

Research Article

From Evaluation to Development: Designing Effective English Writing Materials for University German-Language Students

Leila Rahmani¹ , Kourosh Akef¹  , Mehrdad Rezaee¹ 

¹ Department of English language, CT.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract


In higher education settings, writing plays a central role in academic success; however, many university students lack the proficiency required to meet academic writing demands. This study investigated the challenge of improving the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing proficiency of German-language university students in a context where commercial coursebooks often fail to address learners' academic and professional needs. Using an exploratory mixed-methods design, a needs analysis was conducted through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 62 German language students at an Iranian university. The findings revealed substantial mismatches between learners' writing needs and the existing commercial coursebook, particularly in terms of topic relevance, guided practice, scaffolding, and writing task variety. Based on the needs analysis and established models of materials evaluation and development (Tomlinson, 2011; McDonough et al., 2013; Nunan, 1988; Baleghizadeh, 2019), a new needs-based writing coursebook was developed and evaluated both internally and externally. The materials were piloted with an experimental group, while a control group continued using the standard coursebook. Quantitative data were collected through standardized and teacher-made writing pretests and posttests, and qualitative data were obtained from learners' perceptions. The results showed that the experimental group achieved significantly greater improvement in overall EFL writing proficiency than the control group. Independent-samples t-test analyses confirmed statistically significant gains in the experimental group's writing performance. Qualitative findings indicated positive learner perceptions of the new materials, particularly regarding topic relevance, guided writing stages, collaborative activities, and contextualized language support. These perceptions aligned with the quantitative improvements observed. Overall, the study demonstrates the effectiveness of needs-based, contextually relevant writing materials in enhancing EFL writing proficiency. The findings offer practical implications for EFL and ESP teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers seeking to develop localized materials that better align with learners' needs.

Keywords: coursebook evaluation, EFL, material development, needs analysis, writing proficiency

1. Introduction

Writing remains one of the most challenging skills for EFL and ESP learners, including university students, who often struggle with vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and coherence in academic contexts due to limited

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authentic input, insufficient practice and inherently high cognitive load of writing in a foreign language (Rahmatipasand et al., 2022; Taye et al., 2024). Although a wide range of commercial English textbooks is available, they are frequently criticized for lacking relevance to learners' disciplinary and professional needs (Tomlinson, 2011). In EFL contexts, where writing proficiency is essential, this mismatch may result in learners' disengagement and weak performance.

To support learners, instructors often rely on commercial materials using new features and unique characteristics such as designed units based on the needs of the learners. Interactive environments for learning, authentic coursebooks, and localized materials have provided different opportunities for EFL and ESP teachers and researchers to apply theory to practice in material development; however, these textbooks are frequently inadequate for meeting learners' actual needs (Aalaei et al., 2025; Fakir et al., 2025; Tasheva, 2024; Tomlinson, 2011). Recent research highlights the importance of developing needs-based and contextually relevant materials to support writing instruction (McDonough et al., 2013; Baleghizadeh, 2019). Most prior studies on writing instruction have been either descriptive or purely quantitative, with limited integration of learners' perspectives through mixed-method approaches.

Moreover, researchers have paid little attention to material development for non-English majors, such as German language students in the Iranian higher education, who must complete academic writing tasks in English yet often receive inadequate instructional support. Besides, Moon et al. (2019) emphasized that a close relationship between reading content and writing tasks is essential as irrelevant reading material can confuse learners and hinder writing development. According to Rahmatipasand et al. (2022) EFL learners experience various writing difficulties that should be taken into consideration by their teacher and/or material developer.

Understanding students' feelings and expectations is therefore crucial in developing effective writing materials. Very few studies have used mixed-methods framework to design and evaluate writing materials focusing on learners' needs and expectations. Furthermore, almost no research has specifically targeted German-major undergraduates learning English as a foreign language.

To address these gaps, this study evaluated the inadequacy of a widely used coursebook and developed new EFL materials tailored to the specific needs of German language students at the Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch. Using an exploratory mixed-method design, the study combines needs analysis with a quasi-experimental study of the newly developed materials. It aims to investigate the (in)effectiveness of the usual

coursebook for the university students of German language. This focus provides an opportunity to demonstrate the practicality of the newly designed English coursebook in the Iranian context and to enable EFL/ESP teachers to teach English writing more effectively. Another objective of the study was to examine the impact of the newly developed materials on learners' writing skills, with particular attention to their identified needs. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the study provides a multifaceted analysis of effects on writing learning. The qualitative aspect explored students' wants and needs in learning EFL writing, while the quantitative phase measured the effectiveness of the newly developed material. This mixed-methods integration enriches the understanding of the issue.

Despite the growing body of literature, two major gaps remain. First, most studies have examined writing instruction quantitatively, with limited integration of learners' voices through needs analysis. Second, there is little evidence on material development for non-English majors in EFL contexts, particularly within Iranian higher education. Addressing these gaps, the present study evaluates the shortcomings of a widely used coursebook and develops new writing materials tailored to the needs of German language students, combining qualitative needs analysis with an experimental study. Therefore, the following three questions were formulated:

RQ1: To what extent does the present English coursebook match the learners' needs for English writing?

RQ2: To what extent does the newly developed English coursebook match the learners' needs for English writing?

RQ3: Does teaching the developed English coursebook have any significant effect on learning writing among the university students of German language?

2. Literature Review

Developing effective writing instruction for EFL learners requires consideration of several interrelated factors, including instructional resources, teaching strategies, and learner needs. Insufficient resources and ineffective pedagogical methods frequently contribute to students' weak writing performance. Beyond instructional resources, specific cognitive and metacognitive strategies also play a central role in shaping writing proficiency. (Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021).

Research has underscored the crucial role of metacognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating learner's production explicitly, to enhance cohesion and coherence in learners' writing (Briesmaster &

Etchegaray, 2017; Negretti, 2012). Metacognitive training enables learners to become strategic and reflective writers by helping them control, monitor, and evaluate their own learning processes (Negretti, 2012). These metacognitive processes form only one dimension of effective writing development, with motivational factors also playing a decisive role.

Motivational variables such as enjoyment, anxiety, and self-efficacy have been found to significantly shape learners' writing development, with self-regulated learning strategies improving both competence and engagement (Bai et al., 2021; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). Contextual and cultural factors should likewise be incorporated into instructional materials to sustain learner motivation. Bai et al. (2021) examined motivational variables and self-regulated writing strategies in relation to writing achievement. Based on their research, those students with a high range of writing competence have a high level of motivation, like self-efficacy and task values. Consistent with these findings, Pajares (2003) discussed the influence of self-efficacy and motivation on writing performance, grounded in Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. Ratminingsih et al. (2018) highlighted the crucial role of learner autonomy in enhancing students' writing proficiency. Their findings showed that learners who demonstrated higher levels of autonomy and greater engagement in self-assessment tended to perform better in writing tasks.

Additionally, there are other factors which affect writing improvement. Instructional practices, such as cooperative learning, have been shown to foster students' writing proficiency by encouraging teamwork and reflective practice (Awada et al., 2020; Munawar & Chaudhary, 2019). Team work, pair works activities, and reflective practice (Gaunt & Treacy, 2020) encourage idea sharing and collaborative learning among students. Allowing learners to select topics further enhances autonomy and writing performance (Nasr & Namaziandost, 2019). Besides, corrective feedback remains essential for improving accuracy and organization (Farshi & Safa, 2015). Kardena et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of students' perspectives in writing instruction in a mixed-method study with 69 students. They identified four major writing challenges: grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, and first-language interference. These learners often struggle to connect sentences coherently and commit grammatical errors due to interference from their first language, which leads to weak writing performance.

3. Method

3.1. Design

This study employed an exploratory mixed-methods design consisting of two phases of qualitative and quantitative studies. The qualitative phase

involved conducting a needs analysis through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings from this phase informed the development of new instructional materials, which were subsequently tested experimentally in the quantitative phase.

3.2. Participants

A total of 62 German language students at Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch, participated in the study. The students' English proficiency was pre-intermediate, determined by the writing section of the Key English Test (KET). Table 1 presents the demographic background of the participating students.

Table 1
Demographic Background of the Participants

Variable	University Students	Director and Professor
No. of participants	62	2 (both female)
Experimental Group (EG)	32 (17 f / 15 m)	—
Control Group (CG)	30 (21 f / 9 m)	—
Gender	Male and female	Female
Native language	Persian	Persian

Note. f = female; m = male

According to Table 1, participants ranged in age from 23 to 39, with Persian as their L1. In addition, the department director and a professor, both with over 20 years of teaching experience, participated in interview and questionnaire taking, contributed to the needs analysis. The participants were interviewed and were given questionnaires to get their opinions, and needs from intact classes. Due to administrative constraints, intact classes were used rather than a random sample. Based on limitation to reach all the participants in person (64 persons), the researcher, personally interviewed the director and the professor and also 22 students, selected randomly (14 female/ 8 male). For the purpose of this study, they were assigned to a control group (n = 30) and an experimental group (n = 32).

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. Questionnaire

A needs analysis questionnaire was adapted from Aliko et al. (2021). The questionnaire was a multiple-choice Likert scale with 43 items in which the learners marked their needs, attitudes, etc. In addition, the content and construct validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by Singh (2017). Test-retest reliability was confirmed with 42 participants. Items were reviewed by

three ESP experts for content validity, which showed internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$). The questionnaire was given to the participants face-to-face by the researcher in the university department. It took the respondents 15-20 minutes to complete it.

3.3.2. Interview

The researcher has also run a semi-structured interview to reach the participants' needs. The interview contained five open and predetermined questions proposed by the researcher regarding needs analysis; each question lasted about 3-5 minutes, to collect the students' needs and attitudes. The answers were finally written down for qualitative data analysis.

3.3.3. KET Test

The KET writing section (A2 level) was used as the pretest and posttest to measure learners' general EFL writing proficiency. Because no standardized test exists for evaluating the newly designed material, a teacher-made writing test was created and administered at the end of the semester to assess material-specific learning outcomes. To check score consistency, both the teacher-made test and the KET writing posttest were administered to experimental group.

Two trained raters scored all writing scripts independently, and inter-rater was conformed (Cohen's $k = .86$). The KET pretest was administered before instruction and lasted approximately 90 minutes. Only the writing components of the KET were used to maintain content alignment with the study's focus on writing proficiency. Scoring was performed using the official KET rubrics.

3.3.4. Evaluation Checklist

Miekley's (2005) evaluation checklist was employed to guide both the critique of the existing coursebook and the development of the new materials. Each item was cross-referenced with the criteria proposed by McDonough et al. (2013). The checklist contains three sections: 1) textbook, 2) teacher's manual, and 3) content. Each section was subdivided into specific evaluative components. The textbook section covered content, vocabulary and grammar, exercises and activities, and the attractiveness of the text and its physical layout. The teacher's manual section evaluated general features, background information, methodological guidance, and supplementary exercises and materials. The content section assessed the appropriateness of the textbook for the curriculum, students, and teachers.

Each item was rated on a five-point scale (1 = *totally lacking* (0) to 4 = *excellent*). In addition, the checklist used specific codes: M for mandatory, O for optional, and N for not applicable. Previous studies such as Singh (2017)

have confirmed the checklist's face, content, and construct validity. Its validity and reliability have been further supported through repeated pilot testing in earlier research (e.g., Khan et al., 2024; Rashtchi, 2020; Vakilifard et al., 2021).

3.3.5. Observation

Classroom observations were conducted as a part of triangulation procedures and to ensure instructional fidelity. The researcher attended multiple instructional sessions in which the professor implemented the newly developed materials with the experimental group. An observation protocol was used to document how each component of the material was introduced, practiced, and integrated into classroom activities. During every session, the researcher systematically cross-checked the elements of the developed materials against the evaluation checklist to verify whether they were being used as intended. These observations were included not to generate qualitative data for analysis, but to obtain authentic insight into teacher-material interaction and to confirm that the new materials were delivered consistently and accurately throughout the intervention.

3.3.6. Usual Coursebook

The textbook conventionally used in previous semesters for teaching English to the participants was *Interactions 2* (Kirn & Hartmann, 2002). Although the textbook is primarily designed for general EFL instruction, it served as the main source from which writing tasks were previously derived.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Before the semester started, the researcher visited intact classes and collected qualitative and quantitative needs-analysis data through interviews and questionnaires. The instruments elicited learners' goals, challenges, attitudes, and linguistic background. Due to administrative constraints, intact classes rather than random assignment were used; however, selection bias was minimized by matching the groups based on their KET pretest scores ($p > .05$).

A KET writing pretest (A2 level) was then administered to determine participants' initial writing proficiency. This pretest was used solely to establish baseline comparability and was not part of the needs analysis. Next, the existing textbook, *Interactions 2* (Kirn & Hartmann, 2002), was evaluated using Miekley's (2005) checklist and the criteria of McDonough et al. (2013) and Tomlinson (2011). The evaluation identified weaknesses related to writing instruction, including insufficient scaffolding, lack of genre modeling, and

limited guided practice, which informed the development of new instructional materials.

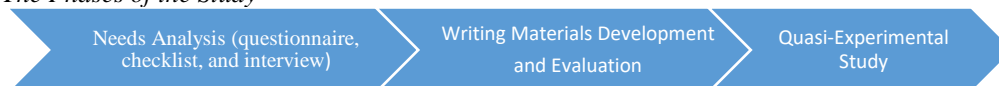
Based on these findings, the researcher developed a needs-based writing coursebook using principles from McDonough et al. (2013), Tomlinson (2011), Nunan (1988), and Baleghizadeh (2019). The coursebook contained six authentic texts, model writing samples, guided tasks, and scaffolded exercises (e.g., warm-up tasks, gap-filling items, matching, and controlled writing tasks). All units were checked against the same evaluation criteria to ensure alignment with the learners' identified needs.

The newly developed material was then piloted with the experimental group over 13 instructional sessions (75 minutes each). The same instructor taught both groups to control for teacher effects. The experimental group used the new material, while the control group continued with the original textbook. The instructor followed identical lesson plans and was not informed of the study's hypothesis to minimize bias. Each lesson followed the same structure: warm-up activities, input through a model text, guided practice, joint construction, independent writing, and wrap-up.

After the intervention, both groups completed a teacher-made posttest tailored to the new coursebook, followed by a standardized KET writing posttest to examine learning gains and confirm test alignment. The KET writing section (A2 level) included two tasks based on Cambridge's official KET format: a guided writing task (25–30 words) and a short message or paragraph task (30–40 words). Writing was scored using the official KET assessment scale, including content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar. Since the test materials are copyrighted by Cambridge English, the exact items cannot be reproduced in the manuscript. Figure 1 shows the phases of the study.

Figure 1

The Phases of the Study



3.5. Data Analysis

First, qualitative data from interviews and questionnaires were thematically analyzed to identify learners' needs. After data was collected, the researcher used keyword extraction to analyze the results of the interview and questionnaire. Nomoto (2022) expressed keyword extraction as a modern perspective to save time and reach a rapid result. Keyword extraction represents a class of approaches that work by scanning contiguous spans of a

text for a keyword, where we visit each word, determining whether to include it in a pool of potential keywords (Nomoto, 2022. p.15). Quantitative data consisted of KET writing pretest scores as well as the scores from the teacher-made posttest used to assess the effectiveness of the developed materials. Independent-samples t-tests were run using SPSS (version 22) to examine between-group differences.

4. Results

4.1. Results for the First Research Question

To address the first research question (i.e., To what extent does the present English coursebook match the learners' needs?), data from the questionnaire, interviews, and checklist-based evaluation were analyzed. The results consistently revealed a substantial mismatch between *Interactions 2* and learners' actual writing needs.

Students reported that many topics were unfamiliar or irrelevant, which limited their ability to generate ideas for writing. They also emphasized the scarcity of writing tasks and the absence of guided practice or structured writing support. Responses from the questionnaires and interviews further revealed a mismatch between students' interests and the topics presented in the existing coursebook, as well as limited opportunities for pair or group work. Learners expressed difficulties with writing and reported a preference for pair and group activities, stating that they learn from each other.

Furthermore, participants noted that the unfamiliarity of the textbook topics hindered their ability to generate ideas, reflecting a lack of activation of prior knowledge (McDonough et al., 2013). They also indicated that the current textbook did not adequately emphasize writing skills or include exercises that encouraged written production.

The checklist analysis confirmed that the textbook prioritized reading comprehension while offering minimal coverage of writing instruction, including paired-work tasks (Munawar & Chaudhary, 2019; Awada et al., 2020) and student-selected topics (Nasr & Namaziandost, 2019). The results showed that only 26% of the evaluated criteria were fully met by *Interactions 2*. The textbook scored lowest in writing task variety, guided practice and scaffolding, and relevance of topics to learners' backgrounds, while scoring higher in reading comprehension activities and vocabulary support.

The questionnaire results indicated high perceived writing needs among students. Qualitative analysis of the interview data revealed three major themes: (a) lack of relevant topics, (b) insufficient writing instruction, and (c)

need for guided tasks. Quantitative (questionnaire and checklist) and qualitative (interview) findings were integrated using a convergence approach. Patterns emerging from questionnaire means were compared with interview themes, and areas of agreement across the datasets were used to validate the interpretation. Converging evidence consistently indicated insufficient writing support, irrelevant topics, and lack of guided practice in the existing textbook.

In general, based on the interview and questionnaire results, the weaknesses of the previous textbook were related to (1) task preferences (paired and group work), (2) topic familiarity, (3) skill emphasis (greater focus on reading than writing), and (4) writing difficulty due to lack of writing guidelines. Overall, the existing material aligned only weakly with learners' stated needs and established criteria for effective writing materials.

4.2. Results for the Second Research Question

To answer the second research question (i.e., To what extent does the newly developed English coursebook match the learners' needs for English writing?), a new coursebook was developed based on the findings of the previous phase. Findings from the interviews and questionnaires, together with the theoretical frameworks of the referenced scholars, guided the development of new English writing materials for university students of German language. In designing the materials, Tomlinson's (2011) principles were applied to ensure relevance and authenticity. The newly developed coursebook was then evaluated both externally and internally. To minimize bias, three faculty professors served as independent raters and evaluated the coursebook using the same checklist.

4.2.1. External Evaluation

The external features of the new coursebook reflect a clear alignment with the needs identified during the needs analysis. The table of contents shows a transparent progression from controlled to freer writing tasks. Each unit includes a model text, vocabulary support, guided writing stages, and an independent writing task. The objectives stated at the beginning of each unit specify the genre, structural focus, and communicative purpose, ensuring clarity for both teachers and learners. Authentic and relevant themes were selected based on learners' interests and academic backgrounds, addressing the lack of relevance identified in the previous material.

4.2.2. Internal Evaluation

The internal evaluation indicated that the coursebook provides systematic and scaffolded writing instruction. In line with Tomlinson's (2011) emphasis on meaningful input, each unit begins with an accessible model text

drawn from authentic sources, enabling learners to notice organizational and linguistic patterns. Tasks progress from controlled practice to guided reconstruction and finally to independent writing, following the gradual release model recommended by Nunan (1988).

Writing tasks promote idea generation, planning, drafting, and revising, which were absent in the previous material. The coursebook also incorporates pair- and group-work activities, addressing students' stated preference for collaborative learning. Vocabulary and grammar support are embedded in context rather than presented in isolation. Opportunities for learner autonomy are provided through short reflective tasks and self-assessment checklists.

Consistent with McDonough et al.'s (2013) recommendation for balanced skill integration, reading texts are directly connected to writing tasks. Short reading passages serve as models for organization and language use, and follow-up tasks support learners in internalizing genre features. Clear instructions, structured tasks, and thematic coherence assist learners in completing writing tasks despite limited prior experience.

4.2.3. Overall Evaluation

Overall, the newly developed coursebook met both scholarly criteria and learners' identified needs. Its scaffolded instruction, relevant topics, guided practice, and genre-based structure address the shortcomings of the previous material. In line with Baleghizadeh (2019), organizing units into model text, controlled tasks, guided writing, and independent writing strengthens pedagogical flow and supports writing skill development.

The evaluations indicated that most checklist criteria reflected positive outcomes. To ensure inter-rater reliability, the researcher and the raters met to review the checklist results and consolidate their observations into a unified evaluation report. The three raters rated the coursebook highly across all major categories (overall mean = 4.47/5), including relevance of topics, task sequencing, scaffolding, and integration of reading and writing skills. The results confirm that the new coursebook aligns closely with learners' needs and meets established criteria for effective writing instruction.

4.1. Results for the Third Research Question

To address the third question of the study, a quasi-experimental study was conducted to check the effectiveness of the newly developed coursebook. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for writing scores on the pretest and posttest for both the experimental and control groups.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics for Writing Scores (Pretest and Posttest)*

Group	Test	N	M	SD
Experimental (EG)	Pretest	33	12.15	2.95
Experimental (EG)	Posttest	33	18.00	2.85
Control (CG)	Pretest	30	12.80	3.10
Control (CG)	Posttest	30	15.95	2.90

As shown in Table 2, the experimental group ($n = 33$) had a mean pretest score of 12.15 ($SD = 2.95$) and a mean posttest score of 18.00 ($SD = 2.85$). The control group ($n = 30$) had a mean pretest score of 12.80 ($SD = 3.10$) and a mean posttest score of 15.95 ($SD = 2.90$). Accordingly, it is evident that both groups improved their writing scores from pretest to posttest. However, the experimental group showed a larger enhancement (from 12.15 to 18.00) compared to the control group (from 12.80 to 15.95). It suggests that the newly developed coursebook applied to the experimental group may have been more effective in enhancing writing performance.

Afterward, an independent-samples t-test was run to see if there was a statistically significant difference between the pretest writing scores of the experimental and control groups (Table 3).

Table 3*Independent Samples t Test for the Pretest*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% CI of the Difference	
Equal variances assumed	1.65	.20	-1.19	38	.24	-0.65	0.55	-1.76	0.46
Equal variances not assumed.	—	—	-1.19	35.92	.24	-0.65	0.55	-1.76	0.46

According to Table 3, there was no statistically significant difference in the two groups' pretest scores, $t(38) = -1.19$, $p = .24$. This indicates that the two groups were equivalent in writing proficiency prior to the intervention. Finally, an independent-samples t-test was run to see if there was a significant difference between the two groups' writing posttest scores.

Table 3*Independent Samples t Test for the Pretest*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% CI of the Difference	
Equal variances assumed	0.64	0.68	4.19	38	0.000	2.05	0.48	0.64	0.68
Equal variances not assumed.	0.64	0.68	4.19	37.88	0.000	2.05	0.48	0.64	0.68

Based on the results of Levene's Test for equality of variances in Table 3, the variances of both groups' posttest scores were equal ($F=1.647, p > 0.05$). The results of the independent-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in posttest performance, with the experimental group scoring higher than the control group, $t(38) = 4.19, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.33$, indicating a large effect size. Assuming that, there was a meaningful significant difference between the scores of the learners in the control and the experimental group.

5. Discussion

The main goal of the present study was to investigate the (in)appropriateness of the previous English coursebook for university students of German language and to develop new learner-centered units as a coursebook based on the theories and models proposed by Tomlinson (2011), McDonough et al. (2013), Nunan (1988), and Baleghizadeh (2019). The study addressed three research questions.

In response to the first research question, the findings highlighted the inadequacy of the existing coursebook in meeting learners' writing needs. The results demonstrated a mismatch between the previous coursebook and learners' needs based on statistical analyses of the pretest and posttest results, as well as questionnaire and interview findings. Although the control and experimental groups began with comparable proficiency levels, only the experimental group showed significant gains, confirming that the previous English coursebook did not adequately support learners' writing development.

The findings related to the third research question, which examined the extent to which the newly developed English coursebook matched learners' needs for English writing, indicate that the newly developed material was closely aligned with both learners' needs and established theoretical

frameworks. Finally, the findings for the third research question revealed a positive effect of the newly developed material on learners' writing proficiency. The experimental group showed significant improvement in writing performance, indicating the effectiveness of the new English coursebook in enhancing writing ability among university students of German language.

The study made two main contributions. Theoretically, it integrated needs analysis with experimental validation, providing evidence that mixed-method research can bridge the gap between learners' expectations and instructional design. Practically, it offered a sample coursebook for developing localized EFL materials, with implications for EFL/ESP teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers aiming to improve writing instruction in similar contexts.

The results of this study aligned with Alkodimi and Al-Ahdal (2021), who emphasized that considering learners' needs and expectations, along with appropriate methods and sources, plays a key role in material development. As indicated by the questionnaire and interview results, learners' preferred topics, grammar focus, and pair-work activities were important needs addressed in the newly developed materials. Alkodimi and Al-Ahdal (2021) also stated that unsuitable sources and teaching methods lead to poor learning outcomes, a limitation addressed in the present study through careful material design.

The findings were consistent with prior research highlighting the role of suitable resources and instructional strategies in developing writing skills (Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021; Briesmaster & Etchegaray, 2017). The positive effects of group- and pair-based activities, learner autonomy, and self-assessment supported earlier studies on cooperative learning and writing development (Awada et al., 2020; Munawar & Chaudhary, 2019; Ratminingsih et al., 2018).

In line with Briesmaster and Etchegaray (2017), the study emphasized coherence and cohesion in writing development through strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating, which were checked through classroom observation. As reported in the interviews, participants felt exhausted and bored with the topics in the previous coursebook and experienced difficulty generating ideas. In response, the researcher selected relevant and interesting topics based on learners' stated preferences to increase motivation and engagement in writing, as also suggested by Tahmouresi and Papi (2021).

The study further supported the role of sociocultural contexts and cooperative learning in writing instruction, as highlighted by Awada et al.

(2020), Bai et al. (2021), and Munawar and Chaudhary (2019). Pairwork and groupwork activities enabled learners to share ideas and reflect collaboratively during writing tasks. In addition, learner-selected topics were consistent with Nasr and Namaziandost (2019), who found student-selected topics to be more effective than teacher-selected ones. The researcher selected topics based on learners' needs and interests expressed in interviews and questionnaires, an approach also supported by Kardenia et al. (2020).

Corrective feedback was another key element of the newly developed material. The researcher involved the instructor in guiding students and providing feedback during writing tasks, as recommended by Farshi and Safa (2015), who noted that learners receiving corrective feedback demonstrate higher writing ability.

Overall, in light of the reviewed theories and empirical studies, the newly developed coursebook demonstrated effectiveness in improving writing skills among university students of German language. This effectiveness was achieved through the integration of corrective feedback (Briesmaster & Etchegaray, 2017; Farshi & Safa, 2015), suitable and learner-selected topics based on learners' needs and interests (Nasr & Namaziandost, 2019; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021), and cooperative learning activities such as pairwork and groupwork (Awada et al., 2020; Munawar & Chaudhary, 2019).

6. Conclusions

This study demonstrated that the existing commercial coursebook failed to meet the writing needs of German language students, whereas the newly developed, needs-based materials significantly improved their writing proficiency. By combining needs analysis with an experimental trial, the study contributed to EFL material development and underscored the value of contextually relevant resources in enhancing EFL writing instruction. The study aimed to propose newly developed English materials based on the models of Tomlinson (2011), McDonough et al. (2013), Nunan (1988), and Baleghizadeh (2019), who presented influential theories of language materials evaluation and development. Both phases of material evaluation and material development were conducted by the researcher to address two main research questions concerning the appropriateness of the commercial materials for learners and the effectiveness of the newly developed needs-based coursebook.

The results indicated that the previous coursebook was not suitable or relevant to learners' needs. Multiple mismatches were identified between learners' needs and the existing material, which contributed to learners' weak writing performance. After designing a new coursebook, the findings revealed

that the developed material was appropriate for the participants. Consequently, the newly developed coursebook had a significant effect on improving pre-intermediate learners' mastery of English writing skills.

The results of the present study are useful for the Department of German Language, where the research was conducted, as they can empower teachers and language instructors to design materials based on learners' needs. Other departments, such as French language programs, may also use the coursebook as a sample to examine its potential effectiveness with their learners. In addition, the findings are beneficial for English teachers working with bilingual or multilingual students, language material developers, syllabus designers, language institutes, second language learners, and language policymakers seeking to develop needs-based materials for specific groups of learners. Moreover, the results of this study contribute to material evaluation and development by highlighting key problems, factors, theories, and techniques relevant to improving writing skills. Practically, the findings provided a coursebook model that can support teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers in developing localized materials that better align with learners' goals.

Despite its contributions, this study had several limitations. It was conducted only at the Central Tehran Branch of Islamic Azad University and did not include other faculties. In addition, the participants were limited to university students of German language, and other academic majors were not included. Another limitation was the lack of gender-based analysis, as no distinction was made between male and female learners. Furthermore, the study focused solely on pre-intermediate learners, and other proficiency levels were not examined.

Although the study was limited to pre-intermediate German language students at a single university, future research could extend this approach to different proficiency levels, academic disciplines, and institutional contexts. The implications may also apply to other ESP and EFL settings in which non-English majors face challenges in developing academic writing proficiency. Future studies could adapt and evaluate the coursebook across different disciplines, proficiency levels, and cultural contexts, contributing to broader efforts to improve L2 writing instruction. In addition, future research could examine the effectiveness of the developed materials in other language programs, such as French, Spanish, or Italian. It is also recommended that similar studies be conducted with learners at elementary, upper-intermediate, and advanced proficiency levels, as well as with participants from different genders, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of needs-based writing materials.

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