

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rationale and Significance of the Problem

A universal element in English language teaching is the coursebook. A look at the English language teaching sections in bookshops will reveal a large number of types and levels of coursebooks. Not only is the range of coursebooks available to English teachers increasing, the coursebooks themselves are growing in complexity. Writing over a decade ago, Hutchinson and Torres (1994) noted a trend towards greater structuring of material, with more detailed instructions for teachers and procedures and reasoning for doing activities in certain ways. Up to the present we have continued to see this trend towards coursebooks providing prepared scripts for teachers. The contemporary coursebook typically offers the following:

- a language syllabus, through specifying and sequencing the language content of the course
- objectives for the language course
- topics for the lessons
- detailed plans of lessons including activities and specification of classroom interaction patterns
- reading and listening texts
- grammar and vocabulary exercises

- supplementary activities and material (including, for example, accompanying websites with downloadable lesson plans)
- suggestions for assessment
- a teacher's guide providing more information on how to use the material and the rationale behind the activities.

While the contemporary coursebook is commercially successful, there are concerns about this move towards more comprehensive materials. One of the concerns is the point that highly structured materials reduce teacher choice and responsibility, "...the materials can preempt all the important decisions which teachers themselves might otherwise be expected to make. The content is pre-determined. The order of the content is pre-determined. The procedures for using the content are also pre-determined" (Maley, 1998, p. 279).

Therefore, these materials are seen as being both constraining and leading to teachers forming an unhealthy dependency on the coursebooks (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994, p. 315). This negative view of coursebooks assumes that materials that appear to present scripts for lessons are in fact used inflexibly. Hutchinson and Torres (1994, p.325) cite studies from other areas of education indicating that teachers are not too constrained by materials but instead freely adapt, omit and replace textbook tasks. However, at present there is little observation data on coursebook use in English language teaching.

In contrast to the negative view of highly structured materials as reducing responsibility and constraining teachers is the more positive view argued by Hutchinson and Torres (1994). They note that structured materials

offer stability and security in the fast changing world of language teaching. In their view, structured materials have an educational role, introducing teachers to innovative teaching ideas, effectively 're-skilling' rather than 'de-skilling'.

As there are a wide range of English language coursebooks published for teachers and students today and as the number of users of coursebooks is increasing, so knowledge of how coursebooks are used is important.

Hutchinson and Torres (1994) conclude that teachers should be educated to be more informed, more discerning, and more influential consumers of coursebooks in the market (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994, p.326). However, there has been little research done on the role that coursebooks play in the language classroom. In the research reviewed for this study, only two studies reported the use of coursebooks by teachers (Ghosn, 2003; Richards, Tung and Ng, cited in Richards, 1998), so there are few examples of teacher's interpretation of coursebooks in their own teaching and classes. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) suggest that research should be carried out into what needs the coursebook satisfies. This kind of research would benefit many groups, especially language teachers by assisting them in their understanding of the roles that coursebooks play in the classroom and applying this understanding in their teaching in order to be most effective.

Objectives of the Research

The purpose of this research is to explore the roles of the English language teaching coursebook through studying how one unit of one

coursebook, *American Headway 2*, is interpreted and used by instructors teaching an undergraduate English course at a University in Thailand.

The questions that are explored are as follows:

1. Do teachers follow the lesson plans provided by the coursebook?
2. If not, what sections of the coursebook do teachers use, and which parts do they not use?
3. How do the teachers modify the sections of the book they used?
4. In what ways do the teachers supplement the coursebook?
5. What factors contribute to the decision to select, adapt, supplement, and omit material?

From the research questions, if the teachers follow the lesson plans provided by the coursebook, they may lose their own teaching styles, resulting in the creation of, according to Littlejohn (1996), the 'standardized classroom'. This would indicate that coursebooks constrain teachers. However, if they do not follow the lesson plans from the coursebook, if they are seen to freely adapt, modify, and supplement materials, this would be evidence that coursebooks do not constrain the teachers.

If observation shows that teachers are introducing the communicative tasks and activities in the coursebook (this coursebook provides many interesting communicative activities so the students can practice language skills), the argument of Hutchinson and Torres, which is that the coursebook can act as an agent of change, having a role in teacher education, is supported. However, if the observation shows that the teachers omit activities that do not fit with their teaching style (every teacher has his or her own way of teaching, and it is possible that teachers may omit activities that they feel

uncomfortable with), this situation would suggest that the coursebook itself has a limited teacher education role and the teachers need to be trained in the use of coursebooks. Also, exploring the factors contributing to the way the coursebook is used may reveal the influence other aspects of the curriculum have on teaching.

Moreover, it will be possible to gain insight into teachers' needs and wants by examining what aspects of materials, such as activities, exercises, and texts provided in the coursebook, that teachers actually use. Some of the ways that the teachers adapt and supplement material from the observation and interview could be useful for other teachers in their teaching development.

Significance of Study

In exploring these issues, the study is of interest to a number of groups. The first one is syllabus designers and those responsible for the selection of materials. This study of how materials are used will provide an insight into the extent and limitations of the contribution made to the language course by the coursebook. The next group is teachers. It has often been pointed out that the classroom is a private world. What a teacher does in the classroom, while evident to learners, tends to remain hidden from fellow teachers. This study, in making public how one set of materials is used, will indicate the range of options available to teachers in adapting a coursebook for use. Given teacher differences, it is good for the teacher to see other ideas that they may be able to apply in their teaching. Kiato mentioned that this is one way teachers can

learn about materials “Colleagues and friends who are teachers are also a good source of recommendation of textbooks and advice about how to best use them” (Kiato, 2003, p. 3). This study will allow the opportunity to understand how different teachers use the book and adapt activities to suit the needs of their classes, and thus may help teachers in the area of professional development.

Moreover, coursebook writers and publishers can benefit from this study. A significant investment of effort goes into producing sets of coursebooks for the global market. It will therefore be interesting to those involved in this to see how the products are used, and thus learn about what would be most beneficial for teachers. This study may also help local rather than international materials writers to identify needs better met by locally produced material.

This study is also of interest to other researchers. Given the expense to educational institutions and learners of teaching materials there is a need to research how these are used. This small-scale project may stimulate further studies.

Definition of Terms

Materials

Materials are defined as anything that helps to teach language learners about the language being learned, and as anything used to inform the learners in the form of a textbook, a workbook, a cassette, a CD-Rom, a video, a photocopied

handout, a newspaper, a paragraph written on a whiteboard (Tomlinson, 1998, p. xi). In this study, the material that is focussed on is the coursebook.

Coursebook

A coursebook is designed to be a textbook which serves as the sole book necessary in a course providing in its pages everything the learner requires during the course, including core materials, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, functions and the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking (Tomlinson, 1998, p. ix).

Workbook

A workbook contains extra practice activities, space for writing and an answer key in its contents, with the objective of aiding the learners in their studies outside the classroom, and providing feedback (Tomlinson, 1998, p. xiii).

Adaptation of material

Adaptation of materials refers to the process of reducing, adding, omitting, modifying, and supplementing material provided in the coursebook, in order to make the material more suitable to a particular type of learner. Adaptation is done by most teachers every time to maximize the quantity and quality of deliverance and

reception of the coursebook material from the teacher to learner (Tomlinson, 1998, p. xi).

Supplementation of material	Supplementation of material refers to outside resources chosen to complement the main teaching material. According to Tomlinson (1998), supplementation of material is a part of adaptation.
Discovery activity	Discovery activity refers to “an activity which involves learners in investing energy and attention in order to discover something about the language for themselves. Getting learners to work out the rules of direct speech from examples, asking learners to investigate when and why a character uses the modal ‘must’ in a story and getting learners to notice and explain the use of ellipsis in a recorded conversation would be examples of discovery activities” (Tomlinson, 1998, p. ix).
Task	Task refers to any proposal contained within the materials for action to be undertaken by the learners, which has the direct aim of bringing about the learning of the foreign language (Littlejohn, 1998, p.198).

Organization of the Study

Chapter One has introduced the study, and included a rationale and discussion of the significance of the problem. This chapter has also provided the objectives of the research and definition of terms. Chapter Two will review some of the background literature and discuss the benefits, limitations, and use of English language teaching coursebooks. Chapter Three presents the research methodology under the following headings: participants, course and material, research instruments, research procedure and data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. After that, data analysis is presented in Chapter Four in three parts. The first part presents the results of what sections of the coursebook the teachers used and did not use in their classrooms. The second part of data analysis presents how the material was supplemented and adapted. The third part concerns the factors contributing to the decisions to select, adapt, supplement, and omit material. Finally, the discussion and conclusion of the study are given in the last chapter. Suggestions for using coursebooks and suggestions for further research are also mentioned in this last chapter.