



Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

Course Materials and Textbook Selection Criteria of English Language Teachers

İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Ders Materyali ve Ders Kitabı Seçim Kriterleri

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Abstract: In this study, it was tried to determine what the criteria used by English teachers working at different school levels in the selection of course materials and textbooks, and what the similarities and differences were in the selection of course materials between different levels. Although the study is a descriptive study, it was carried out in accordance with the phenomenological research pattern, one of the qualitative research designs. Prior to the study, written consent was obtained from the Gaziosmanpaşa University Social and Humanity Studies Committee with Meeting decision number 11.18 on 21.05. 2021 and Protocol Number: E-33490967-044-41105. The participants of the study consist of 51 English language teachers, 15 from primary, 17 from secondary, and 19 from high schools. The opinions of the participants were taken by using a semi-structured guided interview form. Content analysis of the data obtained from the participants were done in a way to create codes and themes, and they were transformed into tables. According to the findings obtained from the study, "visual richness" was the criterion used by the majority of the participants (f=36), regardless of the level in the selection of course materials. Secondly, while primary school teachers prefer fun and up-to-date materials, it is seen that secondary school teachers pay attention to age-appropriateness and entertaining materials. It was observed that participants working at high school level with different priorities expressed similar views. Regarding the textbook selection criteria of English language teachers, visuality was stated as the primary criterion in primary and secondary education, while teachers working at the high school level paid more attention to the way the subjects were taught. The teachers should pay attention to students' ages, genders, levels, interests and goals in language learning while choosing textbooks.

Keywords: Textbook selection criteria, ELT books, Course materials, ELT teachers

Öz: Bu çalışmada farklı okul düzeylerinde görev yapan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ders materyali ve ders kitaplarının seçiminde kullandıkları kriterlerin neler olduğunu ve farklı düzeyler arasında ders materyali seçiminde benzerlikler ve farklılıkların neler olduğu belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Çalışma betimsel bir çalışma olmakla beraber nitel araştırma desenlerinden olgubilim desenine uygun olarak yapılmıştır. Çalışma öncesinde Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Etik Kurulunun, 21 Mayıs 2021 tarihli E-33490967-044-41105 sayılı 11. oturumunun 18. karar numarası ile yazılı izni alınmıştır. Çalışmanın katılımcılarını 15 ilkokul, 17 ortaokul ve 19 lise olmak üzere toplan 51 İngilizce öğretmeni oluşturmaktadır. Yarı yapılandırılmış bir rehber görüşme formu kullanılarak katılımcıların görüşleri alınmış, katılımcılardan elde edilen veriler kod ve temalar oluşturacak şekilde içerik analizi yapılmış ve tablolara dönüştürülmüştür. Çalışmadan elde edilen bulgulara göre ders materyale seçiminde okul düzeyi fark etmeksizin "görsel zenginlik" katılımcıların çoğunluğu tarafından (f=36) kabul edilen ölçüt olmuştur. İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ders kitabı seçim kriterlerine ilişkin olarak ilk ve ortaöğretimde görsellik öncelikli ölçüt olarak belirtilirken, lise düzeyinde çalışan öğretmenlerini konuların anlatım

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şekline daha fazla dikkat ettikleri görülmüştür. Öğretmenler ders kitabı seçerken öğrencilerin yaş, cinsiyet, ilgi ve dil öğrenme amaçlarını göz önünde bulundurmalıdırlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ders kitabı seçim kriterleri, ders materyali, İngilizce öğretmenleri

Introduction

“Language is the most important key to lifelong learning and development in the information age” (Güneş, 2011:124). Language is not only a tool that people use to communicate, but also an important instrument equipped with cultural elements that shape people's view of the world. Language can be defined as a system that enables people to understand and explain each other (Crystal, 2008). According to Black (1993, cited by Canbulat & İşgören, 2005), learning a foreign language makes people more creative, enables them to have a rich thinking capacity, develops more organized thinking in terms of thinking skills, and language learners can get higher scores from tests in areas such as reading and mathematics. People learn foreign languages to reach larger communities, find good jobs and understand different cultures (Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011). In order to encourage people to learn languages other than their mother tongue, the year 2001 was declared as the "European Year of Languages" by EU countries. For the development of students in terms of language and culture and to develop a more positive attitude towards language learning, the age of starting compulsory foreign language learning in countries such as Poland was reduced to 4 years in 2017 (Stec, 2016).

“Teaching materials are tools offered to students by the teacher in different environments during the learning process.” Teaching materials can be pictures, models, printed materials, cassettes that require technology, videos, CDs, web pages and software prepared for educational purposes. Materials should be prepared in accordance with predetermined programs (Kaya, 2006: 26). Foreign language books constitute millions dollar industry, and studies to develop better foreign language textbooks still continue, and materials that meet commercial and pedagogical demands must be developed (Sheldon, 1988). While selecting materials suitable for learner needs is a priority, existing materials should be adapted in cases where suitable materials are not available. In some cases, teachers need to develop their own materials. However, this option may require a lot of effort and time (Newby; cited in Kaya, 2006). Choosing the right materials makes teaching and learning a meaningful activity and aids in age-appropriate language development. If the materials are out of context, uninteresting and difficult, teaching and learning activities turn into an unfounded, and the students lose their motivation (Kito & Kito, 1997).

Course materials are the way the curriculum is delivered to the classroom, and they play an important role in achieving curriculum goals and language dynamics. The language development process will be easier when the materials used in language teaching are interesting, suitable for language development, and related to the subject learned (Dar, 2017:1). The purpose of the course materials used in the classrooms is to develop language learners' communication competencies by creating learners who will use the language effectively (Gilmore, 2007). Textbooks are one of the main educational tools used by teachers in foreign language teaching, especially in the absence of experienced teachers. The curriculum of the textbooks is becoming more and more widespread day by day, as it includes the method to be applied and guides teachers (Ahjaheşuyu, 2014; Hanifa, 2018; White, 2018, Kim, 2015). Textbooks facilitate learning and teaching by exemplifying the most common challenges students face. Textbooks will continue to be published as they are the easiest source for education. Knowing the limitations of ready-made textbooks and materials, this situation raises the importance of choosing foreign language textbooks and materials.

Local and Universal Materials

The content of the materials can affect the attitudes of the students towards the materials. If the materials are full of foreign materials that students are not very interested in, students' motivation towards the lesson may decrease. It can be said that most of the commercial books and materials

prepared especially for English teaching are full of information about countries such as England and America, where English is spoken as a mother tongue, and they do not reflect their local language learning styles and cultural values of language learners (Nguyen, 2005; Hanifa, 2018). As Dar (2012) states, this problem can be solved if the contextual materials are presented by filling them with local elements. Local materials carry cultural elements familiar to the student and can increase student motivation and interest. Brown (2001) and Faidan (2012) have similar views and stated that the use of the student's local motifs as a context will make the materials more meaningful, thus increasing student participation and making language learning more successful. Dat (2003) stated that he supports the use of local language teaching materials as students reflect real life and are familiar with the language used as culture. Most of the foreign language teachers stated that since the books are far from the local language context, the students ask themselves what the proper names in these books mean and look for these words in the dictionaries.

However, as Nguyen (2005) supports, materials that include cultural elements of the countries where the foreign language is spoken may be more useful for the student to compare their own culture with the culture where the foreign language is used as mother tongue, and to create an identity by increasing their basic knowledge of the language they learn. Alptekin (2002: 58) evaluates language learning as an acculturation process and argues that local as well as universal elements, cultures of people who use the language as mother tongue should be included in language teaching materials. Therefore, it is important to use local and foreign materials that offer students a wider perspective and experience.

Authentic Materials

In addition to textbooks, authentic materials are frequently used in language teaching. Authentic materials are defined in different meanings in the literature. Porter and Roberts (1981) define authentic materials as language produced for native speakers in a particular language community of native speakers. Morrow (1977) and Gilmore (2007) define it as the language used by real speakers or writers to convey a real message to real listeners or readers. Dar (2012) defines authentic materials as materials or texts that give language in its real-life context. According to Dar, authentic materials support language learning because they show students how language is used in a natural language environment. Authentic materials are not materials prepared for language teaching purposes. They are materials or texts prepared for people who use that language as their mother tongue. For example, a novel by a British author, or any newspaper published in England for the British, can be considered as authentic materials. Since authentic materials exemplify how people use language in real life and reflect real cultural elements, it allows students to be more motivated and to encounter more cultural elements. According to Richards (2001), such materials meet the needs of students more and add more creativity to teaching.

Dar (2012), who thinks that students with very little exposure to foreign languages may find authentic materials intimidating and this may cause fear in students against language learning, so warns teachers to be careful in using authentic materials. Encountering with authentic materials may reduce the motivation of students with low level grammar who are new to language learning. Teachers should provide appropriate pedagogical support so that students are not demotivated when using authentic materials.

Material Adaptation

An important method in material development is the adaptation of materials. Material adaptation is the adaptation of existing material to the context by making changes in a way that will motivate students and help them progress according to their language level, especially when the original materials are not suitable for the language level of the students. The purpose of material adaptation is to make the materials accessible, understandable and enjoyable for the students. For this reason, teachers who take on the role of developing material should evaluate which foreign cultural elements they will localize and which ones they will teach (Dar, 2012; Nguyen, 2005). By changing the content or format of ready-made materials, they can be adapted to the target student audience and curriculum.

Teachers often have to choose and use textbooks from ready-made materials because they are reluctant or do not have sufficient knowledge and skills. Such a choice often leads them to ignore the need to develop contextual materials. There may be heavy curricula, limitations in the teaching environment, education policies of countries or environmental pressures that force teachers to choose ready-made materials. In Turkey, the selection, writing and publication of textbooks are not done at the local level, and the books determined by the commissions of the Ministry are used jointly in all schools. However, teachers need to receive sufficient information and support both in terms of professional knowledge and in determining the appropriate books for the situation and the needs of the students.

Textbook Selection in Turkey

Textbooks books are important teaching materials and they ease the teachers' jobs in a sense that they provide topic related activities, exercises, reading passages, audio supplement etc. which could not be prepared individually by a teacher himself. In our country, Turkey, most English language teachers are forced to use the books that some authorities choose.

"Textbooks have an important place in realizing the objectives of the programs in education" (Kaya, 2006). The development of textbooks to be taught in public schools requires a long process. The Ministry of National Education (MEB) has published the Regulation on Textbooks and Educational Tools regarding textbooks. The textbooks and materials to be prepared must comply with these legislation rules. This regulation specifies the qualifications sought in the textbooks or materials, preparation, examination, acceptance, suitability, examination and examination fees and the criteria to be sought in the publishing houses that will undertake this task (MEB, 2009).

When the regulation is examined, it is seen that textbooks or materials are prepared with five different methods: "competition, printing, ordering, purchasing and preparing by private sector". In the competition method, the books prepared in accordance with the criteria specified in the specifications are examined and selected by a committee, and then they are purchased and published. In the printing method, a commission created in accordance with the regulation can prepare textbooks or materials. After the specification of the books to be printed in the order method is approved by the Board of Education, the relevant unit has the person or commission prepare the book according to the terms of the specification. The books prepared are evaluated by the relevant boards and commissions and the decisions taken are reported to the relevant unit of the Publications Department. Books that need to be read in the purchasing method are forwarded to the Publications Department through the Board of Education. In the Private Sector Preparation method, individuals or publishers send the ready-to-print books they have prepared to the President of the Board of Education. The relevant person or publisher is informed about the suitable works.

Textbook Selection and Evaluation

Textbooks are vital in teaching and learning English. Depending on the material they contain, textbooks can support or hinder students' language learning (Zohrabi, Sabouri, & Kheradmand (2014). The creativity of the teacher in the selection of course materials is as important as the goodness of a textbook, because the richness of teaching activities is also related to supporting materials (Brown, 2001). Textbooks should be suitable for the teaching method used, the needs, the program, the aims and objectives, and the content of the curriculum (Brown, 1995). On the other hand, students should enjoy learning throughout their formal education in order for lifelong learning to occur and internal motivation to occur (Small, 1997). Only when this is provided, adults may be in search of learning new things after formal education. The materials chosen for language teaching should be able to meet the linguistic and intellectual needs of students of different ages and language levels. In addition to these, Dar (2012) suggests that students should have a positive and permanent attitude towards the materials. He recommends that materials prepared to maintain students' interest should be analyzed and pre-tested before they are made available to the general public. In the development of materials, teachers and students need to provide continuous feedback on the materials. These feedbacks can ensure that the materials are of higher quality and more interesting.

Teachers, who can best identify students' needs and interests, should play a key role in material preparation and selection (Tomlinson, 1998). Teachers have a key role in the successful implementation of curriculum changes and the use of textbooks (Bhanegaonkar & Manfoodh, 2013). According to Cunningsworth (1995), it is very important to analyze the thoughts of the teachers and students who use the textbooks. Textbook use and adaptation is a part of teachers' professional knowledge.

In the preparation of course materials, especially the teaching method to be used should be taken into consideration. The curriculum, which was renewed in 2004, adopted the constructivist approach instead of the behavioral approach, and the textbooks were prepared according to this approach (Çayır, 2011). Private schools mostly buy foreign language books from foreign publishing houses. In the determination of these books, which should be selected in accordance with the framework program prepared by the Ministry of National Education, attention should be paid to the suitability of the context and cultural elements, adaptations should be made if necessary, and a good evaluation should be made of the imported textbooks, especially before and after their use by the teachers. According to Akbari (2015), the textbooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education lack activities that help develop communicative skills. Evaluation of textbooks by experienced and novice teachers, curriculum creators and educational administrators helps to identify the deficiencies of instructional materials and helps education administrators to increase the quality of educational materials by searching for newly published textbooks (Dar, 2012; Ahmadi & Derakhshan, 2016).

In order for the textbooks to meet the needs of teachers and students, those who prepare the textbooks should know the limitations in the classroom at the local level, analyze the needs of teachers and students well, know the language learning backgrounds and aims of the learners, have a good grasp of the goals and objectives of foreign language education, learn the learning styles of the learners, they should be able to prepare the content suitable for the program in accordance with the pedagogy. The materials should be suitable for the teacher's preferred method and personality, and have flexibility to adapt to special situations (Howard and Major, 2004; Dow, 2004; Dar, 2017).

Evaluation of textbooks and materials is necessary and must be done in order to understand the content and styles of the books and to reveal their weaknesses and strengths. Many researchers (Harmer, 2007; Brown, 2001; Cunningsworth, 1995; Richards, 1998) suggest different evaluation methods regarding the evaluation of textbooks. According to Harmer (2007), first of all, textbooks should be at acceptable prices for students. Another evaluation criterion is that the textbooks have extra materials. Some of the other evaluation criteria are the book's design, teaching method, language skills, content, cultural appropriateness.

Textbook evaluation helps teachers and students to choose and organize textbooks that are suitable for the needs of students, in which students can interact naturally, and suitable for the purposes of teaching (Chowdhury, 2014; Ahmadi & Derakhshan, 2016). As Dar (2012) states, choosing textbooks and materials is a challenging task for teachers, as textbooks and materials constitute an important platform for students to learn language. The selection of materials suitable for the development of students is entirely the responsibility of the material developers and teachers. Choosing the right materials makes language learning and teaching activities effective and meaningful. Textbooks also raise students' awareness of local and universal literature and serve as a gateway for students to get to know the world around them. Kita and Kitao (1997) claimed that course materials are the center of teaching and the most important factor affecting what is done in the classroom. While inappropriately selected textbooks and materials make the classroom environment boring, they also reduce the motivation of the students. For this reason, it is considered important to use materials that are appropriate for the age of the students, and that can help their language development and make their participation in classroom activities permanent.

According to some researchers (Dudly-Evans & John, 1998; Dar, 2012; Hanifa, 2018; Ahmadi & Derakhshan, 2016) textbooks facilitate teachers' work and help them fulfill their responsibilities. According to Brown (1995), textbooks have many advantages as they provide resources for language,

support learning, and motivate students. Textbooks have many benefits (O'Neil, 1982; Seferoğlu, 2006; Ur, 1996; Yalın, 2010):

- 1) They meet the information and exercise needs of the students,
- 2) They help students plan their following learning activities,
- 3) They provide information to teachers and students on how to use the book and additional materials,
- 4) They ensure that the subjects are given in a pedagogical order,
- 5) They become a resource for teachers in making changes and adaptations according to the needs of the students,
- 6) They provide inexpensive, accessible teaching material for each student,
- 7) They guide inexperienced teachers,
- 8) They enable students to acquire valuable information.
- 9) They simplify the content, make it easier to understand,
- 10) They save time,
- 11) They make it easier to remember,
- 12) They attract attention, arouse interest to learning in students
- 13) They help embody abstract issues,

Course materials increase students' motivation levels and encourage learning. They diversify the learning environment and process in the classroom (Seferoğlu, 2006). According to Richards (2006), teachers, students and contextual variables should be taken into account in determining language materials. The teacher's language proficiency, education, experiences, cultural background and preferred teaching method affect the material selection. Students' learning styles, language learning needs, motivation levels, interests, needs, ages, genders are the learner characteristics that should be considered in the arrangement and selection of materials. Similarly, as contextual variables, it is important to have a learning-encouraging classroom environment, school culture and classroom conditions. The teacher, student and contextual variables are effective in the selection of materials for the purposes chosen in language teaching. The purpose for which the language is learned, the objectives set, and the language teaching policy of the country in general can also affect the material selection.

According to Altay (2013), successful textbooks should enable students to progress in a foreign language, motivate teachers, and develop students' ability to interact successfully with other students and teachers. According to Harmer (2007), textbooks should present the topics in an interesting way, include appropriate grammar topics, appropriate vocabulary and exercises, contain helpful information about the teaching method to the teacher, give additional ideas, and review the topics covered while giving a preliminary idea about the following topics. According to Tomlinson (2001), textbooks provide continuity and give learners a sense of system. It helps teachers to prepare for the lesson and students to review the topics learned. McGrath (2002) stated that textbooks determine the direction and content of the course and contain suggestions on how to teach. Garinger (2010) also emphasized that especially textbooks reduce the pressure on teachers by contributing to the preparation of materials and preparation for the lesson.

The criticized aspects of the textbooks were expressed by Ur (1996) as follows:

- 1) There are no textbooks suitable for students with different needs,
- 2) There is no one textbook equipped with good topics for the interests and needs of all students,
- 3) Textbooks hinder the creativity of teachers,

- 4) There is no textbook planned for the situation and context,
- 5) Textbooks have their own principles and may not be suitable for the level of the student in the class,
- 6) Teachers are slaves to textbooks and are not free to use appropriate teaching methods based on students' level.

Some researchers, such as Brumfit (1979; cited in Chowdhury, 2014), consider textbooks to be a well-marketed garbage pile. However, textbooks make language learning sustainable for most learners in situations where the language class is limited and the teacher is inadequate (Chowdhury (2014). Teachers should be more careful in selecting and adapting textbooks prepared for commercial purposes that do not appeal to students at the local level. According to Cunningsworth (1995), the textbook may contain disadvantages such as the variety of teaching methods being insufficient, not meeting individual needs, inflexibility, and lack of creativity in teaching methods. For this reason, he recommends not to stick to a single textbook in language teaching.

Considering the benefits and limitations given above, teachers should be guided in the selection and adaptation of textbooks. According to Shaffiee Nahrkhalaj (2012), teachers should have certain qualifications in the selection of foreign language books and materials. These qualities are; to know the advantages of evaluating textbooks; to have the ability to adapt materials or other books to suit students' needs; to be able to change the materials when necessary, so that they can improve the language skills of the students; to evaluate the results of language materials correctly and to reveal their own creativity depending on the textbooks.

It is possible to see many foreign language teaching materials and books embellishing the shop windows in bookstores. The selection of these materials, which are mostly produced for commercial purposes, to be used in classroom should be done after a certain evaluation process. According to Nunan (1991), the selection process should be in accordance with the needs and interests of the students through a systematic evaluation process, and these materials should be compatible with the language teaching ideology of the institution.

According to Cunningsworth (1995), the effective evaluation of textbooks depends on asking appropriate questions and interpreting the answers. Textbook evaluation checklists prepared by experts determine the criteria for the evaluation of textbooks (White, 2018). However, these checklists prepared by experts may need to be adapted in line with individual needs. Sheldon (1998) prepared a textbook evaluation checklist consisting of 53 questions under 17 basic criteria. Checklists consisting of too many questions like this show that experts have problems with scope (White, 2018). Therefore, teachers should evaluate the textbook from a more subjective perspective (Cunningsworth, 1995; Sheldon, 1988). All methods and checklists prepared for textbook evaluation may need to be adapted, taking into account individual needs, local values, teaching methods and purposes. Sheldon (1988) states that textbook evaluation is purely subjective, and there is no need for a formula or system.

McDonough and Shaw (1993) propose a flexible two-stage method in textbook evaluation. The first of these stages is the external evaluation of the textbook. The layout, introduction, table of contents and cover of the book constitute the first stage, while the degree to which the book realizes the goals promised by the author, the goals and objectives of the curriculum and program constitutes the second stage. McDonough and Shaw recommend evaluating a book according to 22 framework criteria, which include the selection of a textbook and the evaluation of a textbook in use. The audience of the book, the level of proficiency it aims, the context in which the materials are used, how the language is presented and whether it is given in teachable units, the author's views on language and method, whether the materials will be used as supplementary or main material; Whether the teacher's book is printed and accessible, whether it contains a word list, visuals adapted to the text, clear presentation of the topics, whether it has cultural biases constitute the framework of the external criteria. The presentation of language skills in the materials, the grading and ordering of the materials, whether they cover the reading

skills with appropriate texts, whether there are authentic or artificial records for listening skills, whether they are suitable and sufficient for different learning styles, constitute the framework of the internal criteria of the textbook evaluation.

Harmer (2010) emphasized that a needs analysis should be done first in the selection of the textbook. According to Harmer, in some cases, students learn the language for specific purposes, such as passing exams that measure grammar and vocabulary. There is no need for the textbooks to be chosen for students in this situation to include language skills. However, the language learning objectives of the students, their age, gender, class size, language level of the students, language learning method, the degree of motivation to learn, the ability of the students to afford the book, their need for language skills play a decisive role in the selection of the textbook. In addition, students' interests, family norms, beliefs and expectations, the teacher's interests and preferences, other materials that come with the books, and whether they are needed should be considered. Harmer (2010) recommends that teachers create their own checklists in line with needs analysis instead of using ready-made textbook selection checklists.

Oruç and Yavuz (2013) stated that the selection of course materials is made according to the advertisements of the publishers, the choice of the school, the prices of the materials, their appeal to the eye, the recommendations of their colleagues and the recommendations given in the in-service training, without a detailed research and analysis in the selection of the course materials. revealed that they need to be equipped more comprehensively in their selection.

“Preparing course materials requires a separate expertise” (Duman, 2013). As a part of their education, teachers should be knowledgeable about material preparation and selection criteria, and be able to develop their own materials when necessary. Materials do not only guide the teacher but they are necessary for increasing the effectiveness of learning and success. The material to be selected should be aimed at which goals, the level, age, interests of the student, its suitability for the general goals of education, and it should be able to meet the learning needs of the student (Yaylacı & Yaylacı, 2013). They should be selected or prepared by paying attention to important criteria such as being suitable for use by the teacher in the classroom, and if it is a technology compatible material, the school and the classroom have the necessary infrastructure. The materials must be meaningful to the student, facilitate the transition from easy to difficult, from known to unknown, and have diversity in terms of examples and exercises. It is thought that teachers can choose the most suitable material for their students both as a part of their pedagogical formation education and as a result of their experiences.

The opinions of target users are also important in the evaluation and development of course materials in language teaching (Cunningsworth, 1995; Kim, 2015). One of the target users of the materials used in language teaching is teachers. Teachers' own views can also be effective in the selection of materials used in language teaching because teachers as practitioners are the ones who know students best. There are many criteria and checklists in the literature for material selection in English language teaching. Harmer (2010) recommends needs analysis, while McDonough and Shaw (1993) recommend checklists consisting of different stages. White (2018) recommends the checklist prepared by experts and Sheldon (1988) has prepared a list of 17 criteria and 53 questions, but he stated that the selection of course material is a purely subjective process and that teachers can choose their own materials without the need for any formula. When we look at the source of the criteria developed for language teaching, it is seen that researchers with different cultural backgrounds, whose mother tongue is usually English, created these criteria.

As well as the universal norms of language teaching, local conditions, culture, student needs and language teaching goals and language teaching policies are different. Teachers are the people who know the learning needs of the students and the subjects they have the most problems with and will use the materials actively with the students. They have experience gained during practice and theoretical pedagogy training on which subjects and what kind of material can be more useful. For this reason, it is very important for those who prepare course materials to know the opinions and preferences of teachers. As a requirement of their profession, teachers are expected to have competence in evaluating and

selecting textbooks and materials. This study aims to determine the criteria used by foreign language teachers in choosing course materials and textbooks used in English language teaching. For this purpose, answers to the following questions are sought;

1. What do English language teachers pay attention to in the selection of course materials? How should the materials be?
2. What are the textbook selection criteria of English language teachers?
3. Do English language teachers working at different school levels have differences of opinion on material selection? If so, what are these differences of opinion?

Method

The study was conducted with the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research designs. The study aiming to describe the existing situation, the data were obtained by qualitative research method. The phenomenology design aims to make an in-depth research by focusing on the phenomena that we do not have a detailed understanding (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). This study aims to determine the opinions of English language teachers working at different school levels regarding the selection of materials used in English language teaching and to reveal whether there is a difference in teachers' opinions according to the school levels. It is possible to define qualitative research as a research in which qualitative data collection techniques such as observation, interview and document analysis are used and a qualitative process is followed to reveal perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic way in the natural environment (Karasar, 2013). Semi-structured interview technique was used as a data collection method in this study, which was conducted to determine the opinions of English language teachers on the selection of course materials and to develop suggestions in line with the relevant opinions. The data collected by the researcher read to the participants for confirmation and then evaluated and analyzed descriptively in accordance with the thematic analysis technique.

Participants of the Study

In the research, criterion sampling method was used in order to be able to interview teachers who are experienced in the selection of course materials. Interviews were conducted with English teachers who voluntarily participated in the research, in accordance with the criteria of having at least 5 years of experience and graduating from English language teaching departments at universities. The research was conducted with the participation of 51 English language teachers working in primary, secondary and high schools at public and private schools operating under the Ministry of National Education within the provincial borders of Tokat. 15 teachers from primary level, 17 teachers from secondary school level and 19 teachers from high schools were interviewed and the opinions of teachers working at three different levels were compared. In determining the number of participants, the rule of reaching the saturation point, which is accepted by many researchers (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Patton, 2014; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011), and the data starting to repeat each other, was taken into account, and when the data started to repeat, the number of participants was considered sufficient.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Row No	Age	Seniority	Gender		Type of School			Code
			Female	Male	Primary (1 Public, 2 Private)	Secondary	High	
1	35	10-15		+	1			T1
2	31	5-10		+	1			T2
3	39	10-15	+		1			T3
4	29	10-15	+		1			T4
5	28	5-10	+		1			T5
6	34	5-10	+		2			T6
7	32	5-10	+		1			T7
8	29	5-10		+	2			T8
9	32	5-10	+		2			T9
10	33	10-15		+	1			T10
11	28	5-10	+		1			T11
12	36	10-15	+		1			T12
13	39	10-15		+	1			T13
14	35	5-10	+		1			T14
15	38	10-15		+	1			T15
16	32	10-15		+		1		T16
17	30	5-10		+		1		T17
18	37	10-15	+			1		T18
19	30	5-10	+			1		T19
20	34	10-15	+			1		T20
21	31	5-10	+			1		T21
22	58	25-30		+		1		T22
23	27	5-10		+		2		T23
24	31	5-10	+			2		T24
25	32	5-10		+		1		T25
26	38	10-15	+			1		T26
27	37	10-15	+			2		T27
28	39	15-20		+		1		T28
29	32	5-10		+		1		T29
30	29	5-10	+			1		T30
31	35	10-15	+			1		T31
32	33	5-10		+		1		T32
33	48	15-20	+				1	T33
34	35	10-15		+			1	T34
35	31	5-10	+				1	T35
36	30	5-10		+			1	T36
37	31	5-10	+				1	T37
38	39	10-15		+			1	T38
39	35	10-15		+			2	T39
40	46	20-25	+				2	T40
41	36	10-15		+			1	T41
42	28	5-10	+				1	T42
43	29	5-10		+			2	T43
44	30	5-10	+				1	T44
45	38	10-15		+			1	T45
46	43	15-20	+				1	T46
47	29	5-10		+			1	T47
48	42	15-20		+			2	T48
49	38	10-15	+				1	T49
50	32	5-10		+			2	T50
51	31	5-10	+				1	T51
Total			27	24	15	17	19	51

As seen in Table 1, a total of 51 English language teachers were interviewed, of which 15 were in primary schools, 17 in secondary schools, and 19 in high schools. 27 of the participants are female and 24 are male, the youngest participant is 27 years old and the oldest participant is 58 years old. It is seen that all participants have at least 5-10 years of seniority. In order to see the demographic characteristics of teachers like school level, age and experience in direct quotations, participants are coded as T1, T2 They were coded as (T-teacher and 1 participant row number). T1-T15 codes were given to primary school, T16-T32 codes were given to secondary school and T33-T51 codes were given to high school English language teachers.

Data Collection Tool and Analysis of Data

According to Creswell (2013), “interviews with individuals who have experienced the phenomenon” constitute the data collection process in phenomenological studies. A semi-structured interview form was used to determine the opinions of foreign language teachers about how the course materials should be and what should be considered when choosing course materials and textbooks. Semi-structured interview takes place by preparing questions in advance in order to get similar answers about the same topic (Patton, 2014). Open-ended questions in the semi-structured interview forms were used to obtain important information from the participants allow participants to share deep information (Creswell, 2012).

A qualitative research focuses on human experiences. It is also an orientation towards subjectivity or human reality. Researcher should take on the role of a participatory observer rather than an isolated, passive spectator. Therefore, in-depth and unstructured interviews with participant observation strategies are frequently used. It is one of the most frequently used strategies. (Boyd, 2001). As mentioned by Boyd (2001), in this study the researcher used a semi-structured question form to be able to ask more questions that may arise during the interview. As Morse (1996) states, often there is nothing to test because there is no theory in qualitative researches. As a matter of fact, qualitative research methods are aimed at understanding the meaning and experience dimensions of human life and the social world. In other words, the nature of qualitative research methods is not based on statistical or empirical calculations (Brink, 1991).

According to Guba (1981), the reliability of qualitative research depends on reflecting the value of reality, eliminating the concerns of applicability, consistency and impartiality. The use of correct and applicable tools that have been proven to be effective for the concepts studied constitutes an important reference point for evaluators and readers (Yin, 2009: 41) for the reliability of the research. In this study, a well-known qualitative research design, phenomenology and a well-known data collection tool, interviewing is used to realize reliability and validity. The researcher gives the statements of participants in quotations to support the data and comments. So, the study is tried to be as reliable as possible.

An in-depth literature review was conducted on course materials and course material selection. By examining the findings and suggestions of different researchers, the importance of course materials in teaching English language were revealed and a semi-structured interview form consisting of two questions was prepared in order to determine the views of English language teachers on course materials. Opinions of three faculty members from Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University Faculty of Education Educational Sciences Department were taken to be comprehensive and relevant in the formation of the questions. The number of questions was kept low in order to keep interview time short as not to lead Covid-19 contamination. The forms consist of two parts, including demographic information such as age, gender, school type, year of service, and open-ended questions. The data obtained from the interviews were recorded in writing by the researcher, and additional questions were asked when the clarification needed. The interviews were converted into Word files and the data were analyzed using the descriptive analysis method by two academician and similar themes and codes were used. When there were differences between the analysis of the researcher and the second academician, a short discussion took place and they decided together. The researcher and the second academician had %97 agreement on the analysis. The results of the analysis were converted into tables under codes and themes.

The themes in the tables were interpreted and supported by direct quotations from the statements of the interviewees. The answers of the participants were grouped according to the levels and examined.

Ethical considerations

Prior to the study, written consent was obtained from the Gaziosmanpasa University Social and Humanity Studies Committee with Meeting decision number 11.18 on 21.05. 2021 and Protocol Number: E-33490967-044-41105

Results

In this section, the data were analyzed in a way to answer the sub-problems, themes and codes were created and given under separate headings.

English Language Teachers' Course Material Selection Criteria

To the primary, secondary and high school English language teachers, "What do you pay attention to in the selection of materials in English language teaching? In your opinion, how should the textbooks and materials used be?" questions were asked, and the descriptive analysis of the answers given by the English language teachers was made and given in the tables below under the codes and themes.

Table 2. Primary School English Language Teachers' Criteria for Course Materials

Teachers' Opinions	Participant Codes	f
Visual richness,	T1,T2, T3,T4, T5, T6, T9, T10,T11,T13,T15	11
Being funny,	T2, T6, T7, T9, T12, T13, T14	7
Being up to date,	T2, T4, T7,T8, T9, T12, T14	7
Making the students active,	T1, T4, T6, T10, T11, T12	6
Compatibility with technology,	T7, T11, T12, T13, T14,	5
Suitable for age and level,	T1, T7,T14,T13,T15	5
Developing four skills,	T5, T8, T11, T14	4
Attention taking,	T5, T9	2
Student-centered,	T2, T12	2
Being in line with the course content,	T5, T15	2

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that primary school English language teachers' first criteria in material selection is "visual richness" (f=11). Teachers think that visual elements and colorful materials attract more attention of primary school students. As the second important criterion, it can be said that primary school teachers prefer "funny" and "up-to-date" materials (f=7). According to primary school English language teachers, other important features that should be included in the course materials are the activities to make the student active and being compatible with technology. The following statements from English language teachers also support the table:

"It should be appropriate for the age and level of the children. For example, foreign language is a very new concept for second- and third-year students. We shouldn't show it as a lesson, we should make it fun. Visual elements should be predominant. It should be full of activities that will help students develop in four skill areas" (T1).

"Students of this age can learn better by playing and having fun. Therefore, books and materials should have an entertaining rather than an educational effect on students. There should be contemporary activities as well as visual elements, and they should be integrated with technologies such as computers and the internet. Songs and games make students of this age more active, enabling them to learn the lesson better while having fun. It is an important criterion for me that students learn by having fun" (T9).

"We are in an electronic age and students are conscious of everything. Technological materials should be available. We can show them videos on the internet and we can also benefit from the resources on the internet. Thus, we can set a good example for them to do the same when they

go online. Colorful stimulants attract the attention of primary school students, so visuality is important. I prefer materials that are suitable for the development of students in different types of skills, and that involve students in the lesson in accordance with the technology required by the age” (T11).

“It should be visually rich and full of activities. I make sure that it is up-to-date and interesting, useful and suitable for technologies such as smart boards. Learning while entertaining is more effective in children at this age, so there should be age-appropriate games” (T13).

“Visual objects should be predominant. The materials should be prepared in a way that will make the child active in the lesson. Books and materials should be compatible with the content of the course and should facilitate learning” (T15).

As seen in the statements above, it is seen that the course materials should have visual richness, technological compatibility, and the ability to entertain students while teaching. Primary school students coincide with the concrete operational period from the developmental stages of Piaget's cognitive development theory due to their age. Considering the developmental characteristics of children aged 7-11, in this period, children can learn through concrete experiences and concrete examples (Yüksel, 2015). Children in this period cannot be expected to understand abstract concepts such as idioms (Özdemir, Özdemir, Kadak, & Nasıroğlu, 2012). It is seen that primary school English language teachers' preference for visual richness and entertaining materials is compatible with the characteristics of the developmental periods revealed by Piaget.

The views of 17 secondary school English language teachers participating in the study were analyzed and the results of the analysis are given in the table below.

Table 3. Secondary School English Language Teachers' Criteria for Course Materials

Teachers' Opinions	Participant Codes	f
Visual richness,	T16, T17, T20, T21, T23, T25, T26, T28, T29, T30, T31, T32	12
Age appropriateness,	T16, T17, T19, T23, T24, T27, T28, T29, T32	9
Being funny,	T17, T19, T22, T24, T29, T31	6
Level appropriateness	T16, T17, T19, T23, T24, T27	6
Adequate practice and explanation,	T20, T24, T26, T27, T32,	5
Pedagogical,	T16, T18, T23, T26, T29	5
Activating the students,	T23, T24, T27, T28, T31	5
Concrete examples,	T16 T17, T18, T28, T30	5
Compatibility with technology,	T20, T23, T25, T27, T31	5
Developing four skills	T19, T21, T22, T29	4
Attention taking,	T17, T23, T29	4
Being up to date,	T19, T22, T32	3
Conformity to environment and culture,	T22, T26, T30	3
Authenticity,	T17, T29	2
Appropriate for different types of intelligence,	T17	1

According to Table 3, it is seen that secondary school teachers pay the most attention to "visual richness" (f=12). Many participants (f=9) stated that "age appropriateness" of materials should be the second important criterion. In addition, it is observed from the table that English language teachers working in secondary schools teach the materials by entertaining the students with level appropriate materials. Moreover, materials should include sufficient exercises, and they must be pedagogical. Some statements of the participants are given below:

“It should be appropriate for their age and level. Primary and secondary school students' books should consist of more concrete examples, and should consist of activities equipped with visuals rather than knowledge-based subjects. In high school groups, materials may be more

knowledge-based. Textbooks should be prepared by the users of the target language (native speakers)” (T16).

“Materials should be appropriate for the age and level of the students. Materials should be chosen from concrete to abstract and should be like this in the examples in the textbooks. It should be equipped with activities that can attract the attention of the student, its visuality should be rich and it should be suitable for the student's intelligence types. Books in accordance with the criteria of educational sciences and pedagogy should be prepared” (T17).

“Textbooks directly affect a whole year and the success of children. There should be sufficient exercise and content explanation. It should contain current topics. It will be more interesting if it touches the interests of the age levels. It will be more learnable” (T19).

“Materials should be illustrative enough, colorful and not boring. There should be books to learn while having fun. Language in daily life should be suitable for use. I cannot use materials other than textbooks. From time to time, I teach on the computer. An effective material in teaching vocabulary is also flash cards. Technological materials can also be more attractive” (T29).

When the above statements were examined, materials used in foreign language teaching should be suitable for the ages and language levels of the students, and concrete examples are important for primary and secondary school students. It is stated that colorful materials are preferred more in materials where visuality is emphasized first. Additionally, materials that allow students to learn while having fun, having activities suitable for their age, containing plenty of practice and especially compatible with technology are preferred. Clearly, technology-based classroom environments such as the innovations made in the field of educational technologies and the Fatih Project also affect the preferences of teachers. According to Piaget, middle school age coincides with the developmental period when students transition to abstract learning. In the abstract learning period, which continues throughout adulthood from the age of 11, students can think abstractly, understand assumptions, and develop their ability to think about their thoughts. During this period, students can determine their own ideals and make comparisons. One of the important features of students in this age group is the development of the ability to find realistic solutions to problems (Mert, 2007; Özdemir et al., 2012).

The data obtained from the answers given by English teachers working at high school level to the question about how the course materials should be, are analyzed and summarized in the table below.

Table 4. High school English language teachers' criteria for course materials

Teachers' Opinions	Participant Codes	f
Visual richness,	T34, T35,T37, T39, T42, T43, T44, T46, T47, T48,T49,T50,T51	13
Compatible with technology,	T36, T37, T38, T39, T42, T44, T45,T46, T48, T50,T51	11
Age suitability,	T34, T35, T40, T43, T44, T45,T47, T48,T49,T50	10
Attention evoking,	T34, T35, T39, T40, T45, T47, T50, T51	8
Being funny,	T34, T37, T43, T46, T47,T48,T49	7
Enormous practice and activity,	T41, T43, T44, T45, T46, T47,T49	7
Focusing interaction and communication,	T37, T38, T40, T46, T49, T51	6
Developing language skills,	T37, T38, T39, T45, T47, T48	6
Compatible with level,	T35, T44,T45, T50,T51	5
Authentic,	T36, T43,T47,T48	4
Student centered,	T40, T44, T48,T51	4
Simple and plain,	T33, T42, T45, T47	4
Including games,	T37, T43, T47, T48	4
In line with student abilities,	T35,T40, T50	3
Made them love the lesson,	T33, T49	2
Easy to understand,	T33, T47	2

Cheap,	T41, T47	2
Portability,	T41, T51	2
Up to date,	T43, T48	2

When Table 4 is examined, participants primarily stated that there should be visual richness in the materials. The idea coded as visual richness is that the materials should include colorful drawings and pictures. The materials such as books with lots of pictures, presentations and flashcards attract students' attention more. The second important feature of English language teachers working at high school level is that the materials should be compatible with technology.

As stated by the participant T36, technology provides many conveniences to teachers. Apparently the Covid-19 pandemic, which has shaken the world in recent years, has made teachers more sensitive about technology compatibility, especially in materials. In particular, teaching students with audio and video materials in a foreign language can transform the classroom into a more modern environment than in a classical learning environment and enable students to overcome their negative attitude towards language learning. High school teachers also state that the materials should be interesting and appropriate for the age of the students. The opinions of some high school English language teachers regarding material selection are given below:

“Materials depend on age, but they should be visual and auditory. materials should appeal to all the senses. They should have topics and activities that will attract the attention of students. Also they should be entertaining while teaching” (T34).

“We are not asked to choose the textbooks, but the books should be visually rich. The students are more interested in colorful shapes, pictures and activities rather than information. In the selection of materials, I make sure that it is suitable for the level of the student and that it minimizes individual differences. I also consider the abilities and interests of my students in the materials I use” (T35).

“Materials should be technologically based; It should be compatible with smart boards. The use of technology can prevent many materials that we need to carry to the classroom, and it motivates students more in terms of both visuality and participation in the lesson. There were times when we brought a tape player to the students to listen to English songs. We had problems while taking the colored pictures we had prepared beforehand to school. Thanks to technology, we can share these colorful, moving audio images with our students more easily. The books and materials we use should cover British culture. The child should see the benefits of using English. Language awareness should be created” (T36).

“Visuality is very important. With the materials used, the lesson should be in a festive mood. Books must contain games. It should be compatible with the smart board and should be suitable for reading and listening activities” (T37).

“We are in the electronic age. It should be in line with the technology. It should include exercises based on interaction and communication. It should be possible to transfer the books to electronic media” (T38).

“It should hold all the language skills together. It should be up to date with technology. Listening and reading exercises should be included. Due to the exam system, it should also be test-oriented. It should be remarkable in terms of visuality” (S39).

“Books and materials should be interactive. In other words, it should be prepared in a way that puts the student in the center. Subject headings should be prepared according to the interests of student age groups. Vocabulary and grammar must have circulation. The teacher should not give the subject and then forget it. Repetition is important” (T40).

“I look for the material I will use in material selection to be economical, portable and appealing to every student. We don't have much choice in books. We use the books sent to us. When I

choose books as an additional source, I check whether there are plenty of exercises to reinforce the information we teach” (T41).

“Coursebooks should of course contain information, but if the books are as colorful as possible, the student will not avoid the book. I teach simplified story books as material. I want them to read the movie from the books they have seen. This will make it easier for them to understand. I use audio cassettes and CDs in the classroom. I make them watch videos” (S42).

“Materials should be suitable for the level of the student. The contents of the book should be full. It should be visually rich and equipped with exercises that make the student active. Compliance with technology is also very important. It is our preference for technology-based education to reinforce the lessons taught with a computer projector or smart board” (T44).

The fact that generally colorful materials used in foreign language teaching are important in terms of breaking the prejudice of “learning a language is difficult” existing in Turkish students and society. It provides an advantage for learners with multiple intelligences and different learning styles, which attracts more attention of students with lot of pictures and less text. Although it seems possible for high school students to learn an expression or word given in a foreign language abstractly, it shows that the visuality of the permanence materials created by experiencing with more senses is important in terms of permanence of what is learned in language teaching. Considering the interests of high school learners and their level in language, it is necessary to use more foreign language materials such as videos and movies, where issues such as pronunciation become important focus and the use of language in real life is more possible. For this reason, technology compatible materials make it easier for students to reach visuals related to the use of language and help teachers to embody what has been learned.

English Language Teachers' Textbook Selection Criteria

The English language teachers who participated in the study were asked what they paid attention to when choosing a textbook. The answers given by the participants were analyzed and the themes and codes were created and turned into a table. In order to compare the views of the participants working at different school levels according to the levels, the opinions of all the participants were tried to be given on a single table.

Table 5. Textbook Selection Criteria of Primary, Secondary and High School English Language Teachers

Teachers' Opinions	PRIMARY SCHOOL (f=15)	SECONDARY SCHOOL (f=17)	HIGH SCHOOL (f=19)
Visuality (color),	15	16	13
Age-appropriate content,	14	9	
Having fun,	13	X	4
In line with the objectives of the course,	12	X	5
Adaptable to the smart board,	11	10	X
Price	10	11	9
Level-appropriate content,	10	15	
The way the topics explained,	X	X	18
Attention taking activities,	9	9	X
Making love the language	8	5	
Comments,	8	8	7
Game and song activities,	7	4	X
Teaching by doing	7	X	X
With Turkish explanations,	6	7	X
Activating students,	5	X	X

Having a lot of exercises,	3	8	15
Having additional materials,	2	X	X
Developing skills.	1	2	17
Order of topics	12	X	11
Interesting texts	X	X	14
Understandable examples	X	X	6
Conformity to culture	X	X	4
In line with our values	X	X	3
Activities making talk,	X	X	2
Preparing to exams.	X	X	2

In Table 5 the criteria that primary, secondary and high school English language teachers consider when choosing books are given. It is seen that all of the English language teachers working at the primary school level (f=15) in this table, in which all three school levels are included in the same table for comparison purposes, stated that *visuality* is important in textbooks. The second opinion in the table is *"age-appropriate content"* (f=14). The other important opinions are *teaching while having fun*, *being compatible with the smart board*, *having an affordable price*, *being suitable for the level of the students*, *including interesting activities that will make students love the language*, and *positive comments by the previous users*.

In the second part of Table 5, the opinions of secondary school English language teachers are given. First criterion in the table is *"visuality"* (f=16). Like primary school teachers, secondary school teachers also think that books should be colorful and illustrated. The second important criterion of secondary school English language teachers is *having "relevant content"* (f=15), and the third is *being "appropriate to the level"* (f=14). The other important opinions are listed as *"the order of the topics*, *price*, *being compatible with the smart board*, *age appropriateness*, *being interesting*, *positive comments*, *plenty of practice"*.

In the third part of Table 5, the criteria that high school English language teachers consider when choosing books are given. As seen in the table, 18 of the participants out of 19 consider *"the way the subjects are told"* as the most important criterion regarding the subject. It is important that the subject of the course is given in accordance with the level of the student, age and teaching techniques. Secondly, they state that books should *"develop language skills"* (f=17). The third important criterion suggested by most of the participants (f=15) is that the books must have *"various exercises"*. The table shows that high school English language teachers they also pay attention to *"interesting texts*, *visuality*, *the order of the topics*, *price*, *positive comments about the book*, *clear and various examples*, *being in line with the course objectives*, *compatible with technology*, and *entertaining" books*. The opinions of some teachers are quoted below:

"It should be appropriate for the age and level of the children. For example, foreign language is a very new concept for second- and third-year students, so we shouldn't show it as a lesson, we should make it fun. The materials we use should be colorful, flashy and interesting. Textbooks should be filled with activities that develop four skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking) for more advanced levels, rather than an inventory that explains the subject" (T1).

"Due to the age of our students, it is important to have books with colorful pictures and visuals that will attract their attention more. I try to teach primary school students, who are in the age of games, with funny games and activities. You have to teach while having fun. In addition, the subjects that we have to teach each semester, namely the course has some goals, it is very important that the books are suitable for the course objectives. Students are now intertwined with technology, there is a smart board in every classroom in our school. I expect the book we have chosen to have activities compatible with this technology. Maybe the price is important, but first of all, I think it should make people like the language" (T7).

“Children are just beginning to grasp what a foreign language is. Entertainment and visuality are important to them. Of course, there are some animations and cartoons that students watch at home in this age group. When choosing a textbook, I make sure that there are heroes familiar to the students. Also, the era of chalk is over. We have smart boards. It is important for me to have supporting materials that I can use with smart board. It can be boring to constantly load words to students. It is necessary to have more interesting animations and activities and use them on the smart board. In order for the course to reach its goals, students must love the course. It is very difficult for them to deal with the dictionary at this age and dictionaries create a separate cost too. That's why I'm in favor of Turkish annotated books. Plays and role-playing activities, in which students can get involved in the event and activate them physically, are good” (T13).

“Even in middle school, I see that the most important thing that attracts students' attention is pictures. I mean colorful fun, purposeful pictures. Long texts with a lot of text, especially in English, can be boring. The content should be in line with the objectives of the course and should be given to the students in the order they can be taught. So it is necessary to proceed from easy to difficult. I also pay attention to the price. At least, the book should worth the money. I don't want to explain language rules to students like math. That's why sometimes I like to practice using the smart board. It helps in taking the attention of the students. I turn on music, we can watch cartoons in English, they like it” (T23).

“I think the books are important, of course, students look at the book before the lesson and have an idea about the topic of the course. I think people don't like math because of the books. Visuality is important in new generation books. Of course, it should be compatible with technology. I try to choose books that are suitable for the age and level of the student and can help them improve their language skills” (T29).

“Language is speaking, reading, writing. Language learners are expected to do these things. The books should be suitable for developing them. Students develop better with books with interesting texts, visual pictures and graphics with plenty of examples. It takes a lot of practice. The book is not enough, sometimes I open exercises on the internet and have them done. Now it is possible to do good things with the internet and technology. The books can be compatible with technology” (T38).

“Students can learn the language more consciously in high school. For this reason, lectures are very important, the student should be able to work and learn individually. It is necessary to look have a lot of exercises that will improve students' skills such as reading and speaking. Of course, it is important that the texts are interesting and that the books have an appeal. Subjects should not be given randomly. The easiest way while choosing a book is looking at the comments about the book. I'm trying to understand how those books are from the comments. I look for the book and the reviews on the internet, it usually gives an idea. If there are sample books, I examine them, if they say that they are compatible with the subjects we will teach in the lesson, and that they are compatible with technology which adds a different richness, I choose that book” (T41).

The participants statements above also support Table 5. Below the opinions of teachers at different levels are compared.

Comparison of Primary, Secondary and High School English Language Teachers' Views on Book Selection

The following comparison table, based on the opinions of the participants, is made to embody the similarities and differences of primary, secondary and high school teachers about book selection.

Table 6. Comparison of Criteria of Primary, Secondary and High School English Language Teachers on Book Selection

Primary School (15)	Secondary School (17)	High School(19)
Visuality (Color)	Visuality,	The way the topics are explained
Age-appropriate content	Relevance of its content	Developing skills
Teaching while having fun	Level eligibility	Various exercises,
In line with the objectives of the course,	Order of topics	interesting texts,
Compatible with smart board,	Price	Visuality,
Price,	Compatible with smart board,	The order of the topics,
Level-appropriate content,	age appropriateness	Price,
Interesting,	Interesting	Comments,
making love the language,	Comments	Clear, plenty examples,
Comments,	lots of practice	Compliance with course objectives,
Game and song activities,	Turkish annotated	Compatible with technology,
teaching by doing,	loving the language	Funny,
Turkish explanation,	Game and song activities,	Conformity to our culture,
Activating students,	Developing skills	In line with our own values,

When Table 6 is examined, it is noticeable that the views of primary and secondary school teachers are more similar to each other. The first two criteria, “visuality and relevant content”, are included in the table with the same priority for the primary and secondary school English language teachers. Moreover, the opinions about the compatibility and price of the books with the smart board are in the same order in both participant groups. It is observed that the biggest difference is between high school English language teachers’ ideas and primary-secondary school teachers. Despite the opinions of primary and secondary school teachers, whose visuality ranks first, high school teachers emphasized the importance of visuality in the fifth rank. High school English language teachers prefer to have activities that improve the way the topics explained and developing language skills more than primary and secondary school teachers. The abundance and variety of exercises and the inclusion of interesting reading passages are other important features sought in high school textbooks, while it is seen that primary and secondary school English language teachers did not mention these topics.

These differences in the selection of books for primary, secondary and high school students can be explained by the fact that the development of primary and secondary level students is very different from that of high school students. That is, high school students can be described as a group with developed abstract learning abilities, who can learn individually, and who need to use the language in real life. Since primary and secondary school students are still in the concrete learning period, visuals, pictures, games, fun activities that embody language are considered more important for them.

Discussion and Conclusion

Teachers take courses such as Developmental Psychology, Educational Psychology, Introduction to Education, and Material Development as a requirement of their professional education, not only to get information about the quality of the materials they can use in the teaching of their field, but also to receive training on subjects such as psychology and developmental stages in which students can be found according to their levels. Many scientists, such as Piaget, have revealed that there are different developmental periods from the primary school age when formal education begins to the end of high school education. Tables 2, 3 and 4 show that there are some similarities and differences between the views of primary, secondary and high school teachers participating in the study on material selection.

Most valued similarity is the view that the materials should have "visual richness". Considering the psychological effect of the attractiveness of the materials in foreign language teaching, the opinion that colored materials will push students to have more positive thoughts is also supported by most researchers. Çalışkan and Kılıç (2014: 69) stated that colors "affect people physiologically and psychologically". Kılıç (20011: 123) stated that the importance of visual stimuli in textbooks and materials has increased with the developing technology. When it comes to visuality, only colorful pictures should not come to mind. Visuality includes all kinds of visual elements such as shapes and graphics that are used and should be used as an important part of the design of course materials, and the way they are used in the material.

Educational materials make it easier for students to learn by engaging them. It helps students consolidate knowledge. Materials have an important role in the realization of permanent learning. As Kuşçu (2017) states, they are important in developing a collaborative environment in language learning. Students' interests, language levels and ages are important factors to be considered in the preparation of visual and auditory tools. Course materials have an important effect on teachers' concretization of the subjects and students' understanding of the subjects.

Our age is the age of technology. The importance of the compatibility of course materials with technology has increased even more since 2020, when the Covid-19 epidemic we are still in, has started. Efforts to make non-technological materials suitable for technology as soon as possible increased exponentially in this period. The fact that students have to continue their education with the distance education method has revealed how important technological compatibility is. Technology not only provides for necessities, but also provides important conveniences in terms of affordability, storability, reusability of materials, creating and using materials suitable for many learning styles and intelligence types.

It is also important for students to have fun while learning a foreign language and to maintain their positive attitudes towards language learning. A learning method in which the task of monotonous and constant loading of new information, memorizing it, and learning and coming to school falls on the shoulders of the students will lead to boredom in the students after a while and will make them evaluate language learning as a difficult and boring activity. It is very difficult to break down negative attitudes that may occur in students at an early age. Just as correcting fossilized mistakes requires more practice and attention, changing a negative attitude will also require special attention and patience. Learning while having fun will keep students positive all the time, and it also enables them to develop many behaviors without realizing it.

Both physiological and psychological development of students are important features that should be considered for learning. While the learning styles of students in different age groups can change, it is accepted that there is a development from concrete to abstract. Academic narrative method in language teaching at primary school level will therefore fail. At these ages when students will need more concrete examples, the quality of the materials may be even more important. However, it is observed that academic and abstract learning skills have improved for secondary school and beyond. Age gives an idea to those who prepare materials about the psychological development processes of students and what kind of stimuli they need. For this reason, paying attention to the age of the students in the selection of materials, and the development of the course materials by considering the features that the students can bring to the learning environment due to their age can be effective in the creation of more educational materials.

Using authentic materials cannot be appropriate for all school levels. It would be useful to clarify the concept of authentic material, which is mostly expressed by the participants working in secondary and high schools. Temizyürek and Birici (2016: 54) define authentic materials as "materials that are prepared for the use of target language speakers in their daily lives and do not have any pedagogical features". Although it is a very difficult and laborious process to use such materials that do not have any pedagogical background or to select and adapt them according to the objectives of the course, it is

important for students to show how the language is used in real life. It is seen that primary school teachers do not give an opinion on the use of authentic material because it is very difficult to find authentic material suitable for their level that primary school students can understand. However, authentic materials suitable for the level of students at secondary and high school levels can be used.

According to the findings obtained from this study, in which the opinions of English language teachers working at different school levels on course materials were determined, it is seen that teachers agree on the importance of visuality in course materials. Although the criteria to be considered in the adaptation of course materials and the selection of materials prepared for foreign language teaching produced with commercial concerns, although they are given as a part of the pedagogical formation training of teachers, what is written in the books and what is expected from a material in practice can be different. The mastery of individual differences in the use of materials and their ability to use the same material in different ways for different purposes are as important as the individual differences of the students.

When language teaching is seen as an activity based on memorizing abstract concepts, foreign language teaching will result in failure, when grammar rules are started to be explained with formulas like teaching mathematical formulas, they will be confused and after a while, students will develop a negative attitude. Enriching the materials used in language teaching with visual elements, having the advantages of technology, being suitable for the age and level of the students, and being able to teach with fun appear as important features that an effective language teaching material should have. Otherwise, when English lessons are reflected as a lesson in which thousands of words and grammar rules are memorized, a much more challenging process will begin for the students and the teachers. It is a fact that attitudes shape our lives not only in language learning but also in many areas of life. It shouldn't be surprising, therefore, that you fail at many things in which you have a negative attitude. Just as your negative attitude towards dancing leads to your failure, the negative attitude that may develop towards language learning results in your inability to learn the language. For this reason, English teachers should be careful in the selection of the materials they use in language teaching and aim to develop and maintain a positive attitude in the students.

Teachers who are adequately equipped for development and learning should choose materials or develop their own materials, considering the age, gender, interests and needs of students in material selection. The findings of this study are also supported by the literature (Çalışkan & Kılıç, 2014; Kuşçu, 2017; Temizyürek & Biri, 2016).

Suggestions

1. In Turkey, especially in public schools, the books are given to the teachers and they are asked to continue their educational activities. Teachers have little role in changing or adapting materials. Teachers are expected to adhere strictly to the curriculum by using the books and materials provided. This can make teaching activities a monotonous task. Teachers are often forced to teach with materials or books that they know will not be useful to students. As a result, lessons with low motivated teachers and students will negatively affect language learning. The solution will be for teachers who can best follow the language development, psychology, and intellectual needs and requirements of students, to make their own choices in material development and selection.
2. It can also be suggested as a pedagogically more understandable and expressive method for teachers to determine the course materials, textbooks and auxiliary resources, taking into account the needs of their students, the objectives of the course, in line with the goals set by the Ministry of National Education, taking into account the individual differences of the students.
3. Not only the universal suggestions about course book and materials selection, but also the national needs, culture and values of our own students should be considered as a criteria to while choosing course materials and textbooks.

Ethical considerations

Prior to the study, written consent was obtained from the Gaziosmanpasa University Social and Humanity Studies Committee with Meeting decision number 11.18 on 21.05. 2021 and Protocol Number: E-33490967-044-41105

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