

Reasons for Adapting

1. not enough grammar coverage in general
2. not enough practice of grammar points of particular difficulty to these learners
3. the communicative focus means that grammar is presented unsystematically
4. reading passages contain too much unknown vocabulary → *slow*
5. comprehension questions are too easy
6. listening passages are inauthentic
7. not enough guidance on pronunciation
8. subject-matter inappropriate for learners of this age and intellectual level
9. photographs and other illustrative materials not culturally acceptable
10. amount of material too great / too little to cover in the time allocated to lessons
11. no guidance for teachers on handling group work and role play activities with a large class
12. dialogs are too formal and not representative of everyday speech
13. audio material difficult to use because of problems to do with room size and technical support
14. too much or too little variety in the activities
15. vocabulary list and a key to the exercises would be helpful
16. accompanying tests needed

Undoubtedly much more could be added to this list but it must serve as an illustration of some of the possibilities. All aspects of the language classroom can be covered: the few examples above include (a) aspects of language use (b) skills (c) classroom organization and (d) supplementary material

Principles and Procedures

The focus is on what the materials contain measured against the requirements of a particular teaching environment. The environment may necessitate a number of changes that will lead to greater appropriacy. This is most likely to be expressed in terms of a need to personalize, individualize or localize. We take personalizing here to refer to increasing the relevance of content in relation to learners' interests and their academic, educational or professional needs. Individualizing will address the learning styles both of individuals and of the members of a class working closely together. Localizing takes into account the international geography of English language teaching and recognizes that what may work well in your country.

There are a number of points to bear in mind. Firstly, this can be seen as another kind of matching process or congruence where techniques; or, conversely, a single technique can be applied to different content areas. For example, a reading passage might be grammatically simplified or its subject-matter modified, or it can be made shorter or broken into smaller parts. The technique of simplification can be applied to

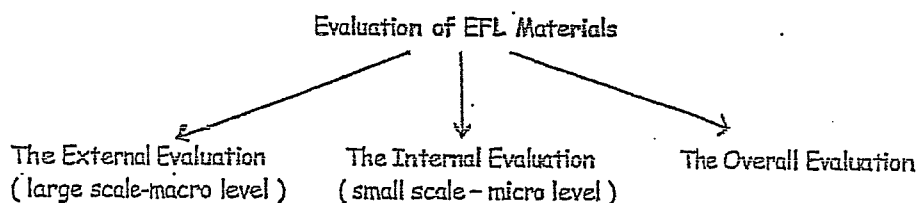
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Evaluating ELT Materials

The ability to evaluate teaching materials effectively is a very important professional activity for all EFL teachers. Cunningsworth (1984) suggests that there are very few teachers who do not use published course materials at some stage in their teaching career. Many of us find that it is something that we do very regularly in our professional lives. We may wish at this stage to make a distinction between teaching situations where open-market materials are chosen on the one hand and where a Ministry of Education produces materials which are subsequently passed on to the teacher for classroom use on the other. The nature of the evaluation process in each of these scenarios will probably differ as well:

1. teachers may have quite a large amount of choice in the materials they select
2. teachers are often under considerable professional and financial pressure to select a coursebook for an ELT program which will then become the textbook maybe for years to come
3. no textbook or set of materials is likely to be perfect and even though it is clear that coursebook assessment is fundamentally a subjective activity
4. for some teachers the selection of a good textbook can be valuable particularly in contexts where the assimilation of stimulating, authentic materials can be difficult to organize, etc.

Here we will examine this topic under three stages: an external evaluation which offers a brief overview of the materials from the outside (cover, introduction, table of contents...) which is often followed by a closer and more detailed internal evaluation. Of course the evaluation process is never static when materials are deemed appropriate for a particular course after a preliminary evaluation, their ultimate success or failure may only be determined after a certain amount of classroom use (summative / overall evaluation)



DEVELOPING LANGUAGE TEACHING MATERIALS

Sometimes teachers and other specialists in language teaching feel the need to create their own materials because they may not be satisfied with the materials that are available. If, for example, a course book is going to be developed for a particular group of learners, people should not forget that the writing of a course book is not an easy task; it is an activity that requires teamwork. Besides some pedagogical problems, there may be other financial problems in the publication phase. In spite of all these problems if someone decides to write a course book, the following phases will be very important:

1. Identifying the needs, age, sex, intellectual, educational background, language level, expectations, interests, hobbies, cultural background, social status, etc. of the learners,
2. Deciding on the content of the course book i.e. the teaching points (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar), the skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), the exercises and activities to be included in the book and the texts providing contexts for these points; deciding on the type of syllabus that would fit the needs of a particular group of learners from the different types of syllabuses,
3. Arranging and grading the materials in the book is another significant task. Grading, i.e. the speed with which the learner progresses, how much new material is introduced in a given number of hours, how close together or how far apart new grammatical structures are in relation to each other, how much new vocabulary is introduced in each unit and so on (Cunningsworth, 1984)
(Note: The question that has to be answered here is the grading of the language content steep or shallow? If in each unit and after the teaching of a particular grammar point, there were four or five practice exercises, the course would be considered steeply graded. If a course devoted six units to the present tense of the verb "to be", that course would be considered shallow graded.)
4. Designing the presentation and practice parts of the book is a very important phase of course book development. The author has to consider whether the course book is for beginners, intermediate, or advanced learners. S/he has to decide whether to present new language through reading, listening, or in dialogs, etc. whether to use authentic language or not; which skills to emphasize; which types of exercises and activities to use; which supporting materials to use
5. Another important point about the content of a language course is the recycling of the already learnt material(s). In other words, it is not a good idea to teach structures and/or vocabulary items once only and then forget about them. A new structure and/or word need to be recycled several times throughout the book so that it is / they are learnt adequately. The new item(s) can be presented in different context and in this way learners meet them in different contexts and develop a full understanding of those item(s).

Selecting and Developing Teaching/Learning Materials

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Why do We Use Materials/What are Materials for?

Language instruction has five important components--students, a teacher, materials, teaching methods, and evaluation. Why are materials important in language instruction? What do materials do in language instruction? Can we teach English without a textbook?

Allwright (1990) argues that materials should teach students to learn, that they should be resource books for ideas and activities for instruction/learning, and that they should give teachers rationales for what they do. From Allwright's point of view, textbooks are too inflexible to be used directly as instructional material. O'Neill (1990), in contrast, argues that materials may be suitable for students' needs, even if they are not designed specifically for them, that textbooks make it possible for students to review and prepare their lessons, that textbooks are efficient in terms of time and money, and that textbooks can and should allow for adaptation and improvisation.

Allwright emphasizes that materials control learning and teaching. O'Neill emphasizes that they help learning and teaching. It is true that in many cases teachers and students rely heavily on textbooks, and textbooks determine the components and methods of learning, that is, they control the content, methods, and procedures of learning. Students learn what is presented in the textbook, and the way the textbook presents material is the way students learn it. The educational philosophy of the textbook will influence the class and the learning process. Therefore, in many cases, materials are the center of instruction and one of the most important influences on what goes on in the classroom.

Theoretically, experienced teachers can teach English without a textbook. However, it is not easy to do it all the time, though they may do it sometimes. Many teachers do not have enough time to make supplementary materials, so they just follow the textbook. Textbooks therefore take on a very important role in language classes, and it is important to select a good textbook.

The Role of Materials in Relation to Other Elements

Since the end of 1970s, there has been a movement to make learners rather than teachers the center of language learning. According to this approach to teaching, learners are more important than teachers, materials, curriculum, methods, or evaluation. As a matter of fact, curriculum, materials, teaching methods, and evaluation should all be designed for learners and their needs. It is the teacher's responsibility to check to see whether all of the elements of the learning process are working well for learners and to adapt them if they are not.

In other words, learners should be the center of instruction and learning. The curriculum is a statement of the goals of learning, the methods of learning, etc. The role of teachers is to help learners to learn. Teachers have to follow the curriculum and provide, make, or choose materials. They may adapt, supplement, and elaborate on those materials and also monitor the progress and needs of the students and finally evaluate students.

Materials include textbooks, video and audio tapes, computer software, and visual aids. They influence the content and the procedures of learning. The choice of deductive vs inductive learning, the role of memorization, the use of creativity and problem solving, production vs. reception, and the order in which materials are presented are all influenced by the materials.

Technology, such as OHP, slides, video and audio tape recorders, video cameras, and computers, supports instruction/learning.

Textbooks should have support for learning. This can take the form of vocabulary lists, exercises which cover or expand on the content, visual aids, etc. Traditionally, language teaching materials in Japan are made up mostly of text, with few, if any, visual aids. However, with the development of technology, photos, visual materials and audio materials have become very important components of language teaching materials, and they are becoming easier to obtain. Teachers need to learn how to find them, and how to best exploit these characteristics.

Materials are getting more complicated, and instructional philosophy, approach, methods, and techniques are getting more important. Teachers need to be able to evaluate materials involving photos, videos, and computers now.

How Can We Learn About Materials?

There are various ways to get information about textbooks and other teaching materials. Many materials are published by publishers and developed and distributed by commercial companies. Thus, publishers are useful (if not entirely unbiased) sources of information and advice about what materials are available and what materials are appropriate for various purposes. Many publishers provide sample copies on request. Bookstores that carry textbooks are another possible source of information. Clerks at such bookstores may help you find the materials you want. In addition, publishers' displays at conferences are useful. They usually have the most recent materials, exhibitors are willing to help you and answer your questions, and in some cases, you will have opportunities to meet and talk with the authors. Colleagues and friends who are teachers are also good sources of recommendations of textbooks and advice about how to best use them. Finally, there is information from computer mailing lists and web pages on the Internet. Lists on language teaching often have discussions on materials, and you can ask questions and may get good feedback. Many publishers have www pages and e-mail addresses, so you can check with them and also ask questions about the materials.

How do We Get Materials?

In addition to publishers, there are many possible sources of materials. There is a lot of material available on the Internet. You can search for materials when you have free time, and store them for your future classes.

Many teachers go abroad during vacations these days, and they can collect materials in English-speaking countries. TV and radio are good sources. They provide a variety of materials. The information is current and the language is natural, but the content has to be chosen carefully. Newspapers, magazines, advertisements, and other types of printed material are very useful. Teachers can take photos, make video tapes or record audio tapes. If they make plans before they go overseas, they may be able to make good video or audio programs.

Even in your home country, you can browse the world wide web and search for useful materials for classes. There are lots of sources of materials and photos on www.

Concerns About Materials

The market of language teaching materials are fairly large, and many companies are competing. They produce new materials and promote them with many advertisements and through their salespeople. You need to be careful about what they tell you. You always need to examine their materials carefully from the point of view of what is appropriate for your students and the classes you are teaching.

Another concern about materials is that the copyright issue. Many teachers violate the copyright laws every day. We cannot copy any copyrighted materials. Of course, we cannot copy them and distribute them to our students in the class. We need the permission from the publisher to do so.

Summary and Conclusion

Though there are five elements in language instruction, and learners should be the center of instruction. However, materials often control the instruction, since teachers and learners tend to rely heavily on them. Materials that are appropriate for a particular class need to have an underlying instructional philosophy, approach, method and technique which suit the students and their needs. They should have correct, natural,

ADAPTING MATERIALS

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PART 1

MATERIALS ADAPTATION: OPTION OR NECESSITY?

Basic Premises

There is seldom time to use everything in the coursebook (CB).

CBs cannot cater for all possible teaching contexts.

CBs tend to offer a variety of materials for teachers to choose from.

CBs may not offer enough material.

CB selection criteria may not always be explicit or sound.

Teachers don't always have a say in CB selection.



Implications

What the CB offers can never be exactly what our learners need.

The CB methodology may not match our own.

Our general aims may not match the aims of the CB.

The aims of a particular lesson/unit in the CB may not match our lesson-by-lesson aims.

We will have to prioritise and select.

We may need to supplement the CB



Coursebook adaptation is inevitable

PART 2 GENERAL GUIDELINES

WHAT TO CHECK IN A COURSEBOOK
Identify CB actual methodology (which may differ from the stated one)
Identify CB syllabus (topic? notional? functional? structural? combination?)
Content and balance (grammar, lexis, pronunciation, skills, strategies)
Identify CB organisation (starting point, integration, recycling)
Identify lesson/unit aims (don't teach 'pages')

WHAT TO CHECK IN A LESSON / UNIT
<p>Content and Balance</p> <p>Grammar</p> <p>Lexis</p> <p>Pronunciation</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Integration</p> <p>Learning Strategies</p>
<p>Aims</p> <p>Relevance</p> <p>Quantity</p> <p>Challenge</p>
<p>Topics</p> <p>Relevance</p> <p>Interest</p>

PART 3 ADAPTATION ALTERNATIVES

What can I adapt?

Aims
Topics
Texts
Visuals
Guidelines and Explanations
Exercises, Activities, Tasks
Games, Quizzes, Questionnaires

How can I adapt it?

Omit
Re-order
Replace
Change
Combine
Add

Where do I get alternative materials?

Same CB
Other ELT books
Publications (newspapers, magazines, encyclopedias, novels etc.)
Media (radio, TV)
Internet
Corpora
Own materials

<p>Methodology</p> <p>Telling vs. Eliciting</p> <p>Input vs. Discovery</p> <p>Teaching vs. Testing</p> <p>Teacher vs. Learner centered</p> <p>Fluency vs. Accuracy</p> <p>Communication vs. Mechanical Practice</p>
<p>Materials</p> <p>(i.e. texts, exercises, activities, tasks)</p> <p>Methodology</p> <p>Relevance</p> <p>Quantity</p> <p>Sequencing</p> <p>Grading</p>
<p>Texts</p> <p>Relevance to aims</p> <p>Complexity</p> <p>Authenticity</p> <p>Length</p> <p>Interest</p>
<p>Support</p> <p>Rules</p> <p>Explanations</p> <p>Guidelines</p>

PART 4

WHY MAY I WANT TO ADAPT?

Omit because ...
<p>Learners are clear about a language point.</p> <p>Learners are competent in a skill.</p> <p>There are too many tasks on a particular area/point.</p> <p>The item/area concerned is not a priority.</p> <p>The item/task is not well designed.</p> <p>The item/task is not well-suited to its aim(s).</p> <p>The topic is not appropriate for learners.</p>
Re-order/Combine to ...
<p>Match your aims.</p> <p>Use a practice task for lead-in and elicitation.</p> <p>Revise an area earlier than the CB does.</p> <p>Compare and contrast areas.</p> <p>Provide thematic unity.</p> <p>Provide an appropriate follow-up.</p>
Replace because ...
<p>Texts are of inappropriate length.</p> <p>Materials are inappropriate for the aim.</p> <p>Materials are inappropriate for learners' age/ experience.</p> <p>Materials are unclear/ confusing / misleading.</p> <p>Tasks are badly designed.</p>
Add because ...
<p>Areas are not covered (sufficiently).</p> <p>Texts/pictures/tasks are not provided.</p> <p>Texts/pictures/tasks are fewer than needed.</p> <p>Tasks are limited in scope.</p> <p>Tasks are of limited range re. methodology.</p>

PART 5

WHAT TO CHECK IN MATERIALS WITH A LEXICAL FOCUS

Focus
Single words - Multi-word items Denotation - Connotation Register and genre Collocation and colligation Affixation
Materials and Procedures
Are learners given the meaning or are they guided to discover it? Is there a clear context for presentation/discovery and practice? How rich is the context? Are learners given enough language data to discover/understand meaning & use? Are lexical items grouped? Is the grouping meaningful and memorable? Do exercises/activities teach or test? Is there a balance between global and focused activities? Is there a balance between free and controlled activities? Are the activities realistic? Are the activities personalised?

PART 6

WHAT TO CHECK IN MATERIALS WITH A GRAMMAR FOCUS

Focus
Form Meaning Function Use
Methodology
Deductive vs. Inductive Form → Meaning vs. Meaning → Form Comprehension/Interpretation vs. Production
Data
Context Text vs. Examples Amount Authenticity Clarity Interest Usefulness
Rules & Explanations
Terminology Clarity Accuracy Generality Amount of detail Exceptions Usefulness
Practice

Context
Amount
Focus (form, meaning, use)
Communication (purpose, audience)
Interest
Personalisation
Effectiveness

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