Blog Posts
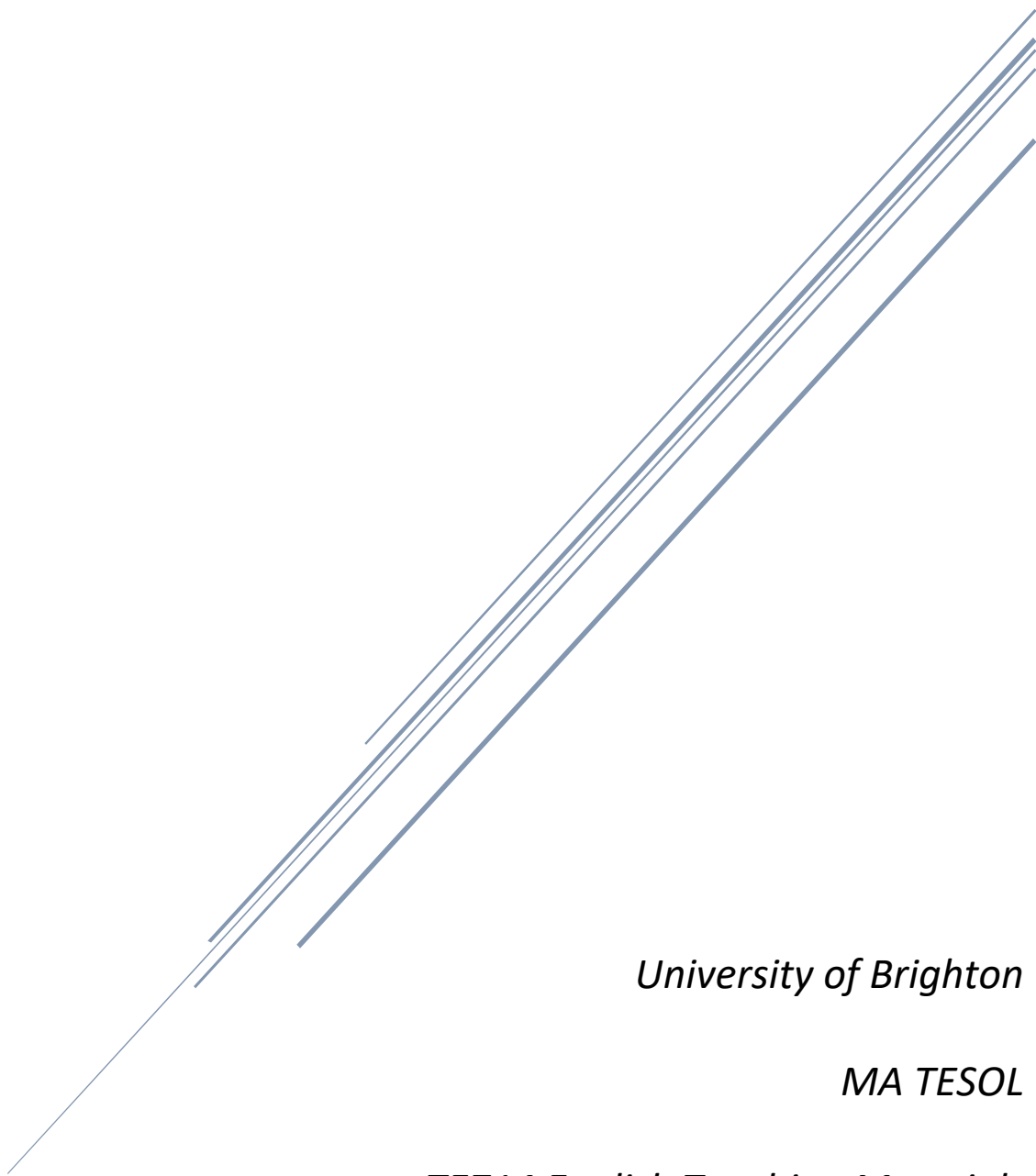
Lee Colburn

University of Brighton

MA TESOL

TE714 English Teaching Materials

Paul Slater and Theresa Clementson

Contents

Word Count - 747

On the surface, the question *'what are teaching materials'* is a relatively simple question to answer. *Instructional materials used in teaching*. However, the roots of learning a language and what someone uses to achieve it, goes far deeper than that. How experimental a teacher can go with their material design and still have it considered as a teaching material hinges on a long list of contextual factors. Tomlinson & Masuhara (2018:2) define materials as "anything that can be used by language learners to facilitate their learning of the target language." Notice how the word *anything* is used in this definition, that means yes, the absurd Mona Lisa dog painting you see before you then, qualifies as teaching material. As unlikely as it seems, I used this in an English camp class to stimulate debate about art; 'What do you think about this painting, is it *art*?' 'Why is Monet's Waterlily pond considered artwork, but not this?' Tell me your opinion, I would like to hear it.

Commercially supplied coursebook materials never seem to go far enough, and nearly always require some form of supplementation (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:3). The question remains; what exactly do we supplement them with, and where do we find these extra puzzle pieces. Materials are for the transfer of information to learners, but I'd argue they are much more than that. Materials also meet the incredibly varied contextual and psychological needs of our learners and provide essential additional motivation to get them through the challenging process of second language learning (Mishan & Timmis, 2015:2). Personally, I believe there are ways and means to combine the content we are provided to teach and our own teaching styles and beliefs, to provide our learners the most fulfilling English classes possible. Learning doesn't happen overnight, it requires a long, continuous investment and inspirational materials that keep our learners coming back for more.

Am I a teaching material? Tomlinson & Masuhara mention *anything* in their definition, but not *anyone*. Numerous teachers I met during my time in Korea, often explained feeling like a clown, or at least feeling like they needed to perform in the classroom to provide additional content to cover the deficiencies in provided material. Although this performance does play a part in student-teacher relationships, teachers are hired to help students learn, not keep them entertained. Teachers are a living, breathing 'material in action' (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:2) and just one of the long list of things which can help someone acquire a language.

How we access material is becoming easier by the year with thanks to the internet and gone are the days that teaching materials came exclusively from a publisher. Materials are now available at the click of a button. The "presentation to students (of materials) dictates how it is used pedagogically" (Mishan & Timmis, 2015:79), so what do students need to practice, what are your particular group of students interested in, which activity or task is best suited to achieve this blend, which material can I find or create to link this all together? The only coursebook consideration here, is the first step. The target language is often determined by government mandates or institutional decisions. Everything else appears to fall on the teacher when a coursebook misses the mark, and that is a lot of pressure.

Creation could be referring to the actual presentation itself, but could also mean considerations towards the classroom atmosphere, student-teacher relationships, or inspiration for further learning. **"**Textbooks are usually designed primarily to satisfy administrators and teachers" ignoring the students, and in doing so often "ignore the needs and wants of learners" (Tomlinson, 2010, cited in: Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:26). Teachers have to conform within contexts and place these needs at the front of their minds. There might be constraints from your ministry of education, principal, parents, other teachers and indeed perhaps even your students, but teachers can still lay the red carpet out for learners to explore by themselves after class. An ability to create materials empowers teachers to break free from establishment constraints (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:7).

My prior experiences as a student shaped my beliefs on how important stimulating teaching materials are for the acquisition of a subject. Not necessarily the level of knowledge intake in the classroom on a single day, but the intake and interest in the English language over time. Just like Rome, languages are not learnt in a day they take years of continuous interaction, with amazing teaching materials to build.

References

Mishan, F. & Timmis, I (2015). Introduction. Materials development for TESOL. 1st ed. Edinburgh textbooks, pp. 1-8.

Mishan, F. &Timmis, I (2015). Reconceptualising materials for the technological environment. Introduction. Materials development for TESOL. 1st ed. Edinburgh textbooks, pp. 1-8.

Tomlinson, B. (2010). What do teachers think about EFL coursebooks? *Modern English Teacher*, v19(4), pp. 5-9.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018). Materials development so far. The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, pp. 1-24.

Blog Week 2 – Processes and Principles

Word Count - 786

Week 2 of this module introduced the concept of principles in material production and questioning the choices which are made when producing content designed for language learners. There is a general understanding that there should be a principled consideration for various factors when creating that award-winning lesson on Marmite tasting, but where these principles are listed, what they actually are, and who decides them are all rather undefined. There have been numerous frameworks put in place by academics to advise on the material production process, Hadfield (2014, cited in: Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:120) for example suggesting a "staged" and "orderly" process towards creation including the generation of ideas, dialoguing, imagination of implementation and trying out or trialling . *Staged* here representing the planning of materials, and *orderly* the smooth creation. As far as I can see, there remains no set rulebook on how to create stimulating, engaging and most importantly, educational English teaching materials for learners, which unfortunately leaves mystery at the heart of the writing process.

There were no frameworks or principles in place when I was in the process of creating materials at my school, all I had to work with was the reaction and feedback I received from students and teachers, an *unwritten* principled approach perhaps, but one I was unaware of at the time. Looking back, I don't consider making my materials 'fun' a bad approach, but it didn't go far enough. I think my obsession with making a 'fun' class could have been combined with a set of principles, learner needs and task evaluation had I known of their significance at the time.

Tomlinson & Masuhara (2018:123) suggest some accepted theories of language acquisition which resonated well with me and require consideration when creating teaching materials. A) The language experience needs to be contextualised and comprehensible; the materials used needs to be relevant to the learners lives and be suitable for their level of ability. B) The learner needs to be motivated, relaxed, positive and engaged; an enjoyable environment must be created for deeper student learning to take place. C) The language and discourse features, available for potential acquisition need to be salient, meaningful and frequently encountered; target language used in materials needs to be important, functional and used regularly to enable familiarity. D) The learner needs to achieve deep and multi-dimensional processing of the language; functional examples of language use can allow for greater understanding from a learner perspective.

Although all remain of great importance and factors I definitely tried to include, B) stands out as something I consciously tried my best to achieve through material creation during my time in Korea.

A creator should have a plethora of ideas before they decide which path to take, but at what stage do we implement the principles to these ideas. Motivated, relaxed, positive and engaged. Should every idea I have be measured on these metrics in order to select the most effective. Is a revolutionary new concept that misses these 4 aims measured as a bad idea, or could it be refined to meet these metrics. How are these metrics measured? It seems that the 'staged and orderly process' is quickly becoming an impulsive and chaotic one. Mishan & Timmis (2015:9) made sure to note that "principles should not be misread" as rules. However, rules ensure order and order can be measured.

Trial and error played a big part in my discovery of which type of materials and activities met the needs of students. Being open to "write, re-write and re-write again" (Johnson, 2003, cited in: Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018:126) is essential. This reflection Johnson refers to is the varying level of satisfaction the learners and teachers receive during their casual evaluation of a particular class. Failures in material effectiveness can actually be harnessed for positive purposes during redesign. Teachers need to spend time with students and they have to trial tasks, especially if they are teacher created. Learners have varying interests, hobbies and skills so it can be difficult to gauge effectiveness, and as "motivation is internal to the learner" (Mishan & Timmis, 2015:11) it is not until you have trialled your 'prototype' with various groups, that it can be redesigned to meet the motivational, relaxing, positive and engaging levels required.

The main point I took from the reading and the seminar this week was that "if learners do not feel any emotion while exposed to language in use, they are unlikely to acquire anything from their experience" (Tomlinson, 2010, cited in: Mishan & Timmis 2015:12). Creating positive classroom and learning atmosphere via your materials is possible. Positivity is emotional, engaging and motivating and including it alongside other equally valuable principles may ensure accurately measurable success and emotionally engaging content.

References

Hadfield, J. (2014). Chaosmos: spontaneity and order in the materials design process. In: Harwood, N. (ed) English Language Teaching Textbooks: Content, Consumption, Production. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Johnson, K. (2003). Designing Language Teaching Tasks, Palgrave Macmillan.

Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015). Principled Materials Development. Materials Development for TESOL. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp. 9-32

Tomlinson, B. (2010). Principles of effective materials development. In N. Harwood (ed.), English Language Teaching Materials: Theory and Practice (pp. 81–108). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018). The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Blog Week 3 – Materials Evaluation

Word Count - 741

Another week and another topic from the world of English teaching materials. This time looking into how to create an evaluative framework to assess the pedagogic *effect* of educational material, opposed to analysis which evaluates what content is included in it (Tomlinson, 2003, cited in: Mishan & Timmis, 2015:57). As it turns out, forming a framework which contains a structured evaluation can be rife with contextual difficulties. Evaluation involves "judgements about the effects of materials on their users" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:54) and these judgements can often lead to conflicting viewpoints and emotionally charged dialogue, as evident in the seminar and the 'effect on the users' can be tricky to measure.

I don't for one second argue that carrying out an evaluation on a set of materials is pointless, but one which is not updated and evolving on a regular basis, in my opinion, fails to meet the contextual needs of individual student groups. As evaluation is essentially "judging the effects of the materials in a given context" (Tomlinson, 2003, cited in: Mishan & Timmis, 2015:57) the variable aspects of student needs must be factored into the evaluative process in some form.

In preparation for the week 3 seminar, we were asked to split into groups and work together to evaluate a set of materials provided to us in the form of a module from an English coursebook. A simple task on the surface, but in reality, incredibly time consuming and polarizing. Our group initially discussed 4 evaluation criteria which surfaced from Mishan and Timmis (2015:62-63); (Grant, 1987; Tomlinson, 2003; Rubdy, 2003; McGrath, 2002) and settled on applying Tomlinson's (2003) as they covered some of the areas our group had discussed as important to evaluate.

Are the materials motivating? (*Universal*). Are the materials culturally acceptable in the context? (*Local*). Is the sound quality of the audio materials good? (*Media-specific*). Do the materials replicate the real-world tasks the target group will need to do? (*Content-specific*). Are the visuals likely to appeal to children? (Age specific).

Breaking down the 5 areas further, we then brainstormed potential aspects that we would look at in greater detail when evaluating, and this proved a timely process. Narrowing down the areas which were thrown around during our meeting to 15 (3 in each section) was again incredibly difficult. This was perhaps due to the group members varying contexts and experiences, as we were looking for different educational tasks needed from this teaching material. "Evaluation criteria, by definition,

express values" and these values or teacher beliefs should be articulated as a "basis for generating criteria" (Tomlinson, 2003, cited in: Mishan & Timmis, 2015:62). This group evaluation exercise proved challenging as our values as Tomlinson mentioned, were too wide ranging to generate meaningful criteria. What exactly should be included or excluded from your individual evaluation criteria, should primarily be shaped by your beliefs and what your students need from a lesson.

One of the more fascinating points which arose from our criteria brainstorming session, was a question related to Tomlinson's media-specific branch. *'How relevant are the images to the language used*?'* I am a staunch advocate of imagery being essential to education, and this view is evidently not held by all teachers. This session and the dialogue from it firmly reinforced this teaching belief of mine.

The weekly reading also touched on the three possible stages when the material evaluation process can take place. A) Pre-use (our group activity), predicting how the material will fare before being trialled or piloted. B) Whilst-use (evaluating during use), and C) Post-use (reflecting based on evidence). I'm going to argue the case for "retrospective evaluation" (McGrath, 2013, cited in: Mishan & Timmis, 2015:61) being the most effective, as it is the only evaluation containing accurate data and not led by assumptions. I regularly took part in this form of evaluation during my time in Korea, and tweaked my materials (worksheets, PPT, tasks) after every session based on learner and colleague reaction.

Having "actual evidence" (Mishan & Timmis, 2015:60) of how material was received, is like gold dust to an educator or materials developer. A whole month could be spent developing criteria with 200+ points you wish to evaluate, but one day in the classroom may shine a greater light on where things need altering. Students are the best material evaluators as they whom can see where educational aims are being missed, it would be wise to listen to what they have to say.

References

Grant, N. (1987). *Making the Most of Your Textbook*. Harlow: Longman.

McGrath, I. (2002). *Materials Evaluation and Design for Language Teaching*. Edinburgh University Press.

McGrath, I. (2013) Teaching Materials and the Roles of EFL/ESL Teachers: Practice and Theory. London: Bloomsbury.

Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015) Materials Development for TESOL. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp. 56-74.

Rubdy, R. (2003). Selection of materials. In B. Tomlinson (ed.), *Developing Materials for Language Teaching* (pp. 37–58). London: Continuum.

Tomlinson, B. (2003b). Materials evaluation. In B. Tomlinson (ed.), *Developing Materials for Language Teaching* (pp. 15–36). London: Continuum.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018). Materials Evaluation. The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Pp. 52-81.

Blog Week 4 – Adapting and Supplementing

Word Count - 834

Adaption and supplementation, or simply altering or adding content alongside the materials supplied in the form of coursebooks, chosen syllabus or curriculums. I mentioned last week that I wasn't too impressed with the effectiveness of a materials evaluation that wasn't completed locally, but in retrospect I was too hasty. It became apparent that *principled adaption* (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, cited in: Mishan & Timmis, 2015:70) is where this process shines. Noting during an evaluation that a particular aspect of the material is sub-par, may highlight an area where adaption or supplementation could have the greatest impact on a learner's language progression and a salutary exercise which should happen from time to time.

The "division" between those who create materials commercially and the learners in the classroom creates a "mismatch between the materials and the target users' needs and wants" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:83). This mismatch is where evaluation, and subsequently adaption and supplementation, can make an English class what it should be - fit for purpose, laying the groundwork for future learning of the subject. Adapting a material does not always mean ripping it down and building something up from the foundations. It varies "in timing, scale and focus" and "carried out reactively" based on evidence from piloting or trialling, or "proactively before a lesson or course" based on assumed wants and needs (McGrath, 2013, cited in Mishan & Timmis, 2015:68). Consider the "classroom dynamics" how the class functions, personalities and ages of the students, constraints from the syllabus and education bodies, resources available such as technology, and individual learner motivations (Cunningsworth, 1995, cited in Mishan & Timmis, 2015:68). The context the original material was designed for is unlikely to match every scenario a teacher will encounter.

It is worth reminding ourselves of the purposes of adaptation; "to make the material more suitable for the circumstances in which it is used; compensating for any *intrinsic deficiencies*" (McGrath, 2002, cited in: Mishan & Timmis, 2015:70). *Intrinsic deficiencies* meaning any essential educational aspects lacking in original materials, or anything missing which could further enhance the language learning taking place. Teachers can use adaption and supplementation to further personalise their teaching of a topic to the context they find themselves in, something I myself took full advantage of during my time away.

There seemed to be a considerable amount of disbelief in the cohort, when I declared myself a 'curriculum maker' during the seminar, which definitely caught me by surprise. I'm still unsure if the reaction was a good or bad thing. (Shawer, 2010, cited in: Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:90) outlined three categories of teachers in terms of curriculum development; *makers*, *developers* and *transmitters*. I think the categories do not cover all contextual eventualities, but *maker* best describes my previous role in Korea. I learnt so much by trial and error, sink or swim, absorbing the feedback I received from my students and local colleagues and improving my materials year-upon-year. "Teachers play central roles in materials development" (Masuhara, 2011:238, cited in: Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:89) and I played the central role in the materials my students used during NET (Native English Teacher) lessons. My curriculum was built around student exposure to global events and raising confidence with their spoken English. It covered a variety of topics, involved wide-ranging tasks and games, and allowed mixed ability classed the chance of participation, something I promised to focus on when I entered teaching. I'm so grateful to my co-teachers in Korea for giving me the autonomy to learn and develop my curriculum, and for Daejeon Office of Education in recognising my hard work when they invited me to run a teacher education workshop on teaching activities for the city."

So, who are you? Why are you here and what do you have to offer your students? The answer is your personality and where you came from" (Colburn, 2019). This was the title of the article I wrote for my teaching workshop, noting essentially that adapting materials allows incorporation of personality into materials for enhanced contextual benefit. Adaption allows for bonding and deeper involvement in learning than standard coursebooks do, and allows that "teachers as curriculum *implementers* can ensure materials contribute in fulfilling this target" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:92). Adaptation "should not be viewed as a deficiency." When teachers adapt materials, they do so to "optimize the learning experience of their pupils" (Loh & Renandya, 2016:106-107, cited in: Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:100). I wish to optimise the learning experience any student I work with has, and adapting, supplementing allows this to happen.

"Minor adaptations can have a major effect." (Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2018:106) Just switching out some language to more become contextually appropriate, changing up the colour schemes to match the mood of the moment, replacing a stock picture with a person of interest to increase engagement, introducing relatable talking points. It doesn't take much to have a significant impact on the interest and long-term learner investment in English as a subject. A little adaption can go a very long way.

References

Colburn, L. (2019). How to survive and thrive in a Korean Middle School – Various teaching activities, 2018-19 Co-teaching workshop. Daejeon Metropolitan Office of Education.

Cunningsworth, A. (1995). In: Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015) Materials Development for TESOL. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Loh, J. & Renandya, W, A. (2016). In: Tomlinson, B. and Masuhara, H. (2018) The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

McGrath, I. (2013). Teaching Materials and the Roles of EFL/ESL Teachers: Practice and Theory. London: Bloomsbury.

Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015). Materials evaluation and adaption. Materials Development for TESOL. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp. 56-74.

Shawer, S, F. (2010). In: Tomlinson, B. and Masuhara, H. (2018) The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018). Materials adaption. The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Pp. 82-116.

Tomlinson, B. and Masuhara, H. (2004). *Developing Language Course Materials*. Singapore: SEAMO.

Word Count - 1423

The topic of visuals and text is one which has me desperately trying to recall everything from my BSc in Product Design. Good design is important and some like me, would even argue critically essential, especially when we are discussing English Teaching Materials, which are essentially products.

The distinction Tomlinson & Masuhara (2018:335) make, is that a teacher ultimately seeks *pedagogic effectiveness* in a product, whereas a designer predominantly aims for *aesthetic appeal*. As I am both, I attempt to blend the two together when creating my teaching materials. A striking image in a coursebook is not there solely to *look good* or *fill a space*, they exist for more than that. The objectives such as; attracting/providing focus, sequencing, section separation, aesthetic response, structure, impact (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:331), that visuals set out to achieve can vary greatly. As a designer and teacher, I argue that no picture is included just for the sake of it, and even if it were to be, would still carry effectiveness.

It's quite possible that the objective of a visual element can be missed by the observer or user and labelled as random, and if you have never given any real attention to imagery in textbooks, this would be understandable. Images have strengths and weaknesses (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:330) each with varying levels of *appropriacy* for their objectives, learners and contexts.

The above is true, and I will comment briefly on the *appropriacy* further on, but it is the reason why some pictures are selected, and how teachers can expand their educational relevance in materials which is the objective. Hall (2013), Tomlinson & Masuhara (2018) and Donaghy & Xerri (2017) all refer to this aim. Teachers need to ask if the images are used "merely as an aid" (Donaghy & Xerri, 2017:1) or can they be used to foster, deeper "communicative competence and creativity."

A common thought from some teachers, is that the design and layout of materials is a specialized talent and should be left to experts in the publishing industry (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:325). Yes, designers might do a better job in a visually satisfying aspect, but teachers have the power to relate images to the target language in a pedagogical way. Duchastel (1978) suggested individual images be chosen for 5 pedagogical ambitions. A) Affective - enhancing interest and emotion, B) Attentive - attracting and directing attention, C) Didactic - cannot be explained in words, D) Supportive - for less able learners, and E) Retentional - facilitating memory.

You, as a teacher, know the ambition for the images selected. Which one of these 5 ambitions are you trying to achieve when using them in your material?

About 3 weeks ago, I made a comment in a seminar about editors *ruining* a writers' work which didn't go down too well. I stand by this comment. The most amazing of works can be destroyed an editor who doesn't understand the ambition intended from the writer. "Design and illustration can make or break a book" (Prowse, 2011:162, cited in: Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:325) and a once 5-star book could easily be brought down to a 2 through imagery alone. In this week's seminar, controversy, misleading photos, inappropriate images and suggestive visuals all came up and raised some interesting views, highlighting just how polarizing this area of teaching materials can be.

There are of course restrictions in place for big publishing companies, they have to consider non educational reasons such as; "copyright, budgets, market research, artists' fees time constraints at every production stage" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:335) and this may realistically impact on which images can be used. I believe that personalising materials in great detail is essential, and must be done at a local level to allow maximum affective, attentive, didactic, supportive and retentional ambitions to be realised. The pictures chosen by publishers and editors are simply not good enough.

A large weighting should be applied to the visual element of a material evaluation such as the one in week 3, as the overall influence on our subconscious (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:325) is too great to ignore. Stock images can be random, fake, bizarre and jarring, and they are the most obvious sign that little effort has been made to personalise in great detail. Learners met with personalised materials can see instantly that a teacher is looking out for their interests. Stock images "lack originality" (Goldstein, 2009:4, cited in: Donaghy & Xerri, 2017:3) and can create "mismatches between the writers' intentions and design" (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018:332). Pictures can paint a thousand words and when your students don't speak your language, they have even greater significance. Choose them wisely.

The original argument of this post, was that "the power of images to stimulate ideas, discussion and creativity is still currently underexploited" (Donaghy & Xerri, 2017:2). That is to say, visuals are not adding value to education in coursebooks. They are! Every image is impacting the reader in some minor way, and emotions are essential for learning. Hill (2013:161) notes that students are "endlessly surrounded by visual images" and they feel "comfortable and normal if their coursebook surrounds them in the same way" letting them feel at ease and facilitating their acquisition of the English language. Would students find it easier to use comics instead of long passages of text, or memes instead of articles. Emojis instead of surveys? Extracting these motivational powers of

thoughts, reactions and emotions are vital in education and language acquisition. (Tomlinson, 2013; Ellis, 2016; Masuhara, 2016, cited in: Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:328) Visuals are a language, and one which the whole world speaks fluently. A lesson I taught in Korea on the subject of Emojis, was enjoyed and understood by most of my mixed ability classes, regardless of their communicative abilities.

Visuals tend to be more apparent in books aimed at younger learners (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:325) and a quick glance at 'The Lion Inside' compared to a scientific journal demonstrates this point. That does not mean to say that adults do not enjoy, or are not assisted in learning by illustrations. It is the selection of image which matters, not the inclusion. A teddy bear in a book designed for adults is clearly inappropriate. Tomlinson & Masuhara (2018:326) argue that "visuals, layout and design are *indispensable* parts of meaning making and of language acquisition and development at all ages" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:326). I wholeheartedly agree. Images are *indispensable*, and all learners require them in some form in their educational material.

If visuals are *indispensable*, then how do we regulate their inclusion in material production. Some maintain that images are included to fill space, whereas others argue they all have emotional and subconscious impact. Hill (2013:162) makes it clear that "distinguishing between those illustrations which aim to facilitate explicit teaching" (defining words via image) "and those which facilitate tasks" (instructional) is essential. Somehow, teachers need to find a balance as not every image needs to have a pedagogical ambition. The balance between an aesthetic experience and facilitating activity likely to promote language acquisition (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:329) should be the ideal.

Some visuals are not selected with this balance in mind because that wasn't their aim and they shouldn't be held to this standard. So long as a visual achieves at least one of these aims; explanation, providing context, instruction, affective response, provoke reaction/discussion, visual summary, consistency or provide aesthetic experience, as mentioned by Tomlinson & Masuhara (2018:328) then it has a function, and a justification for inclusion. Ideally, it *could* be used for another activity but by no means does it need to 100% of the time. Personalisation is key for me and the last aim (provide aesthetic experience) backs up my entire point. It looks good, it complements the text and is improving the learners experience - consciously and subconsciously. Therefore, it belongs in a teaching material.

Images are essential for people of all ages in whichever field they find themselves in. Information is passed quickly though them and they can make tasks or lessons so much more engaging. We do not need to speak the same language to understand each other when we use images. "Illustrations can

convey a lot of meaning with or without language" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:325) Visuals *are* a language. They can assist learners subconsciously just by being there, but what a teacher should aim to do is increase their educational relevance wherever realistically possible.

A teacher thinks pedagogically and a designer thinks aesthetically. We can be both and both are essential in teaching materials development.

References

Donaghy, K. & Xerri, D. (2017). The image in ELT: an introduction. In: Donaghy, K. & Xerri, D. (eds). The Image in English Language Teaching. Floriana, Malta: ELT Council.

Duchastel, P, C. (1978). Illustrating Instructional Texts, *Educational Technology*, v18(11).

Ellis, R. (2016). Language teaching materials as work plans: An SLA perspective. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), SLA research and materials development for language learning, pp. 203-218. New York: Routledge.

Goldstein, B. (2009). *Working with images*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hill, D, A. (2013). The visual element in EFL coursebooks. Pp. 157-166. In: Tomlinson, B. (ed) Developing Materials for Language Teaching. (2nd edn) London: Bloomsbury.

Masuhara, H. (2016). Brain studies and materials for language learning. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), Second language research and materials development for language learning (pp. 23– 32). New York: Routledge.

Prowse, P. (2011). How writers write: Testimony from authors. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), Materials development in language teaching (2nd ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tomlinson, B. (2013). Second language acquisition and materials development. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), Applied linguistics and materials development. pp. 11-29. London: Bloomsbury.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018). Visuals, layout and design. The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Pp. 325-341.

Blog Week 6 – Video

Word Count: 1778

Another week flies by in the Teaching Materials module, this time covering the fiercely debated topic of sound, moving image and video. In the world of ELT, it is essential to stay up to date with the latest methodologies and approaches when incorporating them within materials. Today's learners need to be skilled as Clare (2017:39) explains; in their "understanding, interpretation and creation of visual media." Video is a rich resource filled with motivational, educational and inspirational benefits, and these need to be squeezed out. Sokoli & Terran (2019:226) value video as appealing, varied and flexible, providing exposure to non-verbal cultural elements, contextualising linguistic aspects in functional language and ultimately closer to ideal communication than the written mode, something many of today's learners are interested in engaging in. Educational benefits can be missed when selecting video for use in the classroom, so it is vital to use "pedagogically valid" (Mishan & Timmis, 2015:78) reasoning to justify video use.

Unfortunately, the world is rife with imbalance of access to video technology as an educational tool. The distance between contexts and their access to new technologies (Sokoli & Terran, 2019:227) leads to stark contrasts in the way educational bodies place value onto it. The world is however, going through dramatic changes, most notably how students are entertained, communicate, share and learn (Clare, 2017:33). This must be reflected in materials we provide, with video now expected to replace imagery in many classes. Sokoli & Terran (2019:209) expand upon the benefits to video use, including greater variety, flexibility, adaptability and motivation than still imagery can achieve. Ultimately, students expect schooling to reflect today's society, and for engaged learning to happen, materials require references within educational environments that match the world outside (Mishan & Timmis, 2015:77). Oblinger (2003, cited in: Mishan & Timmis 2015:77) notes something incredibly important that perhaps many teachers do not understand; that this generation do not actually perceive digital devices as 'technology' but as "ordinary tools" and as such should feature in their education. Emotion plays a huge part in the connection a learner forms with material. Clare (2017:36) feels the same way; while learning, cognitive attentions and memories are "profoundly affected by emotion" with video assisting us in extracting these hidden emotions and enabling highly affective learning. "We feel, therefore we learn. Video engages emotion, this is critical for learning." I completely agree.

Historically, film use in education was purely for entertainment purpose, with no pedagogical focus or tasks supplied. It was a time for teachers and students to switch off (Goldstein, 2017:23) and (2017:27) "entirely removed from the rest of the material being used." To some extent this practice is still taking place and these unrelated, irrelevant, impersonalised uses of video contribute to reduced student motivation. The practice of using videos as filler or a substitute teacher (Sokoli & Terran, 2019:217) is changing. Video use is now attempting to mix both motivation and educational aims.

Student access English material outside of class must be accounted for when selecting video as many in private education are learning English to access English speaking culture (Clare, 2017:36). As such, students may already be viewing educational content by themselves and this avenue can be exploited to again increase engagement. Replacing dull, grammar practice with refreshing, contextual learning experiences (King, 2002:510) through video implementation, can inject huge motivation into your group, but the content must be 'authentic', and desirable. I was an advocate of music video use during my time in Korea, as privately students were interpreting English lyrics and seeked a greater understanding of certain songs.

Some have quoted 'authentic' materials as "problematic" (Goldstein, 2017:26) which is a view I do not share. Authenticity is important from a learner perspective as Mishan (2005, cited in: Clare 2017:37) explains; "…authenticity in linguistically rich, emotive input leads to acquisition." Material authenticity is linked to higher engagement levels, motivation and language learning. Students may be alerted to language matching interests and even consolidating language acquired externally from these authentic selections (Clare 2017:38) such as the music videos mentioned above. Language which is "relevant to learner appreciation of popular culture" (King, 2002:515). This isn't the only way to encourage motivation, but a simple one carrying high rewards, and certainly not something I'd consider problematic.

I touched briefly on student expectations earlier, noting how video of some description is expected in modern education. The "visual turn" as Goldstein (2017:23) describes it, ensured video "no longer plays supportive or subservient roles" and is now engrained in the lesson planning stage. The video revolution (Clare, 2017:33) completely surrounds us with moving imagery, smartphones have become an extension of our bodies and a classroom without video exploitation now feels somewhat inadequate. As with other materials selected for classroom use, a principled approach must be taken. Sokoli & Terran (2019:218) outline an interesting method of assessment for this process;

something they name as video richness. This evaluation includes audio-verbal speech, visual-verbal writing, audio-semiotic music and sound, and visual-semiotic pictures. This evaluation is something I can definitely see myself using in the future to justify my video selection.

Vlogging (video blogging) has become a substantially desirable career choice for many young learners and was mentioned regularly when the topic of careers surfaced during my time in Korea. Historically, 'vox pops' were common forms of English teaching material and Goldstein (2017:27) quite rightly voices that "it's not difficult to conceive tweaking the vox pop genre, changing conventional role models into "cool" 'vloggers' who might appear on YouTube." *Modernising* ELT materials and creating more contextually viable content. Vlogging is a fantastic way for students to practice their speech and anyone can talk about anything. This once peculiar hobby, has developed into a legitimate career. Digitally native (Prensky, 2001. cited in: Mishan & Timmis, 2015:77) students have the knowledge to excel in content such as vlogging and the more familiar with things like this teachers become, the more the exploitation of it becomes "less mechanical and more creative" (Goldstein, 2017:29-30) contributing to pedagogically rich and contextually appropriate English classes.

Video can be soaked in richness encouraging learners to go "beyond the information given, through critical thinking and analysis" (Clare, 2017:38). Great video can create meaningful discussions around relevant issues not covered by inhibiting grammatical rule-binding learning (King 2020:510) and is fantastic for facilitating communicative activities. There are reservations from some whether the classroom is a suitable location for the exploitation of moving image in terms of students creating their own work (a flipped scenario), as creation can be time-consuming and difficult for teachers to monitor (Goldstein, 2017:29). This 'flipped' learning, production or consumption, comes in various forms, labelled incidental, informal or formal by Sokoli & Terran (2019:211) each with pros and cons. It was my aim in Korea to disguise incidental and informal learning whilst delivering formal instruction, and video assisted me with this objective on many an occasion. Two of the best classes I personally had was with some students commentating on football highlights and fashion catwalk shows. How we "integrate technology into language learning in pedagogically valuable ways" (Mishan & Timmis, 2015:76) can come in various forms and effectiveness will vary contextually. Learners must be achieving something from video use, besides being entertained. ELT videos can be incredibly well designed, animated and produced content, but not anything students would watch outside class (Goldstein, 2017:25). Definitely not 'learning in disguise' like I aimed to achieve with my students. Leaving the educational taste in the mouth limits enjoyment a

younger student has with material and the balance between pedagogically valid and meaningful contexts can be difficult to strike.

Video is able to assist with this issue of mixed ability classes in numerous ways, "focusing on the visual" (Goldstein, 2017:27) allows those struggling to understand scripts or voice-overs and could be a stepping stone to other tasks which are not text heavy. Students who have pre-formed opinions on what English class is and perhaps those who already decided they dislike the subject, could be persuaded back with novel approaches of learning through film, (King, 2020:510) "focusing on communication rather than meaning and accuracy" something the test and accuracy-based context of Korea desperately struggles with.

Some things with word alone cannot be experienced. The ability to immerse yourself in cultures, countries and experiences far removed from student desks, is incredibly powerful (Clare, 2017:35). Video can teach about the world and it can open up reserved minds, through video use students can learn much more than just the target language, they can be placed in contexts unimaginable by text alone. A fascinating world exists outside of the classroom walls and moving image can break those walls down. The uninspiring routine (King, 2002:509) of commercially produced materials doesn't need to be what teachers feed their students. There are delicious, contextually rich videos waiting to be served. The satisfaction a learner obtains from comprehending real world materials cannot be understated, as understanding video which has been originally watched by the general public (Goldstein, 2017:26) is 'passing a test' and acts as motivation for further study. Students are "visibly impressed" (King, 2002:514) when they take part in societal norms from target language cultures, and "their confidence soars."

As mentioned earlier, contextual restrictions are a big problem with the rise of technology and the distribution of these advances has not been universal. Technology is "part of the classroom furniture in many parts of the world" (Bax, 2003, cited in: Mishan & Timmis, 2015:75) but not in all. Contexts may not have a screen equipped in classrooms with some banning video entirely; Adjoumani (A member of the course and a trained teacher from the Ivory Coast) told the class how video exploitation is not possible in his context due to governmental restrictions, and like students, teachers come in all shapes and sizes with differing contexts, "styles, methods and approaches" (Sokoli & Terran, 2019:212). How an individual teacher explores video use cannot be one-size-fits-all and video is meant to supplement ability and styles, not erase them. Mishan & Timmis (2015:77) mark leveraging video skills as an essential skill for teachers, like we currently see

with reading and writing for students. Some teachers will fight the emergence of video and the expectations placed on them, with some still viewing video as "entertainment that has no place in a pedagogic setting" (King, 2002:511). Video accompanied with "well-structured tasks designed to promote active viewing" (King, 2002:520-521) and therefore making the most of learning opportunities video brings, is certainly something I will continue to argue for.

Video is an essential modern-day part of information transfer. Allowing travel, experiences of new contextually relevant language, and exploration of fascinating cultural knowledge, all possible without a student ever leaving their seat.

References

Bax, S. (2003). CALL: past, present and future. System, v31(2), pp. 13-28.

Clare, A. (2017). The power of video. In: Donaghy, K. & Xerri, D. (eds). The Image in English Language Teaching. Floriana, Malta: ELT Council.

Goldstein, B. (2017). A history of video in ELT. In: Donaghy, K. & Xerri, D. (eds). The Image in English Language Teaching. Floriana, Malta: ELT Council.

King, J. (2002). Using DVD Feature Films in the EFL Classroom. Computer Assisted Language Learning, v15, pp. 509-523.

Mishan, F. (2005). Designing authenticity into language learning materials. Bristol: Intellect.

Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015). Reconceptualising Materials for the Technological Environment, Materials Development for TESOL. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp. 75-98.

Oblinger, D. (2003). Boomers and gen-Xers millennials: understanding the new students. Educause Review, v38(4), pp. 37–47.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. On the Horizon, v9(5), pp. 1-6.

Sokoli, S. & Terran, P, Z. (2019). 'Audiovisual activities and multimodal resources for foreign language learning', in: Herrero, C. & Vanderschelden, I. (eds). Using Film and Media in the Language classroom: Reflections on Research-Led Teaching. Bristol: Multilingual Matters

Blog Week 7 – Teacher Created Materials

Word Count: 1387

Week 7, Teacher Created Materials. It is vital to note from the outset here that TCM are 'unmediated' that is to say anything produced can "pass directly into the classroom without intervention from outside parties" (Mishan & Timmis, 2015:163) such as commercial publishers or after pre-use evaluative processes. Here we find the main issue surrounding the topic, a lack of applied principles or frameworks during the writing process can easily occur.

Approaching the battle between free creativity and principled structure, I find myself torn between my original teaching beliefs and my new understanding of the importance for design principles. "Task design is a complex, highly recursive and often messy process" (Samada, 2005, cited in: Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:119). *Complex* meaning it takes the balancing of numerous contextual variables and skills which many teachers may not possess, and *recursive* describing the repetitive drafting nature of material creation. The messy process describes how ideas can appear in the most bizarre of times, scruffy notes can blossom eventually into fantastic, pedagogically sound materials. Samada also argues that writing does not always "entail orderly progressions through checklists of guiding principles". The progressions do not have to be controlled in nature, but I now know that they do need to exist in some form. Mishan & Timmis echo my overall thoughts; "the intuitive nature of materials writing should not be equated with an unprincipled approach" (2015:176) These principles are part of the messy process, but should not strangle creativity and freedom of thought. A teacher will battle with these things throughout their career, but eventually the mess will develop into their own set of principles.

So long as your writing of materials has the "direct aim" of "bringing about the learning of the foreign language" (Littlejohn 2011:188) your pedagogical reasoning should not be argued. If it were to be, written or pictured proof of a principled approach may be worthwhile. Following a framework allows a teacher to uncover key learner needs a material should be founded upon to maximise this learning Littlejohn describes. Part of a teachers' job is to provide "clear exercises and activities that somehow meet the need for the language learning work that has been initially recognised." (Jolly & Bolitho, 2011:109-110) The recognising mentioned here is the ability to design tasks not for the sake of designing, but to progress students' development in varying contexts, and enhance their skills in areas which are lacking. A detailed analysis can facilitate a deep understanding of what is involved in the teacher-learning relationship and why some tasks fail" (Littlejohn, 2011:204). In my experience,

South Korean students are excellent with written English grammar, but lack confidence in communication. Their need allows space for them to improve on this through correctly designed materials, and this is where most of my work in Korea focused on. (Hall, 1995) shares similar principles to mine; (cited in: Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2015:120) "the need for students to communicate, the need for long-term goals, the need for authenticity, and the need for student centeredness". These issues are not regularly attended to in coursebooks, and where TCM can shine.

Given my background, my fundamentals are perhaps more weighted towards visually appealing resources rather than pedagogically sound materials. This is something I must try to improve on during my career as a teacher. With my education in design, my mind has been trained to view material mainly as a product and I must try to balance these conflicting points as much as I can. "Good design is aesthetic" (Dieter Rams, 1976). Aesthetics *are* important, but equally as important is pedagogic reasoning and design centred around learner needs. "Teachers engaged in writing materials need to develop the same care and attention to presentation that one would expect of good publishers" (Jolly & Bolitho 2011:110) Including this *care and attention* to presentation into a set of writing principles may be unachievable, especially with groups who don't share my view, but unless it is kept at the forefront of the process it may get lost and produce bland materials. In a previous week, I commented on 5-star materials being dragged down to 2-stars purely due to editing and aesthetics and although rather extreme, this was just to get my point across.

I'm a big advocate of TCM being personalised to the particular set of learners one is working with, something which Harwood (2010, cited in: Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:123) echoes; "language materials should not only be shaped by research but need to be made suitable for the contexts in which they will be used." If this is not carried out, then they by definition become *unsuitable* for use. I mentioned to a few members of this course and posted in week 3 about the value of feedback, allowing the design of materials to be altered and evolve into better ones. Evaluation and trialling are vital to the success of any TCM (Jolly & Bolitho, 2011:129). No matter the creativity, effort, alignment to principles and so on, learners will let you know which aspects needs attention. They are pure gold and the best kind of feedback a teacher can get. I learnt so much about material creation from my group of students and would recommend any aspiring teacher to follow a similar path of immersion. Once you get to know a context, an age group, a class. Their learner needs begin to become engrained in you. Mishan & Timmis (2015:167) sum my point up nicely; "it is easier to make informed guesses about the response to your materials from learners you know."

At the end of this week, we were set a TCM task to be completed over the easter break, the task involved harnessing all we had learnt over the previous 6 weeks, actually creating some materials, which I was incredibly excited to do! The part which made this daunting however, was the stipulation of teamwork, something I hadn't really needed to do for my classes in Korea. "As a single author you can enjoy the luxury of doing it your way…" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:128) the *luxury* of not having to face criticism, stresses or embarrassment, perhaps. "Writing in pairs can be more stimulating and supportive but often differences become irreconcilable…" Because I am so visually driven and often accused of aiming for perfection where not required, teamwork is incredibly difficult for me and definitely something I need to improve. It will be interesting to reflect upon this task in the next few weeks and my main aim with the task is to focus on the positive outcomes from multiple parties contributing to a teaching material.

To finish this post, I wanted to attempt to write down my own TCM defining principles. Not to prove to myself that my own *messy* creative process is actually driven by principles, but to attempt to apply them to the work myself and Rossa are going to create over Easter. During the reading this week, Tomlinson & Masuhara (2018:131) outlined 6 areas which an end product must be. These 6 areas resonated with me, as they were always things I tried to include (see brackets) in my own work. The 6 areas were A) Be meaningful to students (provide memorable experiences), B) be relevant to students (context aware), C) Respect students as intelligent individuals (facilitate growth and teenage development), D) Prepare students for academic communication in English (allow space for structured communicative practice), E) Prepare students for social communication in English (unstructured functional English practice), and F) Be respectful to local culture (blend of Western & Eastern societal norms).

I wish to add a few other principles to this list based on my personal teaching beliefs.

G) Be aesthetically pleasing (relax my students for a positive learning environment), H) Be highly personalised (include cultural references and relatable imagery) I) Extract emotion (humorous and positive environment, tied to objective A), and J) Extensive image use (over text where appropriate).

"Imagining your materials being used by a teacher with a different background from your own, in a context far different from your own, is a real challenge (Mishan & Timmis, 2015:168) It will certainly be interesting to reflect upon these principles and Mishan & Timmis' point, in a few weeks once I have completed the Easter break task, and see how both mine and Rossa's differing principles can align.

References

Hall, D. (1995). Materials production: theory and practice. In: A. C. Hidalgo, D. Hall & G. M. Jacobs (Eds.), Getting started: materials writers on materials writing. pp. 8-24. Singapore: SEAMEO Language Centre.

Harwood, N. (Ed.) (2010). Materials in ELT: Theory and practice . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jolly, D. & Bolitho, R. (2011) A framework for materials writing. In: Tomlinson, B. (ed) Materials Development in Language Teaching. (2nd edn) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 107-134.

Littlejohn, A. (2011) The analysis of language teaching materials: inside the Trojan Horse. In: Tomlinson, B. (ed). Materials Development in Language Teaching. (2nd ed) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp 179-211.

Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015) Chapter 9: Materials Design from Process to Product, Materials Development for TESOL. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. pp 163-182

Samuda, V. (2005). Expertise in pedagogic task design. In K. Johnson (Ed.), Expertise in second language learning and teaching. pp 230-254. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018) Chapter 5: The Development of Materials. The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. pp. 117-144.

Blog Week 8 – Review and Evaluation Workshop

Word Count: 1492

My set of principles formed in week 7 were applied to a project over the Easter break in preparation for a workshop in this weeks' seminar. Below you will find the process by which myself and Rossa went through in creating our lesson for secondary students; *'Don't judge a book by its cover'.*

We began by sitting down (virtually) and discussing our teaching context which would form the foundation for our materials. Identifying the exact needs of our learners could only be done with this step, in place and as both of us had experience working with young East Asian students of varying English abilities, selected this context for our work. "Teachers know their own students and will be able to 'tune' the material to suit their level, their aptitude, their interests and their needs" (McGrath, 2016:84). We ran through the framework suggested by Jolly & Bolitho (2019:112, fig 5.1) forming our initial ideas *(see: notes fig 1 & 2)* and would meet the next day to finalise them *(see: notes fig 3)* making sure to keeping our adopted principles from Tomlinson & Masuhara (2018:131) at the front of our minds.

After giving ourselves a few weeks apart to go through the 'messy process' of materials writing, we met again bringing our ideas together. We agreed to address the important learner need of communicative practice and wanted to encourage English communication in a relaxed setting, and attempt to highlight how confident and knowledgeable English use can reduce misunderstandings. We also wanted to open our learners' eyes to global practices around the sensitive topic of outward appearances as this is more of a problem in Eastern contexts where judging someone on appearances isn't so taboo. How we would accomplish this would be through a class-based worksheet that could be adapted for online use if needed, formed around a core text - *"Snack Attack'* by Eduardo Verastegui, which importantly does not contain speech. "Visuals such as illustrations can convey a lot of meaning with or without language" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:325). Our core text was silent intentionally, we selected it to allow the learner to form their own opinions of the characters based solely on their appearance and behaviours, setting the scene for discussions through activities to follow.

From our meeting on April 13th, a number of activities were decided upon. *(see: notes fig 4 & 5)* including solo, group work, presentation skills, critical thinking and most importantly, space for learners to discuss and find meaning with other students. My principle of 'being respectful to our

learners' culture' shone here, pointing us into the direction of elderly people. Those who have visited or worked in East Asia before, may understand the hierarchical nature of those countries in terms of age. We attempted to blend the core text with our teaching context, principles and learner needs, along with "justifiable sequencing of resources, materials and activities." (Sokoli & Terran, 2019:213) and pre-use, thought we were on the right track to a pedagogically sound lesson.

As I value visuals so highly in many aspects of life and especially in teaching materials, I volunteered to create the worksheet, harnessing my three years of product design education and four years' worksheet (self-taught) education in South Korea. Rossa would be acting as an editor and proof reader, Rossa agreed and we began the design process. *(see: notes fig 6 & 7.)*

It was surprising to note here how quickly I was reminded of my time in South Korea, and how valuable to this module it was to be immersed in real life materials creation for a number of years. At the start of this module, I knew very little about the value of principles and frameworks, but clearly, I am realising that they are an essential tool when in the process of material development.

Over numerous back-and-forth messages to each other, myself and Rossa finished up with the materials you can see below *(see: notes fig 8-16).* A lesson about judging and misunderstandings, built from one visual core text and principled from academic and personal perspectives. It is supported by a framework and open to adaption from other teachers in varying contexts. The next stage of the process would be a pilot with a group of learners and alter the material in the areas where deficiencies are shown. Laura F gave this a try for us, as she is currently working online within the context our lesson was aimed towards. In attempting to follow the direction this module has pointed us in, combined with our own professional experiences; *'Don't judge a book by its cover'* is the product of this blend. In the weekly seminar, we would have the chance to gather feedback and see what our community could contribute.

I wish to preface the next section by stating that I am not a professional designer and I do not use any professional software to create teaching materials. Our lesson is not perfect but I tried my best with the skills I possess to make it look as commercially viable as possible using only Microsoft PowerPoint and free assets obtained from the internet. Because presentable aesthetics is one of my main principles, I feel uncomfortable using or presenting materials I am not completely satisfied with, this is to my own detriment in terms of time-management, but I know learners appreciate the effort. Being prepared to teach in my comfort zone, is non-negotiable to me. This is purely my

teaching style and in <u>no way shape or form</u> am I suggesting it is the correct one for all teachers. "…just as there are different learning styles, there are also different teaching styles, methods and approaches" (Sokoli & Terran, 2019:212) and each of them are perfectly valid ones.

There had been a little pushback in the weekly seminars from members of the course, when I gave my opinion towards visuals, as I truly believe they are *vital* to the learning process and engagement in the classroom. During the seminar this week, three members of the group commented on the visuals of our work as if their eyes were drawn towards it first before the pedagogical value, just like a student would do in the classroom. Publishers and editors have a duty of care towards projects to ensure an excellent lesson or piece of writing does not fall at the final hurdle. "Visuals, layout and design are *indispensable* parts of meaning making and of language acquisition and development at all ages" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:326) they *cannot* be ignored or left out. Whether the comments prove my point or not about visuals is debateable, but it was definitely interesting to notice.

Other pairs included Kevin and Ingunn's Spring holiday online class, where the students were asked to research, write and present their findings on a global celebration. I shared concern with the requirement of 500 words being a daunting task for the age group suggested as in my Korean context this would have not been suitable. Ingunn assured us this was a regular occurrence for her context. Anna R and Simone focused on directions, a staple for aspiring TEFL teachers worldwide. I was impressed by their planning and attention to detail regarding the aims for their class, and their presentation of materials couldn't help but take me back to my own journey in material development in Korea. I highlighted to them just how important student feedback and trialling is to the development of a material set, and hope this is something the instructors of this MA course would agree with. Lastly, Laura F and Noussiba delivered their food related material, covering weird foods, recipes and cultural foods from around the world. Both of these members have experience in teaching and you could see this from the principled feeling their work gave off. Overall a very enjoyable session and one which I hope could have been extended, but unfortunately, online limitations impacted how much we could extract from the process.

I wish to take this moment to thank Rossa for her work on this small project. Beforehand, I was a little hesitant towards group work as I have always viewed it as a complicating factor rather than assistance towards a goal. However, the combination of our styles, principles, and both of our, for lack of a better word; *pickiness*, actually worked fantastically in meeting our project goals. It may be

worth noting that both of us do have real-life work experience, so practically speaking, have informed knowledge of what tends to work well in the classroom which may have assisted us substantially. "Writing in pairs can be more stimulating and supportive but often differences become irreconcilable…" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018:140) This time, our differences were not irreconcilable, they formed the fundamentals and principles behind our creation and (I think, unless Rossa thinks otherwise) the process was an enjoyable one for both of us, resulting in an aesthetically pleasing and pedagogically valid teacher created material.

References

McGrath, I (2016). Chapter 5: Supplementation and Worksheets, Materials Evaluation and Design for Language Teaching, Chapter 5. Pp. 79 – 98.

Sokoli, S. & Terran, P. Z. (2019). 'Audiovisual activities and multimodal resources for foreign language learning'. In: Herrero, C. & Vanderschelden, I. (eds). Using Film and Media in the Language Classroom: Reflections on Research-Led Teaching. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. Pp. 209-229.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018). Chapter 5: The Development of Materials. The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Pp. 117-144.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018). Chapter 13: Visuals, Layout and Design. The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Pp. 325-341.

Blog Week 9 – Task Design and Evaluation

Word Count: 778

In a previous week I described my role in Korea as a curriculum *maker*, something which was met by slight disbelief. Similar to my lack of established principles when creating materials for my learners, was the lack of a critical task evaluation of the activities I asked my students to take part in. Richards et al (1985:98, cited in: Vasiljevic, 2011:3) mentions the "objectives, procedures and intended outcomes" of an activity need analysing before use in the classroom, in order to make effective decisions for targeted learner education. This evaluation plays a "crucial role in curriculum development" (Vasiljevic, 2011:3) allowing teachers to see the "effectiveness and efficiency" and develop materials based on evidence, not feel, something I was perhaps guilty of as a novice teacher.

The main issue faced with materials development is that contexts can vary wildly from country to country, school to school and class to class (Maley, 2010:379), making the process of materials design incredibly complex and the end product sometimes ineffective and stale. Through supplementation, teachers are able to fill in the blanks and introduce their own work to match the context they find themselves in, although evaluation is a must to ensure these activities are not as equally misguided as the coursebooks themselves. The evaluation may come in the form of a *predictive evaluation* before use with learners, or *retrospectively* once an activity has been carried out based on reactions and "effectiveness and efficiency" (Vasiljevic, 2011:3).

The was this evaluation is carried out is difficult to clarify, again due to the varying contextual demands, however Ellis (1998, cited in: Vasiljevic, 2011:4) suggested 5 basic inclusions to maintain; A) tasks and objectives description (similar to a lesson plan), B) plan of evaluated aspects (what is measured), C) information collection (data from previous knowledge or current learners), D) analysis of information (what did the data show), and E) conclusions and next steps (what needs changing). There is no guarantee that this process will lead to effective activities, more that it will guide teachers into taking learner needs and satisfaction into further consideration when developing tasks. Vasiljevic (2011:8) clarifies the objective nicely; evaluation "allows teachers to make informed decisions about the suitability of particular activities for differing learning situations. "

One of the most effective ways a teacher can close the gap between commercial materials and their learners is to take control of the lesson contents, as Maley (2010:380) suggests; *content* (what),

order (when), *pace* (speed), and *procedure* (how). These areas are normally outlined in teachers guides and can be jarring when applied to individual situations which require more finesse. Dynamic technology-based materials such as texts, social media and instant messaging are becoming more and more common in education, with many traditional teachers concerned with their use. Task evaluation of these methods along with data-driven pedagogic reasoning may deal with some of these concerns.

Something which particularly drew my attention this week was the concept of subject English classes (Mohan 1986, cited in: Maley, 2010:390) and content and language integrated learning (CLIL). I regularly introduced these types of lessons in Korea and the students seemed quite amazed that it was still considered 'English class', almost as if it was cheating to learn two subjects at once! The assumed advantages being the use of "relevant language" as opposed to the sometimes strange and pointless phrases taught from textbooks, and content more likely to match students' personal interests. Motivation increases as failure results in relatable and realistic consequences.

I attempted to include a day of product design in my curriculum, with students researching, designing and marketing their own sports energy drink. I would bring a bottle of water to class with a blank label wrapped around it, and proclaim that 'THIS IS THE BEST NEW ENERGY DRINK IN THE STORE'. Students would then have to ask classmates what they liked doing (research hobbies), name the drink (normally a hard-hitting catchy name), design the logo and provide a description about why this new energy drink is the best. The students loved being creative, something which is regularly deemed as unnecessary by powers above and was an example of 'learning in disguise' which I had mentioned in a previous blog post.

Unfortunately, coursebook materials will always be constraining, they have to be as there are too many contexts to design personalised content. Teachers are required to use their "professional judgement – or sense of plausibility " (Maley, 2010:392) when creating or using their own materials, and a task evaluation assists with this decision-making process. I did not have a written way of evaluating my classes, and will definitely be making sure this evidence-based reflective action is taken in my future employment.

References

Ellis, R. (1998). The evaluation of communicative tasks. In: B. Tomlinson (Ed.): *Materials Development in Language Teaching.* Pp. 217-238. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Maley, A. (2011). Squaring the circle - Reconciling materials as constraint with materials as empowerment. In: Tomlinson, B. (ed). Materials Development in Language Teaching. (2nd edn) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 379-402.

Mohan, B. (1986). Language and content. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Richards, J. C., J. Platt, and H. Weber (1985). *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics.* Harlow: Longman.

Vasiljevic, Z. (2011). The predictive evaluation of language learning tasks. English Language Teaching. v4(1), pp. 3-10.

Blog Week 10 – Online Materials

Word Count: 690

The last seminar of this module related to the use of materials in an online environment, something I must admit, have limited experience with. I went into the week expecting to be met with a slew of positive reasons why online teaching is the future and how classroom teaching is a thing of the past. Unfortunately, these reasons did not materialise.

I would like to establish the difference between 'technology' and 'online' from the outset of this post. Technology' is an essential part of English teaching in 2021 with students expecting to use or see it being used in their education and I could not agree more with them. To them remember, it isn't 'technology' but an "ordinary set of tools used in their daily lives" (Oblinger, 2003, cited in: Mishan & Timmis, 2015:77). 'Online' materials on the other hand are specialised, in so much that not every teacher or student works within that space. They may use online materials privately, but not with direct instruction.

During our main conversations in the weekly seminar, I felt as though I was an odd one out. Perhaps the context and school I worked in during my years away didn't reflect the majority of TESOL contexts, especially during the pandemic situation. Materials are supposed to "reflect the affordances of the environment" (Hampel, 2006:118, cited in: Mishan & Timmis, 2015:76) and my context didn't afford online work. I don't particularly wish to work online as a teacher of English, that isn't why I am doing this MA. Again, I love technology and its ability to assist with language learning (CALL, CMC, ICT) and I have and will include it in almost all of my classes in some way, but that doesn't mean it has to be online.

Mishan and Timmis (2015:79) talk heavily about the reconceptualization of language learning materials, noticeably the distinction between content and process. Materials used to be published by those in the know, on paper and in books, but now with the internet at our fingertips and "digitally native"(Prensky, 2001:1, cited in: Mishan & Timmis, 2015:) students filling virtual seats, lines are beginning to blur. Mishan (2013:217) refers to materials as *static* or *dynamic*, *static* being traditional materials such as textbooks and worksheets, through Powerpoint presentations in the middle, up to *dynamic* modern materials such as texting and direct messaging on social networks. I can only imagine my Korean colleagues' reactions when told to be more *dynamic* with their teaching and the Principal's reaction to 1400 students having their phones out during classes. I understand the concept and in the right situation, with the right tasks and right group of students, can already

imagine where I would take this in my own work, but I do feel like there are many out there who assume one size fits all, it doesn't.

This week we also had the freedom to explore a few online sites which provide templates for online learning. I have a profound dislike for anything 'stock' and consider creation as part of teacher development and autonomy. Curiously, I was grilled during the seminar about this, so it would appear this is not a common way of thinking. Rossa made me aware that not every teacher feels comfortable, or has time, to create their own work/templates and perhaps this is something I didn't consider before. Looking back, I can understand what a valuable tool they are to some. Personally, I am not comfortable using them and would rather tailor something for the students I am working with from the ground up as a form of development.

I can see the benefits of online teaching and online learning, but not everyone likes it, learns much from it, or wants to do it. We were forced into it by external factors and if it is to continue, I don't think I will continue to be a teacher. I can't help but wonder how the online delivery of this module has differed from the in-person delivery in the past, and would be interested to hear from our professors Paul and Theresa how they feel about the future of online teaching in general.

References

Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015). Chapter 5: Reconceptualising Materials for the Technological Environment. Materials Development for TESOL. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. pp 75-98.

Hampel, R. (2006). Rethinking task design for the digital age: a framework for language teaching and learning in a synchronous online environment. ReCALL, v18(1), pp. 105–121.

Oblinger, D. (2003). Boomers and gen-Xers millennials: understanding the new students. Educause Review, v38(4), pp. 37–47.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. On the Horizon, v9(5), pp. 1–6.

Full List of References

Bax, S. (2003). CALL: past, present and future. System, v31(2), pp. 13-28.

Clare, A. (2017). The power of video. In: Donaghy, K. & Xerri, D. (eds). The Image in English Language Teaching. Floriana, Malta: ELT Council.

Colburn, L. (2019). How to survive and thrive in a Korean Middle School – Various teaching activities, 2018-19 Co-teaching workshop. Daejeon Metropolitan Office of Education.

Cunningsworth, A. (1995). In: Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015) Materials Development for TESOL. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Donaghy, K. & Xerri, D. (2017). The image in ELT: an introduction. In: Donaghy, K. & Xerri, D. (eds). The Image in English Language Teaching. Floriana, Malta: ELT Council.

Duchastel, P, C. (1978). Illustrating Instructional Texts, *Educational Technology*, v18(11).

Ellis, R. (1998). The evaluation of communicative tasks. In: B. Tomlinson (Ed.): *Materials Development in Language Teaching.* Pp. 217-238. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, R. (2016). Language teaching materials as work plans: An SLA perspective. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), SLA research and materials development for language learning, pp. 203-218. New York: Routledge.

Goldstein, B. (2009). *Working with images*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goldstein, B. (2017). A history of video in ELT. In: Donaghy, K. & Xerri, D. (eds). The Image in English Language Teaching. Floriana, Malta: ELT Council.

Grant, N. (1987). *Making the Most of Your Textbook*. Harlow: Longman.

Hadfield, J. (2014). Chaosmos: spontaneity and order in the materials design process. In: Harwood, N. (ed) English Language Teaching Textbooks: Content, Consumption, Production. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hall, D. (1995). Materials production: theory and practice. In: A. C. Hidalgo, D. Hall & G. M. Jacobs (Eds.), Getting started: materials writers on materials writing. pp. 8-24. Singapore: SEAMEO Language Centre.

Hampel, R. (2006). Rethinking task design for the digital age: a framework for language teaching and learning in a synchronous online environment. ReCALL, v18(1), pp. 105–121.

Harwood, N. (Ed.) (2010). Materials in ELT: Theory and practice . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hill, D, A. (2013). The visual element in EFL coursebooks. Pp. 157-166. In: Tomlinson, B. (ed) Developing Materials for Language Teaching. (2nd edn) London: Bloomsbury.

Johnson, K. (2003). Designing Language Teaching Tasks, Palgrave Macmillan.

Jolly, D. & Bolitho, R. (2011) A framework for materials writing. In: Tomlinson, B. (ed) Materials Development in Language Teaching. (2nd edn) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 107-134.

King, J. (2002). Using DVD Feature Films in the EFL Classroom. Computer Assisted Language Learning, v15, pp. 509-523.

Littlejohn, A. (2011) The analysis of language teaching materials: inside the Trojan Horse. In: Tomlinson, B. (ed). Materials Development in Language Teaching. (2nd ed) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp 179-211.

Loh, J. & Renandya, W, A. (2016). In: Tomlinson, B. and Masuhara, H. (2018) The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Maley, A. (2011). Squaring the circle - Reconciling materials as constraint with materials as empowerment. In: Tomlinson, B. (ed). Materials Development in Language Teaching. (2nd edn) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 379-402.

Masuhara, H. (2016). Brain studies and materials for language learning. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), Second language research and materials development for language learning (pp. 23– 32). New York: Routledge.

McGrath, I. (2016). Chapter 5: Supplementation and Worksheets, Materials Evaluation and Design for Language Teaching, Chapter 5. Pp. 79 – 98.

McGrath, I. (2002). *Materials Evaluation and Design for Language Teaching*. Edinburgh University Press.

McGrath, I. (2013) Teaching Materials and the Roles of EFL/ESL Teachers: Practice and Theory. London: Bloomsbury.

Mishan, F. (2005). Designing authenticity into language learning materials. Bristol: Intellect.

Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015). Chapter 1: Introduction. Materials development for TESOL. 1st ed. Edinburgh textbooks. Pp. 1-8.

Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015). Chapter 2: Principled Materials Development. Materials Development for TESOL. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp. 9-32

Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015) Chapter 4: Materials evaluation and adaption. Materials Development for TESOL. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp. 56-74.

Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015). Chapter 5: Reconceptualising Materials for the Technological Environment. Materials Development for TESOL. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. pp 75-98.

Mishan, F. & Timmis, I. (2015) Chapter 9: Materials design from process to product. Materials Development for TESOL. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp. 163-182.

Mohan, B. (1986). Language and content. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Oblinger, D. (2003). Boomers and gen-Xers millennials: understanding the new students. Educause Review, v38(4), pp. 37–47.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. On the Horizon, v9(5), pp. 1-6.

Prowse, P. (2011). How writers write: Testimony from authors. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), Materials development in language teaching (2nd ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C., J. Platt, and H. Weber (1985). *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics.* Harlow: Longman.

Rubdy, R. (2003). Selection of materials. In B. Tomlinson (ed.), *Developing Materials for Language Teaching* (pp. 37–58). London: Continuum.

Samuda, V. (2005). Expertise in pedagogic task design. In K. Johnson (Ed.), Expertise in second language learning and teaching. pp 230-254. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shawer, S, F. (2010). In: Tomlinson, B. and Masuhara, H. (2018) The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Sokoli, S. & Terran, P, Z. (2019). 'Audiovisual activities and multimodal resources for foreign language learning', in: Herrero, C. & Vanderschelden, I. (eds). Using Film and Media in the Language classroom: Reflections on Research-Led Teaching. Bristol: Multilingual Matters

Tomlinson, B. (2003). Materials evaluation. In B. Tomlinson (ed.), *Developing Materials for Language Teaching.* Pp. 15-36. London: Continuum.

Tomlinson, B. (2010). Principles of effective materials development. In N. Harwood (ed.), English Language Teaching Materials: Theory and Practice (pp. 81–108). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tomlinson, B. (2010). What do teachers think about EFL coursebooks? *Modern English Teacher*, v19(4), pp. 5-9.

Tomlinson, B. (2013). Second language acquisition and materials development. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), Applied linguistics and materials development. pp. 11-29. London: Bloomsbury.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018). Chapter 1: Materials development so far. The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, pp. 1-24.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018). Chapter 3: Materials Evaluation. The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Pp. 52-81.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018). Chapter 4: Materials adaption. The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Pp. 82-116.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018). Chapter 5: The Development of Materials. The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. pp. 117-144.

Tomlinson, B. & Masuhara, H. (2018). Chapter 13: Visuals, layout and design. The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Pp. 325-341.

Tomlinson, B. and Masuhara, H. (2004). *Developing Language Course Materials*. Singapore: SEAMO.

Vasiljevic, Z. (2011). The predictive evaluation of language learning tasks. English Language Teaching. v4(1), pp. 3-10.