

## **Exploring lecturers' experiences in developing EFL material at English Education Department in Three Different Universities**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims at exploring the lectures' way to develop EFL materials; strategies for developing EFL materials; and challenges in developing ELT Material. This study was conducted in English Education Department of three different universities namely STKIP Paracendekia Sumbawa, Makassar State University, and Halu Oleo University. In collecting the data, the researchers used narrative case study design. The instrument of this study was the researchers themselves. The result showed that firstly the lecturers who developed English material only implemented some steps in developing teaching material such exploring students' need, contextualizing material, and use the material in teaching and learning process. In this case, the material developer disregarded some other steps such as material trials in small group and evaluation of teaching material. Secondly, the strategies used by the lecturers in developing teaching material is by using analysis, Imitation, and modification, determining the aim of developing teaching material, knowing the number of students and time duration is available, and team teaching. Lastly, in developing teaching materials, the lecturer found some challenges such as difficulties of finding text and sources based on local wisdom, appropriated material, changeable lesson plan, and cost and time.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Learning resources (instructional materials) that have been structured systematically are referred to "teaching materials" used by lecturers and students in the learning process (Prastowo, 2011). Teaching materials have been considered a critical component of English as foreign language (EFL) learning for a long time. Besides, materials are probably necessary for EFL learning because they serve as a

bridge between the course topic, the lecturer, and the students. The materials can be in the form of a textbook and audiovisual, which are utilized in class (Irliana & Pratolo, 2019; Sanjaya et al., 2021). In order to satisfy learning objectives, a textbook offers a variety of materials that may be utilized to assist students' activities, both individually and in groups (Nurhajati, 2015). Lecturers tend to take commercially produced textbooks without making their own textbooks (Sanjaya et al., 2021). Therefore, lecturers can follow seven steps from Tomlinson (2012) in writing materials namely: identifying a material need, exploring that need, contextualizing materials, pedagogically contextualizing materials, producing materials, student use of materials, and evaluating materials against agreed-upon objectives. In addition, needs analysis, goal setting, syllabus design, methodology, testing, and evaluation are all part of the language instruction curriculum development process Richards (1999).

In the context of Indonesia, TEFL materials do not meet the criteria such as inappropriate source selection of instructional materials, material types are chosen that are not in accordance with competency standards and basic competencies, the materials do not flexible enough for contextual and individual differences, language is not functional and contextualized, language use should be realistic and authentic, classroom materials will almost always include an audiovisual component, learners must develop the ability to deal with both written and spoken genres, effective teaching materials promote autonomy and learning, and they must effectively and intellectually engage students (Assapari et al., 2019; Sanjaya et al., 2021). One example, listening materials are included in books as a source of learning materials for students, but the publishers do not supply listening materials on a CD/DVD. In truth, students require a great deal of listening material. Lecturers may feel pressured to cover the textbook's contents, experience less professional autonomy, and struggle to move beyond it because the selected texts, audio-visual resources, and activities have been logically integrated (Erss et al., 2016). Because no textbook can meet every learner's needs, it has been suggested that every lecturer is a materials developer. As a result, lecturers may opt to re-design, re-sequence, and change parts of it (Samuda, 2005). The textbook is not the sole medium for generating information; lecturers may also benefit from technological advancements. Saifudin (2018) applied research about creating of a cross-cultural understanding textbook based on social media.

The law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 Chapter II Article 12 Point 3 year (2012) states, "Lecturers individually or in groups are required to write a textbook, which are published by universities and/or scientific publications as a source of learning and for academic cultural development and civilizing." As a result of this legislation, lecturers have gained expertise in creating instructional materials. However, they must take into account a number of factors when developing the material, including the curriculum and syllabus compatibility, target characteristics, and problem-solving demands (Nurhajati, 2015). In addition, the lecturers can apply the ADDIE Model as a development model in designing instructional material to ensure the quality of instruction in supporting learning effectiveness. It consists of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. Another model is known as Plomp. It includes preliminary research, development or prototyping phase, and assessment phase (Plomp & Nieveen, 2013).

Sanjaya et al. (2021) claimed that there are three strategies in developing materials: identifying types of learning materials, selecting the materials according to competency standards and essential competencies, choosing sources of teaching materials, and lecturers have to differentiate textbooks for students of English education department and students of other majors (Bernardo, 2013). On the other hand, various lecturers developed their textbooks only to prepare teaching materials due to time constraints, heavy workload (Kirana, et al., 2018; Agustiana et al., 2019) and the high cost of publishing a book so when the lecturers create a textbook, they just use it for internal. These are some obstacles that the lecturers face in developing materials in terms of the textbook.

This research aims at exploring the lecturers': 1) ways to develop EFL materials; 2) strategies for developing EFL materials; and 3) challenges in developing EFL materials.

## **METHOD**

Individual narratives are one of the most powerful approaches to analyze experiences construction. This study employs narrative case study as methodological framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This gives a complete resource for comprehending lecturers' inner experience in creating EFL material. The current study's approach enabled it to dig deep into lecturers' experience in developing material in terms of way to develop ELT materials, strategies and challenges for developing EFL material.

Five participants were recruited in this study. There were four males and one female who have taught for 2-33 years in English Education Department. The selection of participants for this study was conducted using purposive sampling, which assigns researchers to select respondents strategically by referring to research questions (Bryman, 2016) and based on the location of duty of the researchers. For this reason, participants were recruited from three different universities (Universitas Negeri Makassar, Universitas Halu Oleo, and STKIP Paracenddekia Sumbawa) in Sulawesi, as the primary research question sought to understand lecturers' experience in developing EFL materials. The participants, who have professor's degree, doctorate (2 lectures), master's degree (2 lecturers) in English Education, volunteered to explore their experiences in developing EFL materials in terms of textbook as a guide for the learning and teaching process in the classroom.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews lasting 30-35 minutes each participant in which the participants shared their detail information related to the topic and experiences in developing EFL material. They were asked to narrate their experiences in developing instructional material that covered the steps of materials writing process. For instance, they were asked to narrate the best strategies and technique to develop the material for teaching English as a second language and the challenges in developing English material.

These interview sessions were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to avoid misunderstanding and to allow participants to completely express themselves. During the interviews, the researchers felt that the participants were at ease and honest in sharing their personal experiences. To fully capture the message or meanings conveyed in the interview transcripts, the data were transcribed and listened to repeatedly using close, selective, and analytical listening (Widodo, 2014). All transcripts were analyzed based on the study questions and themes to verify that the data was consistently recognized (Miles and Huberman, 1994). We ran several member checks before ending data analysis to gather feedback from participants on the validity of the analysis and interpretations presented in the findings below, and we included their remarks and reflections as a way of further verifying the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

## **DISCUSSION**

In terms of the findings of this research, there are three fundamental conclusions that can be drawn from it. First, ways to develop EFL materials. Second,

strategies for developing EFL materials. Third, challenges in developing EFL materials. Each of the following points is critically discussed in detail below:

### **The way to develop ELT Materials**

Materials (including listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills) can be developed in a variety of ways. Experts in instructional design have presented certain models for generating instructional materials. It is discovered that, based on the responses provided by participants, they mainly make a textbook, module and modify or revise the existing textbook. In accordance with the aforementioned conclusion, (Nurhajati, 2015) states that a textbook contains a wealth of information that can be used to supplement students' activities, both individually and in groups as well as use commercially produced textbooks rather than creating their own, but they frequently revise the existing textbook (Sanjaya et al., 2021). Lecturers who have attended an ELT materials development workshop, read a few existing textbooks, and received guidance from their lecturer in the past have attempted to create their own textbook by modifying or adapting it. They have made some textbooks not only for university students but also for elementary school until senior high school students. In addition, they also use textbooks that sell commercially and modifies that textbook by adding other materials from the internet based on their students' needs.

According to them, making a textbook is first a guide for the learning and teaching process in the classroom because of the EFL textbook plays such a significant role in language classroom (Bergström et al., 2021; van Batenburg et al., 2020). Lecturers facilitate the existence of textbooks to make it easier to achieve learning objectives easily, quickly and directed. The second is as a binder of knowledge if the material that has been taught is later forgotten. This condition is often experienced by students who often forget the lecturer's material. This happens because most of them do not understand the material but memorize it more often. So that after the exam, students' understanding of a material just disappears. The third goal is the textbook as a source of deepening material with the worksheet in it. It is undeniable that the presence of a worksheet in the textbook makes students more active in working independently or in groups. On the other hand, the worksheet can improve students' understanding of learning.

As for how to make textbooks, they have different opinions about developing textbooks. The first lecturer said that he made the textbook based on the semester lesson plan, referring to the learning objectives, topics, timings used in class, and the

assessments used. After that, he just collected the related material. The material obtained can be from books, journals and other textbooks. The most important thing in collecting material is that we must be able to connect one topic to another. Finally, it is necessary to have a students' worksheet. The activeness can see the lecturer's assessment of the learning and teaching process in working on the given worksheet.

Another lecturer also expressed another opinion on how he developed the textbook, namely first by referring to the lesson plan for each semester, then both searching the material and the audio. The most crucial aspect of producing the material is determining its relevancy, exam difficulty, and appeal. So first, the lecturer needs to know the students' need analysis (Tomlinson, 2012). The characteristics of each student are different, the purpose of having a textbook is so that students enjoy learning so that their knowledge can be understood well. Thus, in making textbooks, he prefers to make the material more visual (Assapari et al., 2019; Sanjaya et al., 2021) such as the number of contextual images in a given location, based on the culture and circumstances. The third stage is to see the timing used. This is very important because it adjusts to the number of topics each semester. The third stage is the need for an assessment. The assessment in the textbook is in the form of a worksheet whose questions have been adjusted to the student's level of knowledge. The final stage is the need for feedback from students on the material. Feedback is essential for lecturer evaluation of the textbooks that the lecturers have made; hence the textbooks become better.

### **The best strategies for developing EFL Material**

Each lecturer has their own strategy to develop their material. Especially in developing textbooks, participants in this study expressed their strategies for developing textbooks.

The first strategy in textbook development is to differentiate textbooks for students of English education department and students of other majors (Bernardo, 2013). Textbooks for students from outside, the material is for daily use, vocabulary according to their field, and reading material is adjusted to their respective majors.

The Second strategy is to look at the number of students and the timings used. The number of students is very influential on the group assignments in the worksheet. In addition, the number of students affects the teaching techniques used by lecturers when teaching in class. Thus, lecturers need to pay attention to this by looking at the timing and number of students in the class.

The third strategy in developing textbooks is to collaborate more often with team teaching. With collaboration, making textbooks is easier to get more teaching materials and not using a lot of time (Schafrik et al., 2005), can discuss together to overcome difficulties in finding contextual materials, and can learn from each other to improve each other's competence in textbook development.

The fourth strategy is before lecturers develop own materials or textbooks, they have to review curriculum before develop own materials or textbooks especially semester lesson plan, competency standards, and basic competencies. After seeing the learning objectives, material needed, the method and media will be used in teaching and learning process, and the form of evaluation then the lecturers organize their own material in various form such as handouts, modules, books and dictations.

### **The challenges of developing EFL material**

The first challenge in developing a textbook is to get authentic contextual material. Agustin & Wirza (2020) state that English teachers must strongly encourage the usage of real materials in the classroom. The teaching materials are mostly in accordance with the culture of the native speakers. Students may require some creativity when it comes to things that they have never done or witnessed firsthand. It is challenging or lecturers to find materials and pictures that are appropriate to the situation and situation in the city of Kendari, for example reading material for reading "Visiting Batu Gong Beach". Therefore, lecturers themselves need to make their own contextual reading material so that students understand more easily. This result is the same as Nazim (2021) and Banegas et al. (2020), which suggest creating authentic resources that match the learners' needs and interests. Besides, Azizah et al., (2021) argue that the use of local culture as reading material might be beneficial for students in improving reading comprehension, piquing their interest in local culture, and encouraging them to read.

The second challenge is how to analyze teaching materials. Brandenburg-Weeks & Abalkheel (2021) states that it is not easy to select acceptable reading material for language learners. It's important to remember the exercise's precise goal and that the materials picked must complement that goal. The current result showed that the lecturer must correlate the rules of the lesson plan, the material to be written, and the worksheet that can embrace all levels of student ability. The textbook needs to be tested first to see its effectiveness and efficiency. As a

handbook, textbooks are written using standard, communicative, clear, and easy-to-understand language.

The third challenge is cost and time. This relates to the process of publishing books to publishers. Participants in this study said that most of the textbooks they produced were not published. They prefer to be used alone in their respective classes. Publishing which requires the process, cost, and time required by very busy lecturers to spend time editing is also one of the obstacles for them to publish textbooks in printing. It is in line with limited time, apart from teaching, lecturers have various activities such as doing research, doing community service, guide the students in writing thesis and dissertation.

Suggestions for other lecturers for making textbooks are that first the lecturers need to have the principle that the textbooks made are aimed at making students understand and not complicated. So, students like the textbooks that we make and easy to implement in daily activities. Second, lecturers need to be brave to try new things and reflect on the material that has been given to students. Lecturers need to ask for feedback from students if the material is not interesting and difficult. Lecturers need to modify the activities in the classroom and give instructions that are easier to understand in the textbook. Third, lecturers need to improve digital literacy, need to have lots of up-to-date resources. So that a lecturer who is a user, then often discovers material and modifies, at the end can become a creator.

## **CONCLUSION**

Teaching materials take a crucial part in teaching and learning process. In addition, it also serves as a bridge between the course topic, the lecturer, and the students. Therefore, in developing teaching material, it should be relevant to students' need, interest, and ability in order to support them in improving their English ability. The developer should conduct seven steps in developing English material, namely identifying a material need, exploring that need, contextualizing materials, pedagogically contextualizing materials, producing materials, student use of materials, and evaluating materials against agreed-upon objectives process Tomlinson (2012). Thus, based on the interview result, firstly, the lecturers who developed English material only implemented some steps in developing teaching material such as exploring students' needs, AIM (analysis, imitation, modification), context. In this case, the material developer disregarded some other steps such as

material trials in small group and evaluation of teaching material. The best teaching material is materials that have been done trials in different contexts and times.

Secondly, the strategies used by the lecturers in developing teaching material is by determining the aim of developing teaching material, knowing the number of students and time duration is available, and team teaching. Lastly, in developing teaching materials, the lecturer found some challenges such as difficulties of finding text and sources based on local wisdom of Kendari, changeable lesson plan, and cost and time. Based on the result above, this study has some limitations such as the timing is not enough, scope of the study, participants, and theory. Therefore, the researchers suggest that further researchers dig in-depth information or lecturers' experiences in developing teaching material by adding other questions. In addition, it is suggested to enlarge the study's scope and add the number of participants to get comprehensive data.

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