



**BEYOND THE TEXTBOOK: CRAFTING ENGAGING AND CULTURALLY
RELEVANT EFL MATERIALS**

Asadbek Khabibullaev

Silk Road Innovations University

EFL Instructor

Email: asadbekhabibulloh@gmail.com

Abstract: It describes the development and adaptation processes of instructional materials for 14-16-year-old learners of English as a Foreign Language in Almalyk, Uzbekistan. The paper is focused on the descriptive characteristics of the learners, the analysis of their educational needs, and a portfolio presenting the modified materials that attempt to make classes more engaging, culturally relevant, and technologically integrated. In these materials, reflections upon changes made and how they now align with current theories in TESOL materials development are discussed in great detail with a focus on learner-centered approaches.

Introduction: The backbone of successful language teaching is the development of effective instructional materials. In the contexts where English is taught as a foreign language, developing materials that closely meet the particular cultural and linguistic needs of learners, which also comply with their motivational needs, is very crucial. This article presents a case study in the development of materials for a group of teenage learners in Almalyk, Uzbekistan. This study attempts to show how the modification of the existing materials could help in making learners more engaged and their needs met.

Part 1: Description of Learners

I have a group of 16 students learning English as a Foreign Language at a private learning center named Seven Plus Academy in Almalyk city, Uzbekistan. They are aged between 14-16, studying at state schools in the city. Of all learners, 8 of them are males and rest part of the groups is females. They have both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to acquire the English due to the admission purposes for universities and common interests of them to explore new cultures, watch western movies and ability to communicate with foreigners fluently. As regards their actual linguistic abilities, they are Intermediate (B1+ and B2) learners according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR].

Regarding their prior language instructions, they attended supplementary classes and after school as a compulsory course organized by the school authority to aid them in language acquisition. Yet, they used to focus on form, using GTM to prepare for the entrance exams for local Universities in Uzbekistan which drove them give up the course and look for other supplementary classes where they can prepare for international language testing systems like IELTS or TOEFL IBT. This can be attributed to their desire to study abroad where most of the universities require Language Proficiency Certificates as for admission purposes. I, as a professional EFL instructor, used placement tests and interviews to conduct needs analysis, and results show that they face challenges in speaking, and listening due to the lack of exposure and practice.

Individual interview results highlight what type of learners they are, indicating the belonging to kinesthetic and visual learners, showing their preference to be involved in interactive and fun activities alongside with visual aids.

Concerning their access to technology, questionnaire results show that they are digitally literate and have access to wireless internet and possess various electronic tools, ranging from tablets to touch-screen phones.

Part 2: Materials Development Portfolio

1. Activity 1: Photo Analysis and Initial Thoughts

1. Activity 2: Reading Comprehension

• Decision: Adapt and Replace

1. Look at the photo. How old do you think the man is? Why do you think he is famous?

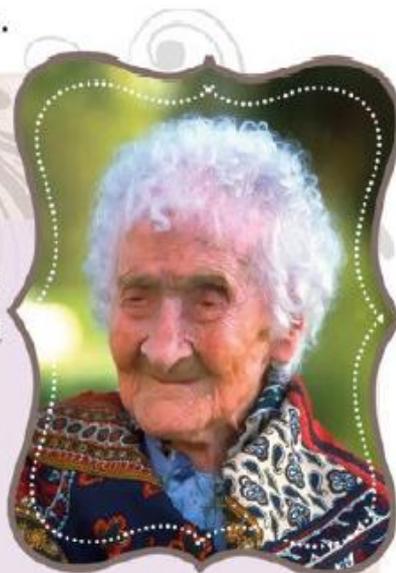
**1 Look at the photo. How old do you think the woman is?
Why do you think she is famous?**

2 Read the text and check your ideas.

In 1875, the US army was still fighting Native Americans, and Alexander Bell was working on a new invention – the telephone. That was the year that Jeanne Calment, the person with the longest lifespan ever, was born in Arles, France. Her parents ran a shop in the town and she worked there when she was a teenager. While she was serving in the shop in 1888, she met Vincent van Gogh, who had come in to buy pencils. She thought he was ‘dirty, ugly and badly dressed’!

In 1896, at the age of 21, she married Fernand Calment and then gave birth to a daughter, Yvonne. Fernand was very wealthy so Jeanne never needed to work. She lived in Arles for the rest of her life, dying on 5 August 1997 at the age of 122.

People of that age often have an enormous family with generations of grandchildren. But Jeanne didn't have any living descendants. Yvonne had had a son, but both she and her son had died many years earlier. So how did Jeanne manage to live so long? The French have their own theories, noting that she ate more than two pounds of chocolate a week and rode a bicycle until she was 100!





2. Read the text and check your ideas.

In 1920, Uzbekistan was part of the Soviet Union, and it was during this time that Abdulmajid Gazi was born in a small village near Tashkent. Abdulmajid grew up in a farming family and spent his childhood helping his parents with agricultural work.

During World War II, Abdulmajid Gazi was drafted into the Soviet army but was later captured by the Germans. He became a member of the Turkistan Legion, a unit composed of Central Asian soldiers who fought under the German command. Despite the difficulties of his wartime experience, Abdulmajid survived and moved to the USA after the war.

After the war, Abdulmajid faced many challenges because of his involvement with the Turkistan Legion. However, he managed to rebuild his life, marry to a woman he loves and start a family. He had four children and contributed to his community by working as a teacher and sharing his experiences with younger generations.

People remember him not only for his unique and challenging wartime experiences but also for his solid attitude, determination, and commitment to his family and community. He lived through significant events and witnessed the transformation of Uzbekistan into an independent nation.

Abdulmajid Gazi passed way in 2023, but his legacy continues to inspire many people in Uzbekistan. His story is a testament to the complex history and resilience of the Uzbek people.

Justification

I decided to remove the content as it is not culturally relevant to my target group learners despite the interesting story of it. Therefore, to avoid disengagement of participants, I replaced it with another text highlights the story of an Uzbek elderly man, using past tenses effectively to capture my students' attention. As Savova (2018) noted that "While commercially published materials and textbooks for global consumption focus on Anglophone culture represented by family-, work-, or entertainment-related topics, teachers could supplement these with discussions and presentations about their students' culture" (p. 5).

2. Activity 3: Grammar Identification

- Decision: Supplement

3 Complete the **Learn this!** box with the tenses below. Then underline an example of each of the rules (a–d) in the text in exercise 2.

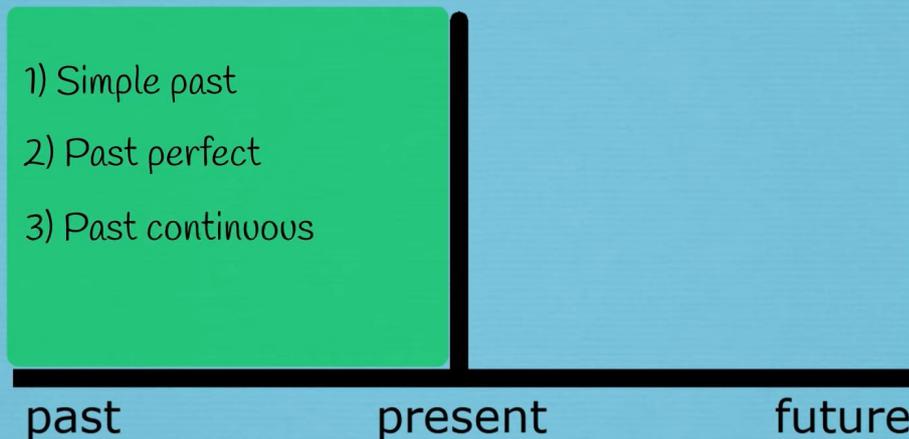
past continuous past perfect past simple

LEARN THIS! Past tenses



- a We use the ¹_____ for a sequence of events that happened one after another.
In 1989, my parents met, fell in love and got married.
- b We use the ²_____ to describe a scene in the past. The events were in progress at the same time.
It was raining and people were rushing home from work.
- c We use the ³_____ for a single event that interrupted a longer event in the past. We use the ⁴_____ for the longer event.
My parents got engaged while they were living in Wales.
- d We use the ⁵_____ for an event that happened before another event in the past.
He had started a business before he left school.

Past Tenses



Simple past

- ➔ Most common past tense
- ➔ Formed by adding 'ed' to verbs (regular verbs)

walk**ed** push**ed** wav**ed**

go → **went** drive → **drove** eat → **ate**

Past Tenses

- 1) Simple past
- 2) Past perfect
- 3) Past continuous
- 4) Past perfect continuous

Simple past

- ➔ Most common past tense
- ➔ Formed by adding 'ed' to verbs (regular verbs)
- ➔ Used for actions that began and ended in the past

★ I drove to the beach yesterday.

★ Last night we walked the dog.

★ She met her friend at a party.

Past Tenses

- 1) Simple past
- 2) Past perfect
- 3) Past continuous
- 4) Past perfect continuous

Past perfect

- ➔ Formed with 'had' + past participle

★ It had been a great holiday before the rain started.

★ She had not spoken to him.

★ By the time Tim got home, James had already left.

Past Tenses

- 1) Simple past
- 2) Past perfect
- 3) Past continuous
- 4) Past perfect continuous

Past perfect

- ➔ Formed with 'had' + past participle
- ➔ Used for actions that began and ended in the past
- ➔ Shows one action happened before another
- ➔ Past perfect clause happens earlier than simple past clause
- ➔ Used with conditional sentences

Past Tenses

- 1) Simple past
- 2) Past perfect
- 3) Past continuous
- 4) Past perfect continuous

Past continuous

→ Formed with past tense 'to be' + present participle

They were watching the football.

She was working hard.

Past Tenses

- 1) Simple past
- 2) Past perfect
- 3) Past continuous
- 4) Past perfect continuous

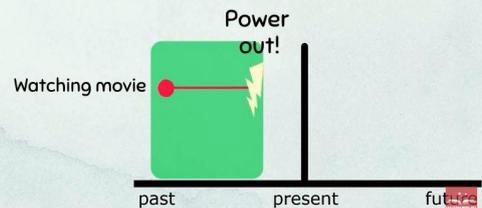
Past continuous

→ Formed with past tense 'to be' + present participle

→ Shows that two events were happening at the same time

→ Shows an event in the past was interrupted

★ We were watching a movie when the power went out.



Past Tenses

- 1) Simple past
- 2) Past perfect
- 3) Past continuous
- 4) Past perfect continuous

Justification

The coursebook gives limited amount of structural information regarding Past Tenses and their usage forms. Though I introduced past tenses in previous courses such as in Elementary and Pre-Intermediate, my students need additional explanation and revision as it has been a long time with other teachers before coming to our LC. Therefore, I supplemented additional ppt presentation to illustrate the past tense forms and contrasts with thorough and comprehensive examples. This process can be called extemporization which “is a common feature of the classrooms of experienced teachers who notice (and can usually predict) when some form of mediation is needed between learners and the material (McGrath, 2016, p.70).

1. Activity 5: Sentence Completion
- Decision: Adapt

5 Complete the sentences with the correct past simple, past continuous or past perfect form of the verbs in brackets.

- 1 We _____ (move) house a lot while I _____ (grow up).
- 2 After Joe _____ (learn) to drive, he _____ (buy) a car.
- 3 George _____ (leave) school, _____ (go) to university and _____ (study) engineering.
- 4 Where _____ you _____ (live) when you _____ (get) your first job?
- 5 My parents _____ (get) engaged in 1990. They _____ (fall) in love two years before, while they _____ (work) in London.
- 6 Kim _____ (want) a change of career so she _____ (emigrate) to Australia.



TOWER DEFENSE

NEW GAME



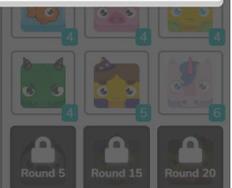
Your progress will automatically be saved



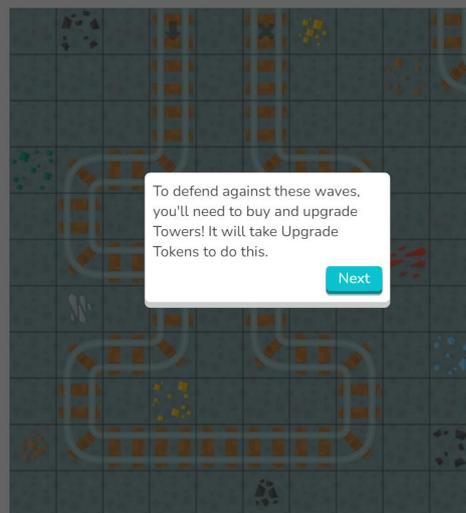
100 ♥

In Tower Defense, your goal is to defend against waves of Evil Blocks. That means you have to keep this health above 0!

Next



2X Speed

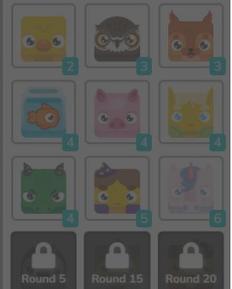


To defend against these waves, you'll need to buy and upgrade Towers! It will take Upgrade Tokens to do this.

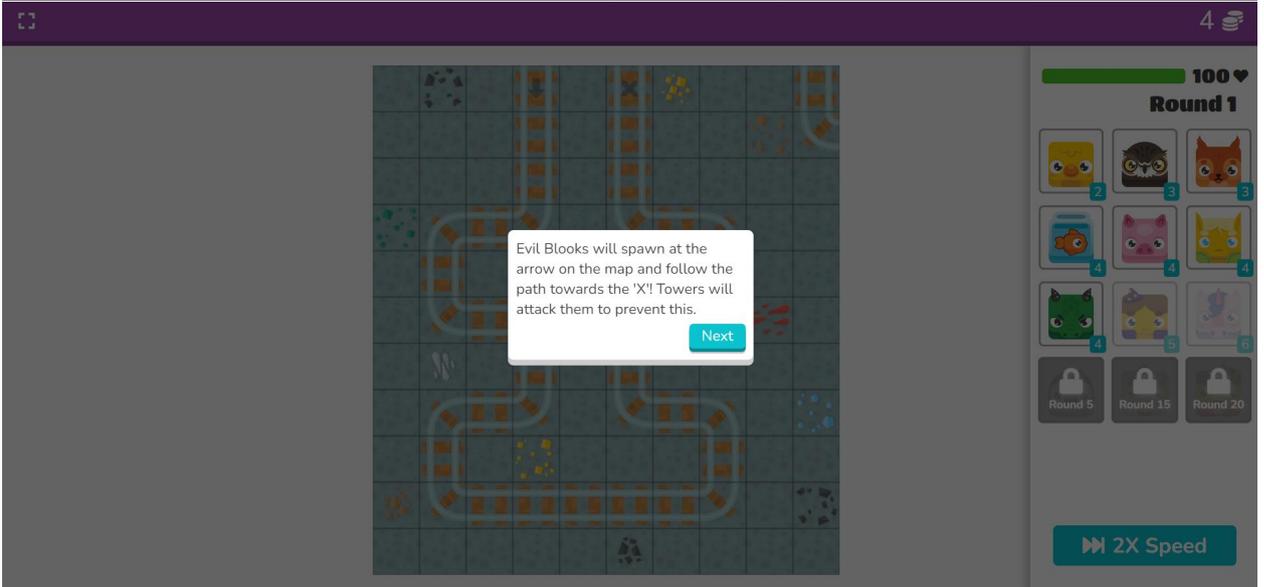
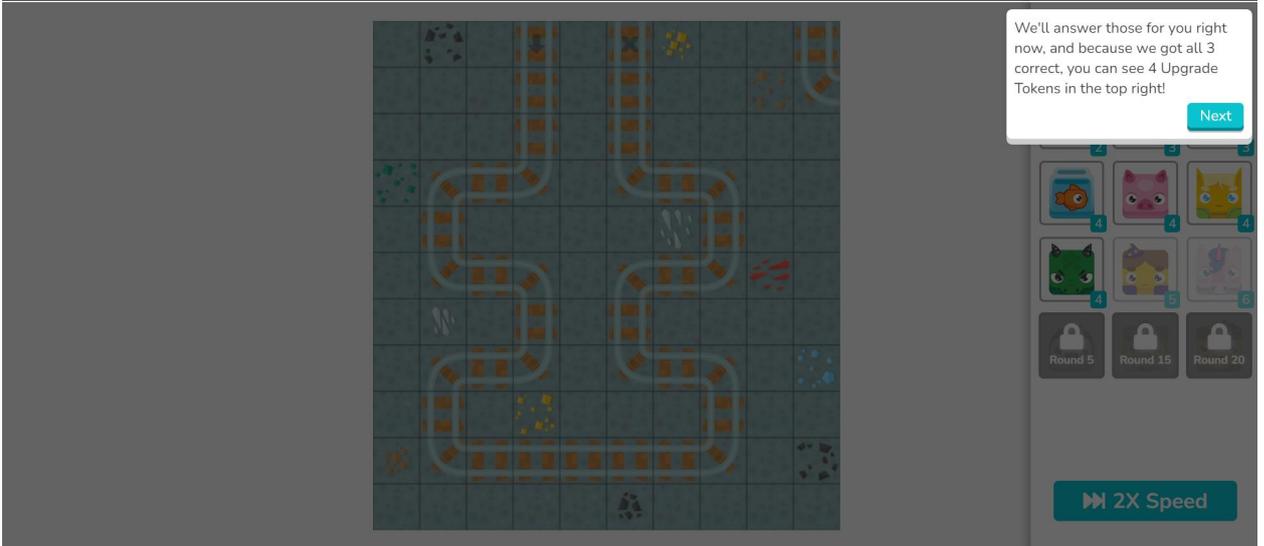
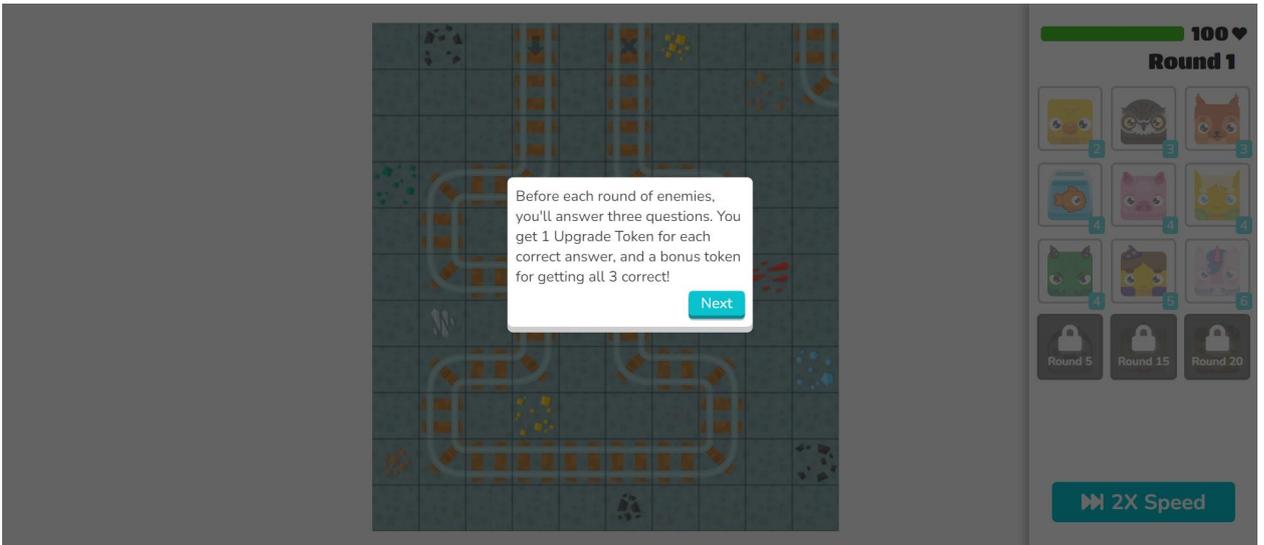
Next

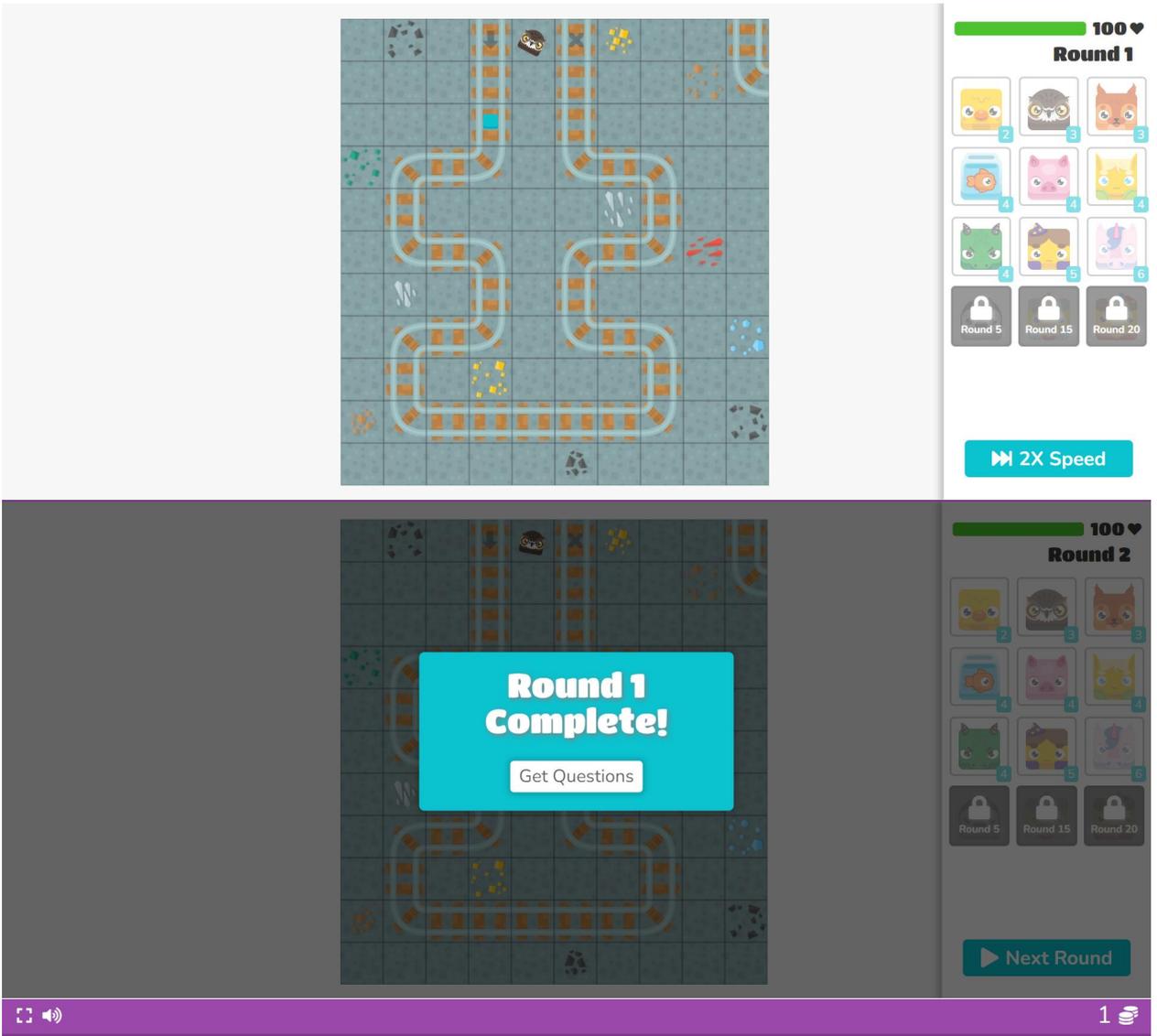
100 ♥

Round 1



2X Speed





We _____ (spend) the weekend moving house, so we went to bed very early on Sunday.

spent

had spent



Before I left the house, I...

I was locking all the windows

I locked all the windows.

Justification

There has been a shift in students' interest in education for the last decade. Advancement in technology and evolution of gadgets have made conventional way of teaching obsolete, urging to modify materials based on students' interests, and incorporate technological tools into language teaching. As McGrath (2016) claimed "when we make changes to a coursebook 'to suit our particular purposes better', what we are really trying to do is to improve the effectiveness of the learning experience" (p. 69). Therefore, I aimed to meet my students' learning preferences to improve effectiveness and engagement by adapting, making changes in the activity, copying and adding some extra sentences into the game platform – Blooket.com.

1. Activity 6: Text Completion
 - Decision: Select

6 Complete the text with the past simple, past continuous or past perfect form of the verbs below.

be be become die get leave live
meet not stop retire say work write



Japan is the country with the most centenarians: over 50,000. It is also where Jiroemon Kimura, the man with the longest lifespan ever, ¹ _____ born in 1897, the year that Bram Stoker ² _____ *Dracula*. Kimura ³ _____ school at fourteen and ⁴ _____ a job in a post office. While he ⁵ _____ there, he ⁶ _____ his future wife Yae. He ⁷ _____ a postal worker for 45 years when he ⁸ _____ in 1962. But he ⁹ _____ working! He ¹⁰ _____ a farmer! In an interview just before he ¹¹ _____ at the age of 116, he said he wasn't sure why he ¹² _____ so long. 'Maybe it's thanks to the sun,' he ¹³ _____. 'I'm always looking up to the sky!'

Justification

We, as professionals, should be good at critical thinking to analyze materials so as to stay informed if they are relevant or irrelevant. And, at this very moment “we should be able to distinguish between those materials which seem directly relevant and can be used unchanged, and those which are totally irrelevant” (McGrath, 2016, p. 66). Hence, having analyzed this activity, I have come to an understanding that it is well relevant and appropriate for my learners, leading me to leave it unchanged to use.

Overall Justification

In summary, the modifications made to the unit's activities were carefully selected to enhance student engagement, cultural relevance, and learning effectiveness. The replacement of the photo analysis activity with a culturally relevant text about an Uzbek elder ensures that students connect personally with material, thus increasing their motivation and interest.

In summary, the modifications made to the unit's activities were carefully selected to enhance student engagement, cultural relevance, and learning effectiveness. The replacement of the photo analysis activity with a culturally relevant text about an Uzbek elder ensures that students connect personally with the material, thus increasing their motivation and interest. Supplementing the grammar identification with additional presentation addresses the learners' need for more comprehensive understanding of past tenses, given their previous learning gaps. The deletion of the sentence transformation activity decision to manage class time effectively, ensuring that more essential content could be covered. Adapting the sentence completion activity to include and interactive game on Blooket.com aligns with the students' preferences for technology-enhanced learning, making the activity more engaging and fun. Finally, remaining

the text completion activity unchanged was justified as it was found to be directly relevant and effective for the learners' level and needs. By making these changes, I intend to create a more relevant and effective learning experience for my students.

Part 3: Reflection

#1. Photo Analysis and Initial Thoughts Reflection

For the "Photo Analysis and Initial Thoughts" activity, I replaced the original content with a story about an Uzbek elder to make it more relatable to my students. Savova (2018) suggests that incorporating cultural contexts can boost student engagement and motivation. By using a culturally relevant story, I aim to create a stronger connection between the students and the material, making the learning experience more meaningful.

#2. Reading Comprehension Reflection

I adapted the "Reading Comprehension" text to better fit my students' cultural background. McGrath (2016) emphasizes the importance of using relevant materials to keep students interested and engaged. The new text, featuring an Uzbek figure, helps students relate their learning to their own culture, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the content.

#3. Grammar Identification Reflection

In the "Grammar Identification" activity, I added a PowerPoint presentation to provide more detailed explanations of past tenses. McGrath (2016) highlights the need for mediation between learners and materials to ensure comprehension. The additional resource addresses my students' previous learning gaps and reinforces their understanding of past tenses.

#4. Text Completion Reflection

I kept the "Text Completion" activity unchanged because it is directly relevant and effective for my students' level and needs. McGrath (2016) advises evaluating materials for relevance and suitability. By maintaining this activity, I ensure that it contributes effectively to the students' language development.

#5. Interactive Game on Blooket.com Reflection

Transforming the sentence completion activity into an interactive game on Blooket.com aligns with my students' interest in technology-enhanced learning. Savova (2018) notes that digital tools can boost engagement and motivation. The interactive game makes learning fun and engaging, while also reinforcing their digital literacy skills.

#6. Sentence Transformation Reflection

I decided to delete the "Sentence Transformation" activity to better manage class time. McGrath (2016) recommends prioritizing essential content to avoid overloading students. By removing this activity, I ensure that we can focus on more crucial content, maximizing the effectiveness of each lesson.

Conclusion

The given case study justifies how instructional materials should be designed to meet the unique needs of EFL learners. Teachers who can integrate culturally relevant content, interactive technologies, and learner-centered approaches will be better positioned to establish a more engaging and effective language-learning environment. Further research could usefully explore long-term impacts on learner proficiency and motivation.

References

1. McGrath, I. (2016). *Materials evaluation and design for language teaching*. Edinburgh University Press.
2. Savova, L. (2018). Local materials development practices. In J. I. Liantas (Ed.), *The TESOL encyclopedia of English language teaching* (pp. 1–13). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
3. Mirxalilova N.A. TIMSS 2023 mathematics assessment scope // *Annals of Forest Research* <https://www.e-afr.org/> 2022. 5399-5404-b.
4. Mirxalilova N.A. Use of the "Working with objects" methodology in preparing for international studies // *American Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences* // ISSN (E): 2832-8019 Volume 13, | June, 2023. Pp: 152-154. www.americanjournal.org.

5. Mirxalilova N.A. Functional Literacy in Primary Education // AMERICAN Journal of Religious and Cultural Studies Volume 2, Issue 4, 2024 ISSN (E): Pp: 2993-2599.
6. 6. Usmanova Mashkura Mirzoroximovna. The content of improving the teaching methods of future teachers of the Russian language based on reflexive innovative technologies and its scientific and theoretical pedagogical foundations // European Journal of Interdisciplinary Research and Development. 2025-yil. Website: www.ejird.journalspark.org
7. 7. Usmanova Mashkura Mirzoroximovna. Improving the teaching methods of future teachers of the Russian language based on reflexive innovative technologies as a topical problem // academic research in modern science International scientific-online conference. 2025-yil. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14723225>
8. 8. Usmanova Mashkura Mirzoroximovna. Improving the methodology of teaching the Russian language based on reflexive innovative technologies for future teachers of the Russian language // trends in the development of science "Moscow - 2025". 2025-yil.
9. 9. M.M.Usmanova. Spiritual and Moral Self-Awareness: The Key to Harmony and Personal Development // Intersections of Faith and Culture: AMERICAN Journal of Religious and Cultural Studies. -18/04/2024, 2024-yil.
10. 10.M.M.Usmanova. FEATURES OF THE METHODOLOGY OF TEACHING FUTURE TEACHERS OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN MODERN SOCIETY // TADQIQOTLAR Jahon ilmiy – metodik jurnali. -xalqaro , 2025-yil. <https://journal-web.uz/index.php/07/article/view/930>
11. 11.M.M.Usmanova. THE STATE OF THE PROBLEM OF IMPROVING THE METHODOLOGY OF TEACHING FUTURE TEACHERS OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE BASED ON REFLECTIVE INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES // THE BEST INTELLECTUAL RESEARCHES. -xalqaro, 2025-yil. <https://scientific-jl.com/luch/article/view/1414>
12. 12. Xunarova L.A. Grammatical complexity in teaching Russian as a foreign language // The best intellectual research. -2025, 2025-yil. 3030-3680.
13. 13. Xunarova L.A. Features of the technology of improving the methodology of teaching the Russian language to students through innovative educational technologies in society // Trends in the development of science "Moscow-2025". -UDC 62-5, 2025-yil.
14. 14. Xunarova L.A. Improving the methodology of teaching Russian to students through innovative educational technologies // TRENDS IN EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY DEVELOPMENT. -I66, 2024-yil. 11.11.2024.
15. 15. Xunarova L.A. Uzbek folklore, history and its place in literature // GALAXY INTERNATIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH JOURNAL (GIIRJ). -ISSN (E): 23-47-6915, 2023-yil. In volume 11, Issue 5
16. 16.. Asadbek Khabibullaev. Sociolinguistic Factors and Pedagogical Strategies in English Language Learning: A Case Study from Uzbekistan // American Journal Of Advanced Scientific Research // ISSN: 2195-1381, 2025. Pp: 60-62. <http://ijarer.org/index.php/ij/article/view/124>