

Didattica della lingua inglese 1

Lesson 10

Modifying and creating teaching materials

Using English in the classroom

About lesson 10

- In today's lesson we are going to...
 - Evaluate materials after use in class
 - Think of ways to modify them
 - To improve them
 - To make them more relevant
 - Plan materials writing
- We are also going to focus on ***your*** English
 - How to give feedback in English
 - How to *recast* children's language

Before we start...

- At the beginning of this course, we looked at a questionnaire on teachers' attitudes to language learning. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006)
 - You expressed some of your ideas about language learning
 - Have they changed during this course?
 - If so, what do you see differently?

Questionnaire (1 of 3)

1. Languages are learned mainly through imitation.
2. Parents usually correct young children when they make grammatical errors.
3. Highly intelligent people are good language learners.
4. The most important predictor of success in second language acquisition is motivation.
5. The earlier a second language is introduced in school programmes, the greater the likelihood of success in learning.
6. Most of the mistakes that second language learners make are due to interference from their first language.
7. The best way to learn new vocabulary is through reading.

Questionnaire (2 of 3)

8. It is essential for learners to be able to pronounce all the individual sounds in the second language.
9. Once learners know roughly 1000 words and the basic structure of a language, they can easily participate in conversations with native speakers.
10. Teachers should present grammatical rules one at a time, and learners should practise examples of each one before going on to another.
11. Teachers should teach simple language structures before complex ones.
12. Learners' errors should be corrected as soon as they are made in order to prevent the formation of bad habits.

Questionnaire (3 of 3)

13. Teachers should use materials that expose students to only those language structures they have already been taught.
14. When learners are allowed to interact freely (for example, in group or pair activities), they copy each other's mistakes.
15. Students learn what they are taught.
16. Teachers should respond to students' errors by correctly rephrasing what they have said rather than by explicitly pointing out the error.
17. Students can learn both language and academic content (e.g. science and history) simultaneously in classes where the subject matter is taught in their second language.

Part 1

TEACHING MATERIALS: modification, (re-)creation

Evaluating materials

- When we use materials in class, we understand immediately if they “work” or not
- Here are some common reasons for materials not working
 - The level was wrong
 - The target age-range was wrong
 - The instructions were not clear
 - The teacher could not explain the instructions
 - The children could not understand the instructions
 - The exercise was too long
 - The progression from presentation to production ...
 - Didn't have enough practice, so was difficult/frustrating
 - Had too much practice and was repetitive/boring

Evaluating materials

- Evaluate your materials as you are using them.
 - Make notes on things that worked/didn't work
 - Keep these notes with the materials so you remember next time you use them (e.g. next year)

Were the pupils able to follow the instructions? If not, what reasons can you give?

Was there enough time to complete the activity?

Was the age level appropriate?

Was the difficulty level appropriate?

Did the pupils enjoy the activity? How can you tell?

Did the pupils learn the things they were supposed to learn?

Did you enjoy teaching the activity?

What (if anything) did you have difficulty with?

What would you eliminate/ do differently next time you do this activity?

Evaluating materials

- Sometimes it is an entire coursebook that you need to evaluate.
 - Sometimes the book doesn't work
 - It is too "babyish"
 - The topics aren't interesting or relevant
 - It doesn't recycle vocabulary
 - There is no audio CD
 - The texts (written/spoken) are boring or stupid
 - So talk to your colleagues and compare your reactions
 - Show them your evaluation forms
 - Call the publishers' reps and **change the book**

Modifying materials

- We modify materials when
 - The level is not right for our pupils
 - We don't have enough time to do the whole activity
 - We have tried the activity and found things that didn't work well
 - We want to build on the materials
 - The original materials are good, and we want to extend the topic/activity

Modifying materials: level

- When the language level is too easy, we can add things to make it more difficult
 - Extra vocabulary/ phrases / structures
 - More speaking or writing activities to extend production, e.g.
 - Question-answer for comprehension
 - Shift the focus (Q-A moves from the exercise to the children's experience)
 - This way you can build on the existing materials but make them more challenging
- When the language level is too high, you may have to simplify the exercise, or abandon it.
 - Select just a few parts of the exercise (e.g. games, warm-up activities, vocabulary revision)
 - Eliminate the production at the end – just focus on comprehension
 - Change it into a mother-tongue exercise (i.e. abandon it as an English exercise, but continue the work if the children seem interested in it)

Modifying materials: time

- Sometimes the children need more time on an exercise
 - Because it is difficult
 - Because they are really enjoying it
 - Because the transition time from one part to another was a lot longer than you had planned
 - Because it took longer to explain or introduce the exercise than you had planned
- If you run out of time, you have to decide whether to
 - Cut one or more parts of the exercise
 - Continue the exercise instead of moving on to another subject
 - Continue the exercise as homework
 - Continue the exercise next lesson
- If it's difficult, cut some bits and/or continue next lesson
- If it's enjoyable, continue as homework
 - Don't steal time from other subjects – it's a bad habit to get into, because you will find that you spend less time on the subjects you don't like.

Modifying materials: improving

- Sometimes materials work but were too easy, boring, or irrelevant.
 - Try to work out what you liked about the activity, e.g.
 - The exercise type
 - The way that the language was presented
 - The general idea
 - The progression of exercises
 - The clarity of the instructions
- To improve materials, you have to identify which part needs improving
 - If it is the text / picture / topic which needs to be changed, find alternatives in books or on internet sites
 - If the exercise types / progression needs to be changed, first see if you can eliminate something, then consider alternatives
 - If the instructions are not good, use similar instructions from other materials

Modifying materials: extending

- Sometimes materials were successful but you want more
 - Because your pupils need extra practice
 - Because your pupils are interested and willing to learn more
 - Because the topic is related to other areas of the curriculum
- The easy (and sensible) way to extend materials is...
 - Take the original activity and make ONE change, e.g.
 - Change the text or song
 - Change the characters in a story
 - Use a different picture
 - Use plasticine to make models instead of drawing pictures
 - Do the same exercises as before, but with the new *medium*, so
 - Children revise the language they have just learned
 - They extend their vocabulary
 - They develop their creative and cognitive abilities

Writing materials

- Improving and extending materials are two ways of writing new materials.
 - You build on a successful base
 - You personalise the activities to suit your pupils
 - You adapt existing exercise types and sequences
- Once you have been teaching for a few years, you will probably want to write some materials
 - Whatever you do, always consider:
 - What am I teaching? → vocabulary, phrases, grammar
 - Why am I teaching it? → to revise, for comprehension, for production
 - Who am I teaching it to? → age, level
 - How long do I have to teach it? → how many minutes/ lessons?
 - How many exercise types can I use to teach it? → 3-5 in a 1 hour lesson

Writing materials

- When you write materials, remember
 - You are writing them because they are not available
 - Use teachers' websites, e.g. onestopenglish.com before spending time and energy writing materials
 - Consider buying one or two good teachers' resource books with plenty of ready-made exercises
 - The aim is for your pupils to learn English more effectively
 - Give instructions in English: copy them from other exercises
 - Use **authentic** texts: download them from reliable websites, e.g. www.bbc.co.uk
 - Use songs sung by native speakers: download clips from YouTube
 - If you need to edit audio (make it shorter, make it slower) use Audacity, which is free and easy to use
 - Remember that **production** is the ultimate aim of learning foreign languages, so always include lots of speaking.