

# 10

## Finding and selecting suitable materials

### 10A Background text

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#### 1. Introduction: finding materials in the past and today

In former times, teaching simply involved working through a textbook and the exercises that belonged to it; ancillary materials were hardly ever considered. Today, the requirements for good teaching are significantly higher in this regard as well. Postulates such as teacher orientation, relevance to everyday life, individualization (see chapters 4 and 5) apply as well for teaching materials (texts, worksheets, electronic media, etc.). Learner orientations, relevance to everyday life and orientation for the goal of intercultural competence mean that HLT instruction must respond to the specific situation of the students who grow up in and between two cultures, which prohibits a simple recourse to textbooks used in the country of origin. In light of the heterogeneous classes and various levels of competence, this recourse would anyway be hardly possible in most classes; it would not fit into the broad spectrum of teaching and learning forms to which students have been accustomed from regular classroom instruction (see chapter 6). Even if the country of origin provides actual teaching materials for HLT, instructors will have to look for additional materials with relevance for the specific situation in the respective host countries and topical political issues. Fortunately, all this no longer has to lead to a complete work overload for HLT instructors.

**In contrast to earlier years, it is not only admissible today, but quite useful also in relation to the postulates, learner orientation, independence, relevance to everyday life and media competence to actively include the students in the selection of materials for specific topics.**

In 1st and 2nd grade, this can mean that the students bring pictures, picture books and objects for themes like "leisure time" or "holiday memories" to class; from the 3rd/4th grade on, students can on their own and mostly without problems conduct research in libraries or the internet while taking advantage of their competences in two languages.

#### 2. What does "suitable " materials mean? Six criteria.

With reference to the title of this chapter, the question of what is considered appropriate teaching materials remains open. This could be subject for an entire book. We shall limit ourselves to the following short checklist of questions. The points that can be answered with "yes", are criteria considered for suitable materials.

- Does the material (text, visual material, website, etc.) correspond to the age of the students, for whom I intend to use it? (criterion of age-appropriateness.)
- Is the material not colored ideologically, religiously or polemically; are critical issues not presented in a one-sided or distorted way? (criterion of the greatest possible neutrality, as demanded by most of the immigration countries.)
- Does the material promote independent thinking of students? (criterion of learner orientation and furthering of independence.)
- Does the material relate – where this is possible and useful – to the reality, the background experience and the bilingual/bicultural competences of the students who grow up in and between two cultures and languages? (criterion of learner orientation with specific reference to HLT.)
- Does the material refrain from accentuating entrenched stereotypes, are both genders represented equally? (criterion of gender equality.)
- Can the material be adapted – where this is possible and useful – such that it is accessible and interesting for weaker, stronger and most advanced students? (criterion of individualized, optimally learner-oriented classroom instruction.)

### 3. Archiving of instructional materials

Before commenting on a series of possible sources for the selection of materials (see below), the importance of archiving or storage of the materials should be briefly emphasized. It is particularly worthwhile to proceed in this regard as effectively and clearly as possible from the beginning, particularly in conjunction with complex multiclass instruction. If this is done, materials will be available in the next year without problems; if not, the instructor is faced with disorderly piles of documents and must waste much precious time with searches.

**An efficient archive today is comprised of two dimensions: first an electronic “department” in the computer, with clearly marked folders and subfolders for the various themes and classes. Important: save and make backup copies periodically! The second department is the “real” archive with master copies, pictures, worksheets, games, etc.**

A simple variant consists of using a large envelope or an archive box for each topic. Inside the box or the envelope, four clear folders could, for instance, hold and store all the materials of the lower, middle and upper levels and those that are appropriate for all levels.

The set-up and “maintenance” of such an archive requires a little time and self-discipline, but simplifies work enormously.

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### 4. Potential sources of teaching materials

#### a) Teaching materials from the country of origin

It is important to distinguish between teaching materials which are used in regular classroom instruction in the country of origin and those which were created in the country of origin especially for the needs of HLT in the respective language.

The teaching materials which are used in regular classes in the country of origin (e.g. reading of language texts) are certainly useful to have on hand as a potential source of materials. However, their suitability is limited for at least two reasons: for one, they are linguistically too demanding, and in part also relating to content. In general, HLT students by far do not have equal command of their mother tongue (particularly in the written and standard variants) as same-age children in the country of origin. For another, it is logical that the textbooks of regular classes do not correspond to the reality, the background experiences and the competences of HLT students who grow up in a different cultural environment. Nevertheless,

these books may absolutely serve as a selective source for texts, pictures, etc. if one is conscious of the two limitations, and also takes care to avoid ideologically or politically one-sided depictions (e.g. in historical texts).

The Portuguese and Albanian HLT, for instance, avail themselves of teaching materials that were developed especially for native language education (see pictures in part B). The Albanian teaching materials were created by a mixed team of HLT instructors from four countries and experts from Kosovo; this ensured a practical focus on the migrant situation from the beginning. For each level (lower, middle, upper), 6 theme booklets were created, as well as an additional booklet for pre-school. The 6 theme booklets per level include specific Albanian themes, one half of each booklet devoted to civilization, grammar, literature, respectively. Topics in conjunction with life in the new country include (Work and spare time; I and the others; A world for all). The fact that specially designed HLT learning materials, created by experts in the country of origin, are not automatically good and functional became apparent when HLT students were linguistically overwhelmed by them.

**Good teaching materials, designed specifically for HLT (with collaborative input of HLT instructors!) are unquestionably an enormous help and should be used by mostly all language groups.**

#### b) Materials from the internet

The internet plays an increasingly important part in the search for appropriate and current educational materials. HLT instructors and students have a great advantage in that they can avail themselves of cultural offerings and materials in two languages – the heritage language and the language of the host country.

In the searches and offerings at least two forms can be distinguished:

First, searches on specific websites for teachers where didactic materials (worksheets, lesson planning, etc.) can be found for all kinds of themes. Such websites exist in many languages of origin and naturally also in the languages of the host countries. Examples for both categories can be found in the practice part (chapter 10 B.1 and 2). It is highly worthwhile to look at these websites, even though the orientation may sometimes be somewhat complicated, at least in the beginning.

The second type of research refers to very specific themes and search terms for desired materials: a factual text about dogs in Croatian, and another about the geography of Sri Lanka, springtime poems in Russian, etc.

Internet searches by students are age-appropriate from the 3rd-4th grade on. Considering the importance attached to media instruction and media competence in most countries, most students should already have acquired good basic media skills in regular classroom instruction.

Where these are lacking among HLT students, older students may help the younger ones. Problems may be encountered with searches in native language websites when orthographically incorrect search words are entered. In such cases, the teacher can perhaps assist, or an (electronic) dictionary may first have to be consulted.

### **c) Materials from books, magazines, newspapers, brochures, etc.**

Aside from internet research, there are, of course, also the traditional print media like books, magazines, newspapers, illustrated books, picture books, etc. which remain important and very useful sources for teaching materials. Depending on the bilingual situation in which the students are reared, materials in the language of the host country can certainly also be used besides the media in their heritage language.

Books in the language of the host country can be found in libraries, among other places. Intercultural libraries which carry holdings in various languages of origin have sprung up in many cities already (for locations in Switzerland, see [www.interbiblio.ch/](http://www.interbiblio.ch/)). It is also important to encourage students to bring books, magazines, etc. to class, particularly in the context of current themes. The search for materials should not at all just be the job of the teacher.

Besides the actual books (non-fiction books, literary works, illustrated books, lexica, picture books, etc.), magazines (including magazines for children and adolescents) will also serve well. They are easier to obtain and (just like books) can easily be brought along from vacations in the country of origin.

The same goes for brochures and other promotional materials, which can be used for exciting learning events in the context of current HLT concepts, vocabulary expansion and comparisons; moreover they can also be cut-up and used for collages, etc.

Newspapers are very easily available for most languages and provide ideal learning opportunities for current reading and discussion events from the 4th grade level on. However, it is vital to ensure that the material is not politically, religious or otherwise ideologically biased. Many daily or weekly newspapers also feature rubrics with comics, puzzles and other contributions, which may be also useful for the lower level classes.

### **d) Teaching materials and illustrative materials of the host country**

For themes that do not involve the country of origin, the migrant situation, or a comparison with the host country, it is worthwhile to establish regular contacts with the teachers of regular classroom instruction. They might quite possibly be interested in a common approach to a theme (that would be ideal) or would at least have appropriate materials to share. Examples: comparisons between host country and country of origin in terms of topics like farm animals/professions /childhood and leisure time in the past and now, etc.: ethical topics like friendship /playing together /racism and discrimination/ integration, etc. For cooperative projects, see also chapter 12.

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## **5. Teaching materials created by students**

As discussed in section 1, students can and should absolutely be involved in the pedagogical concept of creating and selecting teaching materials.

In response to the calls for learner orientation, independence, utilization of resources from the class, etc., it is a great fit when students are included in researching materials on the internet and in libraries, as well as in creating posters, documents and work sheets. As illustrated in part B, examples 10 B.4: a poster for body parts (acquisition of vocabulary), a page to a jointly created word picture book, two posters (3rd and 8th grade) created by the respective students to complement their presentations, two examples of worksheets which these students distributed as learning controls to the class after the presentations. The list of visual materials and worksheets which students create for one another can easily be expanded: simple language exercises which older students create for the younger ones, following a clear example (e.g. enter plural forms or name objects); worksheets with questions for reading texts; contributions for a common book of poems or a common newspaper; a quiz for a subject matter, etc. Of particular importance is the insight that the students' practical engagement is not intended to lessen the teacher's burden; students acquire considerable practical knowledge and media competence in researching appropriate materials for the production of teaching materials.



## 6. Use of electronic media by students

Today's students are mostly well versed (certainly from the 4th grade on) with simple applications of computers and hand-held devices, be it from home use or regular school classes. These competences can also be utilized in HLT, namely in the following dimensions:

### a) for acquisition of information

This is not limited to the internet. Information can be obtained in many ways, time permitting (e.g. from one week to another), information can be obtained through written e-mail or SMS requests. Oral modalities include interviews (perhaps recorded by mobile phone), phone conversations backed up with notes/minutes, or the utilization of Skype as cheaper alternative to the phone. If an internet search is required, a quick overview of the theme or a search term on the Wikipedia page may be useful as well.

### b) exchange and networking

Social networks are very useful for groups and classes who want to establish a platform for exchanging information on assigned topics. The photo platform "Flickr" is ideal for exchanging and commenting of pictures. It is possible to set-up a closed group on the social network site facebook to utilize the functions of chat, personal news, creation of albums, etc. Highly recommendable for HLT classes in Switzerland and their instructors is the platform educanet2 (<https://www.educanet2.ch>) where each class has its own access with personal desks, class room and rooms for groups. There are many possibilities for communication by way of e-mail, chat, forums, wikis, blogs, photo albums, exchange of educational materials, etc.

### c) about the presentation of information

From the 4th–5th grade on, students should have the opportunity to present their work to the class with the support of media offerings. The display of knowledge and the preparation of a presentation is challenging and must be mentored by the teacher. Presentations can be enhanced with posters, worksheets, power-point support or use of apps with an i-pad. The following apps are useful for presentations: BookCreator, ComicLife and iMovie.

### d) design of written text forms

Texts which have been created on the computer and illustrated with one's own photos or pictures from the internet look more appealing and professional than handwritten text. This is true for all sorts of texts: simple text (e.g. experience report), poster, worksheet,

class newspaper, jointly crafted book. The creation of mini books is attractive as well, not just for younger students. For explanations, consult [www.minibooks.ch](http://www.minibooks.ch) (note that on this website one's own minibooks can also be "published"). The program talktyper (<https://talktyper.com/>), is exciting, as it converts spoken words into written text, although it only functions for a limited selection of languages.

It is understood that time and technical means are often lacking in HLT; however since many students have access to computers at home or in other classes, such assignments can mostly be accomplished as homework from one week to the next.

### e) about learning and more in-depth reflection of learning content

There are apps, training programs, e-books, learning software, etc. available for this purpose. Whether these products are available in the native languages will have to be checked periodically, as the offers change constantly. Here are two examples for illustrative purposes:

The freely accessible website [www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com) offers the possibility of learning vocabulary in different ways. There are a great many available lists which can be found through the search function. It is also possible to create one's own lists, but one has to register for it.

The app and CD-ROM "Multidingsda" is a learning program for building and consolidating of basic vocabulary by way of "hidden object games" (pictures with a multitude of objects). Six hundred words can be learned, based on everyday situations by way of hearing, reading and writing. There are fourteen languages available: Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian, German, English, French, Italian, Croatian, Macedonian, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Tamil and Turkish.

### f) about language reflection

Communication between students, but also family members and friends in the country of origin, occurs frequently through digital media (e.g. SMS and chats). These texts are ideal for interesting comparisons between oral and written language: where are the differences, where are the similarities? Do languages get mixed? What kinds of abbreviations and symbols are used?

This is not only an evaluative comparison, but rather an attempt to show that, depending on the occasion and the form of communication, various registers are being employed and that they are functional.

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