Chapter 12

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES FOR ELT

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1. THE OLD, THE NEW, THE NEWEST: AN INTRODUCTION TO MATERIALS AND RESOURCES FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING

Sometimes a teacher may think that language contents are the core of its daily practice. Even though this is not inaccurate, the saying that “the medium is the message” can also be applied to language teaching. Not only is it important to consider materials as a central aspect of the profession but also as a decisive element in the relationship among the teacher, the learner and the language (not to mention the community of users of that language and their culture). This is the reason why in this chapter the materials and resources available to a language teacher are given some space and attention as part of a course on language teaching methodology.

Materials and resources have been divided into three sections: the old, the new and the newest. The first one includes the most traditional elements in a language classroom: the blackboard, the textbook, visual aids and hand-made materials. The second comprises the over-head projector, the audio player and the video camera and video player. Finally, the latter section deals with the information and communication technologies which represent the brand-new present and the future of our profession.

In general, the objective of this chapter is to prove that teachers have a wide range of materials and resources available to them. Some of them may look more “teacher-centred” and some other may be more suitable for a “learner-centred” environment. However, the challenge, in every case, is to use them wisely, which means purposefully, critically and creatively.

DISCUSSION 1

a) Make a list with the materials and resources introduced in this chapter and arrange them in three columns under the headings "Old", "New", "Newest".

2. TRADITIONAL RESOURCES

In this section the focus will be on the most traditional of these materials and resources. The blackboard, visual aids, the textbook, and hand-made materials are among those items every teacher has once or another used and, quite frequently, are still present in every language classroom. In many occasions, some of these elements exceed the limits of its own function and become a structuring force of the language teaching process, as it is the case with the textbook.

In general, a flexible and critical use of the materials and resources will be advocated. Teachers are encouraged to choose among the wide range of today’s possible aids as a way of promoting diversity and variety in the classroom. The larger the number of different materials learners are provided with, the larger the possibilities all learners will find materials suitable to their learning objectives, cognitive styles and capacities.
2.1. The blackboard

Each classroom is different. One may have posters, another may have fixed rows of seats; in another there is a good classroom library whereas a fourth one does not have a single book. However, if there is a piece of furniture every classroom has, that is a blackboard1.

Given the ordinary arrangement of space in the classroom, the blackboard has normally been related to the “teacher-centred” tradition: the teacher, in front of the blackboard, standing opposite the students, who are facing the blackboard as a reference. However, nowadays the position at the metaphorical centre of the classroom has been occupied by the learner in what has been termed as the “learner-centred approach”. Learner-centred instruction is characterised by (Brown 2001: 46-7):

- techniques that focus on or account for learners’ needs, styles and goals.
- techniques that give some control to the student (group work or strategy training, for example).
- curricula that include the consultation and input of students and that do not presuppose objectives in advance.
- techniques that allow for student creativity and innovation.
- techniques that enhance a student’s sense of competence and self-worth.

Obviously, the blackboard (as all other resources and materials) can be used from both perspectives. Teachers have always used boards to support their “lectures” but they can also be used within a learner-centred approach.

Furthermore, given that it is important for a teacher to be able to work with “minimal resources” and that the blackboard is, perhaps, the minimum resource available for all kinds of language teachers, it is important to learn how to use it and, even in that constrained situation, be creative. Control of the resources and materials available is a mark of professional quality.

**DISCUSSION 2**

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1 Even if the authors acknowledge the existence of other terms (“chalkboard”, “whiteboard”, etc.), blackboard is still the most frequent one. However, there exists the problem of confusing blackboard (a piece of classroom furniture) and Blackboard (a piece of educational web-based software). The capital letters will distinguish the latter.
a) Which of the elements of a “learner-centred” approach do you consider most relevant? Why?

The following Dos and Don’ts try to summarise a number of suggestions for a rational and creative use of the blackboard:

| Divide the blackboard into sections. |
| Use fixed sections of the blackboard for some relevant information: date, lesson title, daily agenda, homework, reminders,… |
| Be relevant. |
| Be orderly. |
| Be legible; use BLOCK LETTERS, if necessary. Be aware it must be readable from every corner of the classroom. |
| Be accurate (particularly about the spelling) and mind your handwriting. |
| Be concise. |
| Highlight the relevant information: use boxes, labels, etc. |
| The board is not only to write on: stick things, project things, draw on it,… |
| Read aloud what you are writing on the blackboard as you write it. |
| Erase vertically (it’s cleaner). |
| Complement, if possible, your blackboard writing with printed handouts, OHP transparencies or computer presentations. |
| Share the blackboard with the students: it’s not yours (and they are not likely to reach the upper part of the blackboard, which remains yours…). |

There are many activities which can be done using the blackboard. Marsland (1998) mentions a few of them: Anagrams, Categories, Class story, Cross words, Doodles, Draw and Describe, Fathers and Daughters, Hangman, Letters, Picture it, Ratings, Self Questioning, Sentence Anagrams, Sentence Games, Silent Story or Word Change.

DISCUSSION 3

a) Choose the most interesting, the most commonsensical and the most surprising pieces of advice in relation to the usage of the blackboard.

2.2. Visual aids: realia, flashcards, wall charts and posters

The link among the visual, the aural and the conceptual has to be worked out in the classroom. With that idea in mind, the teacher should use a variety of visual resources to complement their writing and their speaking. Two general types of visual aids can be used: realia and ready-made materials. The first ones are real items belonging to the community of users of the foreign language brought to the classroom (real tickets, brochures, sweets, etc.); the second ones can be any of the wide collection of printed materials available to the teacher.

Brown (2001: 143) writes that “realia are probably the oldest form of classroom aid, but their effectiveness in helping students connect language to reality cannot be underestimated.” Sagrario Salaberri (1995: 424) highlights the value of realia to teach vocabulary or as prompts in oral or written interactions and she suggests some
activities to do with realia: follow instructions, guess the objects, classify objects, “odd one out” or “find someone who”. This is an example of realia:

DISCUSSION 4

a) Which “realia” surrounding you could be brought into an EFL classroom to teach “classroom English”?

Flashcards can be prepared by the teacher and the learners or they can be acquired as printed material. The latter are provided by a good number of educational publishers in relation to lexical, functional or grammatical items; the first can be done by the class or the teacher as part of a language learning task by cutting pictures from a magazine or by copying, pasting and cutting images from the Internet. Salaberri (1995: 426) suggests activities such as the following: show the flashcards, substitution dialogues, chains, classify the pictures/words, picture dictionary, domino and other matching games. This is an example of flashcards:

Finally, wall charts and posters offer the learners more complex visual stimuli. Wall charts comprise a sequence of events related in time and/or space, which make them suitable for narratives or science-related presentations, among many other possible uses. Posters lack the sequential structure of wall charts; it is quite easy to find maps, posters with numbers and letters, etc., but they can also be easily made as part of a learning task. Salaberri (1995: 427) suggests the following activities to do with wall charts:

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charts and posters: predicting and anticipating, descriptions, mind maps, reorder the stage, mime and point, label the pictures, try to remember, say as many words as possible, “hide and seek” game.

**DISCUSSION 5**

a) Which is the difference between a poster and a wall chart? Which one is most suitable for large groups and which for small groups? Which are easier to do?

2.3. The textbook

Penny Ur (1996: 184-5) gives some reasons for and against the use of a textbook. In favour of using a textbook she mentions the sense of structure and progress, its use as a syllabus, its being ready-made, its price (which sometimes is not so reasonable or affordable), its convenience as a package, its guidance help for teachers and that it gives the learner some degree of autonomy. Against using a textbook, she mentions its homogeneity and inadequacy for individual needs and objectives, its irrelevance and lack of interest in many occasions, its limitation of initiative and creativity, its homogeneity and its over-easiness.

However, most teachers would agree that the textbook is the most important (and frequent) single resource they can use. In fact, a textbook does not only provide the teacher with a topic, some texts and a good number of activities; it also caters for some important details which are quite difficult to implement without the aid of a textbook: variety of texts and activities, rich visual design, procedures for continuous and final assessment, a clear statement of objectives and its relationship to texts and activities, etc. For that very same reason, it is extremely important to choose the most appropriate textbook and, then, to use it wisely. In order to achieve both objectives, some usage procedures and a checklist to choose a textbook will be shown below.

Usage procedures:

| Cut, copy and paste. Feel free to modify/expand/reduce the textbook. |
| The book belongs to you, you don’t belong to the book |
| Adapt it to your needs. |
| Don’t use it straightforward, move up and down, forward and backward. |
| There is life out of the textbook: Add materials/information/resources to your textbook |
| There is no best textbook, only a better way to use it |
| Evaluate your textbook and ask your students about it. |
| Check the teacher’s book for ideas, suggestions or further activities. |

**DISCUSSION 6**

In your opinion, which is the most important usage tip about the textbook?

Checklist to choose the most appropriate textbook²:

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1. Description of materials
   a. Is the book
      i. Attractive? Usable? Durable?
   b. Does the book fit your students’ profile?
      i. Age? Native language and culture? Educational background?
         Motivation or purpose for learning English?
   c. Is it a book in a series and are the other levels appropriate?
   d. Is it value for money?
   e. Do the illustrations contribute to understanding?
   f. Does it have other components, apart from the student’s book?
   g. Does the material fit your syllabus?
2. Curricular aspects
   a. Objectives
      i. Does it include general objectives?
      ii. Does it include objectives suitable for the different cycles and consistent with those set out in the official curriculum?
      iii. Do they satisfy your needs?
   b. Contents
      i. Does it comprise
         1. oral and written communication? sociocultural aspects? language awareness? learning to learn?
      ii. Is there a cyclical progression?
      iii. Is too much new material introduced at the same time?
      iv. Is the textbook related to other subjects (Maths, Science, etc)?
   c. Methodology
      i. Is communicative competence developed?
      ii. Are the different skills integrated?
      iii. Does it follow a task-based approach?
         1. Is there a purpose to the tasks/activities?
         2. Is there a variety of tasks/activities?
         3. Are there tasks/activities to deal with diversity?
      iv. Is cooperative learning encouraged?
      v. Are students exposed to comprehensible input?
      vi. Do students need to use the language?
      vii. Is classroom language present in the textbook?
      viii. Are activity instructions clear both to teachers and learners?
   d. Evaluation
      i. Does it include techniques for assessment that respond to a continuous, formative, criterion-based approach?
      ii. Have attainment targets been set for each cycle?

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3 Some important criteria are clarity of typesetting, use of special notation, quality and clarity of illustrations, size of the book and binding, quality of editing, index, table of contents, chapter headings.
iii. Are there tests for different types of contents?

e. Support material
   i. Are the recordings authentic or semi-authentic?
   ii. Are different registers presented?
   iii. Do the recordings allow for interaction from the students?
   iv. Are there other video resources available?
   v. Are there computer-based and web-based support materials?

f. Teacher’s guide
   i. Does the introduction clearly show the rationale underlying the material?
   ii. Does it include a contents map?
   iii. Does it help to use the materials?
      1. Is it easy to use?
      2. Are ideas clearly presented?
      3. Does it give examples and suggestions?
   iv. Does it indicate the role of the teacher at different stages?
   v. Are the steps to follow clear?
   vi. Are there suggestions for using the support material?
   vii. Does it allow for a flexible use of the textbook?
   viii. Is there a variety of practice activities from which to choose?

2.4. Hand-made materials

Teaching is not a repetitive profession. Creativity, as one of the basic competences to be promoted through education, must be a permanent feature of a teacher. Consequently, making new materials is just a proof of that human (and professional) quality.

**DISCUSSION 7**

a) Have you ever made any piece of material? Can you describe what it was like?

However, this does not mean to be designing new materials every day. There is no sense in busying oneself when the availability of materials is such that almost everything a teacher may think of has already been previously designed. A balance should be found between creation and reproduction.

Anyway, a number of ideas are listed below to help you think about your own materials.

- Before inventing, search (especially the Internet)
- Before inventing, ask other colleagues or your nearest teacher resource centre.
- Once inventing, appearance is important.
- Students can also design and create teaching materials
- Be accurate and be neat
- Colourful better than black & white
- Variety is a guarantee of success

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3. Audio and visual resources

In this section we are dealing with electrical and electronic appliances commonly used in the classroom (Overhead Projector, Audio Player, Video Player and Camera). Although they have been labelled as “New Technologies” until recent times, we prefer to denote them as Audiovisual Technologies (AVT) in order to distinguish them from what today are called ICT, which involve mainly the use of computers and networks.

Advances in technology have also affected the development in technical resources applied to EFL. If in the 80’s and the 90’s AVT were considered the “New”, today, when referring to them, we cannot use this term any longer. Anyway, we don’t think they are something from the past. They are not even old fashioned since they are widely used by many teachers in their classrooms and, in many schools, they are still the only technical resources available in everyday lessons.

What is intended in this section is just to present the possible uses of them in the classroom and how they can be exploited to the most.

DISCUSSION 8

a) Do you think AVT are old-fashioned?

We would like to state first that materials and resources are not an end in themselves, that is, we should not listen to a tape or watch a video without any particular aim, but as an aid to improve the students’ learning progress. There should be a close connection with daily classroom work and students’ needs and interests.

Once we have made these considerations, there are some general aspects that should be taken into account when dealing with the use of AVT:

- Advantages: motivation, interaction, improvement of messages (combination of sounds and images), the teacher can face the students all the time, oral communication enhancement, cultural background exchanges, reusable materials, classroom time saving, promotion of learner-centred systems.
- Disadvantages: old equipment, availability in the classrooms, price, technical skills, extra time needed to prepare activities and materials, teachers’ reluctance to use them, bad usage (inadequate materials or usage in isolation).

DISCUSSION 9

a) How should AVT be used in the classroom?

b) Name three advantages and three disadvantages of using AVT in the EFL classroom.
3.1. The Overhead Projector (OHP) – The image

The OHP has been humorously defined (Jones 1982:7) as “a well-built horizontal surface where mugs of coffee may conveniently be placed”. In this chapter we will try to show what other purposes it may have in teaching foreign languages. It is the only audiovisual appliance which was especially designed for teaching foreign languages in the early 40’s. Since then, it has been widely used not only for teaching languages but it has also been a helpful, powerful, popular presentation device in other subjects or fields and in training or conference rooms for many years.

Overhead Projectors project transparencies onto a screen or a white wall (Salaberri 1996:428). It is as simple as effective. A light is shone through a transparency the size of a sheet or a note paper, projecting it onto an ordinary film screen or a white board or wall, which will focus the student’s attention. The teacher has the transparency in front of him, so it can be moved, altered or written and, at the same time, he faces the audience, who can see the image, words or whatever, enlarged on the screen behind the teacher and clear enough in ordinary daylight. This provides the lesson with effective, quick interaction from both teacher and students (Jones 1982:9). Transparencies can be written or drawn on with felt-tip pens before or during a lesson. It is also possible to photocopy texts, pictures, diagrams or silhouettes.

There are advantages and disadvantages about the use of the OHP. Ordinary Overhead Projectors are quite heavy pieces of equipment, so, what is the reason for carrying them to the classroom if, perhaps, they are to be used only for a few minutes? If you are just going to write on it during the lesson, the blackboard would be more convenient, but the OHP wins in the following instances:

- Transparencies can be reused as many times as you need them.
- You save time during your lesson. You don’t have to waste time writing or drawing if your transparencies are done beforehand and you always face students.
- It is easy to conceal anything on the OHP, dictation transcriptions or grammar exercises solutions, for instance. It is particularly useful with pictures, you can mask part/s of the image/word you want and let your students guess and interact with them showing gradually the full transparency. This can not be done with posters, flashcards or flannel boards because you can’t hide parts of them.
- Transparencies are easy to handle as they are enlarged on a screen, you only have to
deal with ordinary sheets instead of big posters. Moreover, you can point, write on them and add any comment you want.
- You can combine several transparencies by superimposing them. Unlike picture boards, flashcards or posters, you have the possibility of building up a picture or combining colours. This is more motivating than serving it complete. It is also possible to create movement and dramatic effects by sliding transparencies or combining them.
- You can photocopy anything on a transparency and anything can be photocopied from it, but diagrams or pictures are the strongest point of the OHP.
- Transparencies can be used together with other teaching aids such as textbooks, tapes or videos, the blackboard, posters, maps and flashcards.

**DISCUSSION 10**

a) What do you think are the strongest points of the OHP in comparison with the blackboard, posters or flashcards?

All in all, the OHP can be considered a helpful mate for any teacher, there are, however, some points against it that must be considered:
- Technical equipment and skills are needed. You may need some technical skills as well. They are not very difficult to use, but it is convenient you try to get familiar with it before you use it. It could be very frustrating having your students messing around while you are trying to switch it on. On the contrary, the blackboard is always ready to be used and it is a reliable piece of equipment. You should always bring into the classroom some optional materials or activities, just in case.
- Preparing transparencies takes some time (your free time!), so you should concentrate on small tasks at first and think that they can be reused. However, for teachers who are not very good at drawing, transparencies allow them to present their students very attractive photocopied or scanned illustrations.
- The OHP cannot be used to show large pieces of texts. It is advisable to write no more than six lines on the same transparency.

**DISCUSSION 11**

a) Do you think making transparencies is a waste of time?

Once you have decided to use the OHP in your classroom, there are some points to consider:
- Check the OHP works properly before the lesson.
- Placing the OHP in the classroom. It should be placed on a corner away from direct light and next to the blackboard, which allows you to use both of them at a time.
- All students should be able to see and read what is projected on the screen. Always use bright or dark colours: black, blue, red, green and purple. Simple drawings (one idea per transparency) and large, bold type will help students to understand what is projected on the screen. To be effective they must be attractive and easy to read.
- Face the classroom. Do not read from the screen. It would be a good idea if you print out your transparencies on a piece of paper, otherwise you might end up talking to the screen.
- In order to be more effective, place the transparency and switch on the OHP. Make sure you have explained the content and purpose of each one. Once you have finished, switch it off to avoid distracting and blinding students.
- If you make your own transparencies, it could be helpful to provide your students with handouts.

### DISCUSSION 12
a) **What technical aspects should be taken into account when using an OHP in the classroom?**

Nowadays, the OHP is becoming old-fashioned and the reason for that may be that other technical resources are replacing it. However, this is one of the aids that most teachers have available at school and it would be useful to have sets of classified materials to provide variety to class work. Salaberri (1996: 428) and Wright and Haleem (1991:29), among others, suggest some possible activities: predicting and anticipating, reading, mind maps, cloze texts, storytelling, dialogues, corrections, matching words and images, summaries and reference material.

### DISCUSSION 13
a) **What kinds of activities are more suitable when using the OHP?**

#### 3.2. Audio player - The sound

Together with the blackboard, the audio player is one of the most common pieces of equipment when teaching languages. One of the reasons could be that most textbooks are supplemented with audiotapes to carry out listening activities. The most recent ones even provide the students with audio CDs so that they can practice orally at home these activities. Apart from what is available in the textbook, there is a great deal of recorded materials especially designed for teaching foreign languages: dialogues, songs, stories…etc.

There is a number of advantages about using recorded materials (Salaberri, 1996: 429):
They provide certain contextual aspects and some extra linguistic elements that help in the understanding of messages.
- They provide exposure to varieties of English and different speakers.
- They allow for the participation of students through repetition and recording activities.

As regards to the audio player, it is not as heavy as the OHP, so it can be easily carried by the teacher. Moreover, they are cheap, usually available at school, simple to use and tapes are reusable and easy to store. As for the OHP, the audio player can be used in combination with other teaching aids such as the blackboard, the OHP itself, posters or flash cards, the textbook, etc, since we should bear in mind that listening activities are not the only possible ones, they are also very helpful in reading comprehension, oral production or written tasks.

There are also some disadvantages:
- One of their weakest points is sound quality. As the models commonly used by teachers are portable, they have small loudspeakers, which may make them unadvisable for using with large groups in large classrooms.
- Verbal messages demand a great deal of concentration by students, so beginners may have some difficulties if tapes are played for long periods.
- Most materials are predetermined, so the teacher has few opportunities to make any adaptation or adjustment to his students’ needs.

DISCUSSION 14
a) Do you think audio tapes are helpful for coping with different students’ needs?

Some usage tips can be recommended for an efficient use of the audio player:

- Teachers must check before the lesson if the audio player works properly and the part of the tape they are going to use is ready.
- The audio player must be located on a place so that the entire classroom can hear it clearly. It is also advisable if it is on a corner, perhaps on the teacher’s desk, so the blackboard or the OHP can be used at the same time.
- Teachers should state clearly before the listening activity starts what is going to be on. Then he switches on the audio player. Once he has finished, it must be switched off in order to avoid distracting students with any noise from the tape. Being used this way, they will be aware when they must focus their attention on the listening and when either on the teacher or the tasks.

Finally, it is important to remember that audio extracts are very motivating for students, especially for the young ones, as they usually involve breaking classroom routine by means of songs, games or dialogues performed by young native speakers. This, however, is not the only aim of listening activities. They should mainly be designed to improve the understanding of oral messages. We should make the following considerations.

- They must demand “listening”, they must really help students to improve their listening abilities.
- They should challenge students to do their best in order to achieve this goal.
- Process is more important than results, that is, getting right answers is not the most important aim.
- They should be interesting for students and as natural and authentic as possible.

**DISCUSSION**

a) What considerations should be taken when choosing recorded materials?

There is a wide range of activities in which listening is required. The most common ones may be listening and comprehension, songs, jigsaw listening or paused listening. See Madrid and McLaren (1995) for a complete list of activities on listening.

**3.3. The video player and the video camera - the image and the sound**

The most outstanding feature of using videos is the ability to present communicative situations in a complete way (Lonergan 1984). The combination of both sound and image shown in a context is a powerful tool in the ESL classroom. The speakers, the setting, the gestures, can be seen and heard and, at the same time, technical features of video players allow the teacher to pause, to go forward and backward or to play video recordings. It is also possible for students to make their own video performances, creating their own stories, video-clips, dialogues by using the video camera.

The main advantage of using video recordings is that they provide language within a natural context. They are similar to those offered by audio tapes, but enhanced by image. Some other advantages are:

- They are highly motivating for students.
- They demand interaction and they are open to be used as learned-centred activities.
- They allow teachers to use image or sound separately as well. So they can focus on non-verbal language, objects, actions or focus on accent, pronunciation or register.
- Many video courses are integrated with textbooks which provide teachers with a wide range of aims and activities. There are also a great amount of published materials adapted to any level.
- They are reusable and accessible. They can be played or paused as many times as needed.
- They are easy to use and you do not have to turn the lights off. Students can both watch the video and take notes.
- If students create their own materials using a video camera, interaction and motivation are granted because this may involve acting, interviewing or reporting.
- As language is presented in its context, students tend to associate it with the context in which it
is used, which helps them to learn meaningfully.

DISCUSSION 16

a) According to Lonergan (1984), what is the main feature of using video tapes in the EFL classroom?

It is important to be aware of the disadvantages of videos:
- TV screens may be small, so they must be carefully placed so that the whole class can see and hear.
- There may be some difficulties related to availability, so it is advisable to plan in advance when they will be needed.
- Video materials are predetermined, so there are few chances for making adaptations. A good idea could be using video cameras in order to make our own videos.
- Some technical skills are needed especially when connecting TV and the video player or searching for the right channel. Things get more difficult when using cameras because they demand a great deal of technical skills by the user.
- It may be difficult for students assuming that video recordings are not just for fun. Teaching with video is not just watching TV. It is essential they are introduced gradually and to make them understand how valuable this teaching aid can be.

One of the most important aspects we have to bear in mind before using the video is deciding on the type of materials we want to show.

- Video recordings must be suitable for the students’ age, level and interests.
- Teachers must be familiar to the use of these appliances: TV, video player and video camera. It would be advisable to check if the equipment is available for the time it is needed, if it works properly and if all connections have been arranged so that it is ready to be used when needed.
- As for the audio player, the length of the section should not be longer, eight or ten minutes on average, depending on the students’ level or the contents of the section. Using different buttons (pause, freeze frame…) can be very helpful to carry out certain tasks (miming, guessing, descriptions…).
- Short and clear instructions must be given to students so that they are carried out and aims achieved.

The same type of activities suggested for the audio player can be used here since listening is an important part of video materials. There are, however, some other possibilities due to the fact that image is also present. This will allow teachers to encourage students to play an active role in the tasks planned by making them think, read between lines and analyse what they are watching instead of just answering comprehension questions.
- Static images can be a useful way of warming up by anticipating or predicting what is going to be seen.
- Sound with no images is another way of getting the students involved in the tasks.
- Transferring information. Comprehension. Dialogues. Video books or worksheets with characters and pictures from the video tape can be used to carry out many tasks before, during or after it is played.
- As regards to the video camera, there are some interesting activities: create your own stories, acting, miming and guessing.
- Drama activities. Dramatization of dialogues. Students can role play the same scene from the video representing the characters in pairs or small groups.

4. ICT for the Teaching of English: definition

Information and Communication Technologies are increasingly integrating into our daily lives. They are changing the way we live, the way we spend our spare time and the way we work. That is why most European countries have stated the importance of the integration of ICT into their educational systems. Prime Minister Tony Blair has said that “(t)echnology has revolutionised the way we work as it is now set to transform education. Children cannot be effective in tomorrow’s world if they are trained in yesterday’s skills” (Tony Blair 1999).

DISCUSSION 17

a) Say what you think ICT are.
b) Should teachers have a deep knowledge of ICT?

Since the term (ICT) is so vast, it would be necessary to explain what we consider ICT to be. There is a number of definitions related to the subject in several areas that may confuse teachers and students. A few years ago we could be thinking of Information Technologies (IT) that were described as the items of equipment (hardware) and computer programs (software) that allow us to access, retrieve, store, organise, manipulate, and present information by electronic means. Personal computers, scanners, and digital cameras fit into the hardware category; database storage programs and multimedia programs all fit into the software category. Nowadays the transmitting of information using different devices (telephone lines, mobile phones, satellite, …) and the outstanding position the Internet has reached makes us speak of Communication Technologies (CT), term used to describe the telecommunication equipment needed to get access to a network or to the Internet. The important aspect to consider here is the term “convergence”. As the crossing of a phone line and a photocopy machine lead to the creation of fax, the mixture of IT and CT has given way to what we know as ICT.

Taking into consideration all these terms, and applying them to education, we can conclude that ICT can be regarded as the use of computers to control several pieces of hardware (scanner, printers, hi-fi equipment, TV, etc.), including an Internet connection, producing, using the appropriate software, which yields a single focus of
attention that can be monitored from a keyboard or similar device. In this definition the convergence of CALL, defined as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (Levy 1997) and ICT creates a new dimension for classrooms, teachers and students.

4.1. Building the physical setting: An ICT classroom.

Most classrooms in our country are still four walls, desks, chairs and a chalkboard. There are many teachers who react against technology arguing the failure of the language lab in the 1960s and 1970s, but this frustration was “largely due to human failures, a lack of investment in training teachers how to use it and a lack of imagination”(Hewer and Davies 2002).

**DISCUSSION 18**

a) Design your English classroom.
b) Explain how it works.
c) Compare actual classrooms and yours.

However, if ICT are to be used in our classrooms then the characters in this setting should act accordingly. New hardware, new interactive materials, new focus of attention, new techniques will make teachers and students assume new roles.

From the point of view of teachers new technologies have the capacity to free them from the role of lecturers or dispensers of knowledge and to help them move towards the role of facilitators or tutors, putting learners at the centre of learning and communication (Egbert and Hanson-Smith 1999). The attitude of teachers is an important element that has to be considered. First of all, “technophobia” shown by many teachers may cause confusion and lack of interest to students, although efforts made by many language teachers have played an important role in developing CALL materials (Levy 1997).

The use of technology on the part of the students is perhaps more intensive than on the part of teachers; what is more, this use may have a positive impact in their learning autonomy if they have an extensive experience with ICT and perceive it as a useful tool (Toyoda 2001). Interactive learning and teaching may well develop around an ICT environment where, as it is being observed, students are confident in the use of ICT.

Until quite recently using computers for the teaching-learning of English meant going to the computer lab or classroom. Fortunately, times are changing and computers are, little by little, becoming an integral part of our classrooms. The reader may be thinking of a multiple computer classroom but there are also opportunities for a single
computer class or a single computer connected to a video projector. Other classrooms are being presented in many countries in Europe, not only as new settings for ICT education but also to make sure these new classrooms would be able to manage current and future changes in ICT.

As we are observing a new setting should be designed and it is being designed in many parts of the world. We should start working on the definition and setting of a new type of classroom according to the needs of the foreign language students and the emerging technologies; as a result figure 12:1 shows what an ICT classroom for foreign language learning and teaching is:

1. Teacher’s computer: Prepared for Video and Audio editing (hardware and software), connected to: the Hi-Fi equipment (5), Video Projector (2), Printer (3), Scanner (4), the Internet (6) and the students’ computers (10). Everything in this classroom is synchronized from the teacher’s table, creating a multimedia environment (webcams, headphones and microphones available at all desks). This setting can be used either on-line (connected to the Internet) or off-line (no connection).

DISCUSSION 19

a) Is the classroom presented in figure 12:1 similar to the one you designed?
b) Are there many differences? Explain differences and similarities.

4.2. INTERNET

4.2.1. Definition and uses

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4 See video demonstration at http://www.pangea.org/dim/ and web addresses where different experiences in Catalonia, Aragón and La Rioja can be examined.

Internet is also changing the way we work, the way we spend our free time and the way we learn and teach. Taking control of information is, nowadays, almost impossible and the access to any kind of culture, anywhere in the world, is as easy as having a computer connected to the Internet: “With a single computer and a telephone line, a young child in a rural village can access more information today than was available by any means to the greatest scientists of the world a century ago” (Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni 2000).

The Internet is comprised of computers and computer networks connected to a global network where everyone can communicate with everyone else. In fact, the information stored in any computer can be delivered through the Internet, so no person, group or government can control the World Wide Web.

At the beginning the connection to the Internet was made through a telephone line, nowadays other forms of connection can take place: satellite, cable, over electric lines, mobile phones or related devices and TV. The Internet involves different ways of receiving, sending or exchanging communication. Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni mention three different types that we can update (2004) adding new elements (shadowy):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>What you Can Do</th>
<th>Programmes needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer-mediated communication</td>
<td>E-Mail, Web bulletin boards, Listservs, Newsgroups.</td>
<td>Send a message for others to read later.</td>
<td>Microsoft Outlook, Opera, Mozilla, Netscape …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-time computer-mediated communication</td>
<td>Chat rooms, Instant Messaging, Videoconferencing</td>
<td>Communicate in real time with others who are on-line at the same time.</td>
<td>IRC, Microsoft Messenger, Commercial software.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertext</td>
<td>World Wide Web</td>
<td>Access and publish multimedia documents with clickable links to other documents.</td>
<td>Microsoft Explorer, Mozilla, Netscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS</td>
<td>Syndication web</td>
<td>Read favourites subscribed contents</td>
<td>Headline Viewer and commercial software.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTP</td>
<td>File Transfer Protocol</td>
<td>Upload or download any type of files to/from a server.</td>
<td>WSftp, Cuteftp, …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION 20

a) Mention the Internet services you use.
b) Why do you use these services?
c) Are they useful? What for?

4.2.2. Searching the WWW

A few years ago the problem most people had was finding the information they needed. Nowadays, the on-line world is continuously increasing. Once you are connected to the Internet, the problem most users have is the sorting of information among the masses of unstructured text. We should bear in mind that anyone can publish anything over the Internet, so there are so many web pages available at the click of a button that you may waste your time going from one link to another with no significant results. Web Searchers may help us overcome this problem.

There are several web searchers, mainly in English, although most of them are using engines in all major languages. From Google (http://www.google.com) to Ask Jeeves (http://www.ask.com) you can either look for isolated words or ask Jeeves a direct question. Nowadays the European Commission is leading Project SEKT (Semantically-Enabled Knowledge Technologies, http://sekt.semanticweb.org/) trying to find a way of making search engines behave more like humans. What is true is that not all search engines do the same things, not all of them work as fast and accurate as we would like and many of them are commercial (you have to pay if you want to have your web page at the beginning of the result list). We can divide search engines in different categories, depending on the way they seek for information, but the most important ones are Yahoo (www.yahoo.com), Lycos (www.lycos.com), Altavista (www.altavista.com), Ask Jeeves (www.ask.com), Google (www.google.com) and the metasearchers Ixquick (www.ixquick.com) and Dogpile (www.dogpile.com), which allow querying many web searchers at the same time.

DISCUSSION 21

a) Look for "English teaching resources" using four different types of searchers. Compare: number of results, useless pages, repeated results and time spent. Discuss your results in groups.
b) Select appropriate materials for primary teachers.

4.2.2. Evaluating web sites

As mentioned above, anyone can publish anything over the web; it is of special interest for teachers and students to make use, at least, of the same critical evaluative skills that we do with a book, adding new aspects (considering the multimedia environment we are working in), analysing and using the information available that should fulfil the needs of students and teachers and bearing in mind that the information obtained is suitable for both. Apart from the “quality” of web sites we should also mention – above all when facing education – two important aspects: Privacy and Security. The changing impact of internet led the European National Centre for Technology in Education develop a plan - Dot Safe Project (www.saferinternet.org) - aimed at promoting internet safety amongst young people, making it clear the importance of equipping teachers with effective means for safe internet use by young people both inside and outside school.

DISCUSSION 22

a) Give your opinion about the resources found: Can you contact the author? Are the pages updated? Are they useful? Could you find the materials easily if Internet didn’t exist? Are they reliable?

4.3. ICT for language teaching

Until quite recently, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) was a topic of relevance mostly to those with a special interest in that area. Nowadays computers are present everywhere and most children are getting accustomed to using the computer as a form of entertainment, communication or for school-related activities. So when introducing these new technologies what we are doing is just bringing the real world into the classroom. The use we can make of new technologies in our classroom will depend on the availability of an internet connection: we may use ICT either on-line or off-line (no internet connection).

4.3.1. Off-line use

There is a number of ways of using new technologies off-line, which then may be combined with a mixture of on-line communication (saving web pages locally, for students to read later).

4.3.1.1. Word-Processor

Almost all computers in our classrooms have got a word processor; we may take advantage of them by using the multimedia capability they incorporate, for example Microsoft Word.
SAMPLE ACTIVITY: SPEAKING PROCESSOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Preparation</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>How</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look for sound files of the most important words in a text. Save them in each computer or, if you are working in a local network, save them in the server.</td>
<td>The files may be recorded by the teacher using a digital recorder or taken from the web, using dictionaries on line (Merriam-Webster⁶, for example).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Task</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>How</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students copy a passage or a short story using the word processor; when they have finished it, they insert the audio file into their text; in this way the text will “speak”.</td>
<td>Click on: Insert → Object → Sound File. Look for the appropriate file in the directory where it was previously saved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.1.2. Educational Software

There is a number of educational packages that may help both teachers and students in the teaching learning process. From Half-Baked Software there is a suite, Hot Potatoes⁷, that includes six applications that enable teachers to build up interactive applications to be used with web browsers (see fig. 12:4). The exercises generated with this suite can be used off-line or on line.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JCloze</td>
<td>Gap-fill exercises can be easily created using this program that allows hints for the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JMatch</td>
<td>Matching or ordering exercises can be generated using this program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JQuiz</td>
<td>It helps create four different types of question-based quizzes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


⁷ [Shareware software, available at](http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/halfbaked/)
In Spain, there is an interesting program widely extended among primary and secondary schools called “Clic” (www.xtec.es/recursos/clic/eng/inex.htm). Many teachers have contributed to a large dossier of files which are shared by students and teachers. With this program you can create multimedia interactive exercises that can easily be distributed for school use or home practice. Many different activities can be created: puzzles, fill in the blanks, multiple choice, written answers …

4.3.2. On-line Connection

4.3.2.1. E-mail.

Electronic mail as an asynchronous (not real-time) computer-mediated communication is a fast, reliable (in spite of viruses) and economical form of sending and receiving information, records or, even, multimedia files. From a photograph to a short movie clip everything can be in the antipodes within seconds. We are going to see e-mail from two different perspectives: the teacher and the students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Personal use with teachers she already knows.</td>
<td>• Exchange information, receive/send files, ask questions, etc., either with teachers or school mates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sharing experiences with all the teachers subscribed to a discussion list or list server, as with Listservs.</td>
<td>• Use pen-pal services to get in touch with other students all around the world to get and/or give information about socio-cultural aspects, make friends, to participate in social exchange programmes, …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Pen-Pal services to get in touch with other schools, institutions, as IECC (www.teaching.com/iecc/). | *

**DISCUSSION 23**

a) Ask for an e-mail account, if you do not have one, and send an e-mail to your classmates and your teacher. You can use, for example, "Hotmail" so as to be able to use "Messenger" later.

b) "Real-time communication has brought us countless benefits". Discuss about this assertion and analyse if there are any weak points.

4.3.2.2. Chatting or the Social Internet setting

If we have a look at the use of internet services, chatting is perhaps one of the places most young people spend most of their time at. At the beginning the keyboard was the
chief means of communication (written and read), nowadays as internet speed is becoming faster (ADSL, cable …) it is possible to transmit both voice and video (using appropriate software); thus, the Internet has become an enormous meeting place and communication platform. As students are accustomed to using this system of communication, teachers can take advantage of their experience by using it, either as a class activity or, better, as an “out of class activity”.

There are many teachers who include “Chatting rooms” in their web pages where students have the possibility of getting in touch with his teacher or their school mates (See http://www.ugr.es/~juliotor/students/online/line.htm for an example). There are more possibilities using appropriate software: IRC (Internet Relay Chat, using, for example mIRC at www.mirc.com) and Messenger (http://messenger.msn.com).

**DISCUSSION 24**

a) Fix a date to get in touch with a group of students and your teacher using "Messenger".

4.3.2.3. Newsgroups

Electronic Discussion Groups consist of collections of a great variety of topics (from many teaching groups to stamp collecting). You can get in touch with people who share your interest or even you can argue with those who don’t. Any internet user may post articles to the group he has subscribed (using the appropriate software program), may read articles posted or ignore them. The address of newsgroups is different from the one of the World Wide Web, e.g. “alt.audio.minidisc” instead of http://www.ugr.es

4.3.2.4. Forums or Bulletin Boards.

An interesting web tool because we can use most of the possibilities that appear in newsgroups but participating (sending replies or reading) while surfing. They exist in a question and answer environment: You write a question and, some time later, you can check if someone has answered the question. See www.teacher.net/mentors for an interesting example.

4.3.2.5. FTP

File Transfer Protocol is a method widely used to send or retrieve information without a web browser, although specific software is necessary. Apart from that, FTP is used to upload pages to servers when you are a webmaster (you have got your own pages and send them to be seen over the internet). Some schools and Centres of Teachers and Resources are using a server to store information that can be downloaded using an ftp programme and an appropriate password to the teacher’s hard drive. This is a sort of enormous database accessible for the teachers attending courses, seminars, etc.

4.3.2.6. Web Logs or Blogs
A Blog is essentially a personal web site where a sort of online diary or personal journal is displayed. They are updated frequently (best Blogs are updated daily) and add new possibilities to communication over the net: you can add links to web pages, upload or download files and what is of great value: they are easy to use, trouble-free updated and a great tool to share experiences, materials, ... They are indexed by search engines, this way they can be easily found using any search tool. See http://free-esl.com/all/blogs/default.asp if you are interested in publishing your personal free Blog.

4.3.2.7. Mobile phones

Nowadays a new form of communication is developing all over the world at a great speed. The power of mobile and satellite technology is increasing day by day. The number of people who own a mobile phone is greater than ever, even children are making use of short messages to connect with their friends or even with groups of people. Taking advantage of the use among young people Nokia and the International Youth Foundation in association with other educational institutions are carrying out “Project Text2teach” (abbreviations typically used in short messages) that will deliver multimedia content to the most distant regions in Philippines\(^8\). Students can explore the same state-of-the-art educational programs regardless of the location of their school or its academic-resource budget.

**DISCUSSION 25**

a) Visit the link of the Project Text2teach and write a summary of its most relevant features.

b) Discuss the revolutionary aspects underlying the project.

4.3.2.8. Surfing the web

Although the services depicted so far show the enormous potential we may obtain using ICT, the possibilities for English Language Teaching increase noticeably when we browse the web. Even more, English may be considered not only an end in itself but the tool for being able to use computers and get information on the Internet. Twenty-first century students must become proficient users not only in multimedia environments but also in electronic communication.

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\(^8\) [http://www.nokia.com/nokia/0,5184,27266,00.html](http://www.nokia.com/nokia/0,5184,27266,00.html)
As there is such a great amount of resources available at the click of a button, we will, following Warschauer’s definition, present some outstanding features which justify the use of ICT in our classrooms: “There are five main reasons to use the Internet for English teaching. Taken together, these reasons help bring English teaching ALIVE: Authenticity, Literacy, Interaction, Vitality and Empowerment” (Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni 2000:7).

a. Authentic listening materials in Randall’s ESL Cyber Listening Lab (http://www.esl-lab.com/) are easily accessible; you only need appropriate free software to listen (Real player, available at http://www.real.com).

b. “The ability to read, write, (…) on the Internet represent new forms of Literacy” (Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni 2000). A few years ago most teachers paid more attention to spoken language, mainly, perhaps, because students were more interested in this form of communication. Nowadays, e-mail, chatting are strongly interesting to all learners. Furthermore, newspapers, magazines (see http://www.pressdisplay.com), books (http://promo.net/pg/), free electronic books at Project Gutenberg… are useful tools to bring socio-cultural aspects into the classroom.

c. “Interaction and negotiation are crucial for learning and language development (…) Computer networks expand opportunities for interaction beyond the one-to-one interactions possible in dialogue journals and pen-and-pencil letters, allowing many-to-many communication with a wide variety of partners”(Peyton, J.K. 1999). Internet is a place where any person can interact with other people in different languages 24 hours a day. Chatting, in contrast to face-to-face communication, can bring about more equal participation among foreign or second language students (Warschauer 1996).

d. Internet is an enormous source of information and an opportunity to bring the real world into the classroom, to connect with students’ real life needs. The internet can inject the Vitality Warschauer mentions, and motivate them.

e. One of the objectives most teachers want to achieve is to enable students to be able to continue learning outside school, university,… This sort of “Empowerment” may allow them “to become autonomous lifelong learners” and be effective in today’s and tomorrow’s multimedia future.

DISCUSSION 26

a) Surf Randall’s web page and look for appropriate listenings texts for primary school pupils.
b) Now look for interesting listenings for secondary school students and save them to your computer.

Note: All the links that appear in this chapter were fully functional on May 30th, 2004. They are available on line (to prevent typing mistakes at:
http://www.ugr.es/local/juliotor/links.htm)
4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has intended to show the variety of materials and resources a teacher may use. Their advantages and disadvantages have been described together with the possible activities in which they can be incorporated. A creative and critical stance has been taken to the use of these materials and resources so that learners and teachers remain at the centre of the educational process as a communicative, purely human activity.

The materials and resources have been exposed in an inclusive historical perspective. The fact that there are old, new and newer technologies does not mean that the first ones have been forgotten and the brand-new ones are reigning over the rest. It would be a waste of learning possibilities to forget about the older and a mere desire to base our teaching on the newest. A realistic balance must be kept between using whatever materials and resources we may have in our classroom and aspiring to the best ones in order to improve our daily practice.

4.5 FURTHER READINGS


This is a very useful guide about using videos in the classroom. It provides detailed information of the steps to be followed. Full with examples and practical activities, from the most elemental to the most sophisticated ones. It also gives a good guideline to produce your own materials with the video camera.


The book deeply describes the different types of OHP, and very useful tips about the usage of this piece of equipment. There is a wide range of activities to be carried out in accordance with the goals pre-established.


From general considerations about Internet to the explanation of how to create your own web pages, the authors give suggestions about networking, research and activities that any teacher will find useful if he/she wants to integrate the latest Internet tools into the curriculum.


This book illustrates the potential of ICT (at any level) for language teaching and learning. Although ICT have been developing with frightening speed (this book was first published in 1997), the collection of activities are accessible to
most teachers and may be used as a starting point to using ICT in our classrooms.

4.6. TASKS FOR PAPERS

1) Design a learning task which requires the use of the blackboard and other two resources mentioned in this chapter.

2) Find two different Primary Education textbooks (preferably one older than the other) and evaluate them using the checklist provided in this chapter. Which one would you choose?

3) Discuss about your experiences as a learner: how do you feel about ATV? What is your personal opinion? Which ATV do you think is the most useful for the EFL classroom? Which one do you enjoy most? Which one is the most frequent in your classroom?

4) In small groups, make an inventory of the AVT available in your classroom and make a survey of the frequency of their use.

5) In pairs, ask the teachers’ personal opinions about them and which ones are their favourite in accordance with the tasks designed.

6) Elaborate a small library (a collection of transparencies, video or audio tapes) to be used in one didactic unit of your own.

7) Identify in a primary textbook activities which can't be carried out without the AVT. Make suggestions for other activities in which the use of them could improve the achievement of the goals.

8) You are a teacher in a Primary school. You have been asked to make flashcards to be used in several units of teaching: Colours, Numbers and Nationalities. You can either build your own flashcards or find and download them from the Internet.

9) You have to prepare a lesson on “Christmas”. Songs, song lyrics, pictures, some knowledge of its legends (Father Christmas, Three Wise Men, Christmas Tree, etc.)
   • Visit: http://www.holidays.net/christmas/
   • Do you think it is interesting the use of Internet? Do you really need it?
   • Could you achieve the same effect using chalk, talk, paper and pencils?

10) Work in pairs: One of you prepares the materials mentioned above using the WWW and the other using his/her own resources. Evaluate differences found: suitability, authenticity, time spent and any other aspects you may find relevant.

11) In which ways have ICT helped you build and prepare your lesson?

4.7 BIBLIOGRAPHY.


