

ENGLISH MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT IN THE EFL CONTEXT OF THAILAND: A NARRATIVE THEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRAK

Studi ini membahas pengembangan materi bahasa Inggris dalam konteks EFL di Thailand menggunakan tinjauan pustaka tematik naratif. Beberapa studi terpilih dianalisis untuk menemukan tema umum dalam mengembangkan materi bahasa Inggris yang efektif. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa materi yang baik di Thailand biasanya didasarkan pada kebutuhan siswa, menggunakan aktivitas komunikatif dan berbasis tugas, mencakup materi otentik, dan mempertimbangkan peran guru dalam implementasi di kelas. Namun, sebagian besar studi sebelumnya hanya berfokus pada hasil pembelajaran dan tidak menjelaskan secara jelas bagaimana elemen-elemen ini terhubung dalam satu kerangka kerja yang lengkap. Oleh karena itu, studi ini menekankan pentingnya menciptakan model yang lebih terintegrasi dan sesuai konteks untuk pengembangan materi bahasa Inggris di Thailand.

Kata kunci: Konteks EFL; Thailand, analisis kebutuhannya, pendekatan komunikatif, materi autentik

ABSTRACT

This study discusses English materials development in the EFL context of Thailand using a narrative thematic literature review. Several selected studies were analyzed to find common themes in developing effective English materials. The results show that good materials in Thailand are usually based on students' needs, use communicative and task-based activities, include authentic materials, and consider the role of teachers in classroom implementation. However, most previous studies focus only on learning results and do not clearly explain how these elements are connected in one complete framework. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of creating a more integrated and context-appropriate model for English materials development in Thailand.

Keyword: EFL context; Thailand; needs analysis; communicative approach; authentic materials

INTRODUCTION

The development of English language learning materials plays an important role in the success of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), especially in countries where English is not the students' everyday language (Nor et al., 2022). In Thailand, the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning faces various structural and pedagogical challenges. One key issue is students' low communicative skills, particularly in speaking and listening, indicating that learning tends to be oriented toward grammar and memorization rather than authentic language use. Furthermore, teaching practices in many schools still rely heavily on generic commercial textbooks that do not adequately address the socio-cultural realities of Thai students (Peemmetasawad & Sudajit-Apa 2019). This dependency results in a

lack of relevance of the material to the local context, so that English language learning becomes less meaningful and is not fully responsive to the needs, backgrounds, and learning objectives of students at the school level.

Furthermore, the results of other empirical studies also show that although materials development is carried out by teachers or prospective teachers in Thailand, the focus is still on general development stages (e.g., adapting materials from textbooks), rather than on finding materials tailored to students' needs analysis, especially those related to communicative and contextual speaking skills. A grounded theory study on how pre-service teachers develop materials in the Thai EFL context revealed that there are various stages that material developers go through, but less emphasis is placed on relevance

to students' learning needs (Niwesworkarn & Soontornwipast, 2025).

Adapting learning materials is a crucial aspect of language development that contributes to effective learning. Material tailored to the needs, characteristics, and proficiency levels of learners can create a more relevant and responsive learning environment. This adaptation allows students to be more actively involved in the learning process and supports the optimal achievement of language learning goals (Hanifa et al., 2024). In addition to serving as a complement to the main textbook, the systematic development of supporting materials in the EFL context has been shown to significantly contribute to improving language learning outcomes, as structured supplementary reading materials not only strengthen students' understanding of the learning content, but also increase their engagement, while the learner-centered approach is able to encourage learning autonomy, increase motivation, and contribute to improving overall language proficiency (Ngabalin, 2023). Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of language learning is not only determined by the existence of teaching materials, but by the extent to which these materials are developed and adapted contextually according to the learner's needs.

While various previous studies have discussed the effectiveness of instructional materials in improving language learning outcomes and engagement, most studies have focused on the impact of material use on learning achievement. However, studies specifically exploring how the process of developing contextual, adaptive, and student-centered instructional materials in the Thai EFL context are relatively limited. Therefore, this study aims to thematically examine how English language materials are developed in Thailand, the approaches used, the extent to which they consider the curriculum, student needs, and socio-cultural contexts, and what research trends require further development.

METHOD

This study employed a narrative literature review design to synthesize previous studies related to English language materials development in the Thai EFL context. A narrative thematic approach was chosen to interpret and organize the findings into meaningful themes, rather than to analyze the

data statistically. A narrative literature review involves summarizing and synthesizing relevant published studies on a specific topic in a structured narrative format. This approach integrates arguments, theories, and previous research findings while identifying existing debates, knowledge gaps, and areas of consensus. It emphasizes critical analysis and conceptual synthesis to establish the current state of knowledge and provide a foundation for further research (Adeniran & Tayo-Ladega, 2024). This study uses a Narrative Literature Review design to synthesize previous studies related to the development of English language materials in the EFL context in Thailand..

This study analyzed seven peer-reviewed journal articles as the primary data source obtained from trusted academic databases such as ResearchGate, Google Scholar, ERIC, and ThaiJO through keyword searches related to English language materials development, EFL in Thailand, needs-based materials, speaking materials, and the Thai EFL curriculum. To maintain scientific relevance and quality, only articles published between 2019 and 2025 were selected, with the criteria that the studies specifically discussed materials development in the Thai EFL context or needs-based materials design, especially related to communicative competence and speaking skills, while studies that only discussed teaching techniques without focusing on materials design were excluded. All articles were analyzed using a qualitative narrative thematic approach by grouping the findings into main themes such as materials design principles, contextual adaptation to students' needs, integration of speaking components, and implementation challenges. These were then synthesized to identify patterns of findings and research gaps in English language materials development in the Thai EFL context..

The studies selected were based on their focus on English language materials development in the Thai EFL context, specifically those addressing needs-based design, contextual adaptation, and speaking-oriented materials for Thai learners. Each article was carefully reviewed and organized into thematic categories based on recurring findings, such as principles of materials development, alignment with learner needs, integration of communicative components, and challenges in classroom implementation. These

themes were then synthesized and interpreted narratively in the Results and Discussion section.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the reviewed studies, there are various approaches to developing effective English language learning materials in the EFL context in Thailand. The literature shows that material development is not only related to the preparation of learning content, but also involves analyzing student needs, selecting appropriate teaching approaches, using authentic materials, and the role of teachers in implementing them in the classroom. Various innovations have been implemented, such as task-based learning, phonics instruction, CLIL, and the use of authentic materials and learning resources outside the classroom. Research results generally indicate that the developed materials are able to improve student abilities and have a positive impact on learning.

However, most research still focuses on the end result of effectiveness and student proficiency improvement. These studies have not systematically mapped the conceptual relationships among elements in materials

development, such as the relationship between needs analysis, pedagogical approach, materials design, and implementation in the Thai EFL context. Consequently, understanding how these various components interconnect and shape comprehensive materials development remains limited.

To make the discussion more structured, the findings from previous studies are grouped into several main themes: (1) needs- and context-based material development, (2) communicative and task-based orientation in material design, (3) use of authentic materials and out-of-class learning resources, (4) teachers' roles and beliefs in material implementation. These themes help clarify how these various elements contribute to the effectiveness of material development in the Thai EFL context.

For a more structured overview, Table 1 summarizes the selected studies by outlining the authors, year of publication, research focus, methods, and main findings regarding the development of English language learning materials in the EFL context in Thailand.

Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Articles

No.	Authors	Focus	Method	Key findings
1.	(Wangdi & Shimray, 2022)	Students' perception toward L1 use in English classroom.	mixed methods design (quantitative & qualitative)	The use of L1 in English classes makes it easier for students in Thailand to understand grammar and vocabulary, reduces anxiety and helps students with low levels of English.
2.	(Suejam & Walkinshaw, 2025)	Beliefs about Global Englishes (views on English varieties: British, American, Asian Englishes, etc). Practices dalam material development.	qualitative case study	The implementation of Global Englishes in material development still faces structural obstacles.
3.	Keeratisuntorn & Sukavatee (2023).	Multicultural content	One-group quasi-experimental design	Local cultural content helps students' understanding, especially in English reading skills.
4.	(Khaengkhan, 2024)	Pronunciation difficulties	mixed methods design (quantitative & qualitative)	Phonics materials are very helpful for teachers in improving students'

				pronunciation skills with sounds that are not in the Thai phonetic system.
5.	(Nhoomork & Abhakorn, 2024)	Development of supplementary reading materials	Research and Development (R&D)	Supplementary reading materials developed according to student needs effectively improve reading ability.
6.	(Pathomchaiwat & Thongrin, 2025)	Task-based English learning materials. Skill communication (speaking & interaction).	Research and Development (R&D)	Task-based materials encourage more hands-on use of language than traditional methods.
7.	Pakarasang & Chusanachoti (2025)	Out-of-class materials	Qualitative case study	Authentic and relevant materials to students' experiences can enrich critical reading learning

Needs Analysis as the Foundational Layer of Material Development

Several recent studies have confirmed that needs analysis is an essential component in the development of English language materials in EFL contexts, including Thailand. In the article Ngabalin (2023) showed that materials developed based on student needs analysis were more effective in improving reading comprehension. The materials were designed with ability level, relevant vocabulary, and alignment with the Thai national curriculum in mind. Meanwhile, the article Wangdi & Shimray (2022) emphasizes that the Thai bilingual context influences learning effectiveness. Controlled use of L1 can aid understanding of difficult concepts and reduce learning anxiety. And article Khaengkhan (2024) also emphasized that many Thai students still have weaknesses in foundational literacy skills such as decoding and pronunciation, necessitating materials that explicitly target these needs.

These three studies demonstrate that materials cannot be designed universally without considering the local characteristics of Thai students, including their language proficiency levels and backgrounds. In the Thai EFL context, effective materials development must begin with a systematic needs analysis that is sensitive to classroom realities. Materials that ignore students' linguistic and social contexts risk being irrelevant and less effective. Therefore, needs analysis and contextual adaptation are the main foundations of English materials development in Thailand.

Communicative and Task-Based Orientation in Material Design

Article Peemmetasawad & Sudajit-Apa (2019) This study demonstrates that a task-based approach significantly improves students' communication skills. The materials are designed with activities such as role-play, problem-solving, and discussion, which encourage authentic language use. These findings also critique traditional approaches that focus on grammar and structured exercises without a communication context. In the Thai context, which still tends to be teacher-centered, the task-based approach offers a paradigm shift toward more interactive and meaningful learning. English language material development in Thailand needs to move from grammar-dominated instruction to communicative and task-based design. Effective materials not only teach language structures but also provide space for students to use language in authentic contexts. Thus, communicative competence should be a primary goal in EFL material design in Thailand.

Integration of Authentic and Critical Materials

Article (Pakarasang & Chusanachoti, 2025) Research on the integration of out-of-class materials in critical reading instruction shows that the use of authentic texts such as digital media and real-world sources can enhance students' engagement and critical thinking skills. Similarly, articles on CLIL-based materials emphasize the importance of integrating content and language

simultaneously so that students learn not only language but also contextual knowledge. Both studies suggest that materials that are too artificial or isolated from the real world do not adequately prepare students for language use in global contexts. In the increasingly globalized Thai EFL context, materials need to integrate authentic texts and content-based approaches. Good English materials development should connect classroom learning to social and global realities and foster students' critical literacy development.

Teacher Beliefs and Global Orientation in Materials Design

Article (Suejam & Walkinshaw, 2025)
This study shows that materials designers' and teachers' beliefs about Global English influence how materials are designed and implemented. This study found a gap between theoretical understanding of global English variations and teaching practices, which are still oriented towards native-speaker norms. This suggests that materials development is influenced not only by theory but also by the belief systems of teachers and institutions. English language materials development in Thailand cannot be separated from the role and beliefs of teachers. Effective English materials development must consider the alignment between theory, materials design, and classroom practice. Furthermore, an orientation towards Global English needs to be integrated to make materials more relevant to the realities of current English use.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the thematically analyzed literature review, it can be concluded that the development of English language materials in the Thai EFL context cannot be understood simply as the process of developing teaching materials, but as a complex and contextual pedagogical process. Various studies have shown that the effectiveness of materials is largely determined by their suitability to students' linguistic needs, particularly in reading skills, vocabulary, and basic phonological abilities. This confirms that needs analysis is not merely an initial stage, but rather a fundamental foundation in materials development. Furthermore, the shift from a grammar-oriented approach to a communicative and task-based approach indicates that effective materials are

those that provide space for meaningful and authentic language use. The integration of real-world texts, global contexts, and the development of critical literacy further strengthen the relevance of materials to students' needs in the era of globalization. However, the success of materials design depends not only on their structure and content, but also on teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their ability to adapt the materials to the classroom.

Although previous research has demonstrated improved learning outcomes through specific materials interventions, most studies have focused on measuring the effectiveness of outcomes and have not comprehensively mapped the conceptual relationships between elements within the materials development process itself. Therefore, English materials development in the Thai EFL context requires a more integrated approach, linking needs analysis, communicative orientation, the use of authentic materials, and the role of teachers within a systematic design framework. Thus, this study's contribution not only strengthens the practice of developing more contextual and relevant materials but also opens up space for the formulation of new conceptual models in the field of English materials development in Thailand.

SUGGESTION

Further research is recommended to develop a more integrated conceptual framework for English materials development in the Thai EFL context. Previous studies have tended to examine elements such as needs analysis, communicative approaches, the use of authentic materials, and the teacher's role separately. Therefore, future research needs to integrate these factors into a systematic model to provide a more comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, longitudinal research is needed to examine the long-term impact of materials development on students' language competence. This way, further research will not only measure immediate effectiveness but also contribute more deeply to the development of materials development theory and practice in the Thai EFL context.

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