Producing our own materials with the students’ collaboration


Many teachers find necessary to produce some of the materials for these reasons:

- The text-book does not provide enough practice or appropriate content.
- To include more interesting and appropriate activities.
- To add variety.
- To attend to diversity.
- To personalize the teaching-practice to our learner’s needs and motivations.

In the tasks of creating new materials we are not alone. Following a learner centred approach we should consider the help of our students. The learner centred approach aims at students being able to continue life-long learning on their own. Therefore we should make students feel the are taking part in the creation process.

Deller lists a number of benefits of the use of learner-generated materials.

1. Student control, motivation and initiative increase.
2. Materials are more relevant to students’ backgrounds and interests.
3. Students feel more ownership of what happens in the classroom, thus creating more cooperation between teacher and student.
4. Students learn more.
5. The classroom becomes more interesting for teacher because there is variety and surprises.

Let's see then, the variety of materials we can produce by ourselves and with the students´ collaboration.

I have divided them into:

- Visual and traditional materials
- Audio and audiovisual materials
- Computer assisted language learning (CALL)

**Visual and traditional materials** have impact on visual learners:

- Flashcards are big pictures or words (word cards) on a piece of cardboard.
We can use them to introduce, practice and review vocabulary or structures, for memory games, TPR activities...

They should be attractive, with clear drawings or pictures from the Internet or photocopied. Students can make them, or colour them.

- **Posters** should be large, attractive and display language in context.

They create an English environment.

They can be used to present or review contents.

Students can make them in pairs or small groups about a specific topic.

- **Worksheets** are written or drawn exercises on a sheet of paper to be photocopied for each student.

They should be attractive and with simple and clear instructions in English.

They can integrate different skills.

Students can make them or complete them.

**Audio and audiovisual materials** produced in class will help learners develop memorization skills, get the general idea and specific information about what they listen to, and contextualize the contents they are learning.

We can use CDs, DVDs or realia materials as TV, radio stations, and also the students recorded.

We should make sure the sound is clear, it contains simple constructions, and several repetitions, and it provides a clear context or visual aids.

When we choose this types of materials we have to check if it is interesting for our students and if it has appropriate contents and level.

When working with DVD we should follow 3 stages:

- A pre-viewing stage- To introduce the story. We can use flashcards or brainstorming activities.
- A while-viewing stage- To develop active and comprehension listening skills.
- A post-viewing stage- We have to design communicative activities to use the language they have been learning.

**Computer assisted language learning (CALL)** it is really enjoyed by learners for several reasons.

- They get immediate feedback and without the anxiety that mistakes produce in learners.
- It respects students’ individual learning process and are able to create "Virtual words" very similar to real life.
- The use of it helps our students develop the basic competence in information processing and digital competence.

Apart from the Microsoft software and the educative software we can find on the market, we can create our own computer assisted activities to attend the specific necessities of our group of students.

I will deal with Clic, Hot potatoes and Webquests.

- Clic, Jclic and hot potatoes activities consists on 6 applications of multiple choice, short answers, jumble sentences, crosswords, matching and gap-filling activities. The teacher just has to introduce the vocabulary or structures and this software creates the activity for teachers.
- Webquests are mini projects and interactive tasks that initiate pupils in the use of the Internet. Students have to search for information related to a topic. It consists on 6 stages:
  - an introduction to the topic.
  - the task is the final result of students efforts.
  - the process - it is where we describe the steps that the students will need to complete the activity.
  - the information resources stage where we list materials and resources.
  - the evaluation stage. One popular form of assessment is a rubric for evaluating webquest.
  - the conclusion is where we encourage our students and guide them to form their own conclusions from what they have learned as a result of the webquest.

Finally, apart from visual and traditional, audio, audiovisual and computer assisted language learners, I have to say that we can also make our students collaborate in the variety of teaching-learning resources used in class in several ways:

- Voluntary children to be described when talking about clothes.
- Giving examples from their own experiences.
- Use their personal objects.

Bibliography