

English language teaching material

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There is an abundance of English language teaching material available on the market, covering different aspects of language learning and language use.

It is important to bear in mind the basic aims of learning English at primary school. In other words, you will need to relate the teaching materials to your aims and objectives.

The basic aim is to prepare the children to benefit fully from the language teaching they will get.

They will become aware that what they say and write in their mother tongue can be said and written in another language in other forms, other sounds and rhythms, other spellings, and that one can sing and play and have fun in another language. Linguistically and culturally, this means they will learn new phenomena and ways of living, through different aspects of everyday life.

The general methodology associated with primary teaching must contribute to the general aim of all subjects taught at a level and is also an important criterion for the selection of materials.

Learning activities must present and practice English in a systematically and comprehensive way so that new language items can be assimilated by the pupil. There is sometimes a tendency when working with young learner to use activities for their own sake, because they are enjoyable or because they *work* as activities, without due regard to their value as language exercises.

The things our pupils do in class should be interesting and enjoyable, but they should also be carefully examined in terms of their language teaching and learning potential and how they relate to what has previously been learnt and what is to be learnt.

Most teachers of English use a coursebook and there are a number of good reasons for doing so.

1. It is a useful learning aid for the pupil.
2. It can identify what should be taught/learnt, and the order in which it should be taught/learnt.
3. It can indicate what methodology should be used.
4. It can provide, attractively and economically, all or most of the materials needed.

Some teachers may use one coursebook only, taking their pupils through it from beginning to end, whilst others may take materials from several different books, adapting them where necessary and supplementing them with original material they have produced themselves. It is rare, however, to meet a teacher who does not draw on published teaching material, as producing original materials is a difficult and time consuming process.

Many coursebooks, however, are in general in that they are designed to satisfy a general world-wide market and are meant to be as usable in Brasil as they would be in Spain. Such courses do not have one particular

group of learners in mind and therefore usually take an English-speaking country as a setting along with corresponding sets of cultural values.

In case of working with a coursebook, the teacher should formulate objectives with the needs of the learners in mind and then seek out published materials which will achieve those objectives. Nobody should allow the coursebook to set the objectives, let alone allow teaching the coursebook to be the objective.

In reality, the coursebook often becomes the teaching syllabus, and the aims and objectives of the book will be adopted for the course. If the teacher has established that the aims of the course and those of the coursebook are reasonably complementary, there seems limited reason for objection.

Different courses have different aims and claim to reach different objectives. It is useful to look at what some of the coursebooks say about themselves.

Although the coursebook may provide the bulk of most teachers' materials, many make use of other materials from time to time in order to provide variety. There are a great number of supplementary materials available for the teaching of English as a foreign language. These include graded and authentic storybooks, dictionaries, nursery rhymes, songs, activity books, cassettes, videos, games, and so on.

When choosing supplementary materials, we have to look at them carefully asking how they relate to:

1. The language presented in your coursebook
2. The type of supplementary language and practice they will provide
3. Your pupils' motivation

We can also provide our own materials. There are many reasons for doing so. Maybe your coursebook does not provide enough practice and you will need to supplement it by adding some extra exercises or maybe you may want to provide your pupils with a selection of different activities to choose from so that they can work at their own pace.

Making worksheets can be a great help to the teacher for organizing oral activities in pairs and small groups, and also for simple reading and writing tasks. When designing worksheets, think carefully about how you want your pupils to use them. For example, if they are to enable pupils to work in pairs and practise listening and speaking, or to work individually and practise reading and writing.

Worksheets have to be clear, simple and attractive.

The instructions must be in very simple English and each activity must last a few minutes. There should be opportunities for the worksheets to be personalized, for example, coloured, labelled, and so on. Each worksheet must practise one particular language point, for example, a structure or a lexical set, and must involve pupils in different skills and possibilities for linking English with other subjects in the curriculum.

Here are some further examples of teacher-produced worksheets.

1. **Information gap:** Pupils work in pairs, A and B. Pupils cooperate with each other, practise vocabulary, ask and answer questions, and practise listening and speaking.
2. **Picture dictation:** Pupils listen to descriptions given by the teacher and add these to the drawing.

3. **Time dictation:** It provides the basis for a question and answer activity.
4. **Matching:** An activity where pupils work individually to practise vocabulary and reading. They match the number of a room to the appropriate illustration.
5. **True or false?** A page from a diary can be used for a true or false activity, involving pupils in listening, reading and speaking.

Flashcards can be made by yourself or by your pupils and can be used to introduce, practise or review structures and vocabulary. Pictures can be drawn by yourself or photocopied. It is useful to enlarge picture on a photocopier if possible.

They must be large enough for the whole class to see and convey the meaning clearly. When using flashcards we can introduce and practise vocabulary related to many topics.

They can also be used for introducing and practising *Yes/No* questions or *Wh questions*; for introducing and practising *can* for expressing ability or for introducing and practising talking about possessions. ●

References

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Wright, A., 1984. *A Thousand Pictures for Teachers to copy*: Collins.