**The Choices We Make.**
Nina MK, Ph.D.

In my country, the first choice is the necessary textbook(s). A teacher can use any of the **manuals** which have the Ministry of Education stamp of approval, which gives everyone quite a good choice. There is also a rather flexible **national curriculum**. Though each of us has to produce certain results annually, and all the students have to fulfill the final examination requirements in addition to a guiding list of conversation topics, we are free to follow any course of action during the school year in order to achieve our goals and to fulfill the academic plan. Thus deciding on which **supplementary resources** to use in class with our students depends on several common factors.

• Traditionally, the students’ AGE plays a huge role in how and what we do in class. If we are dealing with young beginners, aged 8-9, we can use **realia**. They may include pictures, audio and video materials, toys. I have taught the basics of grammar to my young students with the help of their favourite toys which they chose and brought to every lesson. We had a great selection of dolls and cars, and could build up sentences using grammar tables and charts. From simple sentences we progressed to whole stories and often composed our own little plays which we enacted at the end of the school year, to the delight of the students’ parents and the administration’s approval.

• The students’ LEVEL is a very important consideration. The level does not directly **correspond** to age. Adult learners may be slower than young children. What is appropriate for teenagers cannot be always used with pre-teens or primary school pupils. The first decision I have to make is actually determining the level of every class I teach. It is also very important to try and single out both the weakest and the strongest person in the group. You may need to keep a few individual tasks to hand if you get either one of those, since the weaker student may **be overwhelmed** and the stronger one may easily become bored. Both may react by withdrawing into their shells.

• IT provides a great scope of supplementary materials. Today, anything can be easily found with just one click. We may choose videos, audios, lesson plans, articles, funny and odd stories to fit into our lesson plan. **Visual aids** are never a problem; all you need to do is type in any word into Google search and click on Images. We can use computers and the Internet successfully with any age and level, provided we know what we are doing and why we are using those resources. If we have a group of students who find it difficult to cope with even one standard textbook unit at first, maybe we should not introduce any extras yet. If our class quickly does all the exercises from a book and looks at us expectantly, we should be ready with supplementary tasks and resources. In general, I would say it is always better to have more in your imaginary pockets than less. Even half-forgotten handwritten cards which we distribute to students when there is a gap in the exercises are a great help and **time-filler**.

• I usually have a book and a paper dictionary with me at any lesson or lecture. It is useful to occasionally remind your audience that books are a good source of knowledge besides the fact that “the chief end of poetry is to delight”, as John Dryden (1631-1700) would have formulated it. NB: your students probably would not know who John Dryden was; that’s when Google is very helpful. I often read aloud a fairy-tale to younger learners, and read excerpts from some serious methodological works to my colleagues at teacher refresher courses. It also pays to watch which new **series** is currently popular with teenagers, and to bring in some books or to find some **relevant** extracts to share with them.

• The best results that I consistently achieved via supplementary resources came from our participation in various international internet projects. Once you manage to find a project which connects to the school curriculum and which interests your students, you are all set. Young pupils love anything connected with communication, so you may simply organize an email exchange with their **peers** from another country. Older students who are more confident, who can use the English language as a **communication tool** in a more conscious way, enjoy a topical project like Science Across the World, Laws of Life, Learning Circles, The Local History and many others. They are easily found on the web.

• Our biggest problem in choosing supplementary resources is probably their **abundance**! Through the years, I found several which are good for me and try to stick to them. I take great pleasure in studying the new ones, and share them with my audiences if they fit our needs.

1. Find the words in the text to match the definitions:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Children of the same age |  |
| A great number of something |  |
| A TV show consisting of several episodes |  |
| To be exhausted/tired |  |
| pictures |  |
| Real objects to help with learning |  |
| Additional materials |  |
| Textbooks and recommendations |  |
| Important |  |
| Activity to fill the time |  |
| To match (the age) |  |
| A common list of subjects studied in the country |  |
| A means of communication |  |

1. Answer the questions:
* What guides the teachers in their choice of materials?
* How is students’ age relevant in class?
* Does age always define the level of students?
* How IT can be useful in English classes?
* Give examples of resources that can engage students.
* How can communication with peers help?
* What is the biggest problem with supplementary materials?