

Material Designing in Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

This article considers about material designing in language teaching. Also analyses types of teaching and learning materials. There are given some instructions for language teachers in developing materials for any aspect of language learning.

Keywords:

Material Designing, Language Teaching, Instructions for Teachers, Developing Materials, Set of Decisions, Views of Language and Learning, Learner Centeredness.

The design of teaching materials requires the student teachers to take a set of decisions, make choices and explain the reasons for them. This practice will grant them some autonomy (in terms of taking responsibility for decision-making), and create opportunities (and the necessity) for reflection.

Materials obviously reflect the writers' views of language and learning, and teachers (and students) will respond according to how well these matches their own beliefs and expectations. Language is as it is because of the purposes we put it to. For this reason, materials must contextualize the language they present.

These are the types of teaching-learning materials:

Visuals Aids: Blackboard, Posters, Flashcards, Presentations, Printed textbooks, Graphs and Infographics.

Audio Aids: Radio, Tape-recorder and CDs. Audio-visual aids: Videos, Video recordings, Films and Documentaries, Virtual Classrooms.

Language Laboratory.

Instructional materials are the content or information conveyed within a course. These

include the lectures, readings, textbooks, multimedia components, and other resources in a course.

Objectives of Teaching-Learning Materials:

- Teaching aids make every student an active participant in the classroom.
- Teaching aids help students to relate to what is being taught to real-life situations.
- Teaching aids provide reinforcement for better learning.
- They make the learning permanent among the students.

In developing materials for any aspect of language learning, whether it be a skill-based course in listening, speaking, reading or writing or an integrated skills basic series, the materials developers' beliefs about teaching and learning will have a major impact on materials' design, since it will play a role in determining the goals the writer sets for the materials, the focus of the materials themselves and the activities they make use of.

Materials' developers draw on knowledge of research and theory as well as beliefs and principles in planning a course. In planning materials for the teaching of writing for example, the materials developer could start from any of a number of views of the nature of writing or of texts. He or she could start from a view of written language that focuses on writing-modes, i.e. the organizational modes underlying paragraphs and essays, such as definition, comparison-contrast, classification, or cause effect.

Alternatively the materials' developer might start from a genre or textbased view of written language in which texts such as news reports, business letters, or academic articles are seen to reflect their use in particular contexts. Or the writer could begin from a process perspective in which written texts are seen to reflect the cognitive and composing processes that go into their creation, such as prewriting, planning, drafting, composing, reviewing, revising, and editing. If on the other hand one were preparing a listening course the materials developer would need to clarify his or her understanding of the nature of listening. Is it viewed largely as a process of decoding input? Is it viewed in terms of the mastery of discrete listening skills and sub-skills? Or it is seen as a blend of top-down and bottom-up processing? For a speaking course likewise a starting point is selecting an appropriate theory or model of the nature of oral interaction. Will it be based on a model of communicative competence and seek address grammatical competence, to sociolinguistic competence. discourse competence and strategic competence? Or is oral communication viewed more in terms of speech act theory focusing on utterances as functional units in communication dependent upon the performance of speech acts? The materials developer will also need to consider the complementary question of the theory of language learning underlying the materials, since this will determine how the syllabus is implemented in the form of exercises, tasks, activities and learning experiences. Particular language models are often linked to particular views of learning. For example, a textbased approach to the teaching of writing is often linked to a Vygotskian view of learning based on the notion of scaffolding (Lantolf, 2000).

The teacher and the learners are viewed as engaged in a collaborative problem-solving with the teacher activity demonstrations, support, guidance and input and gradually withdrawing these as the learner becomes increasingly independent. Models of good writing are employed and writing (or more correctly, text construction) is taught through a process of deconstruction, modelling, and joint elaboration and reconstruction as students create their own texts. The theory of learning underlying approaches to the teaching of conversation might be based on a somewhat different view of learning. It could reflect an interactionist view of language acquisition based on the hypothesis that language acquisition requires or greatly benefits from interaction, communication, and especially negotiation of meaning, which happens when interlocutors attempt to overcome problems in conveying their meaning, resulting in both additional input and useful feedback on the learners' own production. The materials developer may also seek to reflect a particular philosophy or teaching and learning in the materials, one based on a specific educational approach such as "collaborative learning" "learner "communicative approach" or centeredness," as we see in these statements of principles underlying a secondary school English course:

- There is a consistent focus throughout on learning English in order to develop practical and functional skills, rather than as an end in itself.
- Students are engaged in practical tasks that relate to real-world uses of English.
- Realistic and communicative uses of English are given priority.
- Maximum use is made of pair and group activities in which students complete tasks collaboratively.
- There is an appropriate balance between accuracy-focused and fluencyfocused activities.
- Teachers serve as facilitators of learning, rather than presenters of information

The teacher's philosophy emphasizes the teacher's attitude and the need to create a supportive environment for learning in the classroom. She stresses the need for lesson

planning, but her justification for lesson planning is based on helping the students rather than helping the teacher. Other examples of teachers' principles include:

- Follow the learners' interest to maintain students' involvement.
- Always teach to the whole class not just to the best students.
- Seek ways to encourage independent student learning.
 - Make learning fun.
 - Build take-away value in every lesson.
- Address learners' mental processing capacities.
- Facilitate learner responsibility or autonomy.

So teachers who take part in materials development workshops and courses generally commence a course with very little awareness of the kinds of knowledge and skills involved in developing classroom materials, observed above, often underestimate the nature of the skills involved. From my experience of teaching courses of this kind, teachers who prove most adept at materials development are proficient in English, have relevant practical classroom experience to draw on, have academic knowledge related to the area they wish to focus on, are familiar with a wide range of teaching techniques and strategies, enjoy collaborating with others and are receptive to constructive and at times, critical feedback, and look for original and creative solutions to issues that arise in materials preparation. Not all language teachers will go on to develop classroom materials due to limitations of time and resources as well as limitations in their language proficiency. For these teachers, a course in materials development is still useful, since it gives them a better understanding of what underlies the materials they teach from. Other teachers may go on to become key decisionmakers and curriculum planners in their institutions or may already be engaged in different aspects of materials development. For both of these groups of teachers, comments such as those above suggest that learning the skills of materials development is a valuable component of their professional development.

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