Materials for Language Teaching

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Abstract: Teaching has become an important aspect which includes knowledge, skills, presentation and basically paralingual skills. Teaching demands broad knowledge of subject matter in all horizons, complete curriculum with standards, positive and caring attitude with enthusiasm, and a desire for learning and techniques of classroom management and a desire to make a difference in the lives of young people. But, in this digital era, the course books should not be the only teaching material used in the classroom; because the use of course books alone would be boring and not very stimulating for the students. One of the outstanding developments in the educational technology in recent years is the increased use of teaching aids in teaching learning process. It seems important that teacher should arrange different teaching materials like Visual Aids: Blackboard, Bulletin Boards, Flannel Boards, Magne Boards, Realia, Pictures, Charts, Flash Charts, Maps, Calendars, Cartoon, Clocks, Sliders, Filmstrips. Audio Aids: Radio, Phonograph, Records, Tapes in order to make students remember their language. The existence of materials is totally based on the creativity and innovative ways of teachers. No one can assume even a single material without a Teacher because it is a teacher who uses the materials in the classroom effectively and the effective usage of those materials is reflected by the involvement of the students. Using this content to teach the English language can make the learning process even more engaging, imaginative and motivating for students. It can be useful to elicit genuine response from learners.

Key words: Digital era, Visual aids, Audio aids, paralingual skills

INTRODUCTION

The tradition of English teaching has been drastically changed with the remarkable entry of technology. Technology provides so many options as making teaching interesting and also making teaching more productive in terms of improvements. Technology is one of the most significant drivers of both social and linguistic change. Graddol: (1997:16) states that" technology lies at the heart of the globalization process; affecting education work and culture. With the rapid development of science and technology, the emerging and developing of multimedia technology and its application to teaching, featuring audio, visual, animation effects comes into full play in English class teaching and sets a favorable platform for reform and exploration on English teaching model in the new era. It's proved that multimedia technology plays a positive role in promoting activities and initiatives of student and teaching effect in English class.

Traditional teaching has hampered students' capacity to comprehend certain language and also understanding to structure, meaning and function of the language, and makes the students passive recipients of knowledge, so it is hard to achieve the target of communication. Multimedia teachings enrich teaching content and make the best of class time and break the "teacher centered" teaching pattern and fundamentally improve class efficiency. Multimedia technology goes beyond time and space, creates more vivid, visual, authentic environment for English learning, stimulates students' initiatives and economizes class time meanwhile increases class information.

Teachers have a lot of opportunity to include their students in the planning process, especially considering that English is a subject with endless possibilities: you can read, write, see a movie, listen to music, talk about anything, etc. Whatever material a teacher chooses for his or her students, the students can influence these choices. When using course books, students can decide what chapters and exercises to work with and what to skip. They could also be encouraged to select material outside of course books and hence combine course books with other material. In my experience, this way of combining different teaching materials seems to be more common today than the use of course books or alternative material alone.

Alternative material is mainly referred to as 'authentic' or 'real-life material'. Mitchell (1995:39) describes authentic material as material that was

originally produced for native speakers. According to this criterion authentic teaching material can for example consist of magazines, newspapers or recordings of real-life conversations. Little et al (ibid 1995:45) define authentic texts as follows:

> *An authentic text is a text that was created to fulfill some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced. Thus novels, poems, newspaper and magazine articles, handbooks and manuals, recipes and telephone directories are all examples of authentic texts; and so too are radio and television broadcasts and computer programmes.*

The most important consideration is that the materials should meet our students' needs as Cunningsworth puts it: "Students particularly more sophisticated adults and teenagers need to feel that the materials from which they are learning have to be connected with the real world and at the same time they must be related positively to the aspects of their inner make up such as age, level of education, social attitudes, the intellectual ability and level of emotional maturity." (Cunningsworth, A., 1984)

However appealing a particular method might be to you as you first encounter it, however sensible and practical it might seem, the best method is one which you have derived through your very own careful process of formulation, tryout, revision, and refinement […] There are no instant recipes. No quick and easy method is guaranteed to provide success. Every learner is unique. Every teacher is unique (Brown 2000:15).

In view of the fact that English as a subject lacks any prescriptions regarding what material to use, teachers have great autonomy of choosing whether or not they wish to use alternative material (Gymnasieskolans regelbok 2005:207ff). The main point is that as long as students reach the goals, teachers have the liberty to use material of their own choice. They can choose alternative material, ready-made material such as course books or a combination of both.

Many teachers choose to use course books as their main resource in the classroom whereas some teachers use them only to complement alternative material. Lundahl (1998:11) believes that there is a reason to react if an entire course revolves around course books and suggests a combination of course books and alternative material. Furthermore, he remarks that

there are many advantages with authentic texts; "above all they give students a chance of meeting contents that interest them, stories that fascinate and linguistic challenges that cannot be offered by course books". However, he also points out that several course books today provide texts of good quality.

Woodward (2001:146) writes about advantages and disadvantages of using course books in language teaching. Some benefits of course books are that they give students comprehensible directions and a sense of progress; students can clearly see what and how much they have accomplished in a course as they proceed in their textbook. In addition, since course books are often written by experienced teachers, goals from the syllabus are included. Coursebooks also provide teachers with ready-made material, which makes planning less time-consuming since the planning has already been made and the material already been chosen. Furthermore, they give students independence, as every learner is free to look ahead and use the course books without depending on a teacher.

As mentioned above, course books also have disadvantages. Little et al (1995:46) point out that some textbooks have characters and situations that are of no interest to students. In addition, if course material is organized in the same pattern, students might be bored and find the course books predictable. It may also be the case that the level of the course books does not match that of the students. Moreover, some authors of course books construct unfamiliar cultures. There are course books that contain typical 'course books families' that actually have little equivalence to the majority of people living in the target-language culture. As a result, learners will not acquire an understanding for what the society where the natives in their target language live looks like in reality (Tornberg 2000:52).

Earlier materials were sparingly used mostly by the teachers as aids to teach in the class. But today with the rapid change in the emphasis from teaching to learning in a learner-centered approach, the learners need more and more materials of various types to enhance his/her capacity to learn in groups or individually. Therefore, learning materials can no longer be used restrictively as 'teaching aids'. They should rather be used by the students for learning and by the teachers for aiding teaching. Hence, appropriately such a material is called as 'Teaching-

Learning Material' (TLMs). The Teaching Learning Materials are being designed to disable the monotonous learning methods. These TLMs made a shift from Response Strengthening to Knowledge Acquisition for construction of Knowledge. "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". (Allwright 1990: 65)

We are familiar with materials specifically prepared for teaching and learning particular subjects or topics. Maps, charts, pictures, models, toys, marbles, coloured sticks, flash cards, number and alphabet cards are examples of some of the most common prepared TLMs known and used by teachers. For our classroom requirements we acquire these materials in two ways: (i) procuring from the market (ii) developing by ourselves or sometimes involving students.

Another way of categorization of TLMs is based on the audio and visual effects produced by the materials. Accordingly, there are three types of TLMs: Audio, Visual and Audio-Visual.

(i) Audio aids: The materials or devices which call upon the auditory senses and thus help the individuals to learn through listening e.g. Radio broadcasts, Cassette and CD player.

(ii) Visual aids: The aids which call upon the visual senses and thus help the learners to learn through viewing. The important and under this head are Black board, Charts, Pictures, Graphs, Models, Film strips, Slides etc.

(iii) Audio-Visual aids: The devices which require the auditory as well as visual senses and helping the students to learn through listening as well as viewing. Examples of such aids are television, films and computer-assisted instruction.

Still another way of categorizing TLMs is based on projected, non- projected or experiential.

(i) Projected aids: Movies, epidiascope, magic lantern, micro-projectors and projection with the overhead projectors, LCD projector are examples of projected aids.

(ii) Non-Projected aids: Chalk board, felt board, bulletin board, photographs, posters, maps, charts, globes, specimens, and text book illustrations, come under non-projected aids.

(iii) Experiential Aids: Field trips, educational tours, visit to important institutions and industries, observing experiments, demonstrations and natural phenomena are a few examples of experiential aids.

Digital games encompass much more than your computer's Solitaire or Nintendo's Super Mario Bros. Over the last decade, the genre of digital games has exploded to include numerous platforms and designs. Digital games, whether computer-, game console-, or handheld-based, are characterized by rules, goals & objectives, outcomes & feedback, conflict/ competition/challenge/opposition, interaction, and representation of story (Prenksy, 2001) or more simply, "Purposeful, goal-oriented, rule-based activity that the players perceive as fun" (Klopfer, 2008).

In spite of advantages of application of multimedia technology to English class teaching has to improve teaching effect and university students' overall capacities, there are many problems existing in practical teaching. If teacher is totally dependent on multimedia devices during teaching, the teachers may be turned into slaves to the multimedia and cannot play the leading role in teaching; it is observed in practice that a lot of teachers are active in multimedia technology application but not proficient enough to handle it confidently. In class, they are standing by the computer and students are fixing their attention only on the screen, and therefore, there is no eye contact between teachers and students. The introduction of multimedia technology featuring audio, visual, textual effect fully meets audio and visual requirements of the students and enhance their interest, but it also results in lack of communication between teachers and students, replacement of teachers' voice by computer sound, and teachers' analysis by visual image and students have' few chances for speaking communication.

Language teaching materials are having a very important effect and role in language learning and teaching activities. By means of using the teaching materials, teachers increase students' interests and motivations to the subjects and lessons. So the students listen to the teacher more carefully and don't forget whatever their teachers teach them. In this way the teachers can create desire of learning and all the students participate in the lesson vividly and voluntarily. Teachers can enrich the courses by using supportive language teaching materials.

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