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- 2. TITULO:** MATERIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR EFL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN BILINGUAL PROGRAMS
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- 6. PALABRAS CLAVE:** enseñanza, aprendizaje, lengua extranjera, diseño de materiales.
- 7. DESCRIPCION DEL TRABAJO:** Los "materiales para el aprendizaje de los idiomas" son herramientas fundamentales para el proceso de aprendizaje y el mejoramiento de las prácticas pedagógicas. Es por esto que el proceso de diseño de materiales para el aprendizaje de idiomas exige principios y elementos relevantes que los profesores y en especial los profesores en formación necesitan conocer. Los objetivos de este artículo son dar una perspectiva general de los materiales junto con los factores que influyen en el desarrollo de estos y compartir con los maestros en formación los principios que guían el proceso del diseño de los materiales para el aprendizaje de los idiomas. Así mismo, se espera que el presente documento pueda hacer reflexionar al lector sobre el rol activo que los educadores pueden tomar cuando se independizan de los libros de texto y toman el riesgo de diseñar sus propios materiales de enseñanza que muchas veces pueden ser más pertinentes que los libros extranjeros.
- 8. LINEAS DE INVESTIGACION:** Formación y Práctica Pedagógica
- 9. CONCLUSIONES:** Los maestros novatos deben ser conscientes de que los materiales de instrucción son medios por los cuales los estudiantes pueden alcanzar las metas de aprendizaje de idiomas, por lo cual, los educadores deben tomar decisiones responsables acerca de los materiales a usar en sus clases. Estos materiales deben estar muy bien diseñados, deben tener una intención pedagógica y deben responder a un plan académico. Además de esto, los materiales se deben basar en el propósito de favorecer y tener un impacto positivo en los estudiantes, respondiendo a sus necesidades reales, a sus gustos e intereses.

Los maestros deben conocer las implicaciones del diseño de materiales de instrucción, sus características, los elementos que se deben tener en cuenta, los principios y las etapas de este proceso. Así mismo, los maestros en formación pueden estar seguros de que sus propios materiales de aprendizaje de idiomas pueden contextualizar la lengua objeto a las necesidades e intereses de sus estudiantes, recuperando la riqueza cultural e idiosincrásica que los libros comerciales a veces subestiman y pasan por alto.

Material Design Guidelines for EFL Pre-Service Teachers in Bilingual Programs

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Trabajo presentado como requisito para optar por el título profesional de

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Abstract

In the process of teaching and learning a foreign language, there are many significant elements that play an important role and teachers need to be careful with the appropriate use, interaction and control of those elements. Among them, we have “language-learning materials” which may be seen as effective tools to ameliorate teachers’ practices and therefore promote satisfactory learners’ outcomes. Those language learning materials can be designed, created and adapted by teachers in order to respond appropriately to learners’ needs in a real context. Thus, the process of designing language-learning materials demands principles and relevant elements that teachers and especially pre-service teachers need to know. The main objectives of this article are to give a general overview of materials along with the factors influencing the development of instructional materials and to share with pre-service teachers the principles that guide the materials design process. Additionally, this paper is expected to make the reader reflect upon the active role that educators may take when they become more independent from textbooks and take the risk of designing their own contextualized materials.

Keywords: Teaching, learning, Foreign Language, materials design.

Resumen

En el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de un segundo idioma, hay muchos elementos significativos que pueden desempeñar un papel importante; y los profesores deben tener mucho cuidado con el uso adecuado, la interacción e incluso el control de tales elementos significativos. Uno de esos elementos importantes es los "materiales para el aprendizaje de los idiomas" los cuales son vistos como herramientas eficaces para mejorar las prácticas de los profesores y por lo tanto para promover los resultados satisfactorios en los estudiantes. Estos materiales pueden ser diseñados, creados y adaptados por los profesores con el fin de responder adecuadamente a las necesidades de los educandos en un contexto real. Es por esto que el proceso de diseño de materiales para el aprendizaje de idiomas exige principios y elementos relevantes que los profesores y en especial los profesores en formación necesitan conocer. Los objetivos de este artículo son dar una perspectiva general de los materiales junto con los factores que influyen en el desarrollo de estos y compartir con los maestros en formación los principios que guían el proceso del diseño de los materiales para el aprendizaje de los idiomas. Así mismo, se espera que el presente documento pueda hacer reflexionar al lector sobre el rol activo que los educadores pueden tomar cuando se independizan de los libros de texto y toman el riesgo de diseñar sus propios materiales de enseñanza contextualizados.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza, aprendizaje, Lengua extranjera, diseño de materiales.

Introduction

The present article comes from my own experiences in the practicum sessions in which I could evidence that in many cases it was necessary to adapt, modify and also design language learning materials with the aim of making the language more familiar to the students, contextualizing the language to the students' real daily experiences and supporting teaching practices. In our Colombian context it is evident that in many places students do not have the access to commercial texts which sometimes are not appropriate for the students because they are not contextualized or adapted to the students' specific needs and interests. Besides, commercial materials are too expensive and this fact makes it impossible for many students to have access to them.

As it is known in academic bilingual programs, it is absolutely necessary that teachers use many different language learning materials in order to make the class meaningful and dynamic. All those language-learning materials can help and support the teacher's labor in such a way that educators maximize learning experiences, promote the use of the contents from different subjects, and even engage students in the learning process. For these reasons, language-learning materials have a strong pedagogical importance and they need to be created, designed and analyzed carefully. In this regard, the appropriate process of designing didactic materials involves many important elements that must be considered and taken into account in order to produce significant resources with a high level of effectiveness for students' learning process.

The purpose of this article is firstly to give to pre-service teachers a clearer idea about what language learning materials are in academic settings, the benefits they have and also the advantages or disadvantages when they are not well designed. Additionally to this, pre-service teachers who do not want to depend on textbooks so much can find some material development

guidelines for EFL environments like the Colombian context and some of the principles that are necessary to take into account in the process of creating and designing own didactic materials. Besides, the implications of this significant process when designing new resources will be discussed.

The present article is organized as follows: First, it clarifies what language learning materials are in academic settings and then shows some authors' opinions about authentic, commercial and teachers' designed materials. Second, readers will know about some advantages and disadvantages of using all of them in academic settings. And thirdly, it emphasizes on the process of designing materials including the implications and principles for carrying out such a process in educational institutions. Thus, readers can find the importance of designing materials where designers need to deal with extrinsic factor shaping the process. This article is expected to contribute to the discussion about using textbooks in the language learning process or taking the risk of adapting, and why not creating, materials in future real practices.

Instructional materials in academic settings

Experienced teachers, pre-service teachers and also students can have different ideas about what “language-learning materials” are in academic settings. This disjunction of ideas and concepts about materials are usually based on the previous contact and experiences the users have had with those materials. In order to shed some light on the concept of language learning materials, it is necessary to make a review of the ideas that some authors state in relation to this subject.

To begin with, Muñoz (2009) points out that “instructional materials are any means by which we as teachers expose and lead students to language learning” (p. 31). In this regard,

materials can be seen as an important part of the navigation chart in the teaching-learning process, they are like the clues that students have to follow in order to go forward and acquire knowledge. Accordingly, those language-learning materials can be used as the tools to encourage students to use the language and interact with others. This idea is supported by Tomlinson when he states that “materials can be anything which is used to increase the learners’ knowledge and / or experience of the language” (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 2).

For Tomlinson (2011), also language learning materials can be considered as “anything which is used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language” (p. 2). This idea is supported by Moon (2000) as she states that “materials are an important resource for teachers in assisting pupils to learn English” (p.86). Accordingly, materials are the variety of elements that teachers can use in their classes not only with the purpose of providing learners with input but also for favoring educators’ labor and enhancing students’ learning process.

Following with the idea that language learning materials are effective tools that support teachers’ practices, Richards and Rodgers also mention that “materials are seen as an essential component of instructional design and are often viewed as a way of influencing the quality of classroom interaction and language use” (cited by Richards 1998, p. 128). Therefore, well-designed language learning materials permit to enrich the classes’ procedures.

Taking into account that language learning materials are those tools that support students’ learning and take an important role since they are the resources that teachers use to assist pupils in the language acquisition process, Moon (2000) points out that materials are “anything which is used specifically with the intention of increasing pupils’ knowledge and experience of the language” (p.86). In this regard, materials can be seen as the means that permit students to

strengthen their use of the target language, and they are applied with the hope of affecting students' experience of learning a different linguistic code in a positive way. Language learning materials have the possibility to enrich the class inasmuch as those materials:

Can be instructional in that they inform learners about the language, they can be experiential in that they provide exposure to the language in use, they can be elicitive in that they stimulate language use, or they can be exploratory in that they facilitate discoveries about language use" (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 2).

Therefore, those language learning materials offer a huge range of possibilities and advantages for the development of the class, and consequently for students' learning process, which will be affected by those materials themselves. Tomlinson's ideas are complemented by Harwood (2010) because the author states that materials "encompass both texts and language-learning tasks: texts presented to the learner in paper-based, audio or visual form, and /or exercises and activities built around such texts" (p. 3). This means that materials not only provide students with different types of information but also they maximize outcome opportunities.

Accordingly, materials in academic settings can be presented in many different forms, like: "videos, DVDs, emails, YouTube, dictionaries, grammar books, readers, workbooks or photocopied exercises" (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 2). To the previous set of materials presented by this author, Moon (2000) also adds some other examples of materials like "textbooks, workbooks, story books, videos, cassettes, pictures, brochures, menus or other real-life artifacts" (p. 86). Those different forms can vary according to the teaching intention, the kind of activity

proposed, and also they can depend on the objectives to be maximized or trained during a session.

Therefore, materials are not only a set of things to be used during the class, but also they must have a pedagogical intention and in addition, they have to catch the students' attention and be in accordance with their interests. Regarding this aspect, Harmer (1998) says that "materials which frequently *Engage* students include: games, music, discussions, stimulating pictures, dramatic stories, amusing anecdotes, etc." (1998, p. 25). Therefore, all those materials can be used in academic settings, with the pedagogical purpose of improving students' learning and affecting this process positively.

The Importance of using language-learning materials in the classroom

Taking into account that language-learning materials are employed with the purpose of favoring the Second Language learning process, one of the objectives of such materials is that they help students to be more secure and motivated in the use of the foreign/second language. For this reason, materials must be well prepared, thought and designed, as Richards (2010) proposes, because they "can provide rich sources of learning input as well as facilitate teacher development" (p. ix). In this regard, materials can considerably help teachers challenge traditional practices and thus help students get closer to the language.

Likewise, "materials have the role to promote learning and language learning in particular. They fulfill this role in the way they offer activities and tasks and exercises which challenge the competence of the learners..." (Candlin and Edelhoff, 1982, x) Therefore, students can be exposed to a variety of elements related to the target language and improve their language skills when interacting with those materials.

In summary, materials are seen as important elements to be taken into account in academic settings. The importance relays on the fact that they are significant tools that teachers can propose in their classes by which they let students explore, interact and also use the target language. Therefore, the obvious purpose of materials is to affect positively the students' language learning process.

Authentic and Commercial materials

In real and daily teaching practices, teachers constantly have to make decisions about the materials they need to use in their classes in order to develop and follow an established language curriculum. During this process of selecting suitable materials, teachers can employ authentic materials, commercial materials, or teachers can even take the risk of applying their own creations. Firstly, it is necessary to have a clear idea about the difference between authentic and commercial materials. If this distinction is clear, teachers can be more familiar with the corresponding characterizations of the materials and consequently be more aware of the advantages and disadvantages when using them in academic settings.

Talking about authenticity in language learning materials there are some definitions that can shed some light on this term. Thornbury (2002) defines authentic materials as “something that has not been especially written or doctored for the language classroom” (p. 53). Thereby authentic materials used for English classes are genuine materials and they do not have any modifications in themselves, they are proposed to the students as authentic as they are.

Authentic materials for Omaggio (1993) are every kind of texts presented in spoken or written way that native speakers would use in everyday life, in real situations or in their real world. Therefore, with the use of authentic materials, students are exposed to genuine and real

language, and at the same time students are exposed to real cultural elements from the target language which has a positive impact on their learning process. Specially, teachers can use the following authentic materials in the classroom: magazines, newspapers, brochures, prospectus, ads, songs, and others. Therefore, “authentic tasks are those that native speakers engage in in the “real world” (Graves, 2000, p. 156).

It is important to highlight that authentic materials include the language used in real settings as they have expose learners to idiosyncratic expressions and cultural differences. This idea is supported by Gebhard (1996) when the author affirms that “authentic materials include anything that is used as a part of communication” (p. 100). Hence, such materials are meaningful in the SLA process since people can be exposed to reality and opportunities to use a language code with the intention to communicate. In addition to Gebhard’s (1996) opinion, he also lists some of the authentic materials by sorting them into four groups:

- Authentic listening / viewing materials: TV commercials, cartoons, news, movies, soap operas, radio news.
- Authentic visual materials: slides, sketches, wordless street signs.
- Authentic printed materials: newspapers articles, advertisements, sports reports, restaurant menus, department store catalogs.
- Realia Used in EFL/ESL classrooms: puppets, walkie-talkies, play money, chalk...

Teachers should use authentic materials in the classroom in order to provide students with spaces for real language communication and make them more familiar with genuine language including authentic expressions.

Gebhard (1996) states that authentic materials, as any other teaching tools, have both advantages and disadvantages which are described as follows:

Advantages:

- They can reinforce for students the direct relation between the language classroom and the outside world.
- They offer a way to contextualize language learning.

Disadvantages:

- It takes time and effort to locate authentic materials.
- It is sometimes difficult to make authentic materials and media comprehensible to the students.
- Some students will not accept authentic materials and media as being valuable learning source. (p.101)

Having already an idea about authentic materials, it is necessary to be aware of commercial materials and know some of the advantages and disadvantages that teachers can find in the use of those kinds of materials. Commercial materials are designed, created and commercialized by publishing companies around the world. These commercial materials as Gebhard (1996) says, “include EFL/ESL texts, audiotapes with accompanying workbooks, videotapes with work sheets for students, and computer programs” (p. 89). Additionally to that, publishing companies have materials specialized in one of the four language skills and also for different levels of language proficiency levels.

As it has been stated before, commercial materials entail elements and aspects for the process of language learning. These kinds of commercial materials have three main benefits as Gebhard (1996) proposes:

1. Commercial materials save time, teacher do not have to expend lots of time thinking, designing and creating materials. Commercial materials are already done in order to be used by teachers and students.
2. For novice teachers, commercial materials lead them step-by step, making more secure the process of teaching. Teachers just have to follow the prearranged program and activities proposed by the commercial materials.
3. In addition, this kind of materials provides teachers with useful suggestions and techniques for each lesson plan, which is a valuable help for pre-service teachers.

Continuing with Gebhard's ideas, Harmer (1998) also mentions another advantage of commercial materials: "they have a consistent syllabus and vocabulary will have been chosen with care" (Harmer, 1998, p. 117). In addition, commercial materials are designed with the support of many previous studies and with the collaboration of a good team of professionals with the necessary knowledge and experience in pedagogical settings.

On the other hand, the disadvantages of commercial materials presented by Gebhard (1996) are described as follows:

1. Commercial materials may generate an ideological conflict in the way that teachers' ideas, beliefs and understanding about teaching and learning can differ from the authors' ones.

2. Teachers may following the text in a mechanical way and do always the same, without trying or exploring other kinds of activities. Consequently, the class becomes very hard and boring demotivating students and delaying students' learning.
3. Textbooks may be too generic and do not always take into account the real students' cultural characteristics and background. In fact, some texts only favor the English and the American culture.

In addition to the previous disadvantages, another “danger with ready-made textbooks is that they can seem to absolve teachers of responsibility” (Richards, 1998, p. 130). In this sense, teachers do not make decisions about what they have to teach and how to do it; teachers are just like mechanical players of a prearranged plan, without contributing creatively to the proposed structure.

Another important disadvantage of the use of commercial materials is related to the user of the textbook. Specifically, Moon (2000) mentions that “the difficulty with any published learning materials is that they are designed for a global audience, not specifically for your pupils” (p. 98). Those kind of commercial materials are generic and they do not take into account the particular students' characteristics nor their cultural identity, real needs and requirements.

Materials created by teachers: Advantages and disadvantages

Materials designed and created by teachers are the other kind of materials that can be used in academic settings. These types of language learning materials are the result of a laborious process in which teachers have to put to work many elements like their creativity, their beliefs about teaching and learning, their knowledge about the characteristics of the group, the students that are going to use the materials and also their familiarity about the real students' needs.

The advantages of using materials designed by teachers rely on the fact that teachers know their students better, their real environment and also their academic needs. Therefore, “Teacher-made materials are more relevant and appropriate than commercial materials” (Richards, 1998, p. 126). Accordingly, well designed materials created by teachers are extremely relevant and appropriate because they are made based on the students’ real likes, needs and even cultural and idiosyncratic features.

Harwood (2010) adds that producing materials on a local rather than a global level, connecting them meaningfully with the context and with the learners’ own lives, make those materials more relevant, attractive, and significant for the students. For the use of a variety of materials, even materials designed and created by the teachers, is the basis and the first step for students to feel encouraged to understand and interact with authentic materials. This means that materials created by educators have the purpose of opening students’ minds to the global world and to many possibilities that can be explored little by little during the language learning process.

Moon (2000) comments that “the most common barriers to teachers producing their own materials are:

- Lack of time to design materials/activities
- Cost involved in making/photocopying
- Lack of handbooks or reference books from which to get ideas
- Lack of skills/expertise to design their own activities” (2000, p. 87).

In spite of the disadvantages of materials designed by teachers, it is known that in real academic settings and especially in the Colombian academic context, teachers have to use the materials created by themselves for specific activities and for specific needs in their daily

teaching practice. Therefore, it is necessary that teachers know the theoretical foundations of materials designed for language learning in order to improve their sources and be able to create good and effective materials.

Factors and Principles of Materials Design

Once it has been discussed what materials for language learning mean and their importance for promoting and affecting positively students' experience in the process of learning a foreign language, it is pertinent to know some of the elements that must be taken into account in order to design useful language learning materials.

The process of designing new language learning materials is a valuable process in which designers must put to work all their capacities in order to produce outstanding materials. The importance of those language-learning materials relies on the fact that they can significantly contribute to the program or course that a teacher follows and thus have a future impact on learning. This idea is supported by Gebhard (1996) when he states that "such small changes can ultimately have big consequences on the way students interact with each other and the teacher in English" (p. 106).

During the materials development process, designers have to identify what they need in order to match the syllabus with students' needs. In this regard, Graves (2000) argues that "materials development is the planning process by which a teacher creates units and lessons within those units to carry out the goals and objectives of the course" (2000, p.147). Therefore, designers need to plan the materials design carefully, taking into account all the elements surrounding those materials, their implications, objectives and the academic purpose.

Additionally, this is a reflective process in which the designer creates, designs or adapts materials with the purpose of satisfying a real academic need, and at the same time, designers have to reflect upon the effectiveness of their creations in the academic context. This stage of reflection permits teachers to enrich their own experiences as designers, and also their teaching practices (Moon, 2000 p. 96).

In addition to the previous ideas, Richards (2005) states that “effective instructional materials in language teaching are shaped by consideration of a number of factors, including teacher, learner, and contextual variables” (p. 1). All those factors must be taken into account in the designing process and also they can affect the use of the materials.

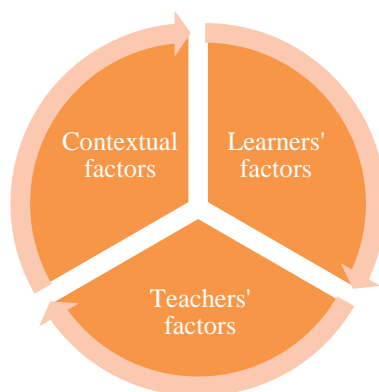


Figure 1. Factors that shape language learning materials.

Contextual Factors

Richards(2005) states that “contextual factors include the school culture, classroom conditions, class size, and availability of teaching resources in situations where the materials will be used”(p. 1). Those external factors can affect the use and implementation of the language learning materials; even those contextual factors can disturb the effectiveness of the designed ones. Consequently, during the process of material design it is important to take care of those

contextual factors and be aware of their scope, which could affect the usage of the language learning materials in a positive or negative way.

Teacher's Factors

According to Richards (2005), teachers' factors that may also affect the process of the language learning materials design include the teacher's language command, cultural background, and teaching style. Besides, the author states that "experience in writing instructional materials is also invaluable for teachers, enabling them to appreciate the types of planning and decision making that materials design involves" (Richards, 1998, p. 139).

When designing language learning materials, teachers have to make choices about what kind of activities they want their students develop with the purpose of providing them with materials that are accurate for the course goals, their real needs and also the teacher's real situation in the academic setting (Moon, 2000).

Following Moon's (2000) ideas, one could say that teachers-designers need to have the ability not only to observe and know in depth students' contexts and real situations but also to create resources that may be adapted and recycled by other colleagues. Thinking about others is an important step for teachers to produce effective language learning materials because, as Johnson (2003) argues, "a good teacher would be able to produce good teaching materials for use by others" (p. 1). Only teachers are the ones who know their students' realities and all the academic demands. Hence, a good teacher-designer should be aware of their real language students' needs and create suitable materials to tackle such necessities.

Accordingly, Richards (1998) argues that "a good teacher is seen as one who analyzes a situation, realizes that a range of options is available based on the particular class circumstances,

and then selects an alternative that is likely to be the most effective for the circumstances” (p. 44). Zahorik (1986) add to this statement that “a good teacher is a person who assesses the needs and possibilities of a situation and creates and uses practices that have promise for that situation” (In Richards, 1998 p. 43). Therefore, teachers who are committed to their profession have the responsibility to apply the best means in order to favor students’ learning and one of those means are language learning materials that can be designed by the teachers themselves.

Moon (2000) also encourages teachers to embark on designing materials and states that “the main argument for designing your own materials is to ensure a better fit between your teaching and the needs of your pupils” (p. 98). Challenging traditional practices by means of materials design is possible since teachers are the “experts” who really get to know their students, and at the same time, teachers know their students’ needs, capacities, aptitudes and likes. Additionally, teachers know what topics learners need to practice more during the classes and after the academic shift. Wright (1987) also supports Moon’s (2000) opinions when the author states that “one of the ways that teachers use to favor modes of instruction which suits either is specially the materials being used” (p. 69).

Learner’s Factors.

Richards (2005) points out that such “factors include learners’ learning style preferences, their language learning needs, interests, and motivations”(p.1). It is necessary to notice that each person is different and that all of the students learn in a different way. By means of designing language learning materials, teachers have the opportunity to fit the most adequate solutions for their students’ particular needs.

Richards (2005, p. 10) recommends that it is essential to develop materials that favor and maintain students' motivation during their learning process in order to create a really good academic environment and also have a really good learning experience. The following chart shows some of the elements that are necessary during the material development in order to increase students' motivation:

Table 1

Elements proposed by Richards (2005, p. 10) to favor the students' motivation

| Motivational strategies | Features |
|---|---|
| 1. Generate and maintain interest | - Units are built around current, contemporary topics - Students can relate all task to their own interests and experiences |
| 2. Promote success | - Students are provided with adequate preparation and support for tasks throughout the learning process - Tests assess only language that students know and do not assume that students know and do not assume that students know more |
| 3. Promote fun in learning | - Tasks are varied - Games and game-like activities make learning fun |
| 4. Provide opportunities for students to speak about themselves | - Personalization tasks offer opportunities for students to use target language to speak about themselves |

It is necessary to develop meaningful materials that enhance students' motivation and engage them in the learning process because "one of the most demotivating factors for learners is when they have to learn something that they cannot see the point because it has no seeming relevance whatsoever to their lives" (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 63).

Teachers and specially teachers-designers need to keep in mind that students' motivation is a very important factor in the Second Language Acquisition process and academic performance because "students will not be motivated to learn unless they regard the material they are taught as worth learning" (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 63). The materials employed during the classes should involve students' interest and increase their motivation to learn a foreign language.

Principles for creating materials

To begin it is necessary to state that the process of designing language learning materials is a challenging process in which teachers-designers need to put all their creativity, experience and knowledge together. Regarding this challenge, Dubin and Olshtain (1986) affirm that “creating materials through which people can effectively learn new languages is a highly specialized craft, one that seems to be perfected through immersion in the activity itself” (p.167).

For those teachers who want to embark on the materials design journey, Tomlinson (2011, p.8) establishes some principles to take into account during the process of designing language learning materials. Such principles will be described as follows:

Materials should achieve impact. This characteristic refers to the process in which “the learners’ curiosity, interest and attention are attracted”(Tomlinson, 2011, p. 8). Learners are engaged with the elements proposed by the materials and they feel interested in the topics and activities proposed. The author states that materials can achieve impact through novelty, variety, attractive presentation, appealing content and achievable challenge.

Materials should help learners to feel at ease. Keeping in mind that “relaxed and comfortable students apparently can learn more in shorter periods of time”(Tomlinson, 2011, p,9), designers should remember that learning a language can be more effective when mental, personal and interpersonal issues are taken into account within a comfortable environment.

In order to help learners feel at ease, Tomlinson (2011, p.9) proposes that materials should help in many different ways:

- Materials with lots of white space than they do with materials in which lots of different activities are crammed together on the same page.
- Real elements from the learners' background and from their real life and experiences make the process more significant and pleasurable.
- Materials which are obviously trying to help them to learn rather than materials which are always testing them.

Materials should help learners to develop confidence. Materials become effective tools when they promote students' self-confidence, security and a positive attitude in the learning process. One helpful strategy to design materials that help students to feel confident with them, is "relating them to known learner interests and to 'real-life' tasks, which the learners need or might need to perform in the target language" (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 11).

Materials should require and facilitate learner self-investment. Designers should take into account that encouraging students to develop their autonomy, letting them explore, manipulate and use the target language are valuable elements that promote and maximize students' learning. Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith (2011) assert that "the role of the classroom and of teaching materials is to aid the learner to make efficient use of the resources in order to facilitate self-discovery" (p. 12).

Materials should expose the learners to language in authentic use. Tomlinson states that "materials at all levels should provide frequent exposure to authentic input which is rich and varied" (p. 14). Learners need to have contact with a fair amount of elements from the target language with its own and genuine characteristics, so "the input should vary in style, mode,

medium and purpose and should be rich in features which are characteristic of authentic discourse in the target language” (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 14).

Materials should provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes. During the language learning process, the idea is that students can interact and develop learning activities in a communicative way. Accordingly, “materials should provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purpose” (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 15).

Materials should take into account that the positive effects of instruction are usually delayed. This makes reference to the fact that materials should help learners during their learning process and motivate them to use the target language, taking into account that the stages of the Second Language Acquisition process can occur in diverse rhythms and the possible outcomes can vary.

Materials should take into account that learners differ in learning styles. Learners have their own and personal differences as genuine individuals, they have personal likes and preferences and also in the academic settings, learners have “different preferred learning styles” (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 18). Specifically, the author mentions all the possible learning styles through which students can take advantages of learning: Visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, studial, experiential, analytic, global, dependent and independent.

Materials should take into account that learners differ in affective attitudes. Tomlinson (2011) leads us to be aware that learners have different attitudes to the learning process, to the learning environment, to the proposed activities, to the teachers and also to their partners. As a result, he proposes some useful ideas when designing materials:

- Providing choices of different types of text;
- Providing choices of different types of activities;
- Providing optional extras for the more positive and motivated learners;
- Providing variety;
- Including units in which the value of learning English is a topic for discussion;
- Including activities which involve the learners in discussing their attitudes and feelings about the course and the materials;
- Researching and catering for the diverse interests of the identified target learners;
- Being aware of the cultural sensitivities of the target learners;
- Giving general and specific advice in the teacher's book on how to respond to negative learners"(p. 20).

Materials should permit a silent period at the beginning of instruction. Tomlinson (2011) argues that "the important point is that the materials should not force premature speaking in the target language and they should not force silence either"(p. 20).At this point materials should permit students to reflect, internalize and process the target language, and consequently, this process of internalization could make more significant and efficient the learning process.

Materials should maximize learning potential by encouraging intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement which stimulates both right- and left- brain activities. Designers need to take into account that in language educational settings it is necessary to provide suitable input in order to maximize the learners' interaction with the target knowledge. This process of maximization of the brain's learning potential has its foundations in the Suggestopedia method proposed by Lozanov since it "enables the learner to receive the information through different cerebral processes and in different states of consciousness so that is stored in many different

parts of the brain, maximizing recall”(p. 21).Therefore, learners can be benefited by the use of many different learning channels that can permit to maximize the brain’s functions, and lead students to have more significant experiences.

Materials should not rely too much on controlled practice. Materials should permit learners to work in a comfortable and flexible way. Additionally to that and according to Tomlinson’s ideas, materials should let learners produce the possible outcomes in a natural, spontaneous and normal way, letting them to use the materials and modeling the language with communicative purposes.

Materials should provide opportunities for outcome feedback. Materials should give learners the opportunity to go further in their own learning process even taking as a basis the difficulties that can arise in the same learning process. Therefore, learners can start developing enough awareness about the aspects to improve and can also work over the possible mistakes in order to correct them. Specifically, “it is very important for materials developers to make sure that language production activities have intended outcomes other than just practicing language” (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 23).

Taking the risk of designing instructional materials

The determination that some teachers have to develop their own language learning materials is a serious decision; it implies teachers’ hard work in order to provide their students with really good materials. It is not possible to satisfy students’ needs with poor resources without a pedagogical purpose. “It is not good enough to set learners tasks on the basis that they seemed a good idea at the time, or because they worked well with another class” (Nunan, 1989, p.138). The decision to use teachers’ own materials is a serious decision which must be

accompanied by good reasons, experience and time. To put it another way, Harmers (1998) states that:

Some teachers take the decision to do without textbooks altogether, a decision which may well be of benefit to their students if, and only if, the teacher has the experience and time to provide a consistent programme of work on his or her own and if he or she has a bank of materials that back up the decisions that are taken. (p. 117)

Teachers who want to design materials need to have a pedagogical intention considering that the process of “materials development means creating, choosing or adapting, and organizing materials and activities so that students can achieve the objectives that will help them reach the goals of the course” (Graves, 2000, p.150). Nunan (1989) also agrees with Graves (2000) because he recommends that designers have clear objectives in mind in such a way that they can create tasks with “pedagogic rationale”.

On the one hand, those materials should permit students to improve their language learning process. On the other hand, “when designing activities, you need to decide whether you want learners to rehearse in class tasks which they will, potentially at least, want to carry out in the real world” (Nunan, 1989, p. 138). Therefore, instructional materials need to include attractive topics for students and at the same time, approaching them to the real language use.

In addition to language use, Graves (2000) points out that “materials also need to be flexible in the way that teachers can give attractive, flamboyant and engaged materials to the pupils in order that they can use those materials in an appropriate way maximizing the experience using and working with them” (p.170). This idea is very important to consider

because language use should not be the only remarkable goal when designing materials, appealing content and motivation also have to be part of the material development process.

According to Dörnyei (2001), it is crucial that teachers-designers keep in mind some steps to create language learning materials. “The first step has to involve our finding out about the interests, hobbies and needs of our learners: If we wish to relate content to students’ interests and experiences, we need to be knowledgeable about them” (p. 65). As a matter of fact, during this first step, teachers have to carry out an exhaustive and careful study about students’ interests and likes to engage them in the learning process.

The next step is to try to “find out what your learners’ goals are and what topics they want to learn about, then build these into your curriculum as much as possible”(Dörnyei, 2001, p. 63). After identifying students’ needs, likes and expectations, teachers have to relate students’ needs to the academic program requirements in order to develop materials that fit the reality and at the same time become attractive and enjoyable for students.

Finally, Dörnyei (2001) provides teachers-designers with a clue to make instructional materials meaningful for students when the author states that “it is necessary to use the obtained information to link classroom topics and activities to the students’ real life experiences and preferences, there is no reason why you couldn’t enlist the help of the students themselves” (p. 66). In this process there is no reason to work isolated, the information gathered from students is really important because these untainted and unbiased data serve as a basis for teachers to take out the ideas that will strengthen the materials development and assure meaningful learning.

Conclusions

Pre-service teachers need to be conscious that instructional materials are the means by which students may reach language learning goals and educators should make responsible decisions about what materials to use in their teaching practices. As most of our real contexts and students do not count on suitable and enough resources, teachers will have to make choices and design or adapt materials to both encourage students to learn and help them reach academic goals. In this case, those language-learning materials must be well designed and they have to be enriched with a serious, completed and planed academic intention.

Such an academic intention of producing own instructional materials should be based on the purpose of favoring and having a positive impact on students' language learning process, responding to students' real needs, interests and likes.

The process of designing language-learning materials is a very serious and demanding labor which demands some special characteristics, elements, principles and stages to be developed. For this reason, pre-service teachers must know about the materials design principles and processes in order to develop effective, significant and meaningful materials.

Teachers-designers always have to keep in mind a clear pedagogical intention when creating their own teaching resources and they should also make sure that their language learning materials truly correspond to learners' needs and the curriculum requirements. Pre-service teachers should not forget that language learning materials are seen as effective tools to promote adequate learners' outcomes. Therefore, pre-service teachers need to take into account all the

elements surrounding the design of materials (context, teacher and learners factors) with the purpose of creating effective materials for the students' learning process.

At the same time, well-designed materials allow teachers to ameliorate their labor making the topics and their practice more adequate and comprehensible for students. Additionally, those language-learning materials make the target language knowledge closer to the students in a friendly way, calling the students' attention and interest.

A special benefit of the materials designed by teachers is that they make language more familiar to students favoring their Second Language Acquisition process. Besides, this kind of materials has the advantage of contextualizing the target language to the daily students' real experiences, making it more significant for them.

Pre-service teachers in Colombia that make use of their own designed materials can take advantage of such resources to provide students with suitable materials, which have the ability to increase the students' opportunities to interact and use the target language. Additionally to that, pre-service teachers can be sure that their own language learning materials may contextualize the target language to the specific students' needs and interests retrieving cultural and idiosyncratic richness that commercial books sometimes overlook and undervalue.

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