

DEVELOPING ELT MATERIALS FOR YOUNG LEARNERS OF FOREIGN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Abstrak: Bagian yang terpenting dalam persiapan mengajar adalah menentukan dan menyiapkan bahan ajar. Pada tahap ini, seorang guru harus dapat menyiapkan bahan yang sesuai bagi muridnya. Walaupun ada banyak jenis bahan ajar yang ditulis oleh para ahli, guru harus dapat menyesuaikan dengan material si guru dan juga dengan level dari pada murid. Jika material tidak relevan, maka akan berpengaruh pada pencapaian murid yang rendah atau pun buruk. Lebih dari itu, murid akan kurang berpartisipasi, cenderung merasa bosan, tidak komunikatif dan proses pembelajaran menjadi tidak menarik. Oleh sebab itu, membuat atau pun memilih material yang sesuai adalah salah satu kunci kesuksesan dalam proses belajar mengajar. Dalam artikel ini, penulis bermaksud untuk mempresentasikan ide dalam membangun material ELT untuk murid yang berusia muda, yang akan difokuskan dalam situasi di Indonesia, dimana *English Language Teaching* (ELT) adalah bahasa asing. Dalam konteks ini, murid berusia muda adalah murid dengan usia di antara 6 tahun sampai 13 atau 14 tahun. Dengan demikian, murid berusia muda bisa saja murid pada level sekolah dasar sampai pada level sekolah menengah pertama. Artikel ini akan berfokus pada pengalaman penulis dan tentunya didukung oleh teori para ahli.

Kata Kunci: kompetensi bahasa, membuat material ELT

***Abstract:** A crucial part of teaching preparation is determining and preparing teaching materials. At this stage, a teacher should be able to provide a suitable and appropriate materials for his/her learners. Though there are varieties of teaching materials written by experts, the teacher should be able to just them accurately in order the materials are really appropriate and match with the learners' level of language competence. If the materials are not relevant, the impact or result of teaching might be the learners' achievement is low or poor. Moreover, the results could be in the form of poor participation of the learners, students feel boring, not communicative and uninteresting situation of teaching learning process. Therefore, developing or selecting an appropriate materials is one of the keys to successful teaching learning process. Thus, in this article, the writer intends to present some ideas of developing ELT materials for young learners, which will focus on the situation in Indonesia, where English language teaching (ELT) as a foreign language. The young learners, in this context, are learners whose ages between 6 years old till thirteen or fourteen year old. Therefore, they may be learners at elementary level till junior secondary level. The discussion will be focused on the writer's experiences and, of course, some theories proposed by the experts.*

***Key Words:** language competence, developing ELT materials*

BACKGROUND OF ELT OF MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned earlier, preparing teaching materials for most teachers are a crucial part of a whole preparation. There are many aspects should be

considered by the teachers, such as: the appropriateness of the materials to the learners, the suitability of the materials with the learners current language competence, and meeting with the objectives of the curriculum. Those factors, on the

other hand, need the teachers' sufficient knowledge about how to select and develop appropriate materials for their learners.

The talk amongst the English language teachers with the writer shows that the teaching materials are obtained from the textbooks published by the private publishers which are available at the market. The most surprising issue is that those materials are taught without any process of selection, in a sense that the materials are really appropriate to the learners. Moreover, some English teachers at the private schools (non-government schools) in Pontianak do not possess an English curriculum and do not aware of the materials (Sada, 2003). Among the reasons are they (English teachers) thought that those textbooks available in the market have matched with the curriculum and moreover, the textbooks are published by the accredited national publishers. Therefore, the English language teachers have no doubt about the quality of the materials.

The English language teachers' trust about the textbooks is so high and there is no doubt at all to use the textbooks. Halliwell (2004:20) states that the English language teachers should be "knowing which activities 'stir' a class and which 'settle' them" and "knowing which activities engage children's minds and which keep them physically occupied"; and "choosing the materials to suit the mood". Those ideas have an important implications in preparing the suitable and interesting materials. Without the suitable and interesting materials, teaching learning process might be the same as chasing a leopard in an arid large desert. Therefore, once again, the first concern of the English language teachers is to focus on materials selection and development.

Gebhard (2000:89) mentions that EFL/ESL materials used in EFL/ESL, basically, are created by four groups of people, i.e. publishing companies, government agencies, curriculum development teams at the school level, and classroom teachers. Relating to this idea, he further stresses that most of the materials will reflect the beliefs of those who create them. Thus, the teacher should do something to make the materials appropriate with the learners' needs and expectation as to confirm that the materials are really

useful. In other words, the materials are meaningful and useful to the learners.

In Indonesian context, the providing of suitable materials is a problem. In some rural schools, where there is no accessibility of internet for teachers and learners could access learning materials or supplementary materials. On the other hand, the government does not provide sufficient materials for those rural or remote schools. Therefore, the condition needs teachers' creativity and knowledge to supply their own needs on teaching materials.

Some of my friends who are teachers of English language in the rural areas of West Kalimantan always complain about the difficulty in obtaining good and suitable materials for their learners. They complain about the available materials which are high enough for their learners. They complain about their own capability in creating or developing the suitable materials for their learners. They complain about the rapid changes of English language curriculum and its guiding infrastructures. In short, some of the teachers are not ready to face those difficulties.

Developing teaching materials so that the materials have to fulfill the appropriateness, suitability and relevance to the learners need sufficient knowledge and skills of the teachers. The teachers should know who their learners' background of English knowledge, know about the characteristics of good materials, know about the sources of materials, and know how to do simplification or modification of available materials. In the condition that the sources of learning materials are insufficient, then, the teachers should be able to produce the materials for their own purposes. The questions of "how to produce?"; "how to develop?"; "where to get or purchase the materials?"; "how to assess the materials are appropriate?" may be arose within the teachers themselves. It is because they (teachers) have no experience or little experience in developing the materials. Therefore, the government should be committed to provide sufficient and relevant materials (textbooks) for the schools in the rural areas.

The phenomenon of English language learning and teaching in the rural areas is sometimes English

language subject is not taught by the teachers of English language graduates. The main excuses of giving the authority to those non- English language graduate teachers are insufficient teachers or lacking of teachers and no English language teachers at those schools. Thus, it is understood that the process of learning and teaching is not running on the right track or learning and teaching process is done but might be “a false process”.

Some studies about teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) in some rural areas or outskirts have shown that the crucial problems are insufficient teachers and inavailability appropriate materials. Though these problems have existed for several decades, it seems that there is no concrete action taken to solve the problems. Thus an opinion or issue that the government has no strong commitment to educate its citizens in the rural or remote areas of this nation. This opinion has activated another issue that the citizens of the rural areas or remote or borders are claimed to be “independence”.

The term independence raised by the citizens of the rural/remote/border has multiple meaning. The first meaning that they want to be freed from any poverty; the second meaning that they need attention from the government to provide development in every aspect of living, and the most important meaning that they and their children have better access in education. In this sense, the writer might be wrong to translate the citizens' wish/hope/expectation. However, they could catch the essence of the citizens' needs is education. The citizens, I think, though they are not educated or less educated, they have learnt a good lesson from their neighborhood brothers and sisters from the neighborhood country (foreign). Therefore, the minor problem of teaching materials will activate a more serious problem of maintain a good citizen in this growing and developing nation.

So, the story told in this background is intended to bring the audience (readers) to understand and feel the “heart-cry” of the teachers in some parts of this nation, who claimed that they are on the state of being ignorant or the citizens who are belittled.

THEORETICAL REVIEW OF MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

Discussing about preparing good materials, the main focus is referring to the teacher's competence. The simply reason is because the task of teaching and learning is conducted by the teachers. Therefore, it is no doubt that materials development or selection are the main task of the teachers.

The next question may arise is how material development is done or conducted. This question is answered or responded by sufficient knowledge of the teachers on theories or experts' ideas on developing materials. Thus, the following discussion will focus on some theories or experts' ideas on materials development.

Cameron (2001:16) mentions some advantages of teaching foreign languages to young learners. The young learners, she meant, are the learners in the primary years (the writer thinks, which is equivalent to elementary school learners). Her statement is referring to some researches findings on the success of foreign language learners' achievement in learning foreign languages. She further explained some keys of successful learning by the young learners (children), such as: (1) children actively try to construct meaning; (2) children need space for language growth; (3) language in use carries cues to meaning that may not be noticed; (4) development can be seen as internalising from social interaction, and (5) children's foreign language learning depends on what they experience.

Halliwell (2004: 3) put forwards some advantages of foreign language learning and teaching for young learners in a topic working with young language learners are: (1) children's ability to grasp meaning; (2) children's creative use of limited language resources; (3) children's capacity for indirect learning; (4) children's instinct for play and fun; (5) the role of imagination, and (6) the instinct for interaction and talk. In this context we can see the children's capability, creativity, role and instinct are the factors that may be the main consideration of the language teachers to start with their work. Of course, those children's skills should be well understood by the language teachers in order they (teachers) could

produce a well plans work, an one of the works is material development.

On the part of her explanation, Halliwell (2004:114) mentions about working with a coursebook. She means that there are factors to be considered by the teachers, such as: (1) what a coursebook does well and what a teacher can often do better; (2) choosing a coursebook; (3) increaing the real interaction and communication offered by a coursebook, and (4) pacing your progress through the book. The essence of her dicussion on this section is about whether the book's priority match with your priorities (material taught). This means that this part is also discuss about how the materials taught are meet the learners' need. Therefore, the appropriateness and suitability of the materials are taken into the concern of material development.

The process of language learning and teaching is inseparable with the learners and teachers behaviours. The learners behaviours are related to the learners' interest and learners' expectation. The positive behaviours of the learners and the teachers will activate the supporting condition of learning. And I assure that the learners' interest will be high if they received appropriate materials, and as well as, their expectation is high if the materials are interesting and useful. Csizier (1998) as quoted by Halliwell (2004:31) stated that the positive behaviours are the entry point or the starting line of having good learning and teaching process and as well as the flow of students-teachers interaction.

Gebhard (2000) in some parts of his book presents about the developing and changing activities or tasks of teaching listening, conversation, reading, pronunciation and writing. Further he explains the importance of knowledge and skills that the teachers should have. In other word, the teachers are having good knowledge and skills in developing materials.

Johnson (2009) argues language teaching and learning from sociocutural perspective. His main intention is to aware us that language teaching and learning is inseparable from culture. From this point of view, it may be relevant if the material development is wrapped with values: social, moral and cultural values. It is, in a sense, that teaching materials have multi-functions, such as: teaching

knowledge and developing morality, and as well as build caharcters of the learners. Thus, the materials will have multi effects upon the growth of the children. This concept, I think, is inline with vision and mission of 2013 curriculum – to build spiritual and social competences.

The introduction of 2013 curriculum should be considered as the main stream of producing any teaching materials. The main goals of nation building is the nation character building. The Indonesian grand design of character building within a periode of 2010-2025 clearly stated that teaching-learning activities should achieve the functions and objectives of education according to the National Education System no. 20/2003.

A more technical theory on materials development is through a process of: (1) adaptation, (2) adoption, and (3) simplification or modification. The process of adaptation is an action of taking the materials from any sources and do some changes in order the magterials are appropriate or suitable to the students. The process of doing changes to the materials is mainly to adapt or to match the materials with the students' current competence in language learning. Meanwile, adoption is an action of taking the materials from other sources without doing any changes of the original materials for teaching-learning purpose. Simplification or modification is a process of simplified or modified so that the materials will be suitable or match with the students language level or capability. Based on the writer' experience, these three ways are commonly practised by most teachers. The materials obtained from any sources will be produced through adaption, adoption and simplification or modification.

TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE OF MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT

The main question is “why the teacher has to develop the teaching-learning materials?”. This question could be responded positively and negatively. A positively response is that, might be, there are no teaching-learning materials which are appropriate with the goals of curriculum, not match the learners' competence or level, the organization of

the materials are not in proper sequence or order, or a compulsory task of the teachers.

The negatively response will refer to those teachers who are teaching in some rural or remote areas where the access in many aspects are insufficient. For instance, there is limited or shortage learning sources, such as: textbooks, e-books, articles, and technology items. Therefore, the reason of insufficient will give another impact, such as: the teacher should be creative, innovative and knowledgeable.

The writer in this opportunity would like to share his experience when he was a teacher of junior secondary school students for almost a decade past. At that time, teaching-learning materials are very limited. A teacher may have one book or some duplicated chapters used for teaching. In this situation, a teacher should be able to extend or develop the materials in order the materials will be (1) match with the students, (2) increase the quantity of the materials in order the materials could cover a term teaching-learning activity, and (3) to fulfill the demand of the institution and students needs.

The next question is “what kind of materials which are developed?”. As mentioned earlier in some parts of this article, the inappropriate and limited sources of materials are the consideration. For example, the teachers have to develop some materials of grammar, reading passages, conversation (speaking) activities and exercises (tasks). Sometimes, the teacher has to do compiling the materials from several sources by doing a process of adaptation, adoption and simplification. The writer frequently does this task as to provide sufficient materials.

The results of interview to some English language teachers in Pontianak stated that most teachers complained about level of difficulty of some materials in the textbooks published by private and government publishers. It means that the materials are not matched with the learners capability. Thus the teachers have to re-construct the available materials by doing modification or simplification.

At the recent time, the teaching materials are plenty, in a sense that there are many sources. Textbooks are available in the market and publishing

companies promote their publications to the teachers. The presence of technology, such as: internet where e-books, articles, journals and other printed materials could be accessed easily. The process of obtaining the materials will be more easily and quickly. The task or work of the teachers is to select the materials. Therefore, I think, nowadays teachers will have less heavy efforts to obtain the appropriate materials.

DISCUSSION

In this discussion section, I would like to discuss the topic from various perspectives, such as: the real condition of material development, the ELT for young learners, the perspective of TEFL, and the future prospect and challenges. It is hoped it could give a comprehensive and holistic discussion about material development and English language learning and teaching for young learners.

Referring to Cameron (2001) that foreign language learning and teaching to the young learners would give more advantages. She put forwards some reasons of why TEFL to young learners would have some advantages. This theory is contradictory to the government policy about foreign language teaching. The new curriculum or commonly known as “2013 curriculum” does not accommodate English language (foreign language) as a compulsory subject at primary school level. It is not clear about the reason of “abolishing” English language subject from primary curriculum.

On the other hand, the government always promotes the globalisation competition. The competition needs a strong requirement of foreign language mastery, in particular, English language competence. This policy seems contradictory with the target (dream) and the action (reality). In my opinion, the contestants of the globalisation should be those who are well developed and prepared from the beginning, such as: build the language competence of the learners from the early age. We believe that communication as one of the factors that is needed by the contestants in this globalisation competition.

The task of material development is not a simple task as we (teachers) might imagine or expect. The

skill of material development requires a complex and multi skills and knowledge. If we refer to the objectives of the current curriculum (2013 curriculum), at least there are four core competences as a baseline of thinking, i.e. spiritual, social, knowledge and skill. The spiritual competence needs a basic knowledge about relationship of human with the Creator, human with human, and human with environment. Therefore, the science relation with God, among humans, and with environment, which includes all His creation. I intend to bring our understanding about this universe that it is one or it is separate or divided from one and another.

The knowledge about the relationship amongst the creatures, His creation with the Creator should be well understood so that values will be the basis of teaching and learning materials or materials as an integrated aspect in promoting value education. The term values in this context is equivalent to the character education which refers to character building of the nation. The values found in the society should be considered as the gradient amongst the gradients of material development. Amen (2011) states that values found in the society as an inseparable aspect with the real conduct of the society, therefore, those values should be blended within the other aspects of material development. He further mentions that the ways of life of the society within is reflecting the values exist in the society. In short, it is wise for material developer to consider various aspects of human in order to produce an holistic and comprehensive behaviors and attitudes.

Theoretically, the teachers of foreign languages are facing some problems in determining the appropriate materials for their learners. The theory of adoption, adaptation and modification are not easily applied because these skills need other requirements. For instance, to just that the materials are suitable and then there is no process of modification, therefore, the teacher should be able to do some procedures, such as: doing a try-out, knowing the current level of language competence of the learners, and believe that the materials are contextual or beneficial to the learners. It is, therefore, some knowledge supporting the teachers' competence in grading the materials are strictly necessary.

The problem of references or sources shortage is another crucial problem for most teachers in developing the teaching materials. This problem will be a serious factor for the teachers in the rural schools. In these types of schools, the shortage or lackage of appropriate literatures, access like internet and experts. If these conditions occurred, then, what should we expect. At the end, we might say "let it happen as it is". Of course, an expectation of hopeless or surrender.

The current curriculum (2013 curriculum) is an factual example. Many teachers complain about the absence of the textbooks for learners (students) and teacher's guide book. They really need those materials for the a better and accuracy of doing teaching learning process. Besides, many teachers from the rural schools have not got sufficient information about the implementation of the curriculum. Thus, once again, what could we expect from this sort of condition upon the smooth and good teaching learning process.

"The spirit of change" as mentioned by Notoseputro (2008) is a flow of air which goes to various directions. It is still dark. So, what he means is that it is hard to say whether there is a change or stagnant, or has changed but very little. Despite there is changing or not, the main idea is how the teachers are motivated and done what they could. Its main goal is how a spirit of change grows in individual teachers. Thus, is there any changes in the paradigm of education system and teaching-learning process, and how high or low. It may be a fool dream for the policy makers because a dream without any proper preparation and guidances.

Back to the process of material development, perhaps, the main key is the spirit of change of the teachers. This effort should be well maintained as to energize the teachers to work harder. Despite their limitation in many aspects, they (teachers) are always in the strong position of change. We (government and society) really hope that our teachers as the frontier will do their task well.

The following question is a question about the quality of the materials. This question needs our wisdom to say whether the materials are in a state of good quality or not. The factors which might become

a consideration is about the teacher's qualification, experience, attitudes toward ELT as a foreign language, and skill. Moreover, the vision and missions of current curriculum which focus on character building stated in the core competence. Therefore, the demand for teacher's comprehensive competence in preparing the teaching materials is something that should be fulfilled.

In line with the current curriculum, the materials should have characteristics of values, both national and local values. The values of morality as an implication of core competence (spiritual) should be tightly wrapped to the materials, as well as, the other competence, such as social, knowledge and skills should be mirrored the content of the materials. Thus, there is a significantly integration within the content of the materials with the curriculum's goals and the teachers' competence and skill.

As the closing part of this article, the tasks of materials designing and developing are the tough job of the teachers. The aim of designing and developing materials by the teachers themselves is mainly functioned as to meet or match with the learners' needs because they (teachers) know exactly the condition and capability of their own learners. Therefore, the main clue is the teacher's commitment and concern in providing the most appropriate materials.

CONCLUSION

Most experts say that the process of teaching and learning starts from the quality of the teaching materials, in a sense that, the materials should be appropriate and match with the learners' needs. The appropriateness means the level of language, content and context are match with the learners. In this case, it is the teacher's task to provide the best materials.

The mission of curriculum to produce graduations with good conduct, attitudes and knowledgeable should be considered as the main focus or goal. It means that the materials should have characteristics of morality, human values and local wisdom. These aspects should be stamped in the school graduates so that they are able to maintain the condition and situation peacefully and harmony.

Therefore, it is hope that the Indonesian people have their own identity – strong character.

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