

MATSDA/SISU 2018 Conference Report

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It is a common problem that textbooks alone cannot meet the needs of teaching, because the course intended-learning outcomes, course schedules, students' learning styles and needs, teachers' beliefs, and other factors always vary from place to place. Under such circumstances, course materials development becomes a necessity to perfect the course. Therefore, I always want to gain insights from research on materials development. From June 9 to June 10, 2018, I was honored to be able to attend the MATSDA/SISU conference in Shanghai, China. It was the first MATSDA (Materials Development Association) conference held in China, co-organized by the Shanghai Center for Research in English Language Education and hosted by Shanghai International Studies University (SISU). The conference theme was "L2 Teacher Development Through Materials Development", highlighting the significance of materials development for every teacher's career advancement.

The conference started with the plenary speech from Brian Tomlinson, who is the founder and president of MATSDA. He talked about the differences among teacher education, teacher training, and teacher development, claiming that "Teacher development is experiential and it gets teachers to learn from doing, reflection, being challenged, experimentation, being critical and being creative. And the most effective form of teacher development is materials development." I learned that teachers benefit from materials development because they take the initiative to experience instead of being told what to do by the trainers. When teachers experience innovative materials in action, analyze and evaluate them, raise questions about devising and revising materials, they will enhance their ability to develop materials in a principled and monitored way instead of repeating what is already in their repertoire.

Another thought-provoking speech was given by Wen Qiufang from the National Research Center for Foreign Language Education, Beijing Foreign Studies University. She is the chief editor of our ELC textbook series, *New Standard College English*. Drawing on her rich experience in developing textbooks, she delivered a presentation entitled "A Theoretical Framework for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Teaching Materials in the Classroom Ecology". The proposed framework included three principles of selecting teaching materials (i.e. teacher-guided, learning objectives-determined, and input-in-service-to-output); three phases of the preparation of teaching (i.e. deciding learning objectives, selecting materials and transforming them into learnable activities) and three criteria (i.e. appropriate learning objectives, effective enabling activities and successful attainment of the objectives).

In terms of the practical presentations, Professor Hitomi Masuhara touched on the Course and Materials Development Module on the MA in TESOL and Applied Linguistics courses at the University of Liverpool. She asked students to develop task-based materials for English courses. The positive outcomes of this assignment included the production of effective research-informed materials and a greater awareness of how to apply second language acquisition principles as well as a considerable increase in confidence and self-esteem. I really loved her presentation because she provided a strong theoretical framework of second language acquisition and related it to the actual practice of materials development assignment.

On June 10, I gave a presentation on materials development on intercultural communication and listening instruction. My action research was based on my teaching experience of ELC-3. As English becomes the lingua franca, people of different sociocultural backgrounds use English to communicate with each other. Since EFL learners are exposed to different English varieties, they should change their perception that English listening practice is based on the native-speakers model. EFL learners should also realize that using English is an intercultural communication process, and it is a situated dynamic communicative practice. It is high time that EFL learners develop a new perspective of listening and

cultivate themselves to be active listeners and competent intercultural communicators. My pedagogical intervention was to introduce the culture interview project to the course. By developing culture interview listening materials, students benefitted a lot in the sense that they were more likely to believe listening was a two-way active intercultural communication process and they should use appropriate listening strategies accordingly. At the conference, other participants gave me advice on how to better interpret the data to explain why students did not change their false perceptions of listening after the pedagogical intervention.

In a word, attending the conference in Shanghai was a fruitful and rewarding experience. I enriched my knowledge of materials development, second language acquisition, task-based teaching, and intercultural communication. It helped me to conduct well-designed research and contribute more research-informed materials to Level 2. I really look forward to the next conference at home or abroad!





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