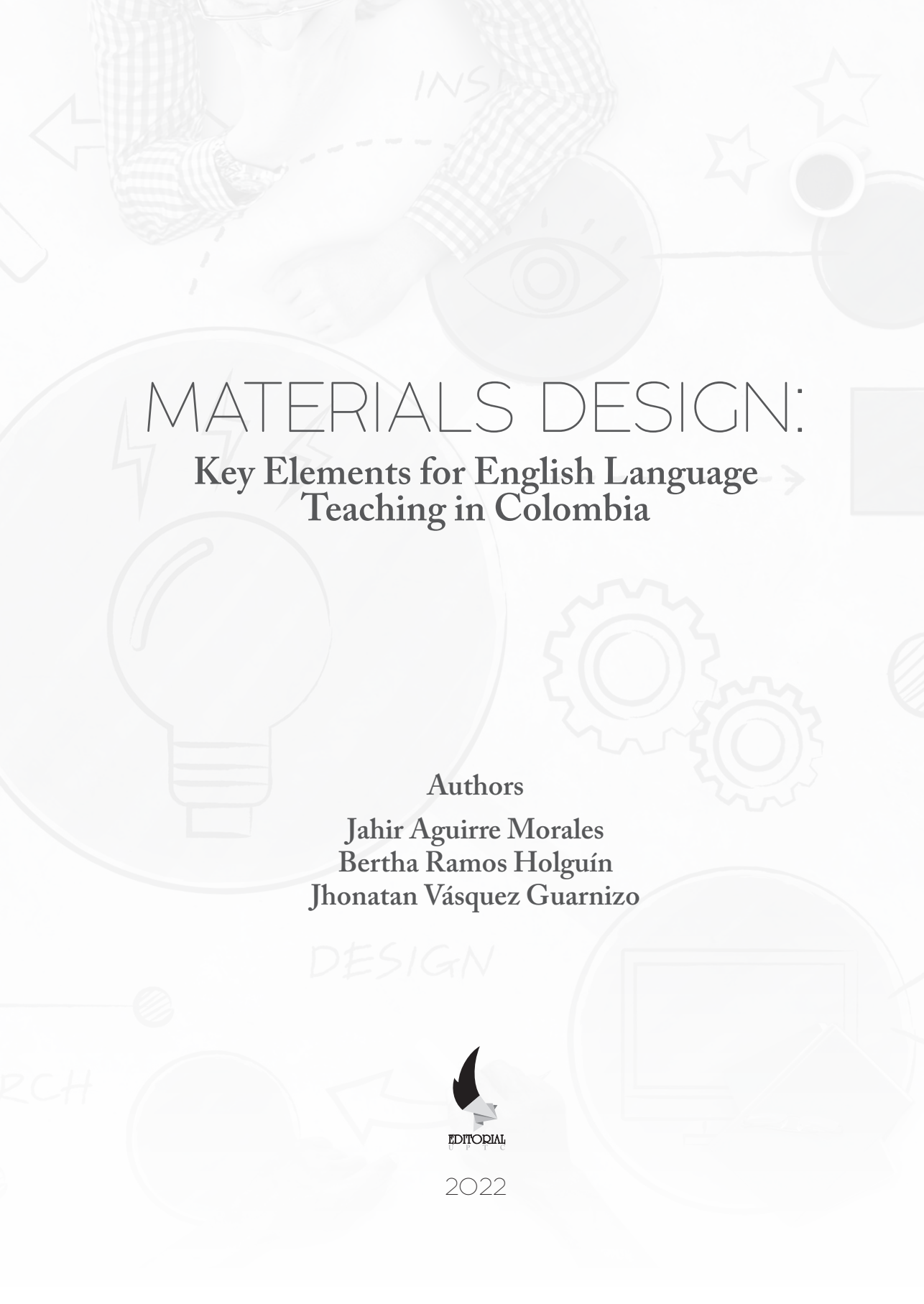




# MATERIALS DESIGN:

## Key Elements for English Language Teaching in Colombia

Authors

Jahir Aguirre Morales  
Bertha Ramos Holguín  
Jhonatan Vásquez Guarnizo



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comite.editorial@uptc.edu.co

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# Abstract

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This book, which is intended for pre-service, novice, and in-service teachers and educators, looks at the key aspects that teachers, as material designers, should bear in mind when creating teaching/learning materials for EFL, thinking about the needs and the particularities of the population. This textbook is divided into twelve elements. The first four elements focus on the initial theoretical aspects that a teacher, as a text designer, should consider when creating materials. Element five introduces a clear description and differentiation between a teaching and learning objective. The next element, Element six, suggests that although all the English skills can be developed in a single workshop or guide, the material should have a protagonist skill. Element seven is based on the notion that teaching and learning materials, such as workshops and guides, can follow a series of steps that include a warming up activity, a presentation of the topic, a practice, and a production stage. Element eight describes the importance of instructions in materials design. The last Elements, nine, ten, and eleven, relate to instructional aspects when designing materials. All of these aspects help material developers have a more inviting and well-designed material. Finally, element twelve helps material developers self-evaluate the material they have designed through reflection.

**Keywords:** Materials' design, materials' development, EFL teachers, English language teaching, pre-service teachers, EFL material designers.

# Resumen

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Este libro, elaborado para maestros en formación, maestros en ejercicio y educadores, centra su atención en aspectos clave que los profesores, en su papel como diseñadores de materiales pueden considerar cuando crean materiales para el aprendizaje y la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera, considerando las necesidades y particularidades de la población. Este libro está dividido en doce elementos. Los primeros cuatro elementos se enfocan en los principales aspectos teóricos a considerar cuando se diseñan materiales. El elemento cinco describe claramente la diferencia entre un objetivo de aprendizaje y un objetivo de enseñanza. El siguiente elemento, el elemento seis, sugiere que, aunque todas las habilidades en inglés se pueden desarrollar en un taller o una guía, el material debe tener una habilidad que sea la protagonista. El elemento siete, está basado en la noción de que los materiales para el aprendizaje y la enseñanza tales como talleres y guías, pueden seguir una serie de pasos que incluyen una actividad de aprestamiento, la presentación del tema, la práctica y la producción. El elemento ocho describe la importancia de las instrucciones en el diseño de materiales. Los últimos elementos, nueve, diez, y once tienen que ver con los aspectos instruccionales cuando se diseñan materiales. Todos estos aspectos ayudan a los diseñadores de materiales a lograr materiales mejores diseñados. Finalmente, el elemento doce, ayuda a los diseñadores de materiales a autoevaluar el material elaborado a través de la reflexión.

**Palabras clave:** Diseño de materiales, desarrollo de materiales, profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera, enseñanza de inglés, maestros en formación, diseñadores de materiales para EFL.

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# INTRODUCTION



Thirteen years ago, a group of teacher-educators created the research group TONGUE (Teaching on New Grounds Unexplored English Possibilities). At the time, we were interested in exploring diverse ways to teach and learn a language. That is why we initially ascribed to the following research lines: Teachers Development, Pedagogy and Interculturality, Pedagogical Innovations and Materials Development Design, Application, and Evaluation.

We noticed how materials design helped us connect intercultural practices and innovation in language teaching and learning. In addition, materials development also fostered teachers' development. As a result, we carried out projects aimed at designing more contextualized materials. The research group published the results of an initial study in a book titled "Instructional Material for Rural Schools: Design, Implementation, and Evaluation". The findings of this study guided us to better comprehend ruralities and rural education. Based on our understandings, we designed a series of workshops that considered the needs of the population.

Later on, the group started a new research project called "Designing Didactic Material through the Use of ICT to Enhance the Skill of Speaking in some Rural Schools in Boyacá". This time, we wanted to address the particularities of the population, as well as the main skills the population needed to foster. To do so, we designed, applied, and evaluated didactic material for rural institutions. This experience showed us the importance of designing contextualized materials.

As teacher-educators, we also noticed that most foreign language teaching programs in Colombia addressed issues related to materials design as part of their teaching methodology courses. However, the contents related to materials design and development favored the evaluation of learning/teaching materials. In fact, we, as the authors of this textbook, have taught courses related to materials development (English Didactics, Materials Design, Teaching Practicum). In these courses, the syllabus usually focuses on analyzing and evaluating the strengths and challenges of published material, particularly textbooks. What this means is that materials development and design, at least in language teaching programs in Colombia, have been taught from a theoretical perspective.

Another relevant issue that recently came to light was the pandemic. In the context where we work, we observed how pre-service teachers were concerned about their practicum. Although they had access to diverse material online, their students did not. In the schools in which pre-service teachers were carrying out their teaching practices, they were asked to design guides, workshops, quizzes, and other kind of materials to teach the language, and there were many design elements they did not understand. For example, some of the pre-service teachers were confused about what an instructional objective was. They were unaware about the importance of layout in material design, and they cut and pasted activities for only one language skill. Needless to say, most of the pre-service students failed to pay attention to the particularities of the context. In sum, they mostly relied on activities and exercises in the English textbooks designed by international publishing houses.

Based on our observation, the pre-service teachers tended to adopt materials they found in textbooks. The main point here is that English textbooks usually focus on the superficial aspects of western ideologies. In doing so, textbooks perpetuate stereotypes and lack the sociohistorical characteristics of the people they serve. Therefore, English textbooks reproduce coloniality. Quijano (2000) stated that coloniality deals with the development of capitalism as a neutral process that imposes a Eurocentric classification system. Language textbooks contribute to what students know and how they think about others (Pingel, 2010). In this vein, Restrepo and Rojas (2010) stated that coloniality is maintained alive in books through its three types: being, knowledge, and power. According to



Ramos-Holguín and Peñaloza-Rallón (2020), “coloniality of knowledge, is based on the insight that colonial societies have systematically vanished other kinds of knowledges, such as indigenous’ knowledges and farmers’ knowledges” (p.38). The same authors further mentioned that “the coloniality of being, is focused on the distinction between superior and inferior human beings based on their race” (p. 38). Finally, Ramos-Holguín and Peñaloza-Rallón (2020) stated that coloniality of power is related to the social classification of the world’s population as inferior or superior. The need to implement materials from textbooks can be seen as a colonial practice. As Kumaravadivelu (2014) said, intellectuals do not have a choice, rather they have to conform to the Western ways of knowing.

In the textbook, *Materials Design: Key Elements for English Language Teaching in Colombia*, we invite pre-service and in-service teachers to produce local and contextualized knowledge through the materials they design, which can be considered a decolonial practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2014; Mignolo, 2011). At the local level, just a few textbooks address instructional aspects about materials design (Núñez, Téllez, Castellanos, & Ramos, 2009). We may be able to find a wide variety of information on instructional materials, but there seems to be a lack of specific guidelines to design contextualized materials. Thus, this textbook presents initial elements for pre and in service teachers to start designing their own instructional materials considering the needs and the particularities of the population. This book, which is intended for pre-service, novice, and in-service teachers and educators, looks at the key aspects that teachers, as material designers, should consider when creating teaching/learning materials for EFL.

This textbook, the first of a series of textbooks, is divided into twelve elements. Elements one, two, three, and four focus on the initial theoretical aspects that a teacher, as a text designer, should consider when creating materials. What material design is, the kinds of materials a teacher can design, and the importance of needs, beliefs, and motivation are some of the aspects these elements consider. Element five introduces a clear description and differentiation between a teaching and learning objective. In doing so, the teaching/learning materials will focus on attainable learning objectives.

The next element, Element 6, suggests that although all the English skills can be developed in a single workshop or guide, the material should have a protagonist skill. Element 7 is based on the notion that teaching and learning materials, such as workshops and guides, can follow a series of steps that include a warming up activity, a presentation of the topic, a practice, and a production stage. Element 8 describes the importance of instructions in materials design. The last Elements, nine, ten, and eleven, relate to instructional aspects when designing materials. All these aspects help material developers have a more inviting and well-designed material. Finally, element twelve helps material developers self-evaluate the material they have designed through reflection.