

Abstract

There are always new English textbooks or revised versions available on the market to provide teachers and learners a wide range of topics at different levels. These can be very convenient and easily accessible for teachers if they meet the school curriculum and are suitable for students. However, they are not always suitable for students due to unfamiliar topics, problems with age-relevance and mismatch of students' learning needs. As a course coordinator and secondary English teacher in Macao, I have found it necessary to tailor-make materials which are more motivating, challenging and yet supportive for students in order to maximize their learning process.

The focus of this research study is on designing English language teaching materials for students majoring in Fashion Design at *Escola Luso-Chinesa Técnico Profissional (ELCTP)*. In addition to selecting age-appropriate and interesting texts, activities were designed to challenge yet offer support for students at varied proficiency levels, especially during reading and listening. The first steps of this research project included needs analysis, text selection, and materials design followed by expert and peer review. The materials then were field-tested with the twelfth grade students enrolled in the Fashion Design Course. After tryouts, the materials were revised for more widespread use based on teacher and student feedback.

Students' reactions to the materials were assessed via questionnaires and informal discussions. Moreover, the teacher-researcher kept detailed field-test notes for further improvement and adjustment of the materials during tryout.

Needs analysis results showed that most students found grammar-focused materials uninteresting and inhibited their motivation in the learning process. Moreover, they had difficulties applying what they learned from class in their daily use, which totally defeated the purpose of learning. There was a need for new materials focused on fashion design topics which utilized pre-reading, during-reading and after-reading and listening activities. Vacca & Vacca (2005) suggest these types of reading guides according to a three-phase process to activate, guide and reinforce learning.

Fieldtest results using new materials showed that three-stage learning materials played a positive role in facilitating students' learning of English. Students responded that these materials were quite interesting and relevant to their knowledge gained from other subjects. Moreover, they also indicated that students felt more successful as learners and thus, they were more interested when they were able to focus and follow the materials with the help of the guided activities. Students felt more successful because they could make use of words/phrases learnt as they participated in listening or speaking activities. According to teacher observations, students' participation and attentiveness in class improved. The teacher also noticed a remarkable improvement in students' word-use, both in spoken and written forms.

Based on this research, suggestions and indications are given for developing and using teacher-generated materials to better suit students' interests, needs and levels so as to make the learning process more positive and effective.