



## Preparing Pre-service English Language Teachers for Classroom Realities: Strengthening Their Competence in Instructional Materials

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### ABSTRACT

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**Purpose:** English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers tend to demonstrate low literacy levels in instructional materials and feel unprepared to use materials effectively. To better prepare pre-service EFL teachers for real classrooms that they will teach upon graduation, current K-12 teachers can provide significant insights into the needed competences of prospective teachers. With this purpose, the study aimed to investigate the competences in utilizing instructional materials needed by EFL teachers to become effective teachers to teach at the context of K-12 public schools.

**Research Method:** The study used qualitative research methods. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews from 19 veteran EFL teachers teaching at K-12 public schools in Ankara. In order to gain a wide range of teacher perspectives on the knowledge and skill requirements for instructional materials, a maximum variation sampling technique was used. Data were subjected to content analysis.

**Findings:** The results suggested that pre-service EFL teachers need to be competent in using a wide range of instructional materials (i.e., printed, visual, authentic, technological, web-based and self-produced) and material related areas (i.e., adaptation, selection, use and design) to use materials for different purposes (i.e., motivational, instructional, classroom management, for general or overall improvement of students and learnability) under some challenging conditions that may affect their utilization of instructional materials.

**Implications for Research and Practice:** In case that the expected competences are adequately addressed at teacher-education programs, the disconnection between the universities and school environment could be solved and pre-service EFL teachers would feel ready and competent to teach upon graduation from teacher education programs.

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## Introduction

Improving teacher education and teacher quality are critical global issues. Like most countries, Turkey has been struggling to implement policies in order to educate better teachers. One of the biggest problems related to teacher education is the disconnection between the universities and school environments. Teacher educators are not aware of real problems of teaching, and pre-service teachers do not have opportunities to access real classrooms and get involved in teaching activities except for their limited experience in practicum courses. The same problem exists in English Language Teaching (ELT). Unfortunately, ELT programs at universities are mostly theoretical and away from the realities of teaching; thus, pre-service teachers do not feel ready and competent to teach upon graduation from these programs (Ozturk & Aydin, 2019). Although ELT programs in Turkey offer a compulsory course on instructional materials, English language teachers demonstrate low literacy levels in instructional materials and feel unprepared regarding instructional materials (Kizilaslan, 2011; Sali & Kecik, 2018), which is probably because the pre-service materials education given at teacher education programs is theory-laden and disconnected from teachers' daily practices in real classrooms. However, the education of pre-service teachers must be based on practice in the workplace, which is the school.

As such, specifically required instructional materials competences used by EFL teachers in the real site of teaching performance should be determined and materials education given by teacher education programs should be planned accordingly. With that purpose, the research aimed to investigate the instructional material competences that EFL teachers need for the context of K-12 classroom teaching. It is hoped that the results of this study will help the providers of initial teacher education assess the instructional material education they give to pre-service EFL teachers and judge if they are meeting the needs of future teachers. In this way, they can revise the program content in order that each pre-service teacher will develop the necessary competences and be better prepared for the real world of classroom practice.

### *Theoretical Foundations*

To strengthen teaching English as a Foreign Language, several teacher education accreditation or certification organizations have prescribed the standards and the necessary competences for EFL teachers. Literature review reveals that one of these critical competences for effective EFL teachers is related with instructional materials (APEID, 1992; Caena, 2014; Kitao & Kitao, 1997; Lipton, 1996; MEB, 2002, 2008; Richards, 2007; Shulman, 1987; TESOL, 2002; YOK, 2007). Instructional materials, which can be anything used to facilitate learning for better results, are of significant importance in English language teaching like in other fields of teaching because of the numerous benefits they bring. Most of the time, they are used to compliment the efficiency of a teacher and effectiveness in lesson delivery (Omabe, 2006). Materials also facilitate the learning of abstract concepts by helping to concretize ideas and

stimulate students' imagination (Esu, Enuokoha, & Umoren, 2004). Furthermore, they make teaching more effective by facilitating the active participation of the learner in their learning process and by making the lesson less teacher-centered. In this way, materials also help teachers save their time and energy (Mathew & Alidmat, 2013).

Some scholars like Okwelle and Allagoa (2014) stated that instructional materials give teachers several advantages in teaching. Some of the advantages they mentioned are that they motivate learners for learning, enable teachers to deal with physical challenges, encourage learners to participate in lessons actively, help teachers save time, supply teachers with meaningful and useful information sources, promote different learning styles and encourage interest and curiosity of learners. Furthermore, effective instructional materials may even contribute to a positive attitude and a healthy self-concept of learners as successfully doing the activities makes them believe they can perform better. Besides all these advantages, instructional materials make most learners enjoy and appreciate the learning process. With the help of materials, students can also better comprehend, evaluate, visualize and experience the things they need to learn (Okwelle & Allagoa, 2014).

Other researchers, Kitao and Kitao (1997), listed several ways that instructional materials facilitate teaching. Providing explanation, example, practice on the content to be taught to learners, constituting a source of motivation for students by changing the dynamics of class routines, by offering various objects to be used in class and promoting interaction among learners are some of these ways. Hinkel (2006) added to the benefits of instructional materials by claiming that they lead to a stronger integration among language skills by incorporating language and content holistically. According to Reid (1995), materials help teachers in dealing with individual differences in class. Similarly, Armstrong (1994) and Gardner (1993) indicated that materials are helpful for handling learner differences in terms of intelligence. What is more, as Brinton (1991) suggested, materials represent the real-life in the classroom and enable presenting language in a more complete and realistic context. This way, they contribute to a more meaningful and complete student learning.

Literature in pedagogy and language teaching explains and illustrates the significance of instructional materials as a tool for improving students' learning, especially about challenging fields like language (Ibe-Bassey, 1991; Etim, 1998; Ikot, 2008). However, using this important tool effectively requires competence. Some researchers like Okwelle and Allagoa (2014) underlined the importance of teachers' being competent for selecting materials carefully, developing and using them skillfully. Only this way, they can benefit from better teaching and faster learning offered by instructional materials. According to the same researchers, it is also crucial for teachers to be aware of the fact that each instructional material brings about a different benefit to teaching-learning situation; thus, they should be appropriate for the available teaching resources, environment, time and the number of learners. It was also suggested that instructional objectives and content should be taken into consideration while selecting, developing and utilizing instructional materials. Another important consideration for material selection, use and development is the

individual differences among learners. That is, their characteristics such as age, level, interest, socio-economic background, learning style and physical skills are very significant variables that should be reflected in the instructional materials to be used. Appealing to different senses of learners with the materials chosen is another suggestion by Okwelle and Allagoa (2014). Learners grasp information through various senses, so materials appealing to multiple senses may improve learnability. The scholars mentioned economic factors as another important consideration regarding instructional materials and suggested that teachers can think of improvisation, which can be a way of increasing inquiry, curiosity and creativity besides being a productive application of intellect.

Howard and Major (2005) are other scholars suggesting EFL teachers design their own materials when available materials are not appropriate for the particular environment or learners. For an effective design process, they presented a set of guidelines. According to their guideline, language teaching materials should be authentic, contextualized, attractive, flexible and generative in terms of language. They should also have appropriate instructions and potential to stimulate interaction and facilitate the development of learning skills and strategies by focusing on form and function together and by promoting integrated use of the language.

In brief, literature review has shown that instructional materials are so important in language teaching that ineffective use of instructional materials may result in low level of language proficiency of EFL learners (Syatriana, 2013). Materials seem to one of the major elements in language instruction, so for effective language teaching, EFL teachers need certain material related skills. According to Kitao and Kitao (1997) some of these crucial skills are choosing, providing and designing appropriate materials, adopting, supplementing, and elaborating on materials in accordance with the needs of the learners and the teaching environment.

To equip pre-service teachers with such competences, ELT programs in Turkey already offer compulsory materials courses to pre-service EFL teachers. However, although teacher education programs offer such a course, EFL teachers still have low levels of literacy in instructional materials and feel unprepared to utilize materials effectively in English language classes (Kizilaslan, 2011; Sali & Kecik, 2018). That is probably because of the gap between theory and practice; that is, lack of alignment and cooperation between universities and schools. Accordingly, this research aimed to investigate the material related competences that EFL teachers need in order to teach in the context of K-12 public schools and the possible challenges they may face in utilizing materials. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What competences in instructional materials are needed by EFL teachers working at K-12 schools in their daily professional practices?
2. What are the challenges they face in utilizing instructional materials in their daily practices of teaching?

## Method

### *Research Design*

The study used qualitative research methods to find out what instructional material related competences are expected from EFL teachers to teach at K-12 public schools and what challenges they might face in using materials. To get an in-depth understanding of the issue, we conducted semi-structured interviews with veteran EFL teachers. The qualitative data collected from teachers were analyzed through content analysis to answer the research questions.

### *Research Sample*

Nineteen veteran EFL teachers having taught at K-12 public schools for more than seven years at the time of data collection constituted the participants of the study. The teachers were selected based on maximum variation sampling technique. Teachers having at least seven years of full-time teaching experience were considered to be veteran teachers for the purpose of the study as according to the policies of the Turkish Ministry of National Education, teachers having a seven-year full-time teaching service become tenured as “expert teachers” (Official Gazette, 2005: 5905). Veteran teachers were explicitly chosen to be the primary source of data in this study since they are believed to have knowledge gained through on-the-job experience (Edwards, 2003). Thus, we relied on the assumption that research on teacher education should approve and even benefit from their experience and knowledge for preparing teacher candidates for their future profession adequately. In addition, veteran teachers are expected to provide useful information regarding the necessary competences on instructional materials, which could guide teacher education and other relevant parties in equipping pre-service teachers with the required skills to be effective teachers.

To collect a wide range of perspectives on instructional materials, a sample group of participants with a wide range of variations were formed using the maximum variation sampling technique (Simsek & Yildirim, 2008). This sampling technique enabled us to attain more significant insights by looking at the issue from various angles, which improved the strength of the research findings and applicability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The variables used in the study to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon were teaching experiences and gender of teachers, the school type and grade level they teach, and socio-economic status of their schools.

To reach out to the participants, we first received information about the type and socio-economic status of schools in Ankara from an expert working at the ministry. Then, we determined 30 potential school sites having different socio-economic status. Later, we gave information about the proposed study to the school principals on the phone and made appointments with the ones agreeing their schools’ participation in the research study. We collected the initial information about the EFL teachers’ working at their school such as their year of teaching experience, gender, and the grade level they were teaching. Considering the criteria for maximum variation

sampling, we determined the target group of participants and notified them if they would like to participate in the study. Later, we further informed the teachers accepting to participate in the study about the purpose of the study and the confidentiality issues via e-mail and received their consent. We also obtained the ethical approval for the research from METU Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee.

Nineteen veteran teachers from schools with high and low socio-economic status in Ankara, teaching different grades from 2 to 12, participated in the study. The number of participants meets Stake's (2006) requirement for four to ten participants and Dukes' (1984) three to ten participants. We reached data saturation after roughly interviewing 15 participants. Yet, we interviewed all of the 19 volunteering participants to ensure data saturation, which assured the adequate number of samples to demonstrate content validity (Francis et al., 2010). Data regarding the participants' gender, teaching experience, graduation, degree and information about the school type, level and the socio-economic status of the schools they were teaching, their prior training and education on instructional materials were summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**  
*Sample Size of Veteran Teachers according to the Variables*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Levels</b>	<b>f</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	15
	Male	4
<b>Experience in teaching</b>	10-15 years	15
	16 years and over	4
<b>Graduation</b>	Faculty of Education	11
	Faculty of Art and Letters	8
<b>Highest degree held</b>	B.A.	14
	M.A and M.Sc.	4
	Ph.D.	1
<b>School type</b>	Primary	12
	Secondary:	7
	*Anatolian HS	2
	Anatolian/Science HS	2
	Vocational Technical HS	3
<b>Socio-economic Status</b>	Low SES	10
	High SES	9
<b>Level(s) taught</b>	2-4	6
	5-8	6
	9-10	4
	11-12	3
<b>Instructional materials training/education</b>	As undergraduate/graduate c.	11
	In-service training	2
	No training/education	6

Notes: \*shows the Anatolian High Schools which were previously general high schools, c: course

*Research Instruments and Procedures*

Semi-structured interviews were done with veteran teachers so that an in-depth understanding of instructional materials was received. Participants were asked questions requiring them to describe their utilization of instructional materials and specific experiences. Besides, prompts were used to ask for more details or specifications when necessary (Simsek & Yildirim, 2008). The interview questions were based on an extensive review of relevant literature. Table 2 gives information about the content of the semi-structured interviews.

**Table 2**

*The Content of Semi-Structured Interviews*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Sample Questions</b>
<b>Demographic details</b>	Can you tell me about your... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teaching experience (duration)</li> <li>- educational background (Ba, Ma, Ph.D.)</li> <li>- grade and class size you teach currently</li> <li>- socio-economic status of your school</li> </ul>
<b>Materials used</b>	Can you describe the materials you used in your classes? (e.g., Formal/prescribed, additional, self- developed)
<b>Material use</b>	Please describe how you use materials on a typical day? Which parts do you omit/ emphasize more/ cover in less depth? Can you elaborate on how and why do you do so?
<b>Strengths</b>	How competent/capable do you find yourself as a teacher in terms of instructional materials, particularly in using, selecting, adapting, developing materials?
<b>Challenges</b>	Can you talk about the problems you face regarding instructional materials in teaching in your context? What are the reasons for these problems?
<b>Weaknesses &amp; Needs</b>	Can you explain the difficulties you have in using, selecting, adapting, developing materials in your daily teaching? What kind of skills and knowledge do you need?
<b>Previous training in instructional materials</b>	Please talk about the courses and the pre or in-service training on instructional materials in which you have participated? How did you benefit from them to improve your knowledge and skills?
<b>Factors contributing to current competence in instructional materials</b>	How could you reach your current competence in instructional materials? What are the factors contributing to your competence?

For the interview questions, expert opinion was obtained from an English language teacher educator and three experts on qualitative research methods. The suggestions from experts were valued and with little alterations on the wording, changes were made in the semi-structured interview schedule. The items having ambiguity or requiring clarification were rewritten by us. The interview procedure was pilot tested on two EFL teachers before actual data collection proceeded with the first author so that both the questions and interviewer's qualitative research skills to ask timely follow up questions were tested and improved.

Interviews with veteran teachers were performed in January 2016. The participants were all assured of anonymity, their consent was obtained with a consent form, and they were all assured to be free to leave the interview if they decided to do so without any excuses. The interviews were conducted at the school sites in a room arranged by the school administration. All interviews were conducted in person by the first author in Turkish and were recorded to be transcribed later. The interviews lasted 50-65 minutes for each.

#### *The Trustworthiness of the Study*

To ensure the credibility of the study, we used peer debriefing and member checking strategies. For peer debriefing, we obtained the perceptions of another senior researcher in each stage of the study (i.e., data collection, data analysis and interpreting research findings) as suggested by Bitsch (2005). In order to improve the credibility of the qualitative data member checking was used (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). For that purpose, data and interpretations in the study were continuously tested as they were derived from veteran teachers. More specifically, the veteran teachers were asked to evaluate the interpretations made based on the interviews with them and suggest any changes for the parts they did not agree.

#### *Data Analysis*

For the analysis of qualitative data, first all interviews were transcribed. Then, based on Wellington's (2000) general stages of data analysis, the transcripts were read, the parts referring to instructional materials were underlined, and broad categories were generated. Later, all transcripts were read again, and it was checked if there were any unnoticed parts according to the emerging categories (immersion). In the second reading, some new categories appeared, and a list of main categories was made. (See the Appendix for the themes and the codes). For the names of the categories, interview questions or researchers' interpretations were used. Later, the data under each category were compared to similar data under sub-categories (synthesis). Data were constantly compared (Merriam, 2009) both within the same category to find sub-categories and across categories. This process resulted in codes categorized under sub-groups.

### **Results**

In this research, it was aimed to investigate the material related competences that EFL teachers need in order to teach in the context of K-12 public schools and the

possible challenges they may face in utilizing materials. Qualitative data collected from 19 veteran teachers revealed useful information about the kind of materials EFL teachers working at K-12 use, the purposes of their material utilization, the specific competences they need and the challenges they face regarding instructional materials in their daily practices.

### *Type of Materials Used*

The veteran teachers mentioned using six main types of materials in their daily practices. These are 1) *printed materials* such as coursebooks, resource books, test books, photocopied exercises, worksheets, stories and staged readers; 2) *visual materials* such as realia or real materials, flashcards, pictures and puzzles; 3) *authentic materials* such as songs and films; 4) *technological materials* such as 3-D materials, flash programs, projectors, OHPs, computers, CDs/CD players, e-books, web-based materials and social media; 5) *teacher and or student-produced materials* like school magazines, notice/bulletin boards, project works, flashcards, picture dictionaries, photos and videos, certificates, booklets, vocabulary journals, sentence and word strips; 6) *materials created with art and craft* like model buildings, origami, clay/dough and wooden artifacts. Qualitative data showed that EFL teachers teaching at K-12 public schools need to be competent in a wide range of instructional materials to teach English in their classes.

### *Purpose of Material Use*

During the interviews, participants mentioned different purposes of their material use and several reasons why they need to bring or design different materials for their teaching. Analysis of their responses provided us with beneficial information about the purpose of material utilization at K-12 public schools. It appears that participants make use of instructional materials for six primary purposes.

*Motivational purposes:* All of the participating EFL teachers stated that they use materials to attract the attention of learners, to stimulate learners, and to involve them in activities.

*Instructional purposes:* Most of the teachers stated that they mostly use materials for instructional purposes like teaching language areas (i.e., vocabulary and grammar), developing language skills (i.e., listening, reading, speaking and writing), assessing student learning, and relating English to other lessons.

*Classroom management purposes:* About two-thirds of the interviewed teachers reported that they make use of materials as a tool for managing their classroom. They mentioned using materials to calm down learners, to decrease the anxiety of learners, to foster cooperation among learners, and to deal with difficult learners as examples for their use of materials for classroom management purposes.

*To increase learnability:* About half of the interviewed teachers expressed using different instructional materials to make the topic more understandable. They expressed that using materials makes the topic more concrete, meaningful and relevant to their lives, so learners can visualize the content, and as a result have more active and long-lasting learning. Even young learners are stated to follow the lesson with ease thanks to instructional materials.

*For general or overall improvement of students:* There are some teachers mentioning that they use materials to foster the confidence of learners and to improve their' problem solving and creative thinking skills.

*For some other purposes:* Some of the responses did not fit under any category, so they were named "other" purposes of material used. To illustrate, one of the veteran teachers expressed that to acknowledge and certify student achievement, she uses materials and sometimes for parent involvement; that is, to inform parents about the learning process of their children and involve them in this process, she makes use of materials.

### Sample Quotations from Veteran Teacher Interviews

### Codes

*"Even the difficult learners cooperate and become eager to take part in the lesson voluntarily when we design our materials in class. They feel successful when they create something and this increases their self-esteem..." VT 13*

"To motivate students"

"To create cooperation"

"To foster students' confidence"

*"I sometimes use extra materials to teach grammar especially at eight grades and I use extra materials to improve speaking skills of students or as a warm-up activity with lower levels" VT 9*

"To teach language areas and skills (speaking)"

### The Most Required Competences

Interviews with veteran EFL teachers teaching at the public school context informed us about the competence areas that they need most in their daily teaching of English. According to their responses, the required competences were categorized in four groups. These are material adaptation, material selection, effective material use and material design.

*Material Adaptation:* Almost all of the interviewed teachers said that they adapt the prescribed instructional materials like the coursebooks provided by the ministry to their students. In other words, EFL teachers change the materials considering certain criteria like 1) their learners (e.g., the level, age, interests, culture of their students); 2) their teaching context (e.g., the class size, physical setting, resources and facilities present at their school); 3) the EFL curriculum (e.g., the pace of the program and the objectives in the program). Interviewees also reported that frequently they need to adapt the materials to the level of learners, that is, mostly in order to make it more appropriate for low achievers and rarely for high achievers. The adaptation techniques that veteran teachers stated to use are omitting, reducing, replacing, simplifying, transforming (i.e., changing the format), changing the content (e.g., names, characters, topics, and examples etc.) and changing the sequence of activities in materials.

*Material Selection:* Experienced ELT professionals also mentioned materials selection competence as a crucial skill. It seems that material selection is the most required skill, especially for teachers working at vocational and technical schools. These schools have different departments like printing press operations, computer programming, hairdressing and early childhood education. Due to a lack of materials on vocational English for such schools, EFL teachers working at this type of schools need to search for and select appropriate materials for teaching vocational English to the students studying at different departments of vocational and technical schools.

*Effective Material Use:* The participants mentioned they use a great variety of materials such as printed, real, authentic and technological ones in their classroom practice. However, their responses revealed an interesting point. It seems that in the public school context, particularly in low socio-economic schools, teachers need to utilize these materials in some difficult circumstances. Some of these situations are trying to use materials effectively in large classes, mixed-ability classes, or classes with students from different departments (as in vocational schools), when there is little or no resource available.

*Material Design:* During interviews, veteran EFL teachers stated that they sometimes design materials with their learners mostly to involve them in their learning process. As a justification for preferring to develop their materials rather than using ready-made ones, they mentioned time and cost-effectiveness. Some of them said that either published materials are too expensive or even if some of them are free, searching for appropriate materials on the net or in the library takes them hours.

**Sample Quotations from Veteran Teacher Interviews**

**Codes**

*“Each department has different interests. I have to select materials considering that. If I choose the same materials for the electronics department and information technologies, then it does not work. They are different; their needs are different.” VT19*

“Selection”

*“Sometimes, in our course books, there are four activities serving for the same objective. It is boring to do almost the same activities. Therefore, I omit two of the activities.” VT 11*

“Adaptation”

*Challenges Faced*

Regarding the challenges they face that destroy the effectiveness of their material use in their English classes, veteran EFL teachers working in K-12 public schools mentioned various factors. Based on their responses, different sources of the issue were categorized under five main themes. These themes are teacher related, student related, material related, school related and ministry related factors.

*Teacher related factors:* Veteran teachers listed several teacher-related factors like having a heavy workload, having no or limited free time, experiencing difficulty in classroom management, having to use ministry-prescribed coursebooks, not being informed about the EFL program, and not feeling adequate for effective material utilization and teaching young learners.

*Student related factors:* Veteran teachers reported several challenges caused by their learners. These are mainly the behavioral, psychological and emotional problems they suffer from because of the characteristics of their age, having ten hours of class a day so being too tired and not being able to concentrate on the lesson. Additionally, the negative attitude of learners towards English was stated to be another difficulty that teachers face. As the possible causes of negative attitude towards English, teachers talked about poor intrinsic motivation to learn English, feeling of frustration or failure in learning a foreign language, being afraid of making mistakes, and having very low proficiency in English to follow lessons.

*Material related factors:* Interviewees listed several material-related factors that make the material use challenging. For example, they said that English teaching materials used at public schools are rather boring for learners. They also stated that these books include too many listening tasks; however, they are not provided with an audio CD for the listening tasks. The tasks in the coursebooks were stated not to be sequenced from easy to difficult, either. Almost all of the participants shared the idea that the books include too many unnecessary and repetitive activities and numerous irrelevant points and details. The materials were described to be out-dated and inauthentic as well. Teachers added that the books are inappropriate to students' level with too many unknown words and too tricky grammar structures. That seems to make it difficult for learners, especially young learners to learn the content. Another point raised by teachers was that the same coursebook is provided to be taught at all different school types without considering the differences in learner profiles. Participants working at vocational and technical schools criticized the practise by explaining that students' level and aptitude in different high schools are not the same. Hence, using the same course materials in different contexts with varying profiles of learners was not considered to be rational.

*School-related factors:* Most of the interviewed teachers talked about the challenges related to school infrastructure. They mentioned technical problems like lack of copying facilities at school, lack of audio materials and equipment (i.e., CDs, CD players and speakers), lack of technological equipment (i.e., computers and projectors) and inappropriate physical setting (i.e., overcrowded classrooms and fixed seating arrangement).

*Ministry related factors:* English language curriculum and language teaching policies of the ministry were regarded to be the primary source of the challenges they experience by some of the teachers. These teachers criticized that English teaching hours are insufficient, the curriculum is too loaded with too many objectives to teach in a limited time, and national exams lack language content. They also talked negatively about not being provided with the essential course materials like teacher's

book and listening CDs. Some of the teachers shared the idea that the language teaching is poorly planned by the ministry as the same objectives are set for students studying at different schools (e.g., Anatolian, Vocational and Technical High Schools). They also criticized the ministry for not informing the stakeholders such as the teachers, students and parents about the EFL curriculum adequately.

### Sample Quotations from Veteran Teacher Interviews

### Codes

*“In grade 12, as students need to take the university entrance exam, they are not interested in English at all. Thus, we just teach easy grammar items to test at exams. LYS is a serious problem for us, actually. As there is no English content, it is pointless to learn English. That’s what students think, so with this grade, I only bring in grammar worksheet but in other grades I do different things, use different materials...” VT 12*

“No content at national exams”

*“Both students’ motivation and interests change. As we teach at a technical high school, the motivation and level of printing operation department students and that of information technologies are so different from each other. You have to do completely different things in these classes. We have various students at various departments. Students at the pre-school education department are the ones that were accepted to school with the highest grades at national exams, so they are very eager to learn English. We can do anything with them: speaking, reading so on. However, other departments are not like them. They do not want to learn even a word of English. They find it difficult and are not motivated. However, we have the same objectives for these groups. It is meaningless.” VT 9*

“Sts’ lack of intrinsic motivation”

“different learner groups”

“same objectives for all sts”

Note: sts: students

About two-thirds of the veteran teachers participating in the study expressed that they did not feel confident in instructional materials, especially in the first years of their teaching. Still later, by trial and error, they started to feel more confident. For not being competent enough in instructional materials in the first years of their careers, the interviewed teachers criticized the undergraduate programs they attended by pointing to the massive gap between real classrooms and the instructional material education they had at the teacher education program. They further expressed that after graduating from teacher education institutions, EFL teachers did not feel prepared for the conditions at public schools, particularly the level and needs of students, the technical and logistic problems they might face in real classes. They criticized teacher education programs for preparing them for ideal classrooms, neglecting the realities of Turkish public schools. To sum up, the data collected from the veteran EFL teachers working at public schools disclosed very beneficial information about the most needed instructional materials competences to teach at K-12 public schools, and the challenging circumstances in which they need to use these competences.

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

Insights and experiences of veteran EFL teachers participating in the study helped us in determining the required competences in instructional materials to teach at K-12 public schools. Initially, experienced teachers underlined the need for knowledge in various material types such as printed, visual, authentic, technological, web-based and self-produced instructional materials (e.g., arts and crafts). For their future careers, it will be useful to extend the knowledge and skills of pre-service teachers in using and designing a variety of instructional materials.

According to the veteran teachers, having a remarkable material adaptation skill is necessary to teach effectively in the K-12 context. Therefore, it is advisable for teacher education institutions to train teacher candidates to be able to adapt the prescribed coursebooks and other teaching materials to the specific group of learners they have (e.g., to their level, age, interest and culture); to the specific classroom context (e.g., to size of class, physical setting, resources and facilities available at school); to the different curricular factors (e.g., the pace of the program and objectives in the program). To do so, pre-service teachers certainly need to have some strategies of material adaptation like removing, reducing, replacing, simplifying and transforming the content of the materials. The strategies reported by the EFL teachers were almost the same as the adaptation strategies suggested in the literature. For example, Tomlinson (1998), Mc Donough and Shaw (1993) all claimed that in order to adapt teaching materials to their learners, EFL teachers remove the inappropriate, offensive, unproductive things in materials; they add new content if they find the coverage inadequate; they shorten or lengthen an activity to give it less or more weight or emphasis; change some parts of materials so that it is more appropriate, challenging, more comprehensible for their group of learners; replace text or exercise in materials to make it adequate for their learners' needs and level and change the sequence in textbooks to make it more appropriate for their students.

Experienced EFL professionals also talked about a need for material selection skill, especially choosing appropriate materials for different learners. Regarding that, it is important for pre-service teachers to be informed about different school types and student profiles in Turkey and be prepared for the reality. They had better be trained to be able to search for and select appropriate materials that would work with students at different school types or in various departments of the vocational and technical high schools.

Another necessary competence is designing ELT materials. Pre-service teachers who will work in K-12 schools would benefit from the ability to design course materials or supplementary materials to reach the objectives in the curriculum because it is likely that in their future teaching practice, the primary course materials might be insufficient to attain those objectives effectively. Such a need is mentioned in literature by Howard and Major (2005), too. They stated that because of the disadvantages of the available materials, teachers might need to design their own materials.

Based on the responses received from veteran teachers, it is possible to suggest that future EFL teachers may need to be proficient in using materials for some other purposes besides instructional ones. For instance, they may need to use instructional materials skillfully to attract students' attention and to make students more active. This was also highlighted by Peacock (1997) who pointed out that there is a direct connection between materials and learner motivation. Pre-service teachers may need to use instructional materials for classroom management purposes as well. In other words, by using materials effectively and skillfully, it is possible for EFL teachers to reduce learners' stress, calm them down, promote cooperation among learners and manage difficult learners easily, and as a result, manage their classroom successfully. As the main purpose of materials is to facilitate instruction, pre-service teachers will undoubtedly need the skill to use instructional materials to improve the learnability of the language, probably by visualizing the content for students or helping young learners follow the lesson easily.

Besides instructional and classroom management purposes, pre-service teachers would need the knowledge and skills in using instructional materials for some other purposes. In their future career, they may need to foster students' self-confidence, improve their problem solution skills and creative thinking abilities by using the instructional materials available to them. Literature supports the impact of materials on the personal development of learners. Regarding that, Okwelle and Allagoa (2014) claimed that material use in English language classes could help learners develop a positive attitude and a healthy self-concept.

The interview results also suggest that equipping pre-service teachers with the skill of utilizing materials effectively under some challenging conditions at some public schools is of great importance. For that, pre-service teachers may benefit from problem solving skills that will help them teach under challenging conditions such as teaching in large classes, teaching to mixed ability or teaching students from different departments (i.e., in vocational and technical high schools) or teaching with little or no available resources. Pre-service teachers need to be taught how to utilize materials effectively to teach difficult learners. In their future career, they may teach a group of students having behavioural, psychological and emotional issues due to their tiring school schedule, poor concentration or motivation to learn English, the feeling of frustration and failure in learning English or low level of English proficiency to follow the lesson.

Furthermore, interview results indicate that it is essential for pre-service teachers to be informed about the problems related to the main coursebook required to be used by the ministry. In other words, it would be necessary to prepare them for the difficulties caused by instructional materials such as uninteresting materials, materials that are not ordered from easy to difficult; materials having too many redundant activities and details; materials lacking authenticity and materials lacking the audio component although including several tasks for listening skill. In other words, teacher education institutions are recommended to prepare pre-service teachers for real life situations so that pre-service teachers could be well aware of demanding situations and develop solutions when they encounter a problem. That

way, they can better cope when it is difficult for their learners to follow the main course material; when the material is out-dated or ineffective, and when the same coursebook is supposed to be used in all types of schools or departments. Additionally, pre-service teachers can be informed about and trained for the physical challenges for effective material use. For instance, they should be ready to teach despite the discouraging technical problems such as lack of photocopying facilities, technological problems like not functioning CD players and speakers and poor physical settings such as overcrowded classrooms and inappropriate seating arrangements.

Another difficulty that pre-service EFL teachers need to be prepared for is about the English language curriculum and policies by the ministry. It is significant that future EFL teachers develop problem solving skills for the possible problems they might face in their future career like inadequate teaching hours for English, too many objectives to be achieved in the curriculum in spite of the limited time allocated, lack of language content in national exams, lack of primary teaching materials like teacher's book or audio CDs and trying to achieve the same language teaching objectives for different students in different school types without considering their capacity or level.

In brief, the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews from veteran EFL teachers revealed very beneficial information about the instructional material competences required by EFL teachers working at K-12 schools in their daily practices as well as the challenges that they have to deal with. The study implies that it is advisable for teacher educators to support pre-service teachers in developing not just relevant knowledge and dispositions of instructional materials, but also in learning to use them when doing the work of teaching. Pre-service teachers need more than just acquiring information or understanding concepts of materials. They need to be able to do the work of teaching by utilizing materials effectively in its natural setting. For that, a paradigm shift in materials courses offered by teacher preparation in Turkey would be beneficial. Following the lecture, note-taking, and memorization of qualities of different instructional materials may not be suitable for preparing pre-service teachers for their future careers. Instead, they can be encouraged to solve material-related problems and internalize critical thinking that will benefit them throughout their careers. If they are facilitated to solve real-world instructional material problems using their content knowledge, they will learn how to approach the issues from a teacher's standpoint and seek additional resources to plan strategies to solve them. As a result, they will be ready to teach from the moment they enter the classroom. In conclusion, it is expected that if the competences determined by the current research are adequately addressed at teacher-education programs and if pre-service teachers are prepared to deal with the potential issues described in this study, they will be better prepared for the real world of classroom practice and ready to teach from the moment they enter the classroom.

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### **Aday İngilizce Öğretmenlerini Sınıf Gerçeklerine Hazırlamak: Öğretim Materyali Yeterliliklerinin Artırılması**

#### **Atf:**

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#### **Özet**

*Problem Durumu:* Dil eğitiminde başarı için yeterli ve uygun öğretmen eğitimi önemlidir. Fakat mevcut yabancı dil öğretmen eğitimi programları, öğretmen adaylarını okullardaki gündelik uygulama gerçeklerine yeterince hazırlamadıkları

için eleştirilmektedir. Ayrıca, bu programlardan mezun olan öğretmenler, gerçek hayattaki sınıflarda karşılaşacakları durumlara yeterince hazırlıklı olmadıklarını iddia etmektedirler.

*Araştırmanın Amacı:* Biz bu çalışmada, öğretmen adaylarını yakında girecekleri sınıf ve okullara daha iyi hazırlamak için, ilk ve orta dereceli okullarda çalışan yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin sınıflarında öğretmenlik yaparken ihtiyaç duydukları öğretim materyalleriyle ilgili yeterlilikleri belirlemeyi ve bu yeterlilikleri öğretmen eğitiminden sorumlu kurumlara, programlarına dahil etmeleri için önermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

*Araştırmanın Yöntemi:* Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Nitel veriler, Ankara'daki ilk ve orta dereceli devlet okullarında görev yapan 19 tecrübeli İngilizce öğretmeninden yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yöntemiyle toplanmış ve içerik analizi yoluyla analiz edilmiştir. Öğretmenlerin öğretim materyalleriyle ilgili ihtiyaç duydukları bilgi ve beceri gereksinimleriyle ilgili geniş bir perspektif yakalayabilmek için görüşme yapılacak öğretmenlerin belirlenmesinde maksimum varyasyon örneklem tekniğini kullanılmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yöntemiyle toplanan veriler içerik analizi yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir. Bu sürecin sonunda, ortaya çıkan kodlar, alt kategoriler ve kategoriler olarak gruplandırılmıştır ve sonuç bölümünde raporlanmıştır.

*Araştırmanın Bulguları:* Görüşme sonucunda tecrübeli İngilizce öğretmenlerinin, basılı, görsel, otantik, teknolojik, web tabanlı, tasarım ve el sanatları içeren bir dizi öğretim materyali hakkında bilgi sahibi olmaları gerektiği ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğretmen adaylarının, gelecekteki kariyerleri için, bu öğretim materyallerinin kullanılması tasarlanması ve adapte etmesi konusunda bilgi ve becerilere ihtiyaçları olacağı anlaşılmıştır. Bu nedenle, öğretmen yetiştirme programları, öğretmen adaylarını, ders kitaplarını ve diğer öğretim materyallerini öğrencilerin seviyelerine (yaşlarına, ilgilerine ve kültürüne; sınıf ortamına (sınıf mevcuduna, fiziksel ortama, kaynaklar ve tesislere); programa (programın hızı ve hedeflerine) göre adapte edebilmeleri için eğitmelidir.

Tecrübeli İngilizce öğretmenlerinin sıkça kullandığı bir diğer yeterlilikte materyal seçme yeterliliği olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Öğretmen adayları Türkiye'deki farklı okul türleri ve öğrenci profilleri hakkında bilgilendirilmeli ve bu gerçekliğe hazırlıklı olmalıdır. Farklı okul türlerinde veya mesleki teknik liselerin farklı bölümlerindeki öğrenciler için hazırlanmış özel amaçlı İngilizce öğreten ders materyalleri bulunmadığı için öğretmen adayları uygun materyalli seçmek için eğitilmelidir.

Gerekli bir başka yeterlilik ise materyal tasarımıdır. İlk ve orta dereceli okullarda çalışacak olan öğretmen adayları, müfredattaki hedeflere yönelik ana veya yardımcı ders materyallerini tasarlayabilmelidir. Bakanlık tarafından sağlanan ders kitaplarının bu hedefleri öğrencilere etkili bir şekilde öğretmekte yetersiz kaldığı durumlarda kendi materyallerini tasarlama yetkinliğinde olmalıdır.

Deneyimli öğretmenlerden toplanan veriler, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ders materyallerini öğretmeyi/öğrenmeyi desteklemek dışında başka amaçlar için de

kullanabilme becerisine sahip olmaları gerektiğini göstermektedir. Bu amaçlar kodlama sonucunda şöyle sıralanmıştır: öğrencilerin dikkatini çekmek ve öğrencileri daha aktif hale getirmek; sınıf yönetimini kolaylaştırmak; konuyu görselleştirmek ve küçük öğrencilerin dersi kolayca takip etmesine yardımcı olmak; öğrencilerin problem çözme becerilerini ve yaratıcı düşünme yeteneklerini geliştirerek kendilerine olan güveni geliştirmek.

Görüşme sonuçları ayrıca öğretmen adaylarının devlet okullarında karşılaşılabilecekleri bazı zorlu koşullar altında da ders materyallerini etkin kullanabilmeleri konusunda da eğitilmeleri gerektiğini göstermektedir. Bu zorlu koşullardan bazıları şöyle sıralanmıştır: kalabalık sınıflar, karma yeteneklere ve dil düzeylerine sahip öğrencilerin bulunduğu sınıflar, farklı çalışma alanlarından öğrencilerin (meslek liselerinde rastlanan durum) olduğu sınıflar, kaynak yetersizliği, düşük motivasyonlu öğrenciler, dersi takip etmek için gerekli dil yeterliliğine sahip olmayan öğrenciler, bazı psikolojik ve duygusal problemler içeren öğrenci davranışları.

Görüşme sonuçlarından edinilen en önemli sonuçlardan biri, öğretmen adaylarının kullanmak zorunda oldukları ana ders materyalleriyle ilgili problemlerin üstesinden gelmek için gerekli yeterliliklere sahip olmaları gerektiğidir. Başka bir deyişle, öğrenciler için ilgi çekici olmayan, kolaydan zora sıralanmamış, çok fazla gereksiz tekrar eden aktiviteleri ve çok sayıda gereksiz detayları içeren, orijinaliği olmayan ve dinleme CD'si olmadığı halde çok sayıda dinleme etkinliği içeren materyalleri nasıl adapte edip kullanmaları gerektiğini öğrenmeleri gerekmektedir.

Öğretmen adayları, devlet okulların altyapısı ile ilgili ve yaşayabilecekleri muhtemel zorluklar hakkında bilgilendirilmeli ve eğitilmelidir. Görüşme yaptığımız öğretmenler örneğin fotokopi ile ilgili zorluklar, bozuk CD çalarlar gibi teknolojik problemlere ve aşırı kalabalık sınıflar ve uygunsuz oturma düzeni gibi fiziksel sorunlara değinmişlerdir.

İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının hazır olması gereken başka bir zorluk yabancı dil müfredatı ve dil öğretim politikaları ile ilgili sorunlardır. Görüşme yaptığımız öğretmenler İngilizce öğretmek için yetersiz öğretim saatlerine, sınırlı bir zamanda öğretilmesi gereken çok fazla hedefin olduğu yüklü programa, TEOG veya LYS gibi ulusal sınavlarda az veya hiç yabancı dil içeriğinin olmamasına değindiler.

Çalışmanın sonucunda ortaya çıkmaktadır ki, öğretmen eğitimcilerinin, öğretmen adaylarına sadece gerekli bilgiyi sağlaması yetmez. Öğretmen adaylarının bilgiyi bilmesi ya da kavramları anlamasının yanı sıra öğretme çalışmalarını kendi doğal ortamında yapabilmeleri gerekir. Bunun için, öğretmen adaylarına sunulan öğretim materyalleri derslerinde bir paradigma değişikliğine ihtiyaç vardır. Farklı öğretim materyallerinin niteliklerini not alıp ezberlemeleri öğretmen adaylarının gelecekteki kariyerlerine hazırlanmaları için uygun ve yeterli değildir. Bunun yerine, öğretmen adaylarına gelecekte karşılaşılabilecekleri muhtemel sorunları çözmeleri gereken ve kariyerleri boyunca onlara yarar sağlayacak araştırma ve eleştirel düşünme becerisini içselleştirmelerini sağlayacak durumlar verilmelidir. Gerçek dünyadaki eğitim materyalleriyle ilgili problemleri sahip oldukları içerik bilgisini kullanarak çözmeleri

sağlanırsa, bu problemleri bir öğretmenin bakış açısıyla nasıl ele alacaklarını öğrenecekler ve problemleri çözmek için strateji geliştirmeyi ve farklı yöntemler ve kaynaklar aramayı öğreneceklerdir. Böyle bir eğitimin sonunda, sınıfa girdikleri andan itibaren öğretmeye hazır olurlar.

*Sonuç ve Öneriler:* Sonuç olarak, aldıkları öğretmen eğitimi, öğretmen adaylarını gerçek sınıf ortamında öğretmenlerin ihtiyaç duydukları yeterlilikleri edinmeleri için eğitmelidir ve araştırma ve eleştirel düşünmeyi içselleştirerek olası problemlerle başa çıkma becerilerini geliştirmeleri için yeterli fırsatı sunmalıdır. Ancak bu şekilde onları gerçek dünyaya hazırlamış olur ve bu şekilde öğretmen adayları sınıfa girdikleri ilk andan itibaren öğretmeye hazır olabilirler.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* Öğretmen eğitimi, öğretmen yeterlikleri, öğretim materyalleri.

**Appendix: Theme and Code List of Interview Analysis**

<p><b>Theme 1: Materials Used</b></p> <p><b>Code 1: printed materials</b>                  -other coursebooks                  -resource books                  -test books                  -exercises (as photocopies)                  -worksheets                  -stories/staged readers</p> <p><b>Code 2: visual materials</b>                  -realia/real materials (e.g., locks, keys, cloths, mirrors etc.)                  -flashcards/pictures                  - puzzles</p> <p><b>Code 3: authentic materials</b>                  -songs                  -films</p> <p><b>Code 4: technological materials</b>                  -- 3 D materials                  - flash programs                  - projector                  - OHP                  - computer                  - CDs/CD players                  - E-books                  - web-based materials                  - social media</p> <p><b>Code 5: teacher and or student-produced materials</b>                  - school magazine                  - notice/bulletin board                  - project work                  - flashcards                  - picture dictionary                  - photos and videos                  -certificates (awards)                  - booklets                  - vocab journals                  - sentence/word strips</p> <p><b>Code 6: art and craft</b>                  -model buildings                  -origami                  -clay/dough                  - wooden artifacts (e.g., wheel of fortune)</p>	<p><b>Theme 2: Purpose of Material Use</b></p> <p><b>Code 1: for motivational purposes</b>                  -to attract sts' attention                  - to make sts more active in class</p> <p><b>Code 2: for instructional purposes</b>                  - to connect it with other lessons                  - to teach language areas (i.e. vocabulary and grammar)                  - to teach language skills (i.e., listening, reading, speaking and writing)                  - to test their learning                  - to relate English to their lives</p> <p><b>Code 3: for classroom management purposes</b>                  - to calm sts down (music)                  - to create cooperation among sts.</p> <p><b>Code 4: to increase learnability</b>                  - to visualize sth.                  - make it more concrete                  - to help young learner follow the lesson easily                  - to handle difficult learners                  - to have meaningful, active and long-lasting learning                  - to relate English to their lives for a longer retention</p> <p><b>Code 5: for general or overall improvement of students</b>                  - to foster sts' self-confidence                  - to foster creative thinking                  - to improve sts' problem- solving skills</p> <p><b>Code 6: for some other purposes</b>                  - to certify their success                  - to inform and involve parents about /in their children' learning</p>
<p><b>Theme 3: Competences Needed</b></p>	<p><b>Theme 4: Challenges Faced</b></p>
<p><b>Code 1: Materials Adaptation:</b>                  -adapting materials to the students' -</p>	<p><b>Code 1: Related to Teachers:</b>                  -heavy workload</p>

<p>level, - age, - interests, -culture  - adapting materials to classroom's – size,  - physical setting, - available equipment and facilities  - adapting materials in order to - catch up with the program, - not to waste time, - to motivate sts.,  -make it more achievable to sts (in terms of level)</p> <p><i>-adaptation techniques:</i> - omitting, - reducing, - replacing, - simplifying, - transforming (i.e., changing the format), - changing the content (e.g., names, characters, topic, examples etc.), - changing the sequence</p> <p><b>Code 2: Materials Design:</b>  -Design materials -to teach language skills, -as it is cost-effective,- no need to search for materials  to teach effectively at different circumstances (e.g. different schools, departments etc.), with limited/no resource at all</p> <p><b>Code 3: Materials Use:</b>  -Use various materials (printed, real, authentic, technological)  materials use: - in large classes, - with mixed ability groups, - in different departments (i.e., different fields of study), - without technology, - to motivate sts, - to attract sts. attention, - on smart boards, designed with new technology</p> <p><b>Code 4: Materials Selection:</b>  -select appropriate materials for sts. at vocational and technical schools (with different departments e.g., printing press operation, computer programming, hairdressing, early childhood education) very limited or no resource to teach these sts.</p>	<p>-no/limited time  -difficulty in classroom management  -not being free to choose coursebook (being obliged to use MoNE prescribed coursebook )  -lack of knowledge:  -regarding the new program  - regarding teaching methods and techniques (e.g.TEYL)</p> <p><b>Code 2: Related to Students:</b>  a) General:  - age characteristics  - behavioral problems  - psychological and emotional turmoil  - tiredness (10 hours a day)  - lack of/poor concentration  b) Attitude towards language:  - not being interested  - lack of intrinsic motivation to learn English  - frustration  - fear of making mistakes  - low language level</p> <p><b>Code 3: Related to Materials</b>  -boring and dull  -too much listening (no CD available)  -sequence of topics (not from easy to diff.)  -repetition of activities  -lack of authenticity  -too many details/unnecessary points  -difficult to follow (for very young learners)  - no coursebook differentiation (i.e., same coursebook for - all types of high schools: e.g., vocational, general, Anatolian) and for different departments of vocational high schools  -outdated  -ineffective (not working) parts/sections  -inappropriate to sts' level (i.e., too many unknown words, too difficult)</p> <p><b>Code 4: 4. Related to School Infrastructure</b></p>
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	<p>a. Technical Problems -lack of/difficulty of photocopy facilities - lack of/faulty CD players and speakers - lack of technological facilities (e.g., computers, projectors etc.)</p> <p>b. Physical Setting - overcrowded classrooms - mixed ability classes - seating arrangement (e.g., fixed chairs, no space to move around)</p> <p><b>Code 5: Related to English Curriculum and language teaching policies of MoNE</b></p> <p>-insufficient teaching hours - too loaded curriculum (i.e., too many objectives versus not enough time -no/little language content in national exams (e.g., TEOG and LYS) - MoNE' not providing the necessary materials (e.g., teacher's book and listening CDs) -same objectives and exams for all students (e.g., Anatolian, Vocational Technical high schools etc.) - insufficient introduction of the current program to stakeholders: teachers, students and parents</p>
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Note: sts.: students

