

Roles and Principles of Instructional Materials in EFL Teaching: Guidance towards Teaching Materials Development

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Teaching English as a foreign language is a complex process that may include so many components. One of them is English instructional materials. These instructional materials play an essential role in determining the success of the EFL teaching-learning process. Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, teacher may find difficulties in achieving the realistic, authentic-like, and contextual materials which are suitable for their learners. In fact, most of them complain about the shortage of availability of suitable teaching materials which can facilitate and enhance the learners' understanding towards the lesson given. They scarcely find materials which are adequately appropriate and satisfy the learners characteristics.

Currently there are plenty of commercial materials which can be found easily in bookstores but few of them can treat the learners as well as the teachers as the way they are. It should be noted that all learners, all teachers, and all teaching situations are uniquely different. Furthermore, classroom situations are changing from time to time. Target needs, common knowledge, and interest of the learners challenge the teachers to provide learning situations including learning materials which are able to meet with those demands. The commercial materials are somehow already predetermined to specific situations that they put off the freedom of action of the teachers. Referring to Malay (1998:279), what actually happens within the classrooms using commercial materials is that there is a complex trade-off between the three major elements in the equation: the materials, the teachers, and the learners.

Talking about instructional materials, it should be widely known that in EFL teaching, materials are not merely those of textbook, coursebook, or published materials. They cover a wider range. They can be cassettes, videos, CD-Rooms, dictionaries, grammar books, readers, workbooks, photocopied exercises, handouts, newspapers, food packages, photographs, live talks, tasks written on cards, discussion between learners: anything which presents or informs about the language being learned (Tomlinson,1998). Considering this fact, EFL teachers do not need to be anxious to develop, adapt the textbooks/coursebooks or even create their own materials. However, they need to look carefully at the principles underpinning such materials to ensure that they contribute positively to the learning environment.

This article seeks to reveal the roles of instructional materials in EFL teaching, the principles of developing EFL teaching materials, and some reflections on developing instructional materials. This article also tries to give inspiration toward the EFL teachers in creating their own teaching materials so that they will not feel fear of having no or limited materials in hands right before teaching. (418 words)

Key words: EFL teaching-learning process, roles, principles, developing EFL materials, authentic, contextual, and effective materials.