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Oksana HANDABURA,
orcid.org/0000-0002-1119-5072
Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences,
Associate Professor at the Department of Foreign Languages
Khmelnyskyi Humanitarian-Pedagogical Academy
(Khmelnyskyi, Ukraine) o.handabura@gmail.com

Tetiana SEVERINA,
orcid.org/0000-0003-1379-8456
Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences,
Associate Professor at the Department of Foreign Languages
Khmelnyskyi Humanitarian-Pedagogical Academy
(Khmelnyskyi, Ukraine) severina.tetiana@gmail.com

Liudmyla ZAKRENYTSKA,
orcid.org/0000-0001-7231-850X
Candidate of Philological Sciences,
Associate Professor at the Department of Foreign Languages
Khmelnyskyi Humanitarian-Pedagogical Academy
(Khmelnyskyi, Ukraine) zakludmila@gmail.com

THE PROBLEM OF CRITERIA AND PRINCIPLES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

The article reviews some aspects to the problem of criteria and principles of English language teaching materials development. There are a lot of tools that can be used by an English teacher to work out materials for the lesson. The problem is how to develop effective material, what criteria and principles are available for this.

The article gives the definition of ELT materials, that is anything that a teacher uses to help the teaching process in the classroom and facilitates the learning of a language. There are print, non-print and digital materials. And the notion of materials development is defined, namely it can be a field of research and a hands-on task. A field of research involves the critical examination of the principles and procedures of the design, implementation and evaluation of language teaching material. A hand-on task involves production, evaluation and adaptation of language teaching materials, application of what we know works and does not work.

The authors analyze criteria to determine if materials are effective. They are level, context and flow. The appropriate level of material is connected to the students' level of English. The level of the material also refers to the level of the exercise or task. The criterion of context includes several elements: classroom environment, cultural context, gender, time. The criterion of flow implies logical presentation of the material.

There are several frameworks with principles of material development. The authors examine two of them, in particular B. Tomlinson's framework of 16 principles, which is based on SLA theories, and a smaller, D. Jolly and R. Bolitho's 5-point framework for teacher-made materials that emphasizes the importance of context.

The authors suggest that choice and development of ELT materials should depend on the methodological approaches a teacher uses. But we are currently in a post-methods era, whose characteristics affect this process. Also, the current trends in materials development have been presented. English teachers can apply these trends in different ways.

Key words: *ELT materials, ELT materials development, criteria, level-context-flow, principles, post-methods era.*

Оксана ГАНДАБУРА,
orcid.org/0000-0002-1119-5072
кандидат педагогічних наук,
доцент кафедри іноземних мов
Хмельницької гуманітарно-педагогічної академії
(Хмельницький, Україна) o.handabura@gmail.com

Тетяна СЕВЕРІНА,

orcid.org/0000-0003-1379-8456

кандидат педагогічних наук,

доцент кафедри іноземних мов

Хмельницької гуманітарно-педагогічної академії

(Хмельницький, Україна) *severina.tetiana@gmail.com*

Людмила ЗАКРЕНИЦЬКА,

orcid.org/0000-0001-7231-850X

кандидат філологічних наук,

доцент кафедри іноземних мов

Хмельницької гуманітарно-педагогічної академії

(Хмельницький, Україна) *zakludmila@gmail.com*

ПРОБЛЕМА ВИЗНАЧЕННЯ КРИТЕРІЇВ ТА ПРИНЦИПІВ РОЗРОБКИ НАВЧАЛЬНИХ МАТЕРІАЛІВ З АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

У статті розглядаються деякі аспекти проблеми визначення критеріїв та принципів розробки навчальних матеріалів з англійської мови. Інструментів, які може використовувати вчитель англійської мови для розробки матеріалів до уроку, дуже багато. Проблема полягає в тому, як розробити ефективний матеріал, які критерії та принципи для цього є.

У статті дається визначення матеріалів для навчання англійської мови, тобто всього, що вчитель використовує, щоб допомогти навчальному процесу в класі та полегшити вивчення англійської мови. Є друковані, недруковані та цифрові матеріали. І визначено поняття розробки матеріалів, в якій розрізняють сферу досліджень та практичні завдання. Сфера досліджень включає критичний аналіз принципів та порядку розробки, впровадження та оцінювання матеріалу для навчання англійської мови. Практичні завдання включають виготовлення, оцінювання та адаптацію матеріалів для навчання мови, застосування того, що ми знаємо.

Автори аналізують критерії для визначення ефективності навчальних матеріалів. Це – рівень, контекст та логічність. Відповідний рівень матеріалу пов'язаний з рівнем англійської мови студентів. Рівень матеріалу також відноситься до рівня вправи або завдання. Критерій контексту включає кілька елементів: середовище в класі, культурний контекст, стаття, час. Критерій логічності передбачає логічне викладення матеріалу.

Існує кілька груп принципів розробки навчальних матеріалів. Автори розглядають два з них, зокрема групу з 16 принципів Б. Томлінсона, яка ґрунтується на теоріях оволодіння другою мовою, і меншу групу з 5 пунктів Д. Джоллі та Р. Боліто для матеріалів, створених учителем, яка підкреслює важливість контексту.

Автори вважають, що вибір та розробка матеріалів з англійської мови має залежати від методичних підходів, які використовує вчитель. Але зараз ми перебуваємо в пост-методичній епосі, чії характеристики впливають на цей процес. Також були представлені сучасні тенденції розвитку матеріалів. Вчителі англійської мови можуть застосовувати ці тренди різними способами.

Ключові слова: *навчальні матеріали з англійської мови, розробка навчальних матеріалів з англійської мови, критерії, рівень-контекст-логічність, принципи, пост-методична епоха.*

Problem statement. Just as every classroom is unique, so are our learning needs and goals as teachers. They are shaped by our students, resources, skills, experiences, and ambitions, and they have been changing change over time, evolving as we grow professionally. Therefore, a clear understanding of our learning needs and goals helps us make more effective decisions throughout our language teaching, especially when we need to select a specific resource for a lesson or create our own lesson materials.

The term “materials” can apply to anything that a teacher uses to help the teaching process in the classroom. B. Tomlinson denoted materials as anything which is used by teachers and learners to facilitate the learning of a language. Materials could obviously be videos, DVDs, emails, YouTube, dictionaries, gram-

mar books, readers, workbooks or photocopied exercises. They could also be newspapers, food packages, photographs, live talks given by invited native speakers, instructions given by a teacher, tasks written on cards or discussions between learners (Brian Tomlinson, 2011).

In our digital era there are loads of instruments that assist teachers, English language teachers in particular, to create their own materials for different aims. What are the means that help teachers to choose the most appropriate for them?

Relevant studies analysis. Many scientists have been researching different aspects of the problem of ELT material development. They study the influence of related factors on the ELT material selection. Alan Cunningsworth examines different types of

coursebooks and gives tips how to choose appropriate coursebook and how to adapt and supplement the coursebook for your students (Alan Cunningsworth, 1995). Donna M. Brinton presents a rationale for and an overview of media materials and equipment traditionally used in ELT classroom (Donna M. Brinton, 2001). In their study of materials and methods in ELT Jo McDonough, Christopher Shaw and Hitomi Masuhara depict the current trends in ELT materials design, paying attention to teaching language skills and classroom methods (Jo McDonough, Christopher Shaw & Hitomi Masuhara 2013). Brian Tomlinson has contributed a lot to the research of the issue of ELT materials design. He distinguishes four reasons of the change in the sphere of language learning materials development, namely a shift in emphasis from materials for language teaching to language learning; evidenced-based development; the boost in digital delivery technologies and connection of materials developed for the learning of English with those for other second or foreign languages (Brian Tomlinson & Hitomi Masuhara, 2018).

The aim of our article is to analyze the problem of criteria and principles of English language teaching materials development.

Statement of basic materials. What is materials development? Materials development is both a field of research and a hands-on task. As for field of research it involves the critical examination of the principles and procedures of the design, implementation and evaluation of language teaching material, understanding what works and what does not and why. As for hand-on task it involves production, evaluation and adaptation of language teaching materials, application of what we know works and does not work (research-based materials) and working on a materials' development team if it is necessary.

In 2014 John Hughes differentiated criteria to determine if materials are effective (John Hughes, 2014). They are level, context and flow.

When we talk about the level of the material, we mean whether it can be used by students with an appropriate level of English. There are some tools that can help you create materials at different levels. For example, if you are writing or adapting a text for reading, you can assess the level of the text with a tool like *Oxford Text Checker*. When you put the text into the text checker, it will show you which words are not in the top 2000 or 3000 keywords in English. As a result, you can decide how to adapt the level of the text and which vocabulary can be taught as new (John Hughes, 2014).

The level of the material also refers to the level of the exercise or task. If you ask students to fill in

the gaps in a dialogue while listening, but there are too many gaps, they will find it difficult – regardless of their language level. Similarly, if you are writing a task for speaking practice that requires more than three sentences of instructions, then the task is probably too difficult for students with a low level of English.

The second criterion for the effectiveness of teaching materials is context. By “context” we mean several elements: first of all, the author must understand the classroom environment in which the material will be used. In other words, if you are writing material for adults in general English that can be used anywhere in the world, your material must appeal to a wide range of people. You must remember that an exercise must be accessible to a class of fifty students as well as to a class of five.

It is important to consider the cultural context; choosing a picture or text that will appeal to younger students will not work for older students. According to John Hughes, gender is also an issue: we need to consider whether our choice of contexts and materials will appeal to both girls and boys.

Another context that particularly influences the creation of materials is time. If you want your materials to last, then you should avoid topics like technology and popular culture, or approach them in a way that will not lose relevance too quickly (John Hughes, 2014).

The third criterion is the logical presentation of the material. After choosing appropriate images, texts and exercises that are appropriate for the level of English of your students and the different contexts in which the material will be used, you should make sure that they are logically structured. This means that one activity flows into another and that it follows the basic principles of good lesson planning.

The logical presentation of the material also depends on providing clear “navigational tools” that help the teacher orient students during the lesson. These tools include the use of headings, numbering, references and rubrics or instructions that accompany the exercise or explain the procedure.

John Hughes concludes that all effective materials writers understand how to write materials that are at the correct level, aimed at the appropriate context, and organized into a series of stages which flow to form a cohesive and complete lesson (John Hughes, 2014).

Brian Tomlinson has recognized 16 principles of materials design, which present a clear, full and potentially universal framework that fit the theories on Second Language Acquisition (SLA). These principles, based on SLA theories, were selected because he found them to be relevant to material design. If

materials are “anything which is used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language”, then this does seem an obvious parallel (Brian Tomlinson, 2011: 1).

B. Tomlinson’s 16 principles of material design are: 1) materials should achieve impact; 2) materials should help learners to feel at ease; 3) materials should help learners to develop confidence; 4) what is being taught should be perceived by learners as relevant and useful; 5) materials should require and facilitate learner self-investment; 6) learners must be ready to acquire the points being taught; 7) materials should expose the learners to language in authentic use; 8) the learners’ attention should be drawn to linguistic features of the input; 9) materials should provide learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes; 10) materials should take into account that the positive effects of instruction are usually delayed; 11) materials should take into account that learners differ in learning styles; 12) materials should take into account that learners differ in affective attitudes; 13) materials should permit a silent period at the beginning of instruction; 14) materials should maximise learning potential by encouraging intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement, which stimulates both right – and left-brain activities; 15) materials should not rely too much on controlled practice; 16) materials should provide opportunities for outcome feedback (Brian Tomlinson, 2011: 8–24).

David Jolly and Rod Bolitho outlined a smaller 5-point framework for teacher-made materials that emphasizes the importance of context and includes:

- 1) Materials writing is at its most effective when it is turned to the needs of a particular group of learners.
- 2) Teachers understand their own learners best.
- 3) All teachers need grounding in materials writing.
- 4) All teachers teach themselves.
- 5) Trailing and evaluation are vital to the success of materials (David Jolly & Rod Bolitho, 2011).

The choice of ELT materials depends on the methodological approaches a teacher uses, i.e., for example, if you use the *direct method*, then it would be appropriate to organize the teaching by situations (shopping, food, at the bank, etc.) or by topics (weather, hobbies, family, etc.) – for this you can use flash cards, pictures, videos, exercises with answers to questions, etc.

Most teachers use a *communicative approach* to teaching English, which focuses on the process of communication, interaction and functions of language, rather than on structured language. In view of this, ELT materials are aimed at the natural use of

language for various social purposes and in various social conditions – solving problems, staging performances, team games, group discussions, surveys/interviews.

Or the *project method*, which is based on an eclectic approach, combining different approaches and techniques of language learning depending on the goals of the lesson and the students’ abilities. The choice of materials also depends on the project tasks, for example, there may be such ideas for projects as creating a new product, a new way of doing something, improving something (menu, telephone, etc.), writing a poem.

According to Dr. Bala Kumaravadivelu, we are currently in a post-methods era, which has the following characteristics:

- there is no single best method;
- each method has its strengths and weaknesses;
- the main emphasis remains on communicative competence;
- we can apply a variety of methodological approaches to the development of materials and teaching;
- it is important to use what suits best, rather than choosing a one-size-fits-all approach;
- the use of innovative and creative materials, technologies (Bala Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

That is why teachers can use different materials, technology that tailors their students’ needs and interest.

Technologies entered all the spheres of our life many years ago. Nowadays we can successfully use digital resources any time we need.

According to these characteristics the current trends in materials development have been distinguished:

- Attention on student input and feedback
- Focus on cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication
- Movement away from the native-speaker model
- Movement towards comprehensible input and output
- Movement towards enjoyment in the language classroom
- More activities
- Movement away from testing
- Movement away from memorization
- Less teacher talking more student talking
- Maximizing student participation (Dr. George E.K. Whitehead, 2022).

English teachers can apply these trends in different ways. They can use storytelling method with young learners; teachers want students to memorize set phrases or want them to use language freely to

develop their own communicative abilities. Sometimes teachers wish students to learn from each other or to teach them specific grammar rules as well as to develop language skills useful for a work setting. Sometimes it is urgent to prepare students to do well on the MST or teach learners how to read texts and do tests to them. In addition, in most cases teachers want to develop students 4 skills in a balanced way, etc.

Conclusions. To sum it up, we can assume that the term “materials” mean to anything that a teacher uses to make a lesson effective. They are print, non-print and digital materials. Material development can be field of research (critical examination of the principles and procedures of the design, implementation and evaluation of language teaching material) and hand-on task (production, evaluation and adaptation of language teaching materials

There are definite criteria that can be used to appropriately select or design teaching material. They are level, context and flow. Moreover, there are

5 principles that can help a teacher to do this, namely 1) it is necessary to bear in mind the needs of a particular group of learners; 2) teachers understand their own learners best; 3) it is required to have grounding in materials writing; 4) teachers teach themselves; and 5) trailing and evaluation are important to the success of materials.

The selection of ELT materials depends on the methodological approaches a teacher uses, but currently we are in a post-methods era, which has such characteristics as: there is no best method; each method has its strengths and weaknesses; the main emphasis is on communicative competence; a variety of methodological approaches to the materials development and teaching can be applied; it is important to use what suits best, rather than choosing a one-size-fits-all approach; and the use of innovative, creative materials and technologies.

All in all, teachers can use different materials that tailor their students’ needs and interest.

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