

# **Instructional Materials Commonly Employed by Foreign Language Teachers at Elementary Schools\***

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## **Abstract**

This study aimed to determine the teachers' choices of instructional materials in teaching English at elementary schools. The reasons behind preferring or not preferring some certain instructional materials specified within the research were analysed. To this end, during the course of School Experience, 68 prospective English teachers observed 38 teachers of English working at 14 elementary schools on a weekly basis, and they completed a questionnaire. A semi-structured interview was also conducted with five randomly selected teachers to identify their reasons for choosing certain instructional materials. The descriptive results revealed that most of the teachers were reluctant to use many of the highly beneficial materials due to reasons including overcrowded classes, limited technological knowledge, lack of time for preparation, curricular time constraints, heavy work load, burnout etc. The study suggests that apart from course-books teachers should be encouraged to use other instructional materials to motivate learners and offer an interactive foreign language teaching atmosphere.

**Keywords:** Instructional materials, Elementary schools, Teachers, Language teaching, Technology.

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## **Introduction**

Changes in learning styles of students and types of instructional materials available have put a great amount of pressure on the teachers, who inevitably need to keep up with the innovative techniques in technology and teaching methods. It is a fact that teaching, which is admittedly a long and hard process, is primarily composed of five components: students, teachers, instructional materials, teaching methods, and evaluation (Kitao & Kitao, 1997). Of these components, instructional materials in foreign language teaching can refer to a variety of things. They can be defined as any tool that teachers use to assist their students in adequately learning the target language; means used to increase students' access to that language; every instrument that contributes greatly to students' progress; anything which

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is used by teachers and learners to facilitate the learning; and the keys to have influence on what goes on in the classroom, just to list a few (Brown, 1995; Crawford, 2002; Jones, 2009; Littlejohn, 2012; McDonough, Shaw & Mashura, 2013; Richards, 2010; Tomlinson, 2008).

As regards the use of instructional materials to foster foreign language learning, foreign language teachers tend to employ them at the right time and in the right proportion. Offering a myriad of benefits to both teachers and learners in teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) context, a variety of instructional materials need to be included in the agendas of teachers. Research proves that instructional materials highly facilitate learning and greatly draw learners' attention to the target language (Littlejohn, 2012; McDonough, Shaw & Mashura, 2013; Solak & Çakır, 2015; Tomlinson, 2012). Simply put, they have a considerable influence on foreign language learners and they play an extremely influential role in the EFL classes. To support this view, Richards (2001) asserts that instructional materials generally serve as the basis of much of the language input that learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom. Thus, it is suggested that instructional materials need to be motivating and interesting. According to Chomsky (1988), 99% of teaching is making the students feel interested in the material. To make the materials more interesting for foreign language learners, teachers should seek to find and present alternative techniques. In this sense, the present study with its findings and suggestions aims to contribute to the professional development of the teachers and preservice teachers so that they can be more effective and well equipped in teaching the target language.

#### *Significance of the study*

This study intends to shed light on the issue of professional and qualified language teachers' need to be able to use instructional materials properly. Investigating this issue is important for teachers currently working at schools and student teachers who will take active roles in the classes in coming years. Additionally, it can be asserted that this study is significant in that there is not much research exploring the instructional material preferences of English language teachers at elementary schools in Turkey.

#### *Review of literature*

The essence of the current century brings about an overwhelming amount of information which involves using efficient mechanisms to ameliorate learning and teaching activities (Kuzu, Akbulut & Şahin, 2007). In this respect, as mentioned above, it is worth stressing that instructional materials play a crucial role in any EFL setting. Before explaining its role in language teaching settings, it would be wise to clarify the types of materials that are commonly utilized by teachers and learners. Tok (2010) categorizes these instructional materials into two groups: printed ones such as course-books, workbooks, teacher's guides etc.; and non-printed ones such as computer-based materials, videos etc. Correspondingly, Tomlinson (2012) classifies the language teaching materials in terms of instructional purposes as follows: informative (informing the learning about the target language); instructional (guiding the learner in practicing the language); experiential (providing the learner with experience of the language in use); eliciting (encouraging the learner to use the language); and exploratory (helping the learner to make discoveries about the language). In other words, instructional materials in an EFL context have an indispensable role as they facilitate language learning (Tomlinson, 2008), draw learners' attention, motivate learners towards foreign language learning, provide comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) and authentic language (Lee, 1995), make learning more concrete and more meaningful, and guide the learner in practicing the language.

From a general perspective, instructional materials can be categorized in three groups: (1) Traditional materials; (2) audio and visual materials; and (3) information communication technologies (ICT) based materials. Traditional materials that can be regarded as classic or old usually include board, course-book, worksheet, chart, realia, flashcard, teacher made materials, etc. As for audio and visual materials, which are regarded as new for many teachers, are video player, audio materials, video camera, computer, projection device, and so on. The third category for the instructional materials, widely acknowledged as the newest, is ICT based materials such as Interactive White Boards (IWB), materials providing mobile assisted language learning (MALL) such as Web 2.0, tablet computers, the internet, podcasts, smartphone, Web 3.0 etc.

Of all the materials listed above, particularly, course-books are the only materials that most of the foreign language teachers use in the EFL classrooms, and they are automatically expected to include all aspects of language (Çakır, 2010). Course-books play a pivotal role in language classrooms in all types of educational institutions – state schools, colleges, language schools – all over the world (Rahimpour & Hashemi, 2011). Sheldon (1988) regards the course-book as the visible heart of any ELT program and she puts forth a number of reasons to justify the widespread use of course-books in the teaching of English as a foreign or second language throughout the world. They are the universal elements of language teaching (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994) for many teachers as they have ready-made materials and syllabi designed by the specialist in the field. In Cunningsworths' (1995) words, "course-books provide a resource, a source of activities, a reference, a syllabus, a great support for inexperienced teachers, and serve as a source for self-directed learning or self-access work" (p.7).

The other issue that should be focused on regarding the use of course-books in English language teaching (ELT) is its role in raising learner's motivation. In attempt to figure out whether there is a positive relationship between the course-book and language learning, Rahimi and Hassani (2012) conducted a study on Iranian foreign language learners. The result revealed that there was a positive relationship between Iranian students' positive attitudes towards EFL course-books and their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language. On the other hand, Richards and Renandya (2002) claim that many of the course-books as preplanned teaching materials have some possible following disadvantages (as cited in Kayapınar, 2009): (a) They fail to present appropriate and realistic language models; (b) They propose subordinate learner roles; (c) They fail to contextualize language activities; (d) They foster inadequate cultural understanding; (e) They fail to teach idioms. In consistent with this claim, Tsiplakides (2011) believes that among the main negative effects of the use of course-books is that they may contain inauthentic language, may distort content, may not satisfy students' needs, and may be expensive to buy. Educationally speaking, course-books are not a magical tool, and they have both advantages and disadvantages for EFL learners and teachers.

It is widely accepted that presenting the target language only through ready-made printed materials does not always contribute to comprehensive and meaningful understanding. Thus, apart from the course-books or textual materials, teaching should also be supported by other visual materials such as pictures, flashcards, posters, tables, charts, etc. In this context, Mayer (2009) claims that visual materials play an important role in assisting instruction in order to clarify, define and explain the related teaching point. Therefore, it is safe to say that in order to create a meaningful learning atmosphere and to offer a comprehensible input, word and pictures need to be presented simultaneously. In this way, learners have a chance to construct both verbal and pictorial mental schemas and build connections between them (as cited in Kuzu, Akbulut & Şahin, 2007). Furthermore, words and visual aids brighten up the classroom and bring more

variety and interest into language lessons, as well as help to provide the contexts which illuminates the meaning of utterances, and helps in giving information of one kind or another about life in the foreign country concerned (Lee & Coppen, 1971). The other contribution of visual materials to language learning is that they assist teachers by giving them time for necessary classroom activities like drills, exercises, instructions and explanation (Abebe & Davidson, 2012).

It is true that with the rapid advancements in technology, new facilities and devices such as ICT based materials have been brought into the EFL classroom. New trends in teaching are increasingly technologically interactive, which precedes the instructional materials at the service of learners and teachers. In this digital age, particularly foreign language teachers must cope with new challenges, responsibilities, and duties. As ShamyLee and Phill (2012) agree, the tradition of English teaching has been drastically changed with the entry of technologies. In this respect, language teachers cannot disassociate themselves from new technology, which allows for the application of scientific knowledge to practical tasks (Çakır, 2006). In other words, technology satisfies both auditory and visual senses of the students in learning environments (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012). It is undoubtedly true that audio-visual materials offer paramount effects on understanding of both written and spoken language. Some of the basic audio-visual aids that are frequently used in foreign language teaching include audio books, mp3, sound files, podcasts, the Internet, CDs, songs, videos, etc. Ali, Ghani and Ali (2010) maintain that the history of the audio-visual aids can be traced back to the Greek Period, however, the technological advancements have brought new innovations in the form of computer assisted programs and accessories. That is to say, technology is seen that it is not a new issue concerning only modern teachers. This long history also explains the effectiveness of audio-visual materials (Rao & Jyoti, 2012).

Foreign language teaching, in particular English language instruction has been conducted with primarily the most available instructional materials, such as course-books, flashcards, audio recordings, video etc., despite their countless benefits, instructional materials have not been utilized properly to assist language learning. In many cases, unfortunately, it can be observed that a great amount of teachers resist using innovative materials due to limited knowledge and time. However, it is widely accepted that a single extracurricular material or activity brings a wide variety into the classroom. In this regard, it would be wise to cite the famous Chinese proverb "A picture is worth a thousand words", which clearly and simply explains the function of a single material to clarify the meaning of something better. Therefore, it is essential for foreign language teachers to utilize a variety of instructional materials so that language teaching can turn out to be fun and motivating for learners.

The study reported here aimed to identify the types of the instructional materials that were employed or overlooked by the foreign language teachers. To this end, the following research questions were formulated to guide the present study:

1. What kinds of instructional materials do foreign language teachers use at elementary schools?
2. What are the possible reasons for utilizing certain instructional materials in the EFL classrooms?

## **Method**

### *Participants*

Participants included 38 teachers of English working at elementary schools in Kayseri, Turkey and they were informed about the observations to be conducted. The age range of

the participants was 24-48 with an average age of 30.97 and standard deviation is 4.783. There were 25 male and 13 female participants with the average working experience of 7.73 years. They were observed by 68 students majoring in English language teaching at a state university. The student teachers, who were selected randomly on a voluntary basis, were assigned to take notes of instructional materials specified in the questionnaire that the participants used to promote teaching English. The student teachers were all fourth-year students and had a compulsory training program in which they were required to complete the related procedure of school observation. That is, they attended the related schools and observed the participants in fulfilment of the requirements of their course of School Observation course. Apart from this course, the student teachers also took the course of Materials Development and Evaluation in Foreign Language Teaching, in which all kinds of instructional materials were introduced and evaluated.

#### *Research instrument*

In order to gather data about the types of instructional materials used to teach English, a questionnaire was designed by the researcher. In the development phase of the survey, the instrument was forwarded to four faculty members and an outside expert in the same field. Upon receiving the positive feedback, the survey was first piloted with ten prospective ELT teachers in order to determine whether or not the content of the questions were valid. The comments taken during this process were considered in redesigning some of the items in the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of Likert-type questions using a three-point scale seeking the frequency of the usage of 15 instructional materials that language teachers are supposed to use in EFL classrooms. It was assumed that in order to motivate and draw learners' attention teachers should vary the types of materials used.

#### *Data analysis*

To conduct this descriptive study, the questionnaire was distributed to 68 ELT department students. They were asked to evaluate 38 teachers that they had been observing two times a week for three months. They were requested to evaluate objectively and choose the correct usage frequency of materials by teachers. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed through SPSS 17 program using descriptive statistics and frequencies. The researcher also interviewed with five randomly selected teachers during and at the end of the research to explore the reasons behind employing or not employing the instructional materials specified in the research instrument. The questions in the interview were spontaneous to cross-check the data in the questionnaire.

#### *Findings*

The aforementioned survey included 15 instructional materials that might be utilized in EFL classes by foreign language teachers. The findings of this study were analysed in four groups. Materials were classified with regard to their functions in teaching process, such as: main sources, visual aids, audio-visual aids, technological aids, and other materials. The items associated with the main sources included course-books, workbooks, printed materials (worksheets, photocopies etc.), and board; the second category, visual aids, to investigate was composed of visual, audio, and audio-visual aids such as flashcards, pictures/posters, audio/recording materials (speakers, etc.), songs or podcasts, and videos and films. The third group of instructional materials under research was composed of information communication technologies (ICT), interactive white boards and projectors, and Internet based materials such as Dyned, Morpa Campus etc. The last part of the research instrument included the materials of real objects, authentic materials, and games.

**Table 1.** The percentage of the basic materials use

Instructional Materials		Always		Sometimes		Never	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
1	Course-book	35	92.1	3	7.9	0	0
2	Workbook	27	71.1	10	26.3	1	2.6
3	Printed Materials (Worksheets etc.)	13	34.2	22	57.9	3	7.9
4	Board	32	84.2	6	15.8	0	0

As can be estimated, the materials employed by the participants are those that can be easily available such as course-book, workbook, printed materials, and the board. The results revealed that participants in the study heavily depended on the printed materials listed in Table 1. It is clearly indicated above that almost all of the participants (*always*= 92.1% and *sometimes*= 7.9%) regarded course-books as the fundamental element of teaching. Thus, it is obvious that course-book remains as the main component of English teaching settings as every teacher in this study, without exception, uses it. In addition, almost all of the respondents (97.4%) stated that workbook would help them to practice the target language. Apart from the course-book and workbook, additional printed materials were also among the most frequently used ones by the participants to enhance classroom instruction. Being a traditional material, the board (*always*= 84.2%, *sometimes*= 15.8%) was the other most frequently employed material by the participants. Even if it seems to be a traditional or outdated material, it still serves as a useful tool in teaching settings for many classroom teachers.

*Reasons for too much reliance on the course-book and board*

In a semi-structured interview conducted with five teachers, the reasons for over-employing the course-book and board to assist teaching were investigated. In this respect, following questions were asked. “What are the advantages and disadvantages of course-books?”, “Why do you think many teachers are heavily dependent on course-books and boards to assist teaching the target language?”, “What makes you feel secure about using the course-book?”. It needs to be clarified here that due to the small sample size, the statements below cannot be overgeneralized for all the teachers of English working at elementary schools in Turkey. The following is a selection of representative interview quotes from teachers talking about their heavy reliance on the course-book and board:

- They are ready-made materials and everything is provided. (T1, T3, T4)
- When we have a course-book we feel more secure. (T2, T4, T5)
- We don’t have enough time to prepare extra materials.(T2, T3)
- They are enough to teach the target language. (T4, T5)
- We need to follow the syllabus set by Ministry of Education (MoE). (T1, T2, T3, T5)
- When we use extracurricular materials, students cannot follow them easily. (T3, T5)
- We feel that we need to write everything on the board. (T3, T4)
- Students are used to copying everything on their notebooks. (T2, T4)
- It is easier to explain the teaching point on the board. (T3, T5)
- Students do not learn when we don’t use the board. (T1, T4)
- When I don’t write the rules/sentences on the board, I feel something missing in my teaching. (T3, T5)

As is clearly seen course-book keeps its popularity in the eyes of the teachers. In this regard, Prodromou (1999) points out that teachers do not often introduce any extraneous material into the lesson as they regard the course-book as a holy book which is not tampered with or questioned. According to the quotes obtained from the participants, a general view is that students don't need to be offered other instructional materials when the course-books are accompanied with the board. Additionally, they think that these two close friends would be sufficient for both themselves and students as long as they are exploited properly.

**Table 2.** *The percentage of visual, audio, and audio-visual aids use*

<i>Instructional Materials</i>		<i>Always</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Never</i>	
		<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
5	Pictures /Posters	4	10.5	15	39.5	19	50
6	Flashcards	2	5.3	12	31.6	24	63.2
7	Audio/recording materials (speakers, etc.)	2	5.3	10	26.3	26	68.4
8	Songs/podcasts	4	10.5	9	23.7	25	65.8
9	Videos/films	3	7.9	12	31.6	23	60.5

Table 2 indicates that half of the participants (50%) prefer pictures/posters as visual aids to facilitate teaching. The reason why they are used more than others might be due to their availability. Despite their effectiveness and availability, it is seen that more than half of the participants (*never*= 63.2%) do not utilize flashcards as instructional materials. The other type of instructional materials that were investigated in this study were audio/recording materials. Research proves that listening materials have a great benefit for learners to acquire the target language as they provide linguistic and communicative input. However, the results indicate that 68.4% of the participants do not pay much attention to the use of audio/recording materials. This fact is also supported with the results obtained from other audio visual materials such as songs and podcasts (*never*= 65.8%) and videos and films. The percentage of those who never use video in their EFL classrooms is 60.5%. It seems that less than half of the participants (*always f*= 2, *sometimes f*= 10) are eager to use audio and recording materials as technological tools. However, the use of audio materials would always be beneficial for non-native speakers as such kinds of tools bring the real language into the classroom. The productive role of video and audio materials in EFL setting is undeniable. They enable learners to be exposed to the target language in its real context. It is not always possible for non-native English teachers to otherwise create realistic language-usage situations in the classroom. Furthermore, recording materials, when applied appropriately, can be used for multiple purposes such as listening to audio recordings, recording learners' own voices, conducting a podcast activity, listening to songs and podcasts etc. In other words, the use of podcasts as a new technology has huge potential in enhancing second language learners' listening and speaking skills (Jarvis, 2004; Stanley, 2005). In this study, the results show that the percentage of those who use audio/recording materials is very low (*always*= 5.3%, *never*= 68.4%). To maintain an enjoyable and attractive teaching atmosphere, songs, and more recently podcasts are regarded as two important materials that deserve to be utilized by teachers. Particularly the use of songs which are now available in many course-books delivered by the Ministry of National Education carries crucial importance in teaching some language patterns and chunks. Educationally speaking, young learners, even adults, enjoy learning through songs. However, this research proves that many of the teachers (*never*= 65.8%) are not particularly willing to make use of songs.

**Table 3.** Responses to the use information communication technologies (ICT)

<i>Instructional Materials</i>		<i>Always</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Never</i>	
		<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
10	Projector/Interactive White Board (IWB)	2	5.3	13	34.2	23	60.5
11	Internet based materials	1	2.6	18	47.4	19	50
12	Courseware programs (DynEd, Morpa Campus, etc.)	2	5.3	6	15.8	30	78.9

The data obtained from the class observations and semi-structured interviews demonstrate that teachers rarely use ICT materials. It was noticed that teachers were reluctant to use projection device and IWB although many schools had either projection device or IWB. According to the results, 60.5 % of the participants do not use it whereas only 5.3% of the participants adopt it for educational purposes. When it comes to Internet based materials, it is seen that half of the participants use them (*always*= 50%). The other type of instructional material that is freely offered to the use of students at state elementary schools is DynEd Courseware. Apart from DynEd, some other online e-course software programs such as Morpa Campus, Dahiders, etc. are also available for many foreign language teachers. As it is indicated in Table 3, most of the teachers (78.9%) do not use the freely offered courseware as a supplementary material for learners. On the other hand, when utilized appropriately, mobile assisted language learning (MALL) based materials entail myriad of benefits for foreign language learners in that they are fast, effective, flexible, authentic, personal, motivating, portable, and sometimes informal. Furthermore, as they are easy to use anytime and anywhere, the effective use of technology in and beyond the walls of the classroom would help learners gain autonomy.

**Table 4.** Responses to the use of other materials

<i>Instructional Materials</i>		<i>Always</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Never</i>	
		<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
13	Real objects	4	10.5	11	28.9	23	60.5
14	Authentic materials	1	2.6	10	26.3	27	71.1
15	Materials for games	5	13.1	18	47.4	15	39.5

The positive role of real objects and authentic materials in foreign language settings is undeniable and they should be utilized in every stage of language teaching. In this way, it would be possible for learners to study and acquire the target language meaningfully and communicatively, rather than through mechanical and rote learning. However, the results of this study demonstrate that such crucial materials are not employed as required. As shown in Table 4, while one third of the participants (28.9%) used authentic materials, the percentage increased to 38.9 % for real objects. On the other hand, 60.5% of the participants prefer games for instructional purposes in the classrooms, which supports the belief that the participants are aware of the benefits of games in elementary education. Thus, it is highly suggested by the researcher that young learners should be introduced to the target language by using concrete objects efficiently.

*Reasons for not employing instructional materials effectively*

To figure out the reasons for not using a range of instructional materials sufficiently and efficiently, five randomly selected teachers were requested to express their opinions. Therefore, the following spontaneous questions were asked to the interviewees. “Do you use additional materials in the class?”, “What sort of problems do you encounter when you use extra instructional materials?”, “What do you think about utilizing instructional materials in teaching English?”. Based on the results, the following statements clearly reveal that employing extracurricular activities and materials might bring extra workload



on many teachers. For that reason, they tend to avoid such efforts. Some of the prominent results that the teachers stated are listed as follows:

- We have to cover the content of the curriculum in a given period. (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5)
- My students don't understand when I use extra material. (T3, T4)
- Once I tried to use audio material, the class didn't react positively. They didn't understand and lost their motivation. (T2)
- I have too much workload. I can't spend much time on the use of materials. (T3, T4, T5)
- I have a course-book. I think that is enough for my class. (T2, T4, T5)
- Students need to learn grammar first. (T3)
- My students won't go abroad. So I don't need to focus on communicative activities that require additional materials. (T4)
- When I attempt to use an instructional material apart from the book, I need to prepare beforehand. However, the course-book entails all the activities for teaching English. (T1, T3, T4)
- It is not my way of teaching. It is not easy to get used to novelty. It takes time. (T1, T4)

The statements above clearly reveal that utilizing extracurricular instructional materials is not quite possible for the participants due to some factors. Possible factors include the content of the curriculum, time constraints, time allocated to the course, adapting the new materials etc. The participants also believe that a course-book itself would be efficient to cover the units. In general, it can be concluded that utilizing instructional materials apart from the course-book is not appreciated adequately by the participants.

## **Discussion**

The current study aimed to determine the types of instructional materials that the foreign language teachers employed to teach English in the state elementary schools in a city in the centre of Turkey. To do this, 38 teachers were observed for fourteen weeks in terms of the instructional materials they preferred to supplement their English teaching. In this descriptive study, five of the teachers who were observed were also interviewed during the term to validate the data and to explore their reasons for using or not using some of the materials. A general finding in this study is that most of the teachers are not so very willing to take part in teaching activities that require additional material, effort and time. When analysed carefully, it is possible to come across some factors such as burnout, not attending to professional development activities, limited technological knowledge, limited time to prepare and apply the related materials, workload, etc., one of the important factors that lead teachers to avoid implementing the innovative techniques and materials in the EFL classes would be to suffer from burnout (Cephe, 2010). For that reason, it is suggested that the teachers need to update themselves and their knowledge regularly in order to keep up with the innovations in the field. Depending on the results obtained in this study, it is highly suggested that teachers should participate in the conferences, workshops, symposiums and in-service training programs. To support this view, Akyel (1999) collected some data from the semi-structured interview with foreign language teachers to find out the reasons for not participating in the professional development activities. The results that she obtained are consistent with the findings of the present

study, including too much workload, low salary, not enough enthusiasm, administrative problems, etc., professionally speaking, it can be stated that foreign language teachers should attend professional development activities regularly in order not to lose their motivation and to stay up-to-date.

Based on the results in this study, it can also be stated that course-books still remain the indispensable teaching tool for many teachers. Sheldon (1988), Hutchinson and Torres (1994), and Richards (1990) believe that course-books lie at the heart of any English language teaching situation. Furthermore, they offer advantages for teachers and language students alike, and they constitute a useful resource for both teachers and learners. Moreover, they are irresistible tools in ELT contexts because, as indicated in this study, it is difficult for teachers themselves to create their own teaching materials. Not only for teachers, but also for students course-books are an unavoidable component of language instruction since their progress and achievement can be measured concretely when they are used in the English classroom (Haycraft, 1998; Hashemi, 2011). The interviewees in this study also generally stressed that course-books allowed them to guarantee a degree of consistency in the course taught by a number of different teachers.

Although the participants in this study seem to depend heavily on course-book and the board, it is clear that they have tendency to use some other audio visual materials to facilitate language learning in the classroom. Pictures (50%) and flashcards (36.8%) are two sorts of visual materials that the participants employ in the classroom. The percentage of the ones who always and sometimes use video in EFL classrooms is 39.5% with 5.3% use of audio recording materials, it can be concluded that the participants are not technologically friendly enough to cover the courses as required. On the other hand, it is a fact that use of audio-visual materials makes learning more long-lasting than the use of traditional textbooks (Craig & Amernic, 2006).

Findings in this study indicated that teachers, unfortunately to a great extent, tend to use the traditional instructional materials which do not require too much preparation for the teachers despite the existence of many other current instructional materials. One of the reasons for not utilizing some instructional materials in the class is that they are not always possible for the participants to reach. However, although many schools have either a projector device or an IWB and they offer a lot of advantages for language learners, the results (*never*= 60.5%) show that they are not adopted as required. The results of this study support the finding of Turel and Varol (2012) in that teachers are reluctant to use technology due to limited knowledge of technology.

Additionally, the results of the study prove that authentic materials, real objects and materials used for games aren't exploited efficiently. In order to expose learners to the target language in its real contexts authentic materials such as radio programs, magazines, news, songs, etc. need to be introduced to the learners. The result (28.9%) in this context is not satisfactory for the benefits of foreign language learners. As Brinton (1991) asserts, authentic materials and media bring the outside world into the classroom and thus students can build the direct relationship between the language classroom and the outside world. The number of those who prefer to use real objects is a lit bit higher (38.9%). In foreign language teaching contexts, real objects usually have a crucial role considering the fact that the more learners are exposed to concrete objects the faster they learn.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

This study sought to determine the types of instructional materials employed by foreign language teachers at elementary schools. Being a hard task for foreign language teachers, teaching should be supported with multiple instructional materials. To this end, teachers should also be well-prepared, well-qualified, and well-motivated. In the current century,

due to the rapid advancement of technology several technological devices have appeared to be utilized for the benefit of language teachers. Most of the learners, who are called as digital natives today (Prensky, 2001), expect to be provided with these instructional materials as well as the traditional ones. Therefore, the choice and appropriate use of instructional materials appropriately has a vital importance to increase the effectiveness of instruction.

These findings suggest that that it is necessary to refine the traditional foreign language teaching classrooms. To create an interactive and effective learning environment, learners should be provided with audio and video supported materials. If possible, learners should be able to access language learning materials easily, and also be able to communicate with their teachers and peers beyond the walls of the classroom. As for the teachers at elementary school, the use of technology needs to be encouraged and they should know how to integrate technology into the curriculum. It is crucial to know how to utilize materials at hand meaningfully and responsibly. The research proves that heavy reliance on the course-book does not lead the teachers to successful and satisfactory results. Rather, they need to consistently vary type of materials; use correct, natural, and current and standard English; and adapt and develop appropriate materials, both commercial and non-commercial, all the time.

It can be concluded that apart from the ready-made and printed materials, other instructional teaching materials, which are most likely to draw learners' attention, are also overlooked by many of the foreign language teachers. Even though most of the classrooms at the elementary schools are equipped with projection devices and IWBs, it is observed that some of the teachers remain reluctant to utilize them. It is safe to say that this study has highlighted the continuous importance of professional development of foreign language teachers through seminars, in-service training programs, conferences, and workshops. Thus, it is suggested that these development activities make it possible for teachers to gain personal growth, to familiarize themselves with innovative techniques in the field, to have professional enthusiasm, and to better exploit the materials at hand for the benefit of learners.

The present study has some limitations such as types of research methods (questionnaire, semi-structured interview), number of the participants ( $n= 68$ ), types of instructional materials researched (15 types), date of the research (2012 fall term), and analysis of the data (descriptive). Further study with more sampling groups using other research methods is therefore recommended. However, the present findings of this study may offer insights for educational administrations, decision and policy makers, and, of course, for many of the teachers of English working actively at schools today.



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