

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS IN TEACHING MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE BOOKS

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***Abstract:** English language teaching is now thoroughly investigated by majority of language experts due to its lingua franca status. Thus, they have put an effort into the creation and design of effective language teaching materials to implement teaching environment where instructional delivery of units takes place successfully via the designed materials by language educators. This thesis aims at offering some solutions to this problem through a set of ten guidelines.*

***Keywords:** contextualized, authentic, user-friendly, organization*

ВАЖНЫЕ СООБРАЖЕНИЯ ПРИ УЧЕБНЫХ МАТЕРИАЛАХ РАЗРАБОТКА УЧЕБНИКОВ ПО АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

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***Аннотация:** Преподавание английского языка в настоящее время тщательно изучается большинством языковедов из-за его статуса lingua franca. Таким образом, они приложили усилия к созданию и разработке эффективных материалов для обучения языку для создания учебной среды, в которой обучение единицам происходит успешно с помощью материалов, разработанных преподавателями языков. Эта диссертация направлена на то, чтобы предложить некоторые решения этой проблемы с помощью набора из десяти руководящих принципов.*

Ключевые слова: контекстуальный, аутентичный, удобный для пользователя, организация.

Guideline 1: English language teaching materials should be contextualised

Firstly, the materials should be contextualised to the curriculum they are intended to address. It is essential during the design stages that the objectives of the curriculum, syllabus or scheme within the designer's institution are kept to the fore. This is not to suggest that materials design should be solely determined by a list of course specifications or by large inventories of vocabulary that need to be imparted, but these are certainly among the initial considerations.

Guideline 2: Materials should stimulate interaction and be generative in terms of language

It can be stated that “most people who learn to communicate fluently in a language which is not their L1 do so by spending a lot of time in situations where they have to use the language for some real communicative purpose”. Ideally, language-teaching materials should provide situations that demand the same; situations where learners need to interact with each other regularly in a manner that reflects the type of interactions they will engage in outside of the classroom. Hall outlines three conditions he believes are necessary to stimulate real communication: these are the need to “have something we want to communicate”, “someone to communicate with”, and, perhaps most importantly, “some interest in the outcome of the communication”. This can be referred as the “learning by doing philosophy”, and suggests procedures such as information gap and information transfer activities, which can be used to ensure that interaction is necessary. Language learning will be maximally enhanced if materials designers are able to acknowledge the communication challenges inherent in an interactive teaching approach and address the different norms of interaction, such as preferred personal space, for example, directly within their teaching materials.

Guideline 3: English language teaching materials should encourage learners to develop learning skills and strategies

It is impossible for teachers to teach their learners all the language they need to know in the short time that they are in the classroom. In addition to teaching valuable new language skills, it is essential that language teaching materials also teach their target learners how to learn, and that they help them to take advantage of language learning opportunities outside the classroom.

Guideline 4: English language teaching materials should allow for a focus on form as well as function

Frequently, the initial motivation for designing materials stems from practitioners' desires to make activities more communicative—often as “an antidote to the profusion of skills-based activities and artificial language use pervasive in the field of ESL instruction”. Sometimes, though, in the desire to steer a wide berth around this more traditional approach, materials are developed which allow absolutely no scope for a focus on language form. The aim of Guideline 3 is to develop active, independent language learners.

Guideline 5: English language teaching materials should offer opportunities for integrated language use

Language teaching materials can tend to focus on one particular skill in a somewhat unnatural manner. Some courses have a major focus on productive skills, and in these reading and listening become second-rate skills. With other materials, reading or writing may dominate. It can be pointed out that, “at the very least we listen and speak together, and read and write together”. Ideally, materials produced should give learners opportunities to integrate all the language skills in an authentic manner and to become competent at integrating extra-linguistic factors also.

Guideline 6: English language teaching materials should be authentic

Much space has been devoted in language teaching literature to debating the desirability (and otherwise) of using authentic materials in language teaching classrooms and, indeed, to defining exactly what constitutes genuine versus simulated text. It is the authors' view that it is imperative for second language learners to be regularly exposed in the classroom to real, unscripted language—to passages that have not been produced specifically for language learning purposes.

Guideline 7: English language teaching materials should link to each other to develop a progression of skills, understandings and language items

One potential pitfall for teacher-designed materials mentioned in the first part of this article relates to the organisation within and between individual tasks. There is a very real danger with self-designed and adapted materials that the result can be a hotchpotch of unconnected activities.

Guideline 8: English language teaching materials should be attractive

Criteria for evaluating English language teaching materials and course books frequently include reference to the 'look' and the 'feel' of the product. Some aspects of these criteria that are particularly pertinent to materials designers are discussed below.

Physical appearance: Initial impressions can be as important in the language classroom as they are in many other aspects of life. Put simply, language-teaching materials should be good to look at. Factors to consider include the density of the text on the page, the type size, and the cohesiveness and consistency of the layout.

User-friendliness: Materials should also be attractive in terms of their 'usability'. Some simple examples: if the activity is a gap-fill exercise, is there enough space for learners to handwrite their responses? If an oral response is required during a tape or video exercise, is the silence long enough to allow for both thinking and responding?

Durability: If materials need to be used more than once, or if they are to be used by many different students, consideration needs to be given to how they can be made robust enough to last the required distance.

Ability to be reproduced: Language teaching institutions are not renowned for giving their staff unlimited access to colour copying facilities, yet many do-it-yourself materials designers continue to produce eye-catching multi-coloured originals, and suffer frustration and disappointment when what emerges from the photocopier is a class-set of grey blurs.

Guideline 9: English language teaching materials should have appropriate instructions

This guideline applies as much to the instructions that are provided for other teachers who may use the materials, as it does for the intended learners. It seems to be stating the obvious to say that instructions should be clear, but, often, excellent materials fail in their “pedagogical realisation” because of a lack of clarity in their instructions. For instructions to be effective, they should be written in language that is appropriate for the target learners, and the use of the correct metalanguage can assist with making instructions more concise and efficient.

Guideline 10: English language teaching materials should be flexible

In the end, teachers must weigh up the benefits and costs of designing their own teaching materials and make their own decision as to whether it is worth the time and effort. As can be understood, the good DIY teacher, with time on his or her hands, with unlimited resources, and the confidence to marshal those resources into a clear and coherent language program, is probably about as good as it gets for the average language learner. Inevitably there will be numerous constraints on any materials designer and compromises will be necessary.

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