquisition, making it a cornerstone of contemporary English language teaching practices.

SELF-INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL (SIM)

The integration of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in teaching English through distance education presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Instructional materials are the linchpin of this mode of education, as they serve as the primary medium for delivering guidance and fostering learning. Distance education, as noted by Iqbal et al. (2019), provides affordable educational opportunities to individuals who are unable to access traditional, formal education systems. To bridge the physical and instructional gaps inherent in this mode, learners rely heavily on specialized resources known as Self-Instructional Materials (SIMs), which are designed to support independent study. Anamika and Paul (2017) further highlight that SIMs are tailored to facilitate self-directed learning, positioning them as a critical component in the success of distance education programs.

Developing effective instructional materials for distance learners is a complex process requiring careful consideration of learner needs, content delivery, and engagement strategies. These materials not only serve as the primary source of knowledge but also replicate the learning environment and guidance typically provided in traditional classrooms. Rampeng et al. (2021) emphasise the pivotal role of such materials in streamlining the teaching-learning process, calling for educators to design resources that address the unique challenges faced by distance learners.

Studies in the field have consistently underscored the importance of aligning instructional materials with the needs and motivations of learners. Handayani and Prasetyo (2022) advocate for the development of materials that are not only relevant and comprehensive but also engaging and visually appealing, as this motivates learners to actively participate in both academic and real-life communication scenarios. Additionally, Dahiya and Mishra (2020) highlight that interactive and well-structured self-instructional materials significantly enhance learner autonomy and confidence, enabling them to master language skills independently.

Recent research by Asha and Thomas (2021) corroborates the effectiveness of SIMs in fostering communicative competence, noting that integrating real-world scenarios and problem-solving activities into instructional materials encourages learners to apply their skills practically. Similarly, Bastos and Martins (2020) found that SIMs incorporating multimedia components such as videos, audio resources, and interactive exercises lead to improved engagement and retention, especially in language learning contexts.

Given the diverse needs of distance learners, self-instructional materials must be meticulously crafted to ensure that they are authentic, learner-centred, and pedagogically robust. By incorporating principles of CLT, these materials can effectively promote communicative competence, preparing learners not only to excel in academic pursuits but also to navigate real-world communication challenges with confidence. The growing body of research in this field underscores the transformative potential of SIMs, provided they are thoughtfully designed to meet the evolving needs of learners.

DEVELOPING SELF-INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Business communication is a vital skill in today's professional world, yet many students, particularly in technical fields like BCA, struggle with effective communication. At VSSD College, we observed that traditional teaching methods often fall short of addressing individual learning paces and diverse linguistic backgrounds. This realization led us to develop self-instructional material tailored specifically for BCA students, focusing on the practical application of English in

professional contexts. These materials are designed to help students grasp the nuances of business communication, such as crafting emails, writing reports, and delivering impactful presentations. By allowing students to learn at their own pace, this initiative bridges the gap between classroom instruction and real-world requirements.

The development process has been an enlightening journey. We prioritized content that resonates with the students' academic and professional aspirations while keeping it engaging and accessible. Two modules were developed including exercises, case studies, and examples that simulate real-life business scenarios, ensuring students gain hands-on experience. Our goal is not just to improve their language proficiency but to build confidence in expressing their ideas clearly and effectively. By equipping our students with these essential skills, we aim to empower them to excel in competitive work environments and contribute meaningfully to their chosen fields.

Based on the researcher's observations while teaching the course 'Business Communication' to BCA students at VSSD College, Kanpur, several obstacles have been identified that hinder effective communication in English. Students often grapple with hesitation, low confidence, and limited opportunities to interact in the target language, which hampers their ability to express themselves fluently. Additional challenges, such as insufficient vocabulary, a lack of exposure to English, and inadequate access to appropriate learning resources, further complicate the situation. Moreover, the existing study materials fail to address the practical requirements of students, leaving critical gaps in their preparation for real-world communication scenarios.

To address these issues, the researchers have developed self-instructional material (SIM) grounded in the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This material is designed to provide students with an interactive and practical resource that not only enhances their English proficiency but also meets the specific demands of business communication. The paper discusses the validation process of the SIM, drawing on feedback from language educators and communication experts. The study evaluates the material's relevance, authenticity,

and effectiveness in improving essential communication skills for BCA students at VSSD College. The findings aim to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, empowering students to excel in their academic and professional pursuits.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- To develop Self-Instructional Material (SIM) for enhancing English language acquisition skills among BCA students of VSSD College, Kanpur, focusing on their needs in the context of Business Communication.
- To design an Opinionnaire to assess the effectiveness of the developed Self-Instructional Material (SIM) in improving English language proficiency and communication skills.
- To analyse the feedback and opinions of subject matter experts and teacher educators regarding the effectiveness, relevance, and practicality of the Self-Instructional Material (SIM) for BCA students at VSSD College.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employs a descriptive method to investigate the effectiveness of the self-instructional material developed for enhancing English language acquisition skills. This approach was chosen to systematically analyse the feedback from subject experts and teacher educators regarding the developed material.

The self-instructional material (SIM) was designed for BCA students at VSSD College, Kanpur, specifically focusing on their needs in the context of Business Communication. For the validation of this material, an opinionnaire was distributed to 16 subject experts and teacher educators. These experts were selected from various educational institutions in North India, particularly those with expertise in English language education and business communication. The participants included professionals from both the Department of English and the Department of BCA.

Instrument Used

Opinionnaire for the Effectiveness of Self-Instructional Material (SIM): The researcher developed an opinionnaire to gather feedback from subject experts and teacher educators for validating the self-instructional material. The

opinionnaire was divided into four aspects, each with specific parameters to assess the material's effectiveness:

- Authenticity of the Material (5 parameters)
- Presentation of the Content (6 parameters)
- Utility for Students (6 parameters)
- Activities for Assessment (6 parameters)

Each parameter was rated on a three-point scale: A (Agree), DA (Disagree), and UD (Undecided). Each response was assigned a score: 1 for Agree, 0 for Disagree, and None for Undecided. The total score for each expert's responses ranged from 0 to 35, reflecting the overall effectiveness of the material, with higher scores indicating greater effectiveness.

Self-Instructional Material (SIM) for English Language Acquisition Skills: The self-instructional material was developed by the researchers, integrating the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. This material was tailored for 1st semester BCA students at VSSD College, Kanpur, and focused on enhancing their English language acquisition skills, particularly in the domain of business communication. The material was designed to be engaging, practical, and aligned with the students' needs and real-world applications.

Through this methodology, the study aims to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the self-instructional material and its potential to improve English language proficiency among BCA students at VSSD College.

Statistical Techniques Used: In this study, percentage analysis was employed to validate the opinions of subject experts and teacher educators regarding the effectiveness of the Self-Instructional Material (SIM) for English Language Acquisition Skills. The data collected from the expert opinionnaires was analyzed using percentage calculations, which provided a clear representation of their feedback.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This section presents a detailed analysis of the subject experts' and teacher educators' opinions on the effectiveness of the Self-Instructional Material for English Language Acquisition Skills, specifically for the undergraduate students of the School of Open Learning (SOL), University of Delhi, studying the first semester BA (Prog.) and B.Com (Prog.) English language courses. The

analysis is divided into four groups based on the key aspects of the self-instructional material.

Aspect 1: Authenticity of the Content

Table 1 presents responses from subject experts on the authenticity of the content included in the self-instructional material (SIM). The findings are as follows:

- 100% of the subject experts affirmed that the material includes authentic content, grounded in real-life scenarios and simple resources that

offer students opportunities to practise English meaningfully.

- 94% agreed that the material features diverse, authentic resources such as newspapers, podcasts, and movie clips, which enhance the relevance and relatability of the content.
- 88% appreciated that the material supports all four English language skills – reading, writing, listening, and speaking – through the use of real-world resources that foster comprehension and provide a meaningful learning experience.

Table 1: Subject experts' opinions on the authenticity of the content

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
A.1	Diversified resources like from technology blogs, online coding platforms, video tutorials, etc., are used	15 (94%)	0	1 (6%)
A.2	Exploring real-time situations where learners can apply English in professional settings (e.g., coding discussions, project collaboration)	16 (100%)	0	0
A.3	Simple resources for learners to practice communication in technical English	16 (100%)	0	0
A.4	Resources are making teaching-learning process engaging and motivational for the students	14 (88%)	0	2 (12%)
A.5	Making technical concepts easily understandable and meaningful for BCA students	14 (88%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)

The authenticity of the content is a prominent strength of the self-instructional material. A large majority of experts recognised the effective use of real-life contexts and authentic resources, which make the learning process more meaningful and engaging. The use of domain-specific tools such as blogs, coding platforms, and professional scenarios ensures that the content is aligned with the needs of BCA students. Furthermore, the inclusion of all four language skills and the focus on practical applications of English enhance students' ability to use the language in academic and workplace settings. While most feedback was positive, a minor portion (6%) noted challenges in simplifying technical concepts, suggesting the need for clearer support mechanisms.

Based on the findings, several strategies are recommended to further improve the SIM. The range of authentic resources can be expanded by incorporating podcasts, open-source coding forums, and real project documentation, which will enhance learners' exposure to practical and industry-relevant content. To support students who may struggle with complex terms, glossaries and explanatory notes can be introduced to simplify technical jargon. Additionally, maintaining an emphasis on real-time, practical applications of English will reinforce the

material's relevance for BCA students and promote more meaningful language use.

Aspect 2: Presentation of the Content

The second aspect evaluated in the opinionnaire is the 'Presentation of the Content'. According to Table 2, the following observations were made for BCA students:

- 100% of experts recognized that the workbook format of the material is user-friendly and easy for students to follow, especially for those familiar with technical resources like manuals and coding documentation.
- 94% of experts agreed that the structure of the units in the self-instructional material is logical and systematically organized, making it easier for students to navigate through concepts.
- 88% of experts approved that all English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are integrated using themes relevant to the students' field of study, such as programming, software documentation, and technical writing.
- 75% of experts approved that the language of the material is appropriate for the technical background and skill level of BCA students, ensuring that the material is neither too basic nor too advanced for their comprehension.

Table 2: Subject experts' opinions on the Presentation of the Content

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
B.1	Themes are well-chosen, relevant, and useful for students	14 (88%)	2 (12%)	0
B.2	All the language skills are integrated	14 (88%)	2 (12%)	0
B.3	The structure of the units is logical and systematically made	15 (94%)	0	1 (6%)
B.4	Table format presentation for many topics makes it easier for students to understand them	16 (100%)	0	0
B.5	The language of the material is as per the level of the students	12 (75%)	3 (19%)	1 (6%)
B.6	The workbook format is easy and handy	16 (100%)	0	0

The self-instructional material received overwhelmingly positive feedback from experts, particularly in terms of the authenticity of its content. Experts highlighted the use of diverse, real-world resources relevant to BCA students, such as technology blogs, coding tutorials, and online programming platforms. These resources not only engage students but also provide them with opportunities to practice English in real-world professional settings, enhancing their communication skills in contexts such as coding discussions, project collaborations, and technical documentation.

The following recommendations are made regarding the presentation of the SIM's content. Advanced themes, such as communication in Agile methodology, can be incorporated to address the 12% of respondents who expressed disagreement, thereby ensuring the content meets a broader range of learner expectations. Additionally, tiered language exercises, ranging

from basic to intermediate and advanced levels, can be introduced to accommodate diverse skill levels and support differentiated learning.

Aspect 3: Utility for Students

The SIM's utility is strongly endorsed (84% agreement), particularly for enabling real-time application (100%) in contexts like email drafting and project discussions. It clarifies language skills (94%) and motivates learning (94%) through interactive exercises and case studies. However, only 75% agreed on improved academic performance, with 12% disagreeing, suggesting a need for further validation via student outcomes. The material provides varied exposure (81%), but 19% were undecided, indicating potential for more multimedia. Catering to diverse learning styles was the weakest parameter (62% agreement, 38% undecided), highlighting a need for inclusive design.

Table 3: Subject experts' opinion on the Utility of SIMs

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
C.1	Use the concepts taught in their real-time situations	16 (100%)	0	0
C.2	Helping in clarifying many concepts related to all skills of language	15 (94%)	1 (6%)	0
C.3	Motivates students to make learning effective	15 (94%)	1 (6%)	0
C.4	Students to make academic performance better	12 (75%)	2 (12%)	2 (12%)
C.5	Interesting for students to get varied exposure	13 (81%)	0	3 (19%)
C.6	Caters the needs of varied learning styles of learners	10 (62%)	0	6 (38%)

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made to improve the utility of the SIMs. Integrating multimedia elements such as video tutorials and podcasts can enhance learners' exposure to varied content formats and support deeper engagement. To address the 12% disagreement and evaluate the academic impact of the SIMs, a pilot study can be conducted. Furthermore, the inclusion of activities that cater to visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learners, such as infographics, audio exercises, and role-plays, can support diverse learning preferences and foster more inclusive learning experiences.

Aspect 4: Activities for Assessment

Assessment activities are effective (77% agreement), with 94% of experts finding them engaging and motivational. They assess all language skills (88%) and provide varied experiences (81%), though 6% disagreed on the latter, suggesting a need for more diverse formats. Creative activities were praised (81%), but 19% were undecided, indicating room for innovation. Only 62% agreed that activities suit students' levels, with 19% disagreeing, highlighting a need for tiered tasks. Self-assessment was the weakest parameter (56% agreement, 31% undecided), underscoring the need for reflective tools.

Table 4: Subject experts' opinion on assessment activities

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
D.1	Different types of creative activities are given for assessment	13 (81%)	0	3 (19%)
D.2	Activities give varied experiences to students	13 (81%)	1 (6%)	2 (13%)
D.3	Activities are engaging, interesting, and motivational	15 (81%)	0	1 (6%)
D.4	Activities are given as per students' level	10 (62%)	3 (19%)	3 (19%)
D.5	Activities are assessing every skill of the language	14 (88%)	0	2 (12%)
D.6	Students can assess themselves through the given activities	9 (58%)	2 (12%)	5 (30%)

The following recommendations were made to improve the assessment activities of the SIMs. Innovative tasks such as video pitches and peer reviews can be introduced to make assessments more engaging and reflective of real-world communication. Offering tiered tasks aligned with varying proficiency levels will help ensure that learners are appropriately challenged and supported. To address the 31% of respondents who were undecided, self-assessment tools such as rubrics and reflective journals can be incorporated, promoting learner autonomy and critical reflection.

The results reflect that the self-instructional materials are highly regarded by experts in terms of presentation, utility, and activities for assessment, with the majority of experts agreeing that the material is useful, engaging, and effectively enhances student learning. The SIM is highly effective (84% agreement), excelling in authenticity (93.75%) and presentation (91%) due to its real-world relevance and user-friendly design. Its utility (84%) supports practical application and motivation, though academic impact and learning style inclusivity need refinement. Assessment activities (77%) are engaging but require improved self-assessment and level appropriateness. The SIM aligns with CLT principles, bridging theoretical and practical communication skills for BCA students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above-mentioned data, researchers are of the view that the findings on the effectiveness of the Self-Instructional Material (SIM) for English Language Acquisition Skills represent a highly positive reception towards the material's authenticity, presentation, utility, and assessment activities. Most subject experts, with 84% in agreement, acknowledged the overall effectiveness of the material in enhancing the language acquisition skills of students in the BCA first semester.

Students were in favour of the self-instructional materials such as newspapers, podcasts, and movie clips, which were enjoyable and proved effective in creating real-time practice situations for learners. Experts also appreciated the logical structure and systematic approach to presenting the content, making it easier for students to grasp and engage with the material. The workbook format and table presentations further facilitated students' understanding, making the learning experience both engaging and motivational.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A pilot study can be conducted with BCA students to assess the SIM's impact on performance. Advanced multimedia integration (e.g., interactive simulations) can also be explored. Adaptive assessment frameworks can be developed to address varied proficiency levels.

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