

Design and Implementation of an EFL Materials Evaluation Tool for Young Japanese Learners

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Abstract

With MEXT initiative to implement English as a core subject at the 4th and 5th grade of Elementary school and devoting approximately 8 hours per month in principle for 3rd and 4th graders has meant that students are learning at an earlier age (MEXT, 2014). In recent years, English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction in Japanese kindergartens and nursery schools has increased annually (MEXT, 2011). As a natural progression the need for appropriate Syllabus design and the importance of suitable material selection for young learners (YL) cannot be overlooked particularly as these issues are viewed as it is instrumental in promoting learner motivation (Hughes, 2014).

The present study investigated the design of a materials selection tool that may be used as an assessment tool for selection of potential commercial materials for the purpose of implementation in a Japanese Kindergarten setting for 5-6 year old EFL learners. The design, evaluation, and pilot test of a materials evaluation tool were provided as well as possible gaps in the evaluated material identified. In an effort to satisfy the criteria for the desired materials, a presentation of supplemental materials was provided. The tool was found to be and efficient but due to design lacking in space to provide more specific information that might be useful for material selection.

Key Words: English as a foreign language (EFL), young learners (YL), multiple intelligences (MI) material assessment

1. Introduction

The following research will attempt to discuss the theories of material design for young learners (YL) under the age of 6 years old. Initially definitions of relevant terms will be offered as well as a literature review with a brief overview of the unique developmental needs of YL with a focus on materials. Fundamental principles of material design for YL will be investigated including the selection and evaluation of materials for YL as well as a discussion of possible criteria for effective materials. A tool for appraisal of commercial materials will be offered. The design, evaluation, and pilot test of this tool including possible gaps in the evaluated material will be identified and an attempt will be made to present design and supplement the evaluated materials with a presentation of supplemental materials such as: a

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sample of flash cards and an excerpt from a supplemental activity guide.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definitions

Materials may be considered anything that may aid in language learning including but not limited to pictures, newspapers or commercially produced resources such as textbooks, workbooks, cds (Tomlinson, 2011). Materials may offer guidance to teachers with respect to the instructive tasks considered necessary for learning to be achieved (Nunan, 1991).

Coursebooks may be termed as a textbook in a language- learning classroom, which is viewed as the main book that would be used in the course (Tomlinson, 2011).

Syllabus may be defined as the focus or content in one particular subject as opposed to curriculum that may be considered more broadly dealing with the aims of subjects within a set of courses in the institution as a whole (White, 1998).

Material selection may be viewed as having a significant effect on the outcome of a syllabus or curriculum as commented by Nunan (1991):

... materials, whether commercially developed or teacher-produced, are an important element within the curriculum, and are often the most tangible and visible aspect of it. While the syllabus defines the goals and objectives, the linguistic and experiential content, instructional materials can put flesh on the bones of these specifications (p.208).

2.3 Developmental considerations for YL

With the discussion of materials for YL it would seem appropriate to identify the unique cognitive needs of this student group. Piaget theorized that children under the age of 11 are largely incapable of abstract thought (Hughes, 2006). As may be perceived the case in YL particularly the age group of 0-6 years olds as they are in an earlier stage of development they may not, as Cameron (2001) in a discussion of YL and foreign language learning states: '... have the same access as older learners to meta-language that teachers can use to explain about grammar or discourse' (p.1).

Further research, expanding on earlier Piagetian theories have commented that YL may be considered active learners trying to make sense of their world, adapting to experiences as they are encountered in their environment (Donaldson, 1978).

In discussion of YL cognitive development, Vygotsky (1978) introduced the term, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), defined as the difference between the current level of development and the development that is possible with help from an adult (Vygotsky, 1978) Later Bruner in an effort to expand on this concept further, characterized the concept of how cognitive support given to a child by an adult or more experienced peer enables the child to cognitively develop as "scaffolding" (Cameron, 2001 p. 8) It may be argued that not all YLs learn in the same manner, and researchers have suggested that there may be different types of learning styles, namely visual, auditory and kinesthetic and that language learning may closely linked to these styles (Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 2002). Gardner (1993) later introduced

the concept of multiple intelligences, offering the hypothesis that there are several different types of intelligences YLs possess, namely linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, kinaesthetic, musical interpersonal, intrapersonal and it is feasible that learners may prefer one intelligence over another (Cameron, 2001).

With this understanding of YL cognitive development researchers have commented that perhaps children learn a second language (L2) in many of the same ways that they learn other subjects (Hughes, 2006). Having presented an outline of various theories of the cognitive development of YLs, this study will next attempt to examine the importance of Second language acquisition (SLA) research with respect to materials.

2.3 Second Language Acquisition Research

Researchers are in agreement that there are various ideas with respect to cognitive development and current second language acquisition (SLA) research appears unable to offer one superior research model for language learning (Tomlinson, 2011). There is an implication that material development may be subjectively determined by teachers' beliefs of which features useful course books should or shouldn't have (Chambers, 1997)

In an attempt to devise a standard for successful material development the combination of empirical data as well as data considered to be subjective may be considered beneficial but, as Tomlinson (2011) cautions: '... be careful not to prescribe applications of unsubstantiated theories' (p.6). Although it may be speculated that decisions regarding material development and evaluation may be subjective based largely on the opinions of educators who may have predetermined ideals regarding language learning, it may also be noted that utilizing the experience of educators possessing current knowledge of SLA research may also aid in the development of materials (Tomlinson, 2011).

In an attempt to include principles related to SLA that may be considered applicable to material development Tomlinson (2011) proposes a number of principles of which due to the scope and length of this study will be limited to principles of particular interest to YL (Tomlinson 2011).

2.4 Criteria for Effective Materials

As stated previously YL may be considered inexperienced with the environment around them and are actively trying to make sense of their surroundings to find meaning (Fisher, 2005). With this concept in mind in the language classroom it may be considered beneficial for the selection of activities as well as materials to reflect the curiosity and enthusiasm of YL (Cameron, 2001). If YL are engaged and attracted and focused on the materials at hand it is possible to theorize that an impact on the students may be achieved, increasing the possibility that the materials will be cognitively processed by the YL (Tomlinson, 2011).

2.4 Achieving Impact

Impact may be achieved by presenting appealing, colorful materials with novel content

and unique topics that are viewed as interesting as well as intellectually challenging, ideally offering choices for YL, as commented by Tomlinson (2011): 'The more varied the choice of topics, texts and activities, the more likely is the achievement of impact' (p.9). As YL particularly in the 0-6 year old group are viewed as being enthusiastic, eager please adults but also having shorter attention spans therefore achieving impact through a variation of activities may prove invaluable to be an invaluable motivational tool to aid in language learning for YL (Cameron, 2001).

With regard to the importance of adults to YLs' language development Cameron (2001) comments: 'From early childhood, the desire to connect emotionally and communicate with other people seems to drive speaking' (p.38). This may be viewed as a further indication that materials for YLs should be selected carefully and with careful selection, materials may promote teacher student interaction to enhance learning (Cameron, 2001).

2.5 Materials should put learners at ease

The promotion of imagination and creativity in YL may be viewed as instrumental however YL are also viewed as benefiting from materials that these learners may identify with as Leburn (1991) comments: '... the younger the pupils, the more necessary it is that materials are close and familiar to them' (p.105). These comments may also relate to SLA research such theories offered by Krashen's theory (1981) viewed as stating that learning is optimized for learners when they have exposure to language that is perceived a bit more advanced than their current level of knowledge, suggesting an association between factors such as materials and methods of instruction and language learning (Nunan, 1991).

If YL language acquisition may be viewed as promoted by a classroom environment that YL feel secure in it may be theorized that if YL are comfortable with their learning environment and learning materials their stress level may be decreased, conceivably aiding YL with language learning (Tomlinson, 2011).

In practice, designing materials with illustrations of intellectual interest to YLs as well as culturally appropriate graphics are indicated as possible methods to put YL at ease as well as promote connection with the material (Brewster et.al, 2002). In an effort to aid YLs in gaining a connection to the materials utilized, a supportive tone or 'voice' given to the content is indicated as perhaps unconventional but may be viewed as beneficial approach to material development as highlighted by Tomlinson (2011): 'Feeling at ease can also be achieved through a 'voice' which is relaxed and supportive, through content and activities which encourage the personal participation of the learners' (p.9).

2.6 Learning Styles including learner differences

As discussed previously YL are viewed as having various learning styles and in recognizing these differences and similarities YL learning may be further facilitated (Brewster et. al, 2002). With regard to materials it would also be deemed beneficial to promote a variety of activities that could be applied to various learning styles (Tomlinson, 2011). As

previously stated YL may be viewed as possessing multiple intelligences that allow YL to learn and acquire knowledge and process information in preferred ways, for example if a YL is considered possessing a physical intelligence the learner may prefer hands on activities (Fisher, 1995). It is interesting to note that dependent on the task at hand children may learn in styles other than their preferred style and these learning styles may be influenced by the circumstances surrounding what is expected to be learned in the lesson, with this relationship to material development is highlighted by Ellis as cited in Tomlinson (2010):

The important point for materials developers is that they are aware of and cater for differences of preferred learning styles in their materials and that they do not assume that all learners can benefit from the same approaches as the 'good language learner' (p.19)

If the materials are designed to accommodate YLs' various learning styles, ideally their interest in learning will be enhanced, promoting a positive attitude which may be considered instrumental for YL success in future language learning (Cameron, 2001). With regard to material design there are various means by which materials can aid YL differences such as: presenting a variety of activities that are of interest to learning group including additional activities for learners that may more motivated, additionally if available a teachers book offering advice on the challenges of motivating learners would be considered helpful (Tomlinson, 2011).

As commented previously children are viewed as constantly seeking to make sense of their world (Donaldson, 1978). With regard to YL language learning it may be considered a logical progression that YL seeking answers are instructed in a manner that is as close to a child's perceived reality as possible, as children may be viewed as utilizing social prompts or circumstances to direct their responses (Cameron, 2001). In the discussion of materials Tomlinson (2010) remarks: 'Ideally materials at all levels should provide frequent exposure to authentic input which is rich and varied' (p.14). With YL under the age of 6 years old there may not be much call for using English outside of the classroom but authentic language may be viewed as helping with cognitive development as Cameron (2001) comments: '...language will grow with the children, in that, although some vocabulary will no longer be needed, most of the language will provide a useful base for more grown-up purposes' (p.31) With the goal being viewed as an active response to this input the response may not only be in the form of language but may be in the form of a physical response as may the case with YLs who are viewed as possessing may different learning styles (Tomlinson2010).

Considered closely connected to the concept of security, learner confidence may also be related to successful learning in YL (Tomlinson, 2011). As commented by Leburn (1991), " ...confidence is crucial in effective language learning at the younger age level' (p.105). The ability for YL to enthusiastically participate with success in the classroom developing confidence it is conceivable successful learning may follow (Cameron, 2001). In

the development of confidence building materials for YL the probability of learning success may be considered increased with the development of materials that are approaching the YL 's ZPD as opposed to materials that are too easy or too difficult which may produce the undesired result of reducing confidence (Tomlinson, 2011). In an effort to effectively utilize learners current skills and to promote confidence in YL some countries have been rethinking material choices as Tomlinson (2011) comments these countries: '...have decided to produce their own materials through textbook projects rather than to rely on global course books, which seem to underestimate the abilities of their learners (p.10). Having presented an overview of the criteria for good materials in general a discussion of commercial will be presented.

2.7 Commercial Materials

Having presented various criteria for good materials in general a discussion of commercial materials may be considered relevant. Currently there is a large amount of readily available language learning commercial material on hand for teachers or administrators to consider (Brewster, et al., 2002). Commercial materials including materials that are available for purchase such as course books may serve many purposes and if used in the manner they were designed they may be considered a training tool to improve skills in inexperienced or ill-trained teachers, and occasionally as a replacement to teacher entirely (Nunan, 1991). Course books may be viewed as having a significant role in the language-learning classroom and if used in a flexible manner, course books may be considered a viable resource for teachers (Tomlinson, 2011). When considering course books one concern as commented by Nunan (1991): '...is that any given coursebook will be incapable of catering for the diversity of needs which exists in most language classrooms' (p.209). Bell and Gower (2011) may be viewed in agreement with the above statement indicating that a degree of compromise is warranted with the acceptance and use of commercial materials such as 'global' course books or materials that are not culturally based but are designed to be used by any class at a specified level commenting: 'With international materials it is obvious that the needs of individual students and teachers, as well as the expectations of particular schools in particular countries, can never be fully met by the materials themselves' (p.137) This issue may be addressed by augmenting course books with supplementary materials that are deemed more culturally appropriate for YLs including flash cards, graded readers, posters and with consideration for YL under the age of 6 the use of toys may also be considered valuable (Brewster et. al, 2002). Although there are differing opinions regarding the benefits of using commercial materials, the time-saving value of these materials as a resource cannot be overlooked (Nunan, 1991) With the premise that selection and evaluation of materials for the varying learning requirements of YLs may be perceived as valuable the next section will continue with a discussion of these principles (Cameron, 2001).

2.8 Selections and Evaluation of Materials

When discussing the concept of evaluation of materials the two types of evaluation that are often mentioned are predictive and retrospective evaluation as distinguished by Ellis (1997): 'predictive evaluation designed to make a decision regarding what materials to use, and a retrospective evaluation designed to examine materials that have actually been used' (p.36). It may be considered of benefit to select materials that are consistent with the learning values of the teachers and students as well as keeping in step with the goals and objectives placed on the learning program (Nunan, 1991).

The selection and design of new materials may be considered a complex enterprise as there may be many unknown factors causing decision-making difficulties (Nunan, 1991). These perceived difficulties in material selection may be aided by utilizing a logical system for evaluation of materials with the needs of the students, teachers as well as other stakeholders while in agreement with the philosophies of the educational administration (Nunan, 1991).

In a review of the research there appears to be focus on predictive evaluation with two approaches suggested for teachers to accomplish this task. The first approach involves the use of reviews provided by professional journals for example ELT Journal maybe helpful by utilizing standards that may be deemed as significant tools for course book evaluation but this may be considered problematic as commented by Ellis (1997): '...in reviews of individual course books, the criteria often remains inexact and implicit' (p.36). In the second approach educators may perform predictive methodical evaluations on course books using a ready made tool ideally designed in a manner that is consistent with the process of how decisions are made, containing a list of pertinent items or guidelines (Ellis, 1997).

If the decisions regarding course books are viewed as effecting larger numbers of teachers and students it may be considered beneficial for mutual agreement on the selection of these materials, offering the following advantages as commented by Chambers (1997): '...joint ownership of the eventual decision (very important in minimizing resistance to all innovations), and increased experience of materials in use' (p.29). The use of a pro-forma may be considered an advantageous method directing a process of well informed decisions in a manner of mutual consent as opposed to a voting situation where there may be considered winners and losers, the implication being that the voted out group may take exception with the decision and perhaps deter the process of reaching a consensus (Chambers, 1997). Teachers may consider this tool indispensable with regard to professional development, as frequently they are the individuals involved in the selection of materials. And as such, opinions and expertise of teachers should not be overlooked but encouraged (Tomlinson, 2011).

Although tools such as a pro-forma may be viewed as containing a tangible amount of validity, YL classrooms may be considered unpredictable with many variables that may be regarded as affecting accuracy or precision of the evaluative tools (Chambers, 1997).

With this knowledge the decision as to whether or not to continue using the current materials or the tools used becomes an issue after the implementation, and may need to be addressed as commented by Ellis (1997), retrospective evaluation may serve a dual role as it:

‘...also serves as a ‘testing’ the validity of a predictive evaluation, and may point to ways in which the predictive instruments can be improved for future use’ (p.37).

Retrospective evaluation can be carried out in two ways, the first impressionistically, relying on teachers opinions of the materials covered in the course typically with respect to student motivation and interest throughout the course or less commonly, systematic or empirical evaluation (Ellis, 1997). As stated previously YLs are viewed more apt to participate in classroom activities that are thought enjoyable (Cameron, 2001). With regard to evaluation of materials a more systematic, less subjective evaluative system with concentration on results and may be beneficial as commented by Tomlinson (2011): ‘What we need to know is, did the teacher and the learners do what the materials intended, were the learning objectives achieved...’ (p.298). Macro-evaluation, which involves acquiring information for a total assessment of an entire group of materials is indicated as a beneficial method of retrospective evaluation but due to the perceived time-consuming and overwhelming nature of conducting this type of empirical evaluation is often not done (Ellis,1997). In an effort make an empirical evaluation more manageable, conducting micro-evaluation with teachers concentrating their research on one specific learning concern, may be considered a starting point for, or a segment of macro-evaluation while at the same time it may be valuable on its own as well (Ellis1997). It has been suggested that in the micro-evaluation of materials the evaluation is best conducted in connection with a task which as defined by Skehan (as cited in Ellis, 1997) as an activity in which: meaning is primary; there is some sort of relationship to the real world; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of task performance in terms of task outcome’ (p.38). An example offered for a task would be information-gap activities that are commonly found in materials for YL (Ellis, 1997).

There 7 steps by which a micro-evaluation of task may be achieved as Ellis (1997) lists: ‘Choosing a topic, Describing a task, planning the evaluation, collecting the information for the evaluation, analyzing the information, reaching conclusions and making recommendations, and writing a report’ (p.38).

3. Research Questions:

The purpose of the current study is to design a material tool termed as a pro-forma to for selection of prospective material with the following the research questions considered:

- 1.Does this tool satisfy the necessary as well as the desired criteria for prospective material selection.
- 2 WEIGHTING.

4.Method

4.1Learners and context of use

The pro-forma will be used in the selection of materials by the teacher for classes in Japanese kindergartens located in a medium sized city in northern Japan. All students will be Japanese between the ages of 3-6 divided into 3 levels over 3 years 3-4 year old, 4-5 year old

and 5-6 year old, one 30-minute class once a week with an average of 40 lessons divided over 12 month each year. The materials will be used without tables and chairs and in groups of 25-35 students. The native language of all the students will be Japanese and for the majority of the students English instruction in kindergarten will be their first exposure to English. The kindergartens requested that the main emphasis in instruction be on developing speaking and listening skills. The expectation of these classes on the part of the administration is to encourage a future interest in English through fun age appropriate activities.

Parents although stakeholders were not considered formally involved in decision-making process therefore not included as a factor in the development of this pro forma.

4.2 Requirements and desires

Young learners (YL), are thought to have shorter attention spans (Hughes, 2014), therefore materials containing fast paced activities that are versatile and adaptable to the various demands of an YL classroom were considered a requirement. Additionally, a requirement for selection of materials concerned age appropriate activities was also considered necessary.

The classes will be taught by native English speakers assisted by Japanese kindergarten teachers with limited English ability. The native English teachers will only be present in the kindergartens for the period of instruction therefore it was thought that the if the chosen materials included a teacher's book in both English and in Japanese language would be beneficial. As this request could possibly limit narrowly the choice of textbooks it was decided that a teachers book in English would be required and a teachers book in Japanese would have to be changed to a desired criteria and in turn weighed. With knowledge of learner profile as well as the learning context the following table suggests the criteria for requirements and desired features in the pro forma that may be used by teachers or other individuals involved in evaluating prospective material. These seven essential features must be present in order for the text to be considered (Chambers, 1997) Table 1 may be considered a checklist for required items necessary for consideration of future material.

4.3 Weighting of Desirable Features

As opposed to essential features, which are generally deemed of equal importance, desired features may or may not be evident in the textbook or present to a certain extent (Chambers, 1997).

TABLE 2 Material Requirement Checklist

Requirement
<input type="checkbox"/> A textbook series that will cover 3 class levels over 3 years
<input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient material to cover 40, 30 minute classes per year
<input type="checkbox"/> Inclusion of a teacher's book
<input type="checkbox"/> Age appropriate
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 skills based textbook
<input type="checkbox"/> An assortment of activities that are developmentally levelled and matched to the Learners
<input type="checkbox"/> Inclusion of supplemental listening cd or other multimedia

TABLE 2 Weighting Checklist

Desired Item	Weight
Inclusion of a teacher's book in Japanese	10
Inclusion of supplemental materials	5
Inclusion of music or chants	5
Activities that require little preparation	5
Four skills text with a stress on listening and speaking	4

In the following table desirable items were weighted on a scale of 1-10 with the most desirable items receiving a higher value in the pro forma (Chambers, 1997). The following table lists the weight of the desired features. The consensus was the availability of teacher's book in Japanese would be a timesaver that would allow time to prepare and develop supplemental listening and speaking activities if necessary, including music or chants.

4.4 Additional Features

There are occasionally features which may not be included as desired or essential features in the pro forma but may be considered and listed in the selection decision such as teacher's previous experience with the material, which may be noted in this section (Chambers, 1997).

4.5 Initial choice

In this category the evaluator will consider the presence of the essential and desired items and record the calculated scores from the weighting of the desired features in the pro forma with a preliminary judgment of accept or reject being determined (Chambers, 1997).

4.6 Risk

Early decisions on materials are generally considered based on positive considerations but as there may be a certain of risk, two main factors although not easily measured are indicated for consideration: the probability of the risk occurring and in the event of occurrence the seriousness of the risk, with these two issues considered against the advantages of the choosing the materials. (Chambers, 1997). As risk taking is considered an individual choice and calculation of negative aspects difficult task Chambers (1997) suggests: 'risk factors will not be given a number value, but will be rated as high, medium, or low' (p.34).

5. Results

From the data assembled in pro-forma (see Table 3) it was viewed that all the essential items were available in both option A and option B therefore it was possible to move forward to evaluate the desired items and weigh them in an appropriate manner. At this point Option A was found not to have 2 of the desired items and the weighted items were calculated with a score of 8 out of a possible 29 points, additionally the textbook series was viewed to be dated with a perceived probability that there would be a new edition or perhaps the materials

Table 3 Material Selection Tool

Features		Option A	Option B
Essential (Yes/No)		Yes /No	Yes/No
1 A textbook series that will cover 3 class levels over 3 years		Yes	Yes
2 Sufficient material to cover 40, 30 minute classes per year		Yes	Yes
3 Inclusion of a teacher' s book		Yes	Yes
4 Age appropriate (colourful, attractive graphics)		Yes	Yes
5 4 skills based textbook		Yes	Yes
6 An assortment of activities that are developmentally levelled and matched to the learners		Yes	Yes
7 Inclusion of supplemental listening cd or other multimedia		Yes	No
Desirable (Score 1-10)	Weight (wt)	Score (I-10)	Score (I-10)
Inclusion of a teacher' s book in Japanese	10	0	10
Inclusion of supplemental materials (ie. Printable materials, flash cards)	5	0	5
Inclusion of music or chants	5	3	3
Activities that require little preparation (fast-paced activities that may be used for larger groups)	5	1	1
Four skills text with a stress on listening and speaking	4	4	4
Total	29	8	23
Initial Decision (accept/reject)		reject	accept
Additional features not mentioned above. Comments:			
Risk Probability Seriousness (Low, Medium, High)		High risk Text is dated	Low risk
Decision (Accept/Reject)		Reject	Accept

may go out of print. The final decision was to reject Option A based on these factors. Option B was found to have all of the of all of the essential items and all desired items present to a certain degree with a score of 23 out of a possible 29 points therefore theoretically Option B could be accepted.

6. Discussion-

6.1 Strengths, Shortcomings Balance and Imbalance of Data

As a tool the pro-forma was a relatively uncomplicated, convenient and timesaving. This aided in an efficient process of completing the evaluation of the materials. The data for the essential items was straightforward to interpret as a yes for the presence of an essential item or a no if the essential item was absent. The simplicity and objective nature would suggest that new teachers or teachers with little experience may utilize this tool with relative ease.

One short-coming of the pro-forma would be that in an attempt to make this tool as objective as possible with yes/no answers there was very little room for any expansion or description of information. For example in the pro-forma one question was whether or not the textbook covered four skills which it did but to what degree is not clear and as a result it may be difficult for third party looking at this evaluation to get a visual picture of the

characteristics of the materials.

Although the need for balance was an important factor in this evaluation and many of the questions asked may be viewed as reflecting this desire for balance for example: do the materials cover 3 class levels over 3 years, but other sections may reflect an imbalance with a need for expansion, for example with the question whether the materials age appropriate there is no general description of the materials evaluated. Without a general image of how the materials are designed it may be considered difficult to make a well-informed decision based on the pro-forma alone, as it may be difficult to envision the layout of the materials.

As stated previously for this pro-forma to aid the decision-making process more descriptive questions should be implemented requiring more than yes/no answers. In changing the question style more description of the materials may be revealed allowing a more informed basis to make a decision. The simplicity of the pro-forma may be viewed as impacting the accuracy of decisions. More descriptive questions would be viewed as helpful particularly with regard to the division and concentration of skills with regard to the material.

Various disparities were identified with the implication for alteration or modifications for further development of the pro-forma.

Two areas were identified. The first area was although the textbook series was found to cover all four skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening the two former appeared to be concentrated on more fully than speaking and listening which presented a particular dilemma for teachers, as the students would not be using desks for the majority of the lessons. This would suggest the necessity to develop more speaking and listening activities.

The other area presenting in a gap was the lack of larger group activities. Although the text series was marketed to cater to large group classes, upon closer inspection of the material, most speaking activities were based on classes of 4-8 students. With class sizes between 25 and 40 students it became apparent that it would be necessary to modify the existing material or design new material to accommodate the larger numbers of students in the classes.

The gap that has been identified and concentrated on for development in focus 3 is the lack of speaking practice. The material although presenting some opportunities for speaking practice through songs and chants there is offers very little opportunity for other conversational practice. In this context speaking practice with the development of supplementary the materials will be the area of concentration.

In an effort to create more opportunities for speaking practice for larger groups, activities that will augment the vocabulary presented in the selected materials will be assembled and presented in a supplemental handbook for teachers. The design of the handbook will be shown roughly an example of activity and the accompanying flash cards that will be designed.

As commented in the main previously YLs benefit from materials that establish confidence therefore it would be considered beneficial for YLs to have as many opportunities as possible to practice speaking the target language and, as this age group (under 6 years old) may not have many chances outside the classroom to practice speaking a second or foreign

language the challenge is to increase the amount of practice within the allotted class time (North, Ortega, & Sheehan, 2011).

Another principle of good materials identified in the main previously was the importance of materials utilizing YLs various learning styles in order to aid in learning. Utilizing activities that will challenge as many senses as possible may be viewed as beneficial for YLs as commented in Brewster: 'The younger the learners, the more physical activity they tend to need and the more they need to make use of all their senses' (p.35). In the evaluated materials it was found that although many learning styles were addressed there were others did not receive as much emphasis. The supplementary speaking activities suggested are hoped to aid in learning by making use of various intelligences that were concentrated on to a lesser extent in the evaluated materials namely: such as musical, kinesthetic or interpersonal.

6.2 Supplement Activity Options

As commented earlier the materials selected appeared to lack activities applicable for larger class sizes. In figure 1.1 an activity to in unit in the first series of the evaluated materials is presented. This discusses the concept of likes and dislikes. The speaking practice is "I like_____" . 'Me too' . or "Not me" . The activities that accompanied this lesson concentrated on individual answers for the students and some pair work activities. In larger classes it is difficult to hear every students voice individually therefore Drilling may be an effective way to get YL to practice language while at the same time gaining confidence in the material in order encourage learning (Hughes, 2014). Furthermore it was thought that students doing an activity such as the activity explained in figure 1.1 that it may be considered an efficient way to accomplish a speaking task in an enjoyable manner as YLs are viewed as learning from other learners in when placed in groups (Brewster et.al 2002). This activity is viewed as being fast-paced, enjoyable, familiar activity that will utilize various intelligences including, physical, and linguistic intelligences (Hughes, 2006).

<p>Let' s find our Friends Game</p> <p>Time: 10-15minutes</p> <p>Aims: To practice the conversation presented in Unit 3.</p> <p>Materials: A color card for each student</p> <p>Procedure: 1.Distribute the cards to the students. 2. Instruct them to make groups of 4 or 5 depending on the class size, using the target language "I like _____" they will search for the students who hold the same color cards as they do.</p> <p>For example: Student A: I like green Student B: Not me. I like red. Student A: I like green Student C: (holding a green card) Me too.</p>

Figure 1.1 Supplemental Speaking Exercise

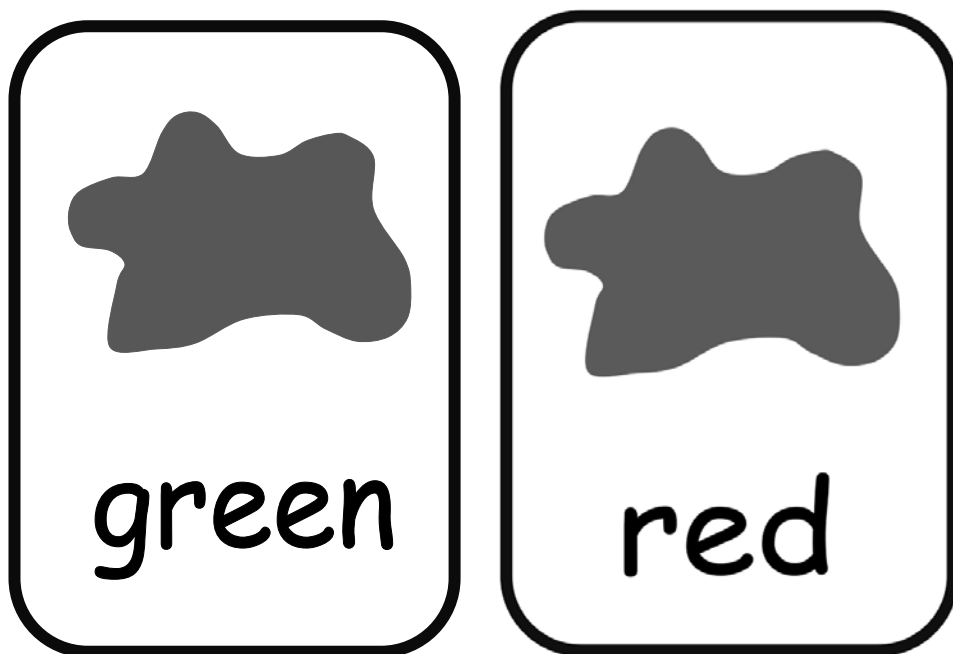


Figure 1.2 Example of flash cards for Supplemental Speaking Exercise

Conclusion

This study has attempted to discuss the theories of material design for young learners (YL) under the age of 6 years old. Definitions of relevant terms were offered and a brief overview of the unique developmental needs of YL was presented. Fundamental principles of material design for YL were investigated including the selection and evaluation of materials for YL as well as a discussion of possible criteria for effective materials. The development, evaluation and a pilot test of a material selection tool for use in a Japanese Kindergarten setting was presented. Although the tool was found to be useful and timesaving, unfortunate drawback was the use of yes/no questions as this left little room for the materials evaluator to leave comments. In future designs of this tool this will be an important issue to address.

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