

تكيف المواد التعليمية للمتعلمين الصغار في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية: دراسة للسياق الكردي

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الخلاصة:

يلقي هذا البحث الضوء على دور الكتب المدرسية في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية في إقليم كردستان العراق. وفي الوقت نفسه، يحاول اكتشاف تكيف المواد التعليمية من قبل المعلمين وأي نوع من التكيف يستخدمونه أكثر داخل فصولهم الدراسية، وما يفكر فيه المعلمون بشأن الالتزام بالكتب المدرسية. ولهذا الغرض، تم جمع البيانات في السليمانية وأربيل وجمجمال. وفي المدن الثلاث، شارك ٣١ معلماً في المدارس الابتدائية. كما يتم استخدام البحث المختلط لإجراء هذه الدراسة. استبيان يضم كلا من البنود المغلقة والبنود المفتوحة. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة أنه على الرغم من أن المواد التقليدية مثل الكتب المدرسية وكتب التدريبات والسيبورة تهيمن على ممارسات الفصول الدراسية، إلا أن هناك استخدام محدود للأدوات التكنولوجية الحديثة والمواد الإضافية. ويشكل الافتقار إلى البنية التحتية التكنولوجية وقيود الوقت عائق كبير أمام اعتماد تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات وغيرها من الوسائل التعليمية المعاصرة. في الوقت نفسه، بينما يدرك المعلمون أهمية تكيف أساليبهم وموادهم لتحسين مشاركة الطلاب وفهمهم، هناك فجوة ملحوظة بين فهمهم النظري للحاجة إلى التكيف واستخدامهم الفعلي لمثل هذه التقنيات في الممارسة العملية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التكيف/المواد التعليمية، الكتب المدرسية، السياق الكردي

Adapting Educational Materials for Young Learners in English Classrooms: A Study of the Kurdish Context

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Abstract

This research explores the role of textbooks in English language classrooms in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. It also examines how teachers adapt materials in their classes, the types of adaptations they use most frequently, and their perspectives on relying solely on textbooks. For this purpose, data were collected in Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, and Chamchamal, with 31 primary school teachers participating across these cities. A mixed-methods approach was used, incorporating both closed- and open-ended questions in the questionnaire. The study's findings reveal that traditional materials, such as textbooks, workbooks, and the board, dominate classroom practices, while the use of modern technological tools and additional resources remains limited. The lack of technological infrastructure and time constraints are key barriers to the integration of ICT and other contemporary teaching aids. Although teachers acknowledge the importance of adapting their teaching methods and materials for enhanced student engagement and understanding, there is a noticeable gap between their theoretical recognition of this need and their actual implementation of such adaptations in practice.

Keywords: Material adaptation, textbooks, Kurdish context

1. Introduction

Material adaptation is a critical aspect of effective language teaching, especially in diverse classrooms. In the context of Kurdish primary schools, it is essential to understand how teachers incorporate adapted materials into their instruction. The types of adaptations teachers use, whether through modifying, adding, or simplifying content, play a significant role in meeting the diverse needs of students. Furthermore, exploring teachers' perspectives on the role of textbooks and their reliance on them is vital for assessing the overall impact of material adaptation on student engagement and language acquisition.

The problem of this study lies in the gap between the heavy reliance on traditional textbooks and the necessity of adapting teaching materials to meet the diverse needs of primary school students in Kurdistan. This study investigates the advantages and disadvantages of textbooks, the factors influencing the use of alternative materials, and the types of adaptations teachers make to enhance student learning

To this end, this study aims to examine the extent of material adaptation by primary school teachers in academic classrooms, the types of adaptations they use most frequently, and the degree of reliance on textbooks, along with the reasons for their heavy dependence on them.

To achieve the aims and solve the problem, this paper tries to answer the following questions:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using textbooks in the classroom?
- What factors influence your decision to use materials outside the textbook? In other words, how do you adapt your teaching materials?
- Which types of adaptations (e.g., omission, addition, reduction, extension, rewriting, replacement, reordering, and branching) do you use most often in your classroom? Why?
- Based on your experience, what are your thoughts on teachers who rely solely on textbooks?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definitions of adaptation

Adaptation is an explanation of the modifications that are made in general for students to encounter their aims and objectives. It is allowed in an academic domain that authorizes the pupil's equal opportunity to acquire access, outcome, advantage, and levels of accomplishments. Those adaptations include both accommodation and moderation. They are constructed to encounter student's needs as recognized in an individualized teaching plan. The phrase adaptation is used to describe anything that teachers or learners use to assist language learning (Tomlinson, 1998). Adapting materials are anything that is used to help learners learn the Language. It, also, is the adjusting of materials to enhance or make them more relevant for a specific class of learners or groups of learners. Adaptation in the instructional setting, accommodations are characterized as an adaptation of classroom directives that guarantees equal access to the curriculum for all students so that they have the chance to succeed, (Tomlinson, 2011).

2.2 The role of the textbook in ELT context

Given the technical advances and the position of the internet, textbooks are the key tools for teaching used by many English language teachers around the world, the scope of English language teaching in the world perhaps could not be maintained without the assistance of countless non-identical types of textbooks and their attending which are obtainable to assist English language teachers (Tomlinson, 2003). In many educational institutions, textbooks supply the primary foundation for the curriculum (Richard, 1993). Appel (2011, pp.50_51) states 'in no other school subject does course books exert a similar influence as in language teaching. The book is in fact, treated as the syllabus'. Textbooks frequently control the aims and the content of teaching, as well as the techniques teachers use. For both teachers and students, the textbook supplies a plan that details the general materials of lessons and awareness of structure which gives unity to each particular lesson, in addition to a whole course. Furthermore, McGrath (2013) presents a variety of phrases used by

teachers to explain the role of textbooks for them: recipe, springboard, straightjacket, supermarket, holy book, compass, survival kit, and crutch, as implied by these metaphors some instructors utilize textbooks as their main resource for teaching. The quality of the lesson is based on the materials. The balance of skills taught, and the type of language exercise learners participate in, in additional circumstances course books can assist essentially to accessory the instructor's directions, for unpracticed teachers a course book and the manual of the teacher may be a major source of exercise on the job, a textbook and its audio or video elements may supply an important source of English language data reception for the learners, serving for class use and self-study before or after lesson. A textbook can offer students a sense of self-independence, that dependence on handouts prepared by the teachers does not provide, (Crawford, 2002).

2.3 Adapting ELT materials

Many recent studies have focused on teachers' adaptation to ELT materials, and they indicate that most participants face challenges in matching adaptation activities to their mixed-ability classes. Additionally, the time allocated to teaching a coursebook may be too short. Therefore, the language needs of the students will determine the materials that should be used. Teachers also employ a variety of techniques in teaching English, such as adding, deleting, modifying, simplifying, reordering, conceptualizing, dividing inputs into smaller sections, and tailoring materials to students' capabilities and interests, among others. Here are the most important and common techniques that teachers might use in their classes:

- Addition is the act of combining two or more items.
- Deletion means deleting or drawing a line through something, especially a written word or words.
- Modifying is altering something such as a plan, opinion, law, or way of behavior to a slight extent, in a way to make it more appropriate.

- Simplifying is making something less difficult and thus easier to do or understand.
- Re-ordering is the process of organizing, adjusting, or disclosing (articles) again in their proper places.
- Conceptualizing is the invention and the practical execution of an idea.

2.4 The reasons for adaptation

Adapting to teaching the English language has several uses. It encourages both teachers and students academically. Also, the adaptation materials are mostly student-based, therefore, learners make the most of it. Adapting to English language teaching makes learning more interesting, increases learners' involvement, initiates more activity, provides extra information, and keeps the students focused on the subject matter. Moreover, the student's attitude toward having the same coursebook for a whole year is most likely boring and less interesting for them. It is better to bear in mind the impact of using different techniques is far greater than one ongoing textbook provided for a whole country. Some modifications can be made to relate the subject matter to the students' backgrounds and information such as task-based materials, which normally tie the students to the outside world. Using real-life examples and evidence can be an easier input for students' learning abilities. On the other hand, the culture and samples given in the textbook can be rather irrelevant for the students to intake due to the difference between the cultural values of the first language and the second language. Therefore, adapting to English language teaching is highly recommended, especially for ESL learners, who have different backgrounds and cultural understandings than the textbook (Tomlinson, 1998).

2.5 Techniques for Adapting Textbooks

There are various techniques for adapting to textbooks in general and the Sunrise book specifically. Adding and deleting are two of the techniques used in adapting to textbooks to supplement more materials and provide more, whilst extending provides more of the same material. On the other hand, expanding

provides more information but is different from the existing materials. Deleting refers to two types of adaptation techniques (subtracting and abridging) which are both used for removing specific parts of the materials, but different in ways that subtracting extracts parts of the available material. On the other hand, abridging excludes parts and focuses on other parts. Another technique for adaptation is simplifying the context to make it easier for students to comprehend, learn, and understand. Some other way of adaptation techniques is reordering and replacing. They are different in usage in the context that reordering is changing the sequence of activity in a way that makes it more comprehensible and suitable for the student's needs. While replacing includes substituting parts or sections in the material with different purposes, mostly works in cultural differences (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010).

2.6 When do teachers supplement textbooks?

Teachers adapt to textbooks due to various reasons and motives. And they are mostly student-centered. Textbooks are not always impactful and effective in teaching a language.

Therefore, teachers should adapt to increase impact by breaking unit routines with unusual activities, using attractive colors, interesting topics for the learners, and presenting tasks that challenge the students to think (Tomlinson, 1998). The materials used by the teachers must make the students feel at ease in learning the language by using materials that include lots of white space rather than activities that are put together on the same page. Also, students feel more comfortable with texts that relate to their own culture than being culturally unfamiliar.

Furthermore, students find it easier to learn materials that are trying to help them learn and not test them frequently. The teacher's voice is a great criterion in the classroom as it should be supportive and helpful through activities that encourage the student's participation (Tomlinson, 1998). The comprehension tasks sometimes are either too easy or too difficult. Teachers should be able to adapt to using different vocabulary and word forms to make them easier or more difficult for the students. At the same time, the subject matter could be inappropriate for the student's age, the cultural difference given by the pictures in the textbook, or the dialogues may be too official and not exactly daily

speech (Nehal, 2016). Each student has his/her learning style. So, for example, students who learn from a studied teaching style are more likely to learn clear grammar rather than students who desire an experimental learning style and can learn from reading a book with grammatical structures (Tomlinson, 1998). Another issue is students being used to the sequence of a textbook. The teacher may realize that the sequence does not fully suit the student's interests and abilities. On that basis, the teacher may re-order the sequence of the textbook in a way compatible with the student's comprehension abilities (Nehal, 2016).

Being too reliant on the coursebook does not give the satisfaction needed by the teachers. Therefore, teachers should develop continuously (Çakir, 2015)

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Mixed methods research is a methodology for performing research that includes gathering, analyzing, and integrating quantitative (e.g., experiments, surveys) and qualitative (e.g., focus groups, interviews) research. Quantitative data includes close-ended items that are found to measure attitudes (e.g., rating scales), behaviors (e.g., observation checklists), performance instruments, and questionnaires. On the other hand, Qualitative data consists of open-ended information that the researcher typically collects through interviews, focus groups, and observations (Dunning, H., Williams, A., Abonyi, S. et al. , 2008).

The tool for collecting data for this study is an adaptive questionnaire, which Cakir uses in (2015) in a Turkish context that consists of three sections. The first part includes particular questions about the teachers' gender, age, nationality, mother tongue, and years of teaching experience. The researcher has selected to receive general information about the participants' backgrounds. Also, for a better understanding of the applicants' teaching mentality. The second part contains (15) close-ended questions issuing the materials that are commonly used by teachers in teaching English such as (textbooks, flashcards, real objects, videos, etc.). The third and last part of the survey contains (4) open-ended questions.

3.2 Context of the study

The context of the study includes basic schools. The study is enriched by visiting (19) different schools with questioning (1-3) teacher(s) in each school. To enhance the reliability of the research and gather a broad range of information, the researcher conducted the study across various districts in the Kurdish region, including Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, and Chamchamal.

3.3 Participants

The participants of the study were (31) basic school teachers from different Kurdish contexts. From three different places naming Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, and Chamchamal. Ninety percent of the participants were females and ten percent were males. The teachers' ages ranged from 33-61. The teachers' years of experience ranged from 6-40. Both nationality and mother tongue of applicants were Kurdish.

Gender		Percent		Age		Experience		Nationality & mother	Percent
Male	3	10%	Min	33	Min	6		Kurdish	100%
Female	28	90%	Max	61	Max	40		Total	100%
Total	31	100%	Med	45	Med	17			

Table1: Background information

3.1 Data analysis

3.1.1 Close-ended items

As it is calculated, the materials that the researchers frequently utilized are those that are mostly available for teachers to use such as textbooks, workbooks, and the board. Depending on the study it is indicated that all participants (always=100%) regarded textbooks as a primal element of teaching the English language. Therefore, the textbook is considered the central element in the process of teaching English as every teacher in this study uses it without exceptions. In addition, almost all of the participants (always=97% and sometimes =3%) expressed that a workbook can help in exercising the target language. However, additional printed materials are not used as frequently as the textbook and the workbook (always =7%, sometimes =32%, never=61%) considering it will not help teach young learners. The board is one of the classical materials, that is mostly frequently used by the participants (always =100%) even if the material appears to be traditional or outdated, it still is a useful tool in the teaching process for many teachers.

Instructional materials		always	sometimes	Never
1	Textbook	100%	0%	0%
2	Workbook	97%	3%	0%
3	Printed materials (work sheet,	7%	32%	61%
4	Board	100%	0%	0%

Table 2: The percentage of basic materials used

Table 3 indicates that (always=74%) of the participants use pictures/posters as visual aids in teaching the English language and very few of them (never=3%) do not use it. This is due to the availability and the instructions of the textbook. At the same time, flashcards are another visual material that is used less (always=68%) as teaching aids by teachers. Another type of instructional material examined in this research is audio/recording materials. As it is understood, listening materials have a great deal in acquiring the target

language by learners, as they provide them with vocabulary and especially pronunciation input. This study reflects the fact that audio/recording materials are essential in teaching the target language as (74%) of the participants benefit from them with their teaching performance. This might be due to the requirements of the textbook, as it instructs the teachers to use audio/recording materials inside the classroom. Therefore, the researchers understand the reasons behind the fewer usage of songs/podcasts as (58%) of the participants always use them and (6%) never do. Even though they have a better impact on learners' focus and interest than the table. The researchers comprehend that the use of visual aids and audio aids is over (50%) but somehow, the usage of audio/visual aids has dropped as low as the ground. Almost none of the participants use videos/films as teaching aids on a daily basis, only (3%) of the applicants apply them in every class, and (81%) never even use them. This mostly refers to the unavailability of projectors, televisions, and computers on the campus.

Instructional materials		Alway	sometimes	Never
5	Pictures/posters	74%	23%	3%
6	Flashcards	68%	29%	3%
7	Audio/recording materials	77%	23%	0%
8	Songs/podcasts	58%	36%	6%
9	Videos/films	3%	16%	81%

Table 3: The percentage of visual, audio, and audio-visual aids used

The information collected from the survey demonstrates that most of the participants never use ICT materials inside of the classroom due to the lack of projectors, computers, and the World Wide Web. In most of the schools, low budget is the main problem. In the usage of projectors, 74% of the teachers never use it. However, the data indicates that some teachers utilize this material for better comprehension at the percentage of (always= 13%, sometimes= 13%). In the matter of internet-based materials, it is seen that the same as the material mentioned above more than half of the participants (never=74%) depend on the usage of cyberspace, which reveals the reasons

why none of the participants completely depend on this material (always=0%) and 23% sometimes utilize it. Another educational material is computer-based programs, despite their availability, teachers are not eager to use this material in their classrooms. According to the results, 71% of the teachers never use it, while 3% of the participants always rely on the usage of this material for educational purposes.

Instructional materials	Always	sometimes	Never
10 Projector/interactive	13%	13%	74%
11 Internet based materials	0%	26%	74%
12 Computer based programs	3%	26%	71%

Table 4: The use of information communication technology (ICT)

The constructive role played by real objects and authentic materials in the process of learning a foreign language is unquestionable and they are necessary for learners to obtain the target language most efficiently, to connect the language to the real world. In the collection of data for real objects, it is estimated that 61% of teachers use them as permanent material for young learners and 39% only uses them sometimes or when necessary, there has not been a single participant who utterly suspended their usage. On the other hand, participants have always used authentic materials at the rate of 84% and 16% sometimes. Young learners can consider the last instructional material beneficial. However, it was noticed that some teachers neglected their usage due to a shortage of time. 6% of participants utterly ignored this element in their classrooms and the remaining participants have utilized it at the percentage (always=42%,52%).

Instructional materials	Always	sometimes	Never
13 Real objects	61%	39%	0%
14 Authentic materials	84%	16%	0%
15 Gaming materials	42%	52%	6%

Table 5: Responses to the use of other materials

3.1.2 Open-ended questions

This part of the study explains the interviews and ideas gathered from the participants. The first question asked was “What are the advantages and disadvantages of textbooks”? Moreover, the answers shocked the researchers as they were very relevant based on the little knowledge and improvements the applicants have achieved. The textbook is believed to be the most important of all in teaching the method. In addition, in this context, the participants mostly replied positively to the benefits of the textbook. Therefore, a quiet number of the interviewees have the same ideas about the usage of the textbook in general as they grasp it as an essential way of learning both reading and writing skills very well, which draws the researcher’s attention to the other two skills which are listening and speaking. A big amount of the teachers agree that the Sunrise textbook is weak on speaking skills as it doesn’t teach the students how to speak fluently. However, applicant number (3) has other ideas as she says, and I quote “The sunrise book teaches the students songs, vocabulary, and speaking skills” which is quite the opposite of the other applicants as participant number (1) includes that “the students learn how to read and write, but not how to speak”. As many of the teachers, view the textbook as a flawless/no disadvantage included “no advantages for

young learners” so applicants’ number (9, 10, and 12) say, there also are some contradictions on the informative levels of the textbook for example, contributor number (4) explains, “The subject is too long for teachers to teach in such short period”.

On the other hand, candidate numbers (3, 12, and 7) say, “the textbook is too short and contains very little information”. On the bright side roughly (90%) of the partakers, agree on the brightness and colorfulness of the subject interest the learners. Let us not forget the pictures included in the textbook as it helps with the visual input of the students’ information. Another important question the interviewees asked was “What makes you use materials outside of the textbook? In other words, how do you adapt”? On this particular question, a quite number of the applicants had the same view on their reasons behind the usage of adaptation inside the classroom. As the researchers, accept as true that the teachers adapt in teaching especially due to the benefit of better understanding to the students’ input ratio. For instance, contributor number (1, 2, 4, and 7) believe that “I use adaptation materials and I also adapt for the students to understand better and easier”. Some other participants use it as motivation in order to give less and benefit more of the time they have. Applicants’ number (three, four, five, and 7) say, “The adaptation materials teachers use during classes are more affective in ways of the information permanence, studying motives, besides the fun they get from the materials”. Although the materials used by the teachers vary from one to another as applicant number (1) uses flashcards, internet-based materials and videos. On the other hand, participant number (2 and 3) use pictures and conversations for both visual and speaking ability improvements. There is also the manner of boringness and hatred of specific subjects by the students as participants’ number (12 and 17) think that the way of making a lesson more interesting and active you have to connect it to the students’ real lives. This drives us to the next teacher number (14) as the teacher believes that the students need more information than it is already given by the textbook. The study included wide range of questions.

Therefore, similarly requested answers about the types of adaptations the applicants use more inside the classroom (omission, addition, reduction,

extension, re-writing, replacement, re-ordering, and branching). Why? In this section, the adaptation materials asked are the ones included in the textbook. Therefore, approximately all applicants believe that (addition) is the most important adaptation you could make inside the textbook because the information given in the textbook is quite short and needs to be extended for further recognition and knowledge base (numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8). The addition not only helps give extra information on the current subject, but it also provides a clear view of what is coming in the next grades (number 7). Although a large number of the applicants believe that, the textbook is weak on information, nevertheless participant number (11) uses (reduction) to save more time.

Nonetheless almost (70%) of the applicants believe that the textbook is perfect and does not need any type of adaptation and it must be taught as it is. The researchers also asked the participants "What are your thoughts about teachers who stick to the textbook only? Taking their experience into consideration "The replies that the researchers received from the applicants were mostly alike and somehow useless as the applicants appointed such teachers as "bad teachers". The interviewers acquired a good view of the participants' knowledge base and mentality in teaching such young minds and it was not as expected. Almost all of the applicants clarified that teachers must improvise and improve without the usage of the textbook, but then again, the same applicants were the ones who did not adapt whatsoever. For example, participant number (3) indicated, "It is not good to stick to the textbook, you know your students best, therefore you have to use adaptation materials" At the same time, the same participant was one of those who did not use any adaptation tools. On the contradictory, participants number (10, 11, and 1) have similar views as they clarify that "the world is in a rapid change; therefore, teachers should use technology in teaching, they are bad teachers because good ones are always growing, they are non-creative and non-developing teachers" From this, it is understandable that the applicants agree on the necessity of adaptation. There also is the practical portion of learning, in addition, participant number (18) believes that "such teachers are doing bad because students need adaptation to be more active and must practice the lesson they have been taught".

Essentially, the maximum number of contributors relegate the crisis of not adapting in teaching young learners. This tells us how much the teachers are closely related on mindset but not acting, as they should be.

4.1 Conclusion

The results of this study reveal that textbooks are central to English language teaching, with 100% of teachers using them regularly. Teachers also appreciate workbooks (97%) for reinforcing language skills, but additional printed materials and digital resources are infrequently used, largely due to perceived limitations and lack of access to technology. Visual aids like pictures (74%) and audio materials (74%) are more common, though **audio/visual aids** like videos are rarely employed, mainly due to a lack of technological infrastructure.

Open-ended responses highlight that while teachers recognize the value of adapting lessons to better address **speaking skills** and enhance engagement, many continue to rely on textbooks without significant modifications (70%). Teachers cited the **Sunrise textbook** as helpful for reading and writing but acknowledged its shortcomings in promoting speaking skills, leading them to seek additional materials. Some teachers mentioned using **flashcards, pictures, and internet-based resources** for adaptation, but there is a disconnect between the awareness of the need for adaptation and the actual use of these methods in the classroom.

Moreover, **real objects** and **authentic materials** are valued for their ability to link language learning to real-world contexts, though time constraints often hinder their consistent use. Teachers also emphasized the need for more information than what the textbook provides, advocating for **addition** as a key adaptation strategy.

In conclusion, while teachers are aware of the need for more diverse and engaging teaching methods, their practices remain largely shaped by traditional materials and a lack of technological access. To foster more dynamic teaching, improving access to technology and offering professional development on adaptation strategies would be essential.

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