

CHAPTER II

COURSEBOOKS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

For this literature review, the focus is on the proposed benefits and drawbacks of coursebooks, and how they are used in classrooms. The literature review covers the following topics:

1. Beneficial roles of coursebooks in English language teaching
2. Negative effects of the use of coursebooks in English language teaching
3. Use of coursebooks in English language teaching

Beneficial Roles of Coursebooks in English Language Teaching

A universal element in language teaching is the coursebook. It is usually the main material in the classroom. Coursebooks may contribute positively to English language teaching through, for example, being a source of structure for teachers and students, having a role in educating teachers, and providing ideas for classroom activities. The beneficial roles of coursebooks are discussed below, first focusing on the teacher's view, then considering the coursebook from the perspective of the learner.

Benefits for Teachers

Firstly, coursebooks serve as a syllabus which help teachers know what they will teach in the classroom. Cunningsworth (cited in Richards, 2001, p.251) mentions the role of materials in language teaching as providing a syllabus reflecting the learning objectives already determined. According to Richards, coursebooks provide a syllabus that has been systematically planned and developed (Richards, n.d). According to Bell and Gower (cited in Rubdy, 2003, p.39), coursebooks can act as a sort of “route map,” or guide which teachers and learners can apply in the areas of looking ahead to what will be done in a lesson, as well as looking back on what has already been done. This “route map” helps teachers to plan what will go on in the classroom for the courses they are teaching.

Secondly, coursebooks provide structure and security for teacher. Richards identifies this role of the coursebook in many areas, contending that coursebooks serve to supplement teacher’s instructions in providing the basis for the content of the lesson, the balance of skills taught and the kinds of language practice the students take part in (Richards, n.d.). So, the structure in the coursebooks can guide teachers in their teaching and this can help the teachers to feel secure in preparing the lesson. As Kiato states, “materials are the center of instruction and one of the most important influences on what goes on in the classroom” (Kiato. n.d.). Moreover, Rubdy (2003, p.39) states one advantage for the use of coursebooks is that “coursebooks provide teachers, especially those lacking in training and experience, with a sense of self-confidence and security”. Ansary and Babaii also mention the same, that

“for novice teachers a coursebook means security, guidance, and support” (Ansary & Babaii, n.d.).

In addition, coursebooks educate teachers and thus have a teacher-training role. Coursebooks help in educating less experienced and inexperienced teachers in order to be more confident in how to plan lessons and teach in the classroom. Cunningsworth (cited in Richards, 2001, p.251) mentions that coursebooks are a support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain confidence. They provide ideas on how to plan and teach lessons (Richards, n. d.). Hutchinson and Torres make the claim that coursebook should be seen as a means of ‘re-skilling’ not ‘de-skilling’ in order to educate teachers to develop their own teaching (Hutchinson & Torres,1994, p.325).

Also, coursebooks assist teachers in freeing up time in managing their lessons. Coursebooks are very helpful for teachers to aid their preparation for instruction and activities for their classes. Hutchinson and Torres (1994, p.318) discuss the teachers’ view of textbooks as a “tool” to help them manage their lessons. Teachers are looking for a coursebook that can guide them in their teaching, provide interesting activities, yet do not require too much preparation. Richards mentions that good coursebooks help teachers with different levels of experience, training, and teaching skills, to not spend time working out how to use the coursebooks by giving explicit goals, exercises, clear activities and procedures for use (Richards, 1998, p.134). Ansary and Babaii claim that a coursebook is a framework which regulates and times the programs (Ansary & Babaii, n.d.). So, coursebooks help teachers save time in planning lessons because the activities and tasks are already included.

Coursebooks do not just help to save teacher time in preparing the lesson but also help to relieve the psychological pressure on teachers. A reason for using a coursebook that Ansary and Babaii make is “a coursebook provides ready-made teaching texts and learning tasks” (Ansary & Babaii, n.d.). From this claim, coursebooks can help reduce the pressure on the teachers because they do not need to provide all lessons by themselves.

Harmer (2001, p.304) claims that good coursebooks help the teacher to feel relieved from the pressure of having to create original material for every class.

Moreover, coursebooks are a source of tasks and activities by providing more communicative tasks and activities which help students to interact in the classroom. As Richards (1998) mentions, coursebooks provide a variety of resources, and serve as the most important tool of guidance for teachers in the classroom, helping the classes become more communicative. Mares claims that coursebooks are designed to provide direction, support, and specific language-based activities aimed at offering classroom practice for students. Mares (2003, p.130) also claims that coursebooks provide non-native speaking teachers with the support and security necessary for them in more communicative-type classes, rather than the more traditional grammar translation classes of the past.

In addition, coursebooks assist in assessment and evaluation. Kiato claims that coursebooks can help in areas such as assigning grades, checking learning, and giving feedback to students, or improving instruction by giving feedback to the teachers (Kiato, n.d.).

Benefits for Learners

Coursebooks are not only beneficial for teachers but also benefit learners. First of all, for learners, coursebooks provide language input. The coursebooks may provide the major source of contact they have with the language apart from input provided by the teacher. "Coursebooks provide input into classroom lessons in the form of texts, activities, explanations..." (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994, p.317). So, learners can learn language through the coursebooks from the texts, activities or explanations provided.

Also, coursebooks provide structure and security. Coursebooks not only benefit the teachers in the areas of enriching education and providing structure, but enhance the academic performance of the learners as well. For instance, when students miss class, do homework at home, or prepare for the test, the coursebook can be used as a primary resource. According to O'Neill, coursebooks can help learners who have missed lessons to catch up, and coursebooks can also help learners to prepare for future lessons in advance (O'Neill, 1982, p.106). Harmer also gives a similar idea about the usefulness of coursebook for learners. Students can look back on the coursebook for revision (Harmer, 2001, p. 304) Coursebooks make it possible for learners to look ahead to what they are going to do or to look back at what they have done (O'Neill, 1982, p.105). Coursebooks give a sense of progress to learning and so help learners to learn language inside and outside the classroom.

Not only that, coursebooks can be reference sources on what for the learners have learned. Cunningsworth (cited in Richards, 2001, p.251) makes a claim that coursebooks are a reference source for students on grammar,

vocabulary, pronunciation. This helps learners to have more confidence to learn because they know the source of what they have learned.

Moreover, coursebooks contribute to learner independence.

Hutchinson and Torres discuss how the learners view coursebooks in terms of their role in learning. Learners see the coursebook as a framework or guide that helps them to learn both inside and outside the classroom. They can use the coursebook to guide them in discussions and activities. Also, coursebooks are able to guide the learners when they study on their own by means of explanations and activities. For example, when students are doing homework or preparing for tests they can consult the book for additional information (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994, p.318).

Also, coursebooks contribute to learners' motivation. Ansary and Babaii mention that learners see coursebooks as an important tool for their learning. If there is no coursebook, this may be understood as meaning that there is no purpose to the instruction. Learners may think that without a book, their learning is not taken seriously (Ansary & Babaii, n.d.).

However, there are some negative views about using commercial coursebooks. The literature below discusses limitations and disadvantages of coursebooks in language teaching.

Negative Effects of the Use of Coursebooks in English Language Teaching

One of the disadvantages of coursebooks is teacher 'deskilling'.

Teachers do not have to think or create other activities for the students. They teach exactly by the coursebook. Coursebooks can deskill teachers if they just

follow everything from coursebook. This may reduce the teachers' role in the classroom, because they follow closely what the coursebook provides.

Richards mentions that coursebooks can deskill teachers, because coursebooks provide instructions for teachers, allowing them to just present materials prepared by others (Richards, n.d.). Also, Littlejohn, cited by Hutchinson and Torres mentions that "the precise instruction which the materials give reduce the teacher's role to one of managing or overseeing a preplanned classroom event" (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994, p.316).

It has also been argued that coursebooks are uninspiring. Meddings and Thornbury (2001) argue for getting rid of coursebooks. They give the idea that coursebooks are needed for other subjects such as geography, history, or mathematics but language teaching may not need them. They also argue that in the coursebook that provides tasks, activities are in actual fact "passivities", serving merely to put words into the students' mouths rather than as vehicles for the communication of their own meaning (Meddings & Thornbury, 2001, p.12). This supports the idea that teachers should not follow everything from coursebooks but know how to adapt or supplement them to suit their own classrooms.

Coursebooks may also provide irrelevant materials. The disadvantages in using the coursebook which Richards lists (1998, p.126-127) include that teachers can make more relevant material for their students than is found in commercial coursebooks, and that good teachers who can create their own materials do not need coursebooks. From this limitation, writing materials is not good for less experienced or inexperienced teachers because they still need some guidance from the coursebooks.

In addition, coursebooks are unable to meet the variety of needs of learners, according to Richards (n.d.). Ansary and Babaii (n.d.) also counter O'Neill's ideas on this point (O'Neill, 1982). Ansary and Babaii make the following arguments: A coursebook is confining, in that it cannot serve a variety of levels, every type of learning style, and every category of learning strategy because of its pre-set rationale. A coursebook of necessity sets prearranged sequence and structure that may not be realistic in the situation, and unable to respond to all the different needs of the group of students. Also, coursebooks are made through a compromise between the author and the publisher. The author is concerned in producing a text that teachers will find innovative, creative, relevant to their students' needs, and also that they will enjoy teaching from. Moreover, the author is concerned about his book's success and profit, and the publisher's aim is to make a large profit in their investment as well. The publisher must be concerned about the good quality and marketability of the coursebook in order to achieve the profit (Richards, 1998, p.134). It is unlikely that one coursebook will serve everyone's need in a specific class because coursebooks are made by this compromise. So, the teacher's job is to find the way to make use of the coursebook according to their own classrooms. The tables below summarize the advantages and disadvantages of coursebooks.

Table 1: Summary of the advantages of coursebooks

Advantages of Coursebooks
1. Coursebooks serve as a syllabus which help teachers know what to teach
2. Coursebooks provide structure and security for teachers
3. Coursebooks educate teachers and thus have a teacher training role
4. Coursebooks assist teachers in freeing up time in managing their lesson.
5. Coursebooks help to relieve the pressure on teachers
6. Coursebooks provide a variety of tasks and activities
7. Coursebooks provide communicative tasks and activities which help students to interact in the classroom
8. Coursebooks provide language input for learners
9. Coursebooks give learners structure and security
10. Coursebooks are a reference source for learners
11. Coursebooks contribute to learner independence
12. Coursebooks contribute to learner motivation

Table 2: Summary of the disadvantages of coursebooks

Disadvantages of Coursebooks
1. Coursebooks can deskill teachers
2. Coursebook content may be uninspiring
3. Coursebooks provide irrelevant materials
4. Coursebooks are unable to meet the variety of needs of learners

From what researchers have observed and teachers have stated, there are both benefits and limitations to coursebooks usage. According to the table above, there are more advantages for coursebooks than disadvantages. Despite the disadvantages, coursebooks are generally considered useful tools for helping the teachers in their teaching. Although coursebooks are not made for a specific class, they are helpful in language teaching and learning. What is important is how the coursebooks are used in the classroom effectively. The following section discusses the teachers' use of coursebooks, with an understanding that no coursebook is perfect, but must be adapted and supplemented according to the various needs of teachers, students, and classroom setting.

Use of Coursebooks in English Language Teaching

Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argue that teaching is a partnership between teacher and materials. So, coursebooks play a very important role as a teacher's tool in the classroom. Nowadays there are many coursebooks published and sold, so schools and teachers are able to choose coursebooks suitable for their students. The good variety of coursebooks means that teachers have many choices in selecting suitable coursebooks for their classes.

As the requirements of particular learning and teaching situations are varied, a coursebook should be selected for flexibility, adaptability, and relevance to the changing needs, goals, and interests of the language learner (Tomlinson, 2003, p.38). Coursebooks should be a tool to help teachers and learners learn the target language. However, one coursebook cannot be

followed to meet the differing needs of every teacher and class. As a result of factors such as teaching styles or students' differences, a coursebook cannot be taught exactly the same in each class. There are different ways to use one coursebook in the classroom. Teacher factors such as personality, proficiency, background knowledge, or teaching style influence the ways that different teachers use a coursebook, even though they may follow the same syllabus provided by the educational institution (Maley, 1998). Woodward (cited in Richards, 1998) concludes that teachers' use of the coursebook depends on experience. She claimed that inexperienced teachers use coursebooks more extensively than experienced teachers. Also, the use of the coursebook depends on the subject matter being taught. For example, teachers who teach reading perhaps might use coursebook as a resource for lesson content but not necessarily for teaching procedures (Richards, 1998, p.133). It will be useful if coursebooks offer support for the teacher so that the teacher can learn how to use them by adapting, supplementing or replacing tasks or activities in order to make classrooms more effective.

Tomlinson (1998) gives the definition of adaptation as "making changes to materials in order to improve them or to make them more suitable for a particular type of learner..." (Tomlinson, 1998, p. xi). Richards and Ansary and Babaii indicate that no commercial coursebook will ever be perfect for every situation in the classroom (Richards, 1998, p.135, Richards, n.d., Ansary & Babaii, n.d.). Thus coursebooks should be adapted to suit the teachers' and learners' needs. From this, Ansary and Babaii suggest that teachers should have the option of assigning supplementary materials based on their own specific needs in their own specific teaching situation. Teachers

should not follow the coursebook exactly, but rather should delete, adapt, and extend coursebook activities in order for the book to work effectively with their classes.

Many researchers mention the benefits of coursebook adaptation. According to Grant, there are two main purposes of adaptation most frequently cited. The first one is to make the material suitable for the classroom situation to meet the learners' needs and interests. The second is to compensate for any intrinsic factor in the materials such as linguistic inaccuracies, out-of-datedness of materials, lack of authenticity or lack of variety (Grant, 2002, p.64). Islam and Mares give one reason for adaptation, that "materials are necessarily constrained by the syllabus, unit template, and other space concerns. Not all material, therefore, is fully developed. A good teacher's guide will supplement materials with useful alternatives and adaptation." (Islam and Mares, 2003, p.86).

When considering the benefits and drawbacks of coursebooks, and options on adapting coursebooks, teachers are in need of research studies conducted through observation on teachers and their coursebook use in classroom teaching and learning situations. The following research studies give some information about the use of coursebooks in both TESOL and non-TESOL classrooms. Ghosn (2003) investigated how experienced teachers and their students interact when using tasks in ELT coursebooks in six primary school classrooms in Lebanon. The study showed that the coursebook was a key participant in the classroom. All the participating teachers followed the coursebooks and the teacher's guidebook but they viewed the same coursebook in different ways. The study revealed that the coursebook is firmly

in control of what is permissible and what needs to be accomplished, however tasks and activities were used in unexpected ways (Ghosn, 2003, p.292-293).

Richards, Tung, and Ng (cited in Richards, 1998) carried out a survey in Hong Kong about the major teaching resources used, and the functions of coursebooks. The teachers used the coursebook, supplementary materials, and audiotapes as primary teaching resources. Providing practice activities (64%) were primary functions of coursebook. Coursebooks also provided a structured language program for teachers to follow (56%), and then provided language model for 55 % and gave information about language for 50%. Most teachers (83%) said that they did not rely on one coursebook, but used different coursebooks for listening, reading practice, and writing. Only 28% mentioned that they used exercises and material that they prepared by themselves.

Horsley states that few studies have been conducted involving observation of coursebook use. Horsley's research (Horsely, n.d.) 'An Expert Teacher's Use of Textbooks in the Classroom' investigated how an expert teacher used a coursebook in a secondary school in Australia, using an observational instrument, TEXTOR, to examine coursebook use. Preliminary results comparing the expert teacher to teachers in other studies indicated that the expert teacher used the coursebook differently in class than teachers in another two TEXTOR studies, and the expert teacher's main need and use for coursebook was to represent and provide subject matter content to the students. Also, factors such as subject, grade level, and timing of lesson, did not have an influence on coursebook use. He concludes that classroom usage

needs to be taken into account in considering what might be thought of coursebooks (Horsley, n.d.).

A study by Studolsky (cited in Richards, 1998) investigated the view that coursebooks deskill teachers (mentioned when describing limitations of coursebooks). Studolsky observed six teachers of math and social science to determine the extent to which topics taught were from the book, which sections of the book or other materials were used, and the extent to which teachers followed suggestions in the teacher's manual. She found that teachers varied considerably in their use of coursebooks. The teachers used them differently in regard to classroom practices, teaching techniques, and the activities from the teachers' edition by selecting specifically what they used from the coursebook and following the recommendation in the teachers' manuals. Her study suggested that the teachers' abilities to teach and to employ pedagogical reasoning skills were not negatively affected by the use of coursebook, but the coursebook served simply as a resource which they implemented in many different ways (Richards, 1998, p.133). In addition, teachers used the coursebook as guidance. They did not exactly follow the book but adapted and supplemented it to suit their classes. This study suggests that coursebooks do not deskill teachers.

In order to avoid the deskilling effect of the teachers in using the coursebook, the teachers should be given the knowledge and skills needed to evaluate and adapt the coursebook. Teachers should be prepared for using coursebooks as sources for creative adaptation (Richards, 1998, p.140). Teachers should be trained how to use coursebooks effectively by being provided with activities that can develop their ability to use, supplement, and

adapt the book. Richards claims, "These activities seek to develop an understanding of the nature of textbooks and their role in teaching through the processes of analyzing what textbook set out to do and how they do it, developing criteria for evaluating textbook, providing experience in preparing instructional materials, giving experience in adapting textbook, and monitoring the use of material in teaching" (Richards, 1998, p.136).

Summary of the Chapter

The literature reviewed above gives insights about the role of coursebooks. There are both benefits and limitations in coursebook use. Benefits include serving as a structure for teacher and learner and also educating the teacher in guiding them through tasks and activities in the classroom. Coursebooks are the main material in the language classroom but the way that each teacher interprets and utilizes the coursebook is different according to factors such as teacher's degree of language proficiency and confidence, teacher's personal learning experiences, teacher's personality, or teacher's preferred teaching style.

However, coursebooks may deskill teachers if they strictly follow everything in the coursebook, ignoring the need to adapt the lesson to their individual classroom and learners. As discussed above, one coursebook cannot serve every need in a specific classroom, so teachers should understand how to adapt and supplement materials accordingly. Teachers should see the provided material as a model to follow in developing their own materials, according to Nunan (1988, p.98). Teachers should understand

more about the role of the coursebooks and be trained in how to utilize coursebooks. Richards (2001, p.260) states that “the ability to be able to adapt commercial textbooks...is an essential skill for teachers to develop.” So the teacher should be trained and provided with resources in order to adapt and use the coursebook in the most effective way.

The discussion on the influence of structured coursebooks revealed that some writers say that they constrain teachers, but others mention that coursebooks have a role in teacher education. However, it is clear that there has not been much research on how coursebooks are used. According to Hutchinson and Torres (1994, p.326) “we...require more research into what teachers and learners actually do with textbook and teachers’ guide in the classroom...we need to know what the role of the textbook really in ELT.” By studying how a number of teachers make use of the same coursebook, this research can help to make a contribution to fill this gap of knowledge. This is the reason why the current study was conducted.