The textbook as agent of change

Tom Hutchinson and Eunice Torres

Why does there appear to be apathy and even hostility to the ELT textbook in the literature? Why does it survive and prosper apparently in contradiction to the development of ideas in applied linguistics? In this paper, we first consider the role of the textbook in terms of its normal day-to-day use in teaching and learning English, and then consider its role in the process of change. We refer to data from a study carried out in the Philippines into the introduction of an ESP textbook. In the light of our analysis, we challenge some of the assumptions that underlie the anti-textbook view. We argue that the textbook has a vital and positive part to play in the everyday job of teaching and learning English, and that the importance of the textbook becomes even greater in periods of change. Finally, we consider the implications of a more informed and positive view of the role of the textbook, emphasizing, in particular, the need to see textbook creation and teacher education as complementary and mutually beneficial aspects of professional development.[1]

Introduction

The textbook is an almost universal element of ELT teaching.[2] Millions of copies are sold every year, and numerous aid projects have been set up to produce them in countries such as Sri Lanka, Yemen, and Peru. The growth of ESP has also generated an increasing number of textbooks for more specialized areas, such as English for Draughtsmen, English for Fisheries, etc. No teaching–learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook. Yet this phenomenon—the ELT textbook—which has such an impact on ELT, has been little studied. And such papers as have been written about textbooks have been generally critical. Swan (1992: 33), for example, gives this warning:

The danger with ready-made textbooks is that they can seem to absolve teachers of responsibility. Instead of participating in the day-to-day decisions that have to be made about what to teach and how to teach it, it is easy to just sit back and operate the system, secure in the belief that the wise and virtuous people who produced the textbook knew what was good for us. Unfortunately this is rarely the case.

Contemporary views of pedagogy

The idea that textbooks produce a kind of dependency culture among teachers and learners is echoed by Littlejohn (1992: 84). In his study of some widely-used primary/lower secondary textbooks, he concludes that

'the precise instructions which the materials give reduce the teacher's role to one of managing or overseeing a preplanned classroom event.' This concern about the merits of textbooks is not restricted to ELT. Loewenberg Ball, and Feiman-Nemser (1988) describe how in teacher pre-service education programmes (for all subjects) in the United States, textbooks are consistently criticized as inadequate to meet the needs of the classroom. Student teachers are taught that good teachers do not follow the textbook but devise their own curriculum and materials. Why, we might reasonably ask, given the extent of the influence of textbooks, does there appear to be at best apathy and at worst hostility to them in academic circles?

Lying at the heart of the unease appears to be a concern that the format of the textbook does not sit easily with the developments in ideas about teaching and learning that have come out of the applied linguistics debates of the last two decades. Having recognized the dynamic and interactive nature of the learning process, and having taken on board the individuality of any teaching–learning situation, we might reasonably expect the textbook to wither away in favour of negotiated syllabuses backed up by materials produced by teachers and learners working together. Indeed, the development of concepts such as the process syllabus (Breen 1984) should logically preclude the very idea of a fixed and permanent textbook. The textbook as a medium should have given way to resource packs and the like.

The nature of contemporary textbooks

And yet the textbook not only survives, it thrives. The number of new textbooks being produced shows no sign of abating. Even more striking is the fact that each new generation of books is more comprehensive and more highly structured than the last. A comparison of two successful textbooks by the same author (with different co-authors) written a decade apart, illustrates this trend well. *Streamline* (Hartley and Viney 1978) consists almost entirely of texts, questions, and substitution drills. Its modern successor, *Grapevine* (Viney and Viney 1989), however, contains in addition an integrated video, information-gap activities, role play, further reading texts, songs, the development of reading, writing, and listening skills, games, grammar summaries, and tape transcripts. As well as containing a greater range of content, *Grapevine* has explicit rubrics for activities, whereas *Streamline* simply gives the exercise number and an example. The instructions in the *Grapevine* teacher's book are also more detailed and give more information about the 'why?' and the 'how?' of each activity. Far from becoming looser, the structure of the textbook is becoming much tighter and more explicit—more like a prepared script. Less and less appears to be left to the teacher to decide and work out.

How can we explain this apparent mismatch between the movement of language teaching theory towards greater negotiation and individual choice in the classroom on the one hand, and the development of ever more comprehensive and structured textbooks on the other? Are we perhaps just in a timelag between the evolution of ideas and their transference into the classroom? Are vulnerable teachers and learners

316   *Tom Hutchinson and Eunice Torres*

being seduced and exploited by the attractive package deals offered by commercial publishers, as Littlejohn (1992) implies? Or is the market-place telling us that our theories about language teaching and learning are simply wrong?

Structure in teaching and learning

Textbooks clearly survive because they satisfy certain needs. In this paper we wish to suggest that we have to take a much wider perspective on what those needs actually are. Principally we need to attach much more value to the importance of structure in people's lives. Textbooks, we shall argue, survive and prosper primarily because they are the most convenient means of providing the structure that the teaching–learning system—particularly the system in change—requires.

We shall first of all consider the role of the textbook in terms of normal day-to-day use and then consider its role in the process of change. We shall refer to data from a study carried out in the Philippines into the introduction of an ESP textbook for fisheries technology. Our analysis will illustrate the wide range of needs that textbooks fulfil. In the light of this analysis we shall challenge some of the assumptions that underlie the anti-textbook view. We shall argue that the textbook has a vital and positive part to play in the day-to-day job of teaching English, and that its importance becomes even greater in periods of change.[3] Finally, we shall consider the implications of a more informed and positive view of the role of the textbook, emphasizing, in particular, the need to see textbook creation and teacher education as complementary and mutually beneficial aspects of professional development.

The context of the classroom

We generally think of textbooks as providers of input into classroom lessons in the form of texts, activities, explanations, and so on. Allwright (1981), however, provides a model of the lesson which adds a further dimension to the role of the textbook. Allwright characterizes the lesson as an interaction between the three elements of teacher, learners, and materials. What this interaction produces are opportunities to learn.

Portraying the lesson as a dynamic interaction in this way might seem to imply that the greatest need is freedom for the dynamics of the interplay to take the lesson where it will. This might further imply that the less control the better. Such a view does not bode well for the textbook, which is generally seen as controlling lessons by providing a prepared script for the interaction. However, if we consider the full range of the needs of the people involved in the interaction we will arrive at a very different conclusion. As Allwright and Bailey (1991: 21) point out, the greatest need is in fact for the interaction to be effectively managed—by both teachers and learners—'to give everyone the best possible opportunities for learning the language'.

The importance of management and the role of the textbook in the management process are certainly recognized by both learners and teachers. In her questionnaire data Torres (in preparation) asked the question 'Why do you want to use a published textbook?' In the

Figure 1: A model of the lesson
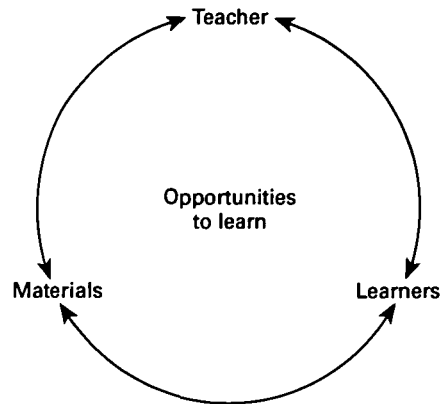
(adapted from Allwright 1981)

responses, management concerns accounted for 45.25 per cent of learners' reasons and 74.6 per cent of teachers'.

Although learners cite 'content' as their main reason for wanting a published textbook (with 51.89 per cent), management does not come far behind. Learners see the textbook as a 'framework' or 'guide' that helps them to organize their learning both inside and outside the classroom— during discussions in lessons, while doing activities and exercises, studying on their own, doing homework, and preparing for tests. It enables them to learn 'better, faster, clearer (sic), easier (sic), more'.

Teachers see managing their lessons as their greatest need. Most of their responses centre around the facilitating role of the textbook: it 'saves time, gives direction to lessons, guides discussion, facilitates giving of homework', making teaching 'easier, better organized, more convenient', and learning 'easier, faster, better'. Most of all the textbook provides confidence and security.

But what is it about the teaching–learning situation that makes management so important? We shall consider this question in terms of the context of the lesson, the wider learning context, and the context of the lives of the participants.

Context of the lesson

Prabhu (1992), characterizes the lesson as, amongst other things, a social event. As such it is potentially threatening to the participants, since any social encounter is essentially unpredictable. However, in practice the

Tom Hutchinson and Eunice Torres

level of unpredictability is low, because we find high levels of unpredictability difficult to tolerate. Any recurrent event such as a lesson is naturally and inevitably subject to what Prabhu calls 'social routinization': the encounter becomes increasingly stereotyped, to reduce the unpredictability, and thereby the stress, for those who are active participants in the event.

But it is important to recognize that this process of routinization is not a regrettable necessity that simply makes the interaction more tolerable to the participants—it also has positive advantages. Wong-Fillmore (1985) stresses the importance of structure to learners. She concludes from her observation of different lessons that the good lessons were characterized by a clear lesson format with lesson phases clearly marked and signposted, by regularly scheduled events, and by clear and fair turn allocation for student participation. The good lesson, in other words, is the clearly structured one.

Thus, although we may characterize the lesson as a dynamic interaction, through its nature as a social event the lesson will inevitably tend to routinization. Teachers and learners will actively seek ways of pinning down the procedures of the classroom. The fact, therefore, that textbooks impose a structure on the interaction of the lesson should be seen not as an undesirable constraint, but rather as a potentially beneficial phenomenon, which teachers and learners will welcome.

Wider learning context   Prabhu (1992:162) also characterizes the lesson as a curricular event in that it is one of 'an incremental sequence of teaching units, the sequence as a whole meant to achieve a larger objective'. A lesson is not a one-off, isolated event, but part of a series that has a long-term purpose relative both to the learners and, usually, to the requirements of interested bodies external to the classroom, such as education authorities, sponsors, parents, and (in the EAP case) other subject departments. Any lesson needs to be seen, therefore, in relation to what goes before it and what will come after it. There is a need, in other words, for a map or plan as a visible and accessible statement of where the individual lesson fits into the general development of the learning programme.

That there should be as clear and complete a map as possible is important for a number of reasons:

Negotiation   This is an essential element of any interaction. It requires equal access for all to the content and procedures being negotiated. Only a textbook can show as fully as possible what will actually be done in the lesson. (Recognizing, of course, that the same material can also be interpreted in many different ways.) Although the existence of a textbook may be thought to constrain negotiation, in fact it makes it possible, by providing something to negotiate about. This does not just apply to negotiation within the classroom. Torres (1990) describes how the production of an ESP textbook for fisheries technology provided a basis for communication between ESP teachers and content teachers, and led to a better relationship both between the two groups of teachers and between

the English and the Fisheries curricula. One ESP teacher commented: 'The content teachers and English teachers are now friends, where before [the English teachers] were always blamed by content teachers for the learners' poor language skill. This time they are now working together, and the fisheries textbook made this possible.'

Accountability Although only teacher, learners, and materials may actively participate in the classroom, they are not the only parties to the interaction. Each of the three active participants is subject to the influence of, and acts as a representative of, other stakeholders in the system. Teachers, for example, may act as representatives of the school staff, education authorities, or school owners who pay their salaries. Learners may be representatives of their parents or sponsors. These other stakeholders may not only need to know what is being done in their name in the closed and ephemeral world of the classroom, but may also justifiably claim the right to influence what is taught in the classroom in terms of content, methodology, and cultural or ideological values.

Orientation Teachers and learners need to be able to orient themselves in relation to what goes on in other classrooms. They need to know what is expected of them, what is regarded as acceptable or desirable in terms of content, what objectives should be reached, how much work should be covered in a given time, and so on. This knowledge helps teachers and learners to feel more secure by enabling them to assess their own performance in relation to the expectations of the authorities and to the performance of fellow teachers. Such shared knowledge may also be administratively necessary in order to maintain a degree of standardization across different classes or institutions.

As a shared enterprise with known goals the teaching–learning process demands a map. There are only three places where this map can reside—in the teacher's head, in a written syllabus (produced by external authorities or negotiated between teacher and learners), or in the form of pre-planned materials (i.e. a textbook). With the first two options, there are problems. If it is only in the teacher's head, it is inaccessible to anyone else. In the form of a syllabus, it is more accessible, but only to those who understand the code in which the syllabus is framed and even so it does not show what the actual content of the lessons will be like. A map needs to be as full and as accessible as possible. Only the textbook can fulfil this need.

Context of the lives of the participants   Finally, whilst we may discuss the lesson in terms of interaction, creativity, learning processes, etc., we should not lose sight of the fact that the participants involved are people with their own busy and complicated lives to lead. However dedicated the teacher may be, the lesson is still only part of a job that has to be done to earn a living, and the amount of time and effort that can be put into any lesson has to be balanced against all the other competing interests of the individual's life—family, home, shopping, travel to and from work, leisure, and so on. We can make a similar case for the learners. One of the primary requirements that both

Tom Hutchinson and Eunice Torres

teachers and learners have, therefore, is the means to make their working lives easier. As two teachers in Torres' (in preparation) study say: '[The ESP textbook] enables the teacher to save time, especially when he or she is quite busy with other school matters' and 'Much to (sic) my desire to prepare my own instructional materials, I lack both the time and the materials/finances.'

To sum up, then, we can see the lesson as a dynamic interaction between teacher, materials, and learners. This interaction has to be managed in order to provide the structure and predictability that are necessary to make the event socially tolerable to the participants, to enable learners and teachers to know where the lesson fits into the general pattern of things, to save teachers and learners work, and to give legitimate external parties access to, and possibly influence upon, what takes place in the classroom. The very fact that a lesson is a dynamic interaction, therefore, leads not to a need for maximum freedom, but to a need for a predictable and visible structure both within the lesson and across lessons. The textbook, we suggest, is the best means of providing this structure.

We have looked in this section at the need for clear and accessible structure in the teaching–learning process, and have argued that the textbook is the best means of providing this structure. Turning now to the main point of this paper—the textbook's role in the change process—we shall see that if the visible structure that the textbook provides is important in the normal run of events, in the unsettled context of change it becomes essential.

Context of change

Change has become almost endemic in ELT. The past two decades have seen a welter of new methodologies, new areas of interest, such as ESP, new approaches to syllabus design, new concepts, such as learner training, and so on. This rush of new ideas has created a need to understand the process of change, and its impact upon the individuals who must implement it.

The fundamental problem of change is that it disturbs the framework of meanings by which we make sense of the world. It challenges, and thereby potentially threatens, the values, attitudes, and beliefs that enable us to make experience meaningful and predictable. Yet, like growth, no development is possible without such disturbance. If people are to accommodate themselves to change, therefore, the disturbance that change inevitably brings must be kept within manageable limits. If it exceeds these limits, it will engender feelings of anxiety and insecurity and thereby provoke what Marris (1986) calls 'the conservative impulse' i.e. a determination to resist the change and maintain the existing context within which the individual feels secure.

Conditions for effective change

Studies from management and social sciences (see for example Marris 1986, and Blackler and Shimmin 1984) indicate that there are certain conditions for smooth and effective change:

1   Only a certain amount of change can be accommodated at any one

The textbook as agent of change   321

time. The individual's network of meanings has to be given time to take new ideas and experiences on board.

2   Adjusting to change takes time and energy. To make the adjustment, therefore, individuals need relief from other pressures, and constant reassurance and support.

3   To reduce feelings of insecurity, people need as complete a picture as possible of what the change will look like in practice.

4   Individuals find it difficult to carry the burden of change alone. The support of a group helps individuals by sharing the burden. As a general rule, groups are more inclined to take risks than individuals (Handy 1985: 155) because they feel more secure through their mutual support for each other.

In sum, then, the most important requirement in the process of change is security. This reinforces the need for structure and visibility. Van den Akker (1988) illustrates this well.

Implementing curriculum change   Van den Akker was interested in how written materials can help teachers in the implementation of a new curriculum, in this case a new science curriculum introducing a more enquiry-based approach. Two groups of teachers were given different materials. The control group's materials were more loosely structured, gave more options, and generally left most decision-making as to how they should implement the curriculum guidelines to the teachers. The experimental group's materials had fewer options, more 'how-to-do-it' advice and structured guidance, such as basic lesson plans giving sequences of activities, time estimates for each activity, and explanations of the function of each stage of the lesson.

The results of the research showed that the experimental group's lessons were much closer to the intentions of the curriculum developers, in that they were more successful in maintaining the enquiry-based approach. The control group teachers on the other hand frequently lost control and reverted to more traditional forms of teaching. Furthermore, the experimental group reported greater satisfaction with the materials, their lessons, and their performance.

Van den Akker concluded that the highly structured approach is more effective in getting curriculum change into the classroom. He also concludes that, although this research was only concerned with the implementation phase, the change is likely to be more permanent: 'Certainly, if early experiences have been satisfying and yield positive results (both in teacher performance and in students' learning) there seems more chance of commitment to a programme and of stable and substantial changes in the direction of proposals for an innovation.' (ibid.: 54).

Creating a supportive environment   Change is a disruptive and threatening process. The crucial factor in achieving smooth and lasting change, therefore, is security. The most effective agents of change will thus be those that can create the supportive environment in which teachers will feel able and willing to take on the challenge of change. This would indicate that the textbook has the

Tom Hutchinson and Eunice Torres

potential to be a very effective agent of change. We can relate its advantages back to the conditions for change noted above:

1 People can only accommodate a certain amount of change at any one time. The textbook can introduce changes gradually within a structured framework enabling teachers and learners to develop in harmony with the introduction of new ideas. In other words, the textbook can be not just a learning programme for language content, but also a vehicle for teacher and learner training.

2 Adjustment to change requires support and relief from other burdens. As we have already noted, the structure provided by the textbook saves the teacher work and helps him or her to manage the class. This frees the teacher to concentrate attention on coping with new content and procedures. Furthermore, since it is used on a daily basis, is portable and permanent, the textbook can provide constant support. In Torres (1990) the introduction of an ESP textbook meant that teachers were not spending their time scouring for materials and producing visual aids, but were free to concentrate on planning the lessons and understanding the subject matter. This resulted in better planned lessons, a more creative methodology, and more useful materials adaptation and supplementation.

3 People need to know what the change will look like. The textbook can provide as complete a picture as possible. Through structured scripts (particularly when supported by a teacher's guide) it can show as explicitly as possible what to do, and because it is immediate to the actual context of use, there is no problem of transfer from training context, such as a seminar, to the classroom.

4 People feel more confident about change if supported by others. Adopted on a school basis, the textbook gets the support of the group behind the individual teacher, and thus relieves the teacher of much of the burden of responsibility for introducing changes. This was certainly the case in Torres' study (in preparation), where ESP teachers drew a great deal of comfort from the fact that the textbook project involved a network of eight regional state colleges, and was supported by content teachers and college administrators.

Textbooks as agents of change

There seems, then, to be a substantial case for regarding textbooks as effective agents of change. Far from being a problem, as some educationalists have concluded, the good textbook, properly used, can provide an excellent vehicle for effective and long-lasting change. Attempts to do without a textbook (unfortunately, the all too common strategy of many a reform programme) fly in the face of what is known about the process of change, and are more likely to create the damaging insecurity that will make it more difficult for the individual to accommodate the change. Only the textbook can really provide the level of structure that appears to be necessary for teachers to fully understand and 'routinize' change. Viewed in this way, the move to more highly structured textbooks that we noted in the introduction is not something to be deplored, but rather to be welcomed as a natural and beneficial response to a period of rapid change.

In the next section we shall draw together our conclusions so far in order to confront some of the assumptions that seem to underlie the textbook debate.

Some assumptions challenged

If we take a wide perspective on the role of the textbook we can see that it can and does satisfy a very wide range of needs. It is hopefully clear why, apparently in the face of developments in ELT methodology, the textbook continues to be the mainstay of ELT provision. Furthermore, in a period of change the value of the textbook becomes even greater. We now wish to return to the earlier question that we posed in the introduction, namely why is the view of textbooks in academic discussion seemingly so negative?

The anti-textbook argument appears to be based on a number of assumptions, which, when probed, appear to have little or no evidence to support them. Let us look at some of these possible assumptions.

Textbooks as a basis for negotiation

Assumption 1: Textbooks are merely a pre-packaged form of classroom materials. There is at the base of this assumption a belief that only the needs of the classroom interaction and more particularly the needs of the learner matter. We have seen, however, that textbooks satisfy a range of needs both within the classroom and beyond it. Principally, the textbook provides a structure for the management of the lesson as a social interaction and a basis for negotiation between all the relevant parties. Textbooks are not just classroom materials packaged in a particular format. Rather we need to see it the other way round: providing classroom materials is just one of the functions that textbooks have.

Textbooks as a flexible framework

Assumption 2: Maximum freedom of choice is both desirable and desired. Or to look at it from the opposite perspective, structure constrains creativity. This is patently not true. Freedom of choice brings with it the responsibility of making decisions. This both confuses and frightens people. Thus, all the evidence indicates that both teachers and learners want and benefit from the security that a clear structure provides, even though this restricts the options available. This is particularly the case, as Van den Akker (1988) shows, during the process of change. We have to beware of confusing ends with means. As Owen *et al.* (1978: 388) say: 'It is important to distinguish between a structured learning environment and control . . . A teacher may present a highly structured learning environment but allow students great flexibility, responsibility, and freedom of choice; in another classroom the learning environment may be devoid of structure yet rigidly dominated by a dictatorial instructor.'

Our purpose, in other words, may be to enable the individual to develop his or her talents as fully as possible, but the means of achieving this is to provide the secure framework within which learners and teachers can make informed choices.

Textbooks and teacher development

Assumption 3: The fixed format of a textbook makes negotiation more difficult. In fact, the opposite is the case. For negotiation to happen, there has to be something to negotiate about, and that must be as complete as possible, and available equally to all parties to the interaction. The great

Tom Hutchinson and Eunice Torres

benefit of a textbook is that it is visible and therefore can be freely negotiated. Without it the teacher is the only person who has the map. How can effective negotiation take place in such circumstances?

Assumption 4: The development of more highly structured textbooks leads to the de-skilling of teachers. (See Littlejohn 1992, for example). The teacher becomes little more than a cipher for a prepared script. Again, we have to ask: Where is the evidence? Stodolsky (1988: 180), for example, dismisses the idea that teachers feel unduly constrained by textbooks: 'We have found little evidence in the literature or in the case studies to support the idea that teachers teach strictly by the book. Instead we have seen variation in practice that seems to result from teachers' own convictions and preferences, the nature of the materials they use, the school context in which they teach, the particular students in their class, and the subject matter and grade level they are teaching.'

This view is borne out by Torres' study (in preparation) of the actual classroom use of the ESP textbook by two teachers. A task-by-task analysis of selected modules reveals that, even in the kind of teacher-fronted classrooms found in the study, teachers and learners do not follow the textbook script. Most often teachers follow their own scripts by adapting or changing textbook-based tasks, adding new tasks or deleting some, changing the management of the tasks, changing task inputs or expected outputs, and so on. Moreover, what is also clear from the study is that the teacher's planned task is reshaped and reinterpreted by the interaction of teacher and learners during the lesson.

It is indeed far more likely that the more secure teachers feel in what they are doing, the more inclined they are to depart from the given script. Furthermore, we might challenge the whole idea of 'de-skilling'. The more complex the textbook becomes, the more skill is required of the teacher in using it. They may need different skills to those they have traditionally employed, but, if anything, the more developed the textbook, the greater the skill required of the user. In fact, the 'de-skilling' argument misses the whole point about teacher development. Without the kind of structured guidance that a good textbook can provide, teachers are likely to carry on teaching in the same way as they have always done. The textbook makes it possible to bring changes into the classroom. The textbook, in other words, should be seen as a means of 're-skilling' not 'de-skilling'.

Textbooks as a workable compromise

Assumption 5: A textbook cannot meet the needs of any individual teaching–learning situation nor the needs of the individuals within it. And this is true. A textbook can never be more than a workable compromise, but then, given the range of needs that exist within any learning context, so is everything else in the classroom. If we argue that textbooks should be done away with because they cannot meet all the needs of a given situation, are we also to argue that since no teacher can meet all the needs of any given learner, teachers should be done away with? Nothing that happens in education is anything more than a workable compromise, and

we cannot uniquely condemn textbooks because they are not a perfect fit. Given that a reasonable amount of thought has gone into the creation of the textbook by the publisher, and to the choice of the textbook by the teachers, there is no reason to assume that any other materials would be any better, and many reasons why they may be worse.

To sum up, there are, we feel, a number of implicit assumptions in the arguments against textbooks—assumptions for which there is little or no support. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the anti-textbook arguments are based on ideological or cultural values, which do not accord with the reality of people's needs. O'Neill (1991) touches on this point. With regard to teacher training, he argues that rather than stressing individuality and creativity in the classroom, we should concentrate on getting teachers to do ordinary things well, such as ask effective and useful questions. But, he maintains, such an approach does not figure highly in the debate about teaching because it is not seen as desirable by the Western mind. We can see something similar in the attitude towards textbooks. There is an emphasis on individual freedom and creativity over effective performance. It's a sort of 'back to nature' appeal. Wouldn't it be better if we all baked our own bread, preferably from our own home-grown, organic wheat, rather than buying a cut-and-wrapped loaf at the supermarket? In reality, of course, the convenience of the supermarket is overwhelming in determining our choice. The important conclusion to draw, surely, is not that we should encourage everyone to make their own bread, but that we should educate people to be more informed, more discerning, and more influential consumers.

Let us now consider the implications of our arguments.

Implications for action

We have focused in this paper on the value of the textbook, particularly in periods of change. Our concern throughout has been to see the textbook in relation to the needs of the various parties in the teaching–learning process, particularly the needs of the teacher. Teaching is a partnership between teacher and materials. Partnerships work best when each partner knows the strengths and weaknesses of the other and is able to complement them. If we are to understand the value of the textbook and fully exploit its potential as an agent of lasting and effective change, we need to see textbook development and teacher development as part of the same process. This has two implications.

Textbook development

The teacher development potential of textbooks should be recognized and actively built into textbook design. This will require more research into what teachers and learners actually do with textbooks and teacher's guides in the classroom. It has been disheartening that in preparing this paper, we have had to rely largely on studies of textbook use in subject areas other than ELT. For an industry of this size and economic value, the amount of supported knowledge about textbooks and their use is lamentable. It is little wonder that such discussion as there is about ELT textbooks is generally so ill-informed. We need to know what the role of the textbook really is in ELT. We would suggest that publishers in

Tom Hutchinson and Eunice Torres

particular, both in their own interests and those of the profession, should fund research into this very question. We have to know what needs the textbook satisfies, if we are to provide the secure and appropriate support that is required for development.

Teacher development

Just as textbooks (or at least their producers) need to find out more about the teachers' needs, so teachers need to learn more about textbooks. Teachers should, as Prabhu (1992) maintains, become good 'theorists', who understand not only how, but also why something is done. This indicates a need for a better relationship between the textbook and teacher development, through courses, seminars, workshops, etc. In particular we need to abandon the generally hostile attitude to textbooks that pervades much teacher training, and stop wasting so much time and effort on teaching teachers to do without or simply substitute for a textbook. Instead a central feature of all teacher training and development should be to help teachers become better consumers of textbooks by teaching them how to select and use textbooks effectively. This means helping them to be able to evaluate textbooks properly, exploit them in the class, and adapt and supplement them where necessary.

Conclusion

We began by posing two questions. Why does there appear to be such apathy and even hostility to the ELT textbook in the literature? And why does the textbook survive and prosper apparently in contradiction to the development of ideas in applied linguistics? We have argued in this paper that the anti-textbook position rests on narrow and unsupported assumptions about the role that textbooks play. When we explored the ELT context more thoroughly, we discovered that far from being a problem, the textbook is an important means of satisfying the range of needs that emerge from the classroom and its wider context. Education is a complex and messy matter. What the textbook does is to create a degree of order within potential chaos. It is a visible and workable framework around which the many forces and demands of the teaching–learning process can cohere to provide the basis of security and accountability that is necessary for purposeful action in the classroom. This vital management role takes on even greater importance in the insecure context of change. Rather than denigrating and trying to do away with textbooks, we should recognize their importance in making the lives of teachers and learners easier, more secure and fruitful, and seek a fuller understanding of their use in order to exploit their full potential as agents of smooth and effective change.
Received June 1993

Notes

1 This paper was presented at the 27th International Annual IATEFL Conference, Swansea, April 1993.

2 The term 'textbook' is used in the broad sense of 'an organized and pre-packaged set of teaching/learning materials'. The materials may be bound in just one book or distributed in a package, such as the familiar coursebook, workbook, teacher's guide, and cassettes. Our use of 'textbook' would encompass both the individual book and the package.

3 We are not concerned with the merits or otherwise of any particular textbooks. We recognize that there are bad textbooks and good textbooks. Our concern is with the textbook as a medium, which may be used well or badly.

4 We acknowledge that our arguments may not be relevant to some parts of the world (India and Pakistan have been cited to us as examples) where there is a justifiable concern about the stultifying effect of dull and outdated official textbooks backed by all the authority of the educational system and the academic hierarchy.

References

Allwright, R. L. 1981. 'What do we want teaching materials for?' *ELT Journal* 1: 5–18.

Allwright, D. and K. Bailey. 1991. *Focus on the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blackler, F. and S. Shimmin. 1984. *Applying Psychology in Organizations*. London: Methuen.

Breen, M. P. 1984. 'Process syllabuses for the language classroom' in C. J. Brumfit (ed.). *General English Syllabus Design*. ELT Documents 118. London: The British Council.

Breen, M. 1987. 'Learner contributions to task design' in C. Candlin and D. Murphy (eds.). *Lancaster Practical Papers in ELT. Vol. 2*. London: Prentice-Hall International.

Handy, C. 1985. *Understanding Organizations*. London: Penguin.

Hartley, B. and P. Viney. 1978. *Streamline*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Littlejohn, A.L. 1992. 'Why are ELT materials the way they are?' Unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University.

Loewenberg Ball, D. and S. Feiman-Nemser. 1988. 'Using textbooks and teacher's guides'. *Curriculum Inquiry* 18/4: 401–23.

Marris, P. 1986. *Loss and Change*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

O'Neill, R. 1991. 'The plausible myth of learner-centredness: or the importance of doing ordinary things well'. *ELT Journal* 45/4: 293–304.

Owen, S. V., R. D. Froman and H. Moscow. 1978. *Educational Psychology: An Introduction*. (2nd ed.) Boston: Little, Brown and Co.

Prabhu, N. S. 1992. 'The dynamics of the language lesson'. *TESOL Quarterly* 26/2: 161–76.

Stodolsky, S. S. 1988. 'Is teaching really by the book?' in P. W. Jackson and S. Horoutunian-Gordon (eds.) *From Socrates to Software: The Teacher as Text and the Text as Teacher*. 88th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education: 159–84.

Swan, M. 1992. 'The textbook: bridge or wall?'. *Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching* 2/1: 32–5.

Torres, E. G. 1990. 'If you cannot understand into your teacher you can depend into the book: the role of textbooks in challenging English language teaching and learning situations'. Paper presented at the first international conference of the Malaysian English Teachers Association, May 1991, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Torres, E. G. (in preparation). 'The role of textbooks in classroom second language learning: Teachers' and learners' classroom use of a fisheries-based ESP textbook in the Philippines'. PhD thesis, Lancaster University.

Van den Akker, J. J. 1988. 'The teacher as learner in curriculum implementation'. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 20/1: 47–55.

Viney, K. and P. Viney. 1989. *Grapevine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wong-Fillmore, L. 1985. 'When does teacher-talk work as input?' in S. Gass and C. Madden (eds.) *Input in Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

The authors

Tom Hutchinson is Associate Director of the Institute for English Language Education, Lancaster University. He is also the author of the *Project English* (OUP) and *Hotline* (OUP) coursebook series, and co-author of *ESP: A Learning-Centred Approach* (CUP), and *Interface* (Longman).

Eunice Torres was the local counterpart to the University of the Philippines in the Visayas/British Council English for Fisheries Project in the Philippines, and co-authored the project textbook *English for Fisheries Technology*. She is currently doing a PhD at Lancaster University on the role of textbooks in classroom second language learning.