

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Coursebooks play significant roles in many language programs. They are viewed as central resources (McGrath, 2006) and provide structure for both teachers and learners. Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) stated that materials, if well selected, can help learners reach the goal of language learning, as they can offer learners perceptions of knowledge, language learning and promote affective and cognitive development and their general information about the world. Most language programs in Thailand make use of at least one coursebook. It is therefore worth investigating the roles of the coursebook in language programs and exploring how the coursebook is exploited by teachers.

Despite the popularity of coursebooks, there continues to be debate about the roles they play in language programs with arguments made for and against coursebook-based teaching (McGrath 2002). Some scholars such as Swan (cited in Hutchinson & Torres 1994) claimed that there may be some drawbacks to using coursebooks. Littlejohn (cited in Hutchinson and Torres 1994) also added that here is the danger that ready made coursebooks may reduce teachers' roles and responsibility and deskill the teachers through allowing them to rely heavily on the coursebook when teaching. In this view, coursebooks reduce teacher creativity. In contrast, a number of writers (Nunan, 1991; Ellis, 1997, 1998; Richards, 2001) are of the view that coursebooks play a vital role in language pedagogy and may not necessarily deskill teachers. Hutchinson and Torres (1994 p. 326) suggest that there is a need to

understand the coursebook in relation to the needs of the various groups in the teaching-learning process, especially the needs of the teachers. They also suggest that more research is required to investigate what teachers and learners actually do with the coursebooks in the classroom to understand the actual roles coursebooks play.

To date, much of the evaluative work on coursebooks appears to be predictive evaluation or pre-use evaluation in the form of checklists or evaluative questions (Nunan, 1991) that aim to help teachers to select the coursebooks suitable for their learners. It is the aim of this work to complement this predictive evaluation with a study in the classrooms of one well established language center to investigate the role of the coursebook and the factors influencing its use.

Rationale for Study

According to Richards (2001 p. 251), teaching materials are an important component in most language programs. He goes on to indicate that materials may be in print such as books, workbooks, worksheets, published or commercial coursebooks; non print materials such as cassettes, radio, audio programs, multi media; a mixture of both print and non print materials such as self access materials; materials that are not designed for pedagogical purposes (authentic materials) such as newspapers, magazines, songs, video selections, photographs, etc.; and created materials which refers to coursebooks and other specially developed resources produced by publishers or teachers themselves or even learners. The most common materials are in the form of coursebooks.

Based on Cunningsworth (cited in Richards, 2001), the functions of materials, especially coursebooks in language pedagogy can be listed as:

- 1.) A resource for language presentation (spoken and written)
- 2.) A source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction
- 3.) A reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and so on.
- 4.) A source of motivation and ideas for classroom activities
- 5.) A syllabus (where they reflect learning objectives that have already been determined)
- 6.) A support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence.

In other words, teaching materials can give detailed information of what to teach even when a syllabus is not present. They guide teachers on the intensity of coverage and the amount of attention required by the content and tasks. They can also define objectives of the syllabus and the expected roles of teachers and learners in the pedagogical process. Some are even designed for newly trained teachers (Nunan, 1991). Finally, when coursebooks are well designed, for example containing up to date content, and personalized content, they can arouse learners' motivation to learn more.

Hutchinson and Torres (1994), share the view that the coursebooks have an important and positive role in the everyday practice of teaching and learning a language. In addition, the coursebook becomes significant in periods of change as they regard the coursebook as being an "agent of change" in supporting change through texts, activities, explanations, etc. This is because during the past two decades, there has been a welter of new teaching methodologies, new areas of interest, such as ESP, new approaches to syllabus design, new concepts and beliefs. This flow of new ideas has created a need for teachers to understand the changes. It is suggested that the coursebook can manage changes gradually with its structured framework

supporting teachers and students to develop in harmony with the flow of new ideas. The coursebook can be said therefore to be not only a learning program for language but also a carrier for teacher and learner training. The good coursebook, if used appropriately, can offer an excellent support for effective change. The potential benefits of the coursebook is also supported by Allwright (1981) who adds that coursebooks can manage the interaction between teachers, learners and materials

Thus many authors, such as Sheldon (1988), Skierso (1991), Nunan (1991), Chamber (1997), and Littlejohn (1998), have come up with checklists and evaluative questions for pre-use evaluation, to be used in coursebook selection. However, Sheldon (1988) viewed that coursebook evaluation by relying on checklists is basically a subjective, rule of thumb activity. In other words, there is no systematic rule that can provide “a definitive yardstick” for pre-use evaluation of coursebooks. Furthermore, there is very little published research on how the textbooks are used and implemented by language teachers in classroom settings. The discussion of the roles of coursebooks, and the development of pre-use evaluation checklists needs to be complemented by study of how coursebooks are actually used.

In order to consider how coursebooks are used, Nunan (1991) and Ellis (1997, 1998) called for micro evaluation of materials evaluation in terms of the empirical evaluation of language teaching materials. In addition Hutchinson and Torres (1994) urge for studies on the roles of coursebooks in classroom use. Also, McGrath (2002) speculates that teachers may or may not use the coursebooks in the ways that correspond to the instruction of the materials designers.

When investigating how the coursebook is used, it is unavoidable not to focus attention on the teachers even though there are various parties making use of, or with an interest in coursebooks for example, publishers, students, and program

directors. In the profession of teaching, teachers are typically faced with different kinds of tasks such as selecting learning activities, preparing students for new learning, presenting learning activities, conducting drills and providing opportunity for practice of new items (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). There is no doubt that teachers work closely with materials in carrying out these tasks and providing lessons that match the needs of learners, parents, institutions, and programs. In exploring the contribution of coursebooks, one factor to consider is the teacher, as teacher beliefs, confidence and experience may influence how the coursebook is used (Masuhara, 1998).

Given the importance of materials in teaching, the centrality of coursebooks, and the debate on the roles and functions of coursebooks, the gap of knowledge concerning how coursebooks are used by the end-product users, in particular teachers, needs to be filled. This study thus aims to gain a deeper understanding of how a coursebook is used in classroom settings and what factors influence its use.

Objectives of Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the roles of the coursebook through studying how the teachers make use of one coursebook. The objectives are:

- 1.) To find out whether language teachers use the coursebook in the way that correspond to the writers' instructions (found in student's book and teacher's book).
- 2.) To investigate the extent to which language teachers adapt and supplement the coursebook.

- 3.) To investigate how language teachers modify and supplement the coursebook tasks.
- 4.) To explore the factors that contribute to the way the coursebook is used.

These objectives can be stated as research questions:

- 1.) What sections in the coursebook do the teachers use and which parts do they reject?
- 2.) Do the teachers use the coursebook in the ways that correspond to the writer's instructions (found in the student's book and teacher's book)? If not, in what ways do they modify the coursebook?
- 3.) Do the teachers supplement the coursebook tasks? If so, what are the characteristics of supplementary tasks and what sections do these tasks supplement?
- 4.) What factors contribute to the way the coursebook is used?

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this study will be in the interest of various parties such as teachers using coursebooks, coursebook writers and publishers, students of TESOL, policy makers, and researchers.

The first group who are likely to be interested in this study is teachers using coursebooks. Gaining a deeper understanding of how coursebooks are used in classroom settings is likely to be beneficial to those who use coursebooks in their own program. As mentioned earlier, coursebooks are one of the important elements in

language learning and teaching. This study can help illuminate the factors that may contribute to what actually happens when coursebooks are used, how and why tasks are adapted and supplemented. Importantly, awareness of this can help educate and improve teaching skills and contribute to professional development. Reflection on this study is hoped to give those teachers some ideas of how to adapt and supplement his/her own teaching materials wisely and appropriately as well as think critically of the characteristics of supplementary and modified tasks and whether they have a direct or indirect aim of foreign language learning.

Also included in the intended audience for this study are writers and publishers who may be interested in what happens when the coursebooks are implemented in a particular setting. This is not limited only to those responsible for the coursebook used in this study but can also be extended to other publishers and coursebook writers as a useful reflection of their own work.

Additionally, this study could be of interest to students of TESOL, for example those taking MA degrees in TESOL. It is obvious that pedagogical methods are derived from the theories and approaches to language learning. These theories, approaches and teaching methods are turned into practice in the form of contents and tasks in the coursebooks. In this case students of TESOL can gain an insight into how theories, approaches and methods are turned into classroom practice and understand the factors that may shape classroom implementation.

Next, those in management of language programs will be able to make use of the findings from this study to write or reform language program policy to make it reflect the realities of classrooms. Programs could be developed using the findings of this study in setting up seminars or meetings during or after the coursebook use.

Finally, researchers in the field of materials evaluation who plan to conduct a study in this field could use this work to inform their research design to make it suitable for their own objectives in order to reach findings about language pedagogy.

Definition of Terms

Coursebook	In the current study, the term coursebook will be used to refer to a book used in a school or a language program which is the basis for a course or formal study (McGrath, 2002).
Coursebook Evaluation	Coursebook evaluation is a procedure that is concerned primarily with the value of a set of coursebook. It involves making judgments about the effect of coursebook on the people using them and it attempts to measure for example the flexibility of the coursebook, whether it is easy for a teacher to adapt the coursebook to fit a particular setting (Tomlinson, 2003).
Materials	The focus of the current study is primarily text materials that include those that have been either designed for language learning and teaching as such coursebooks (McGrath, 2002).

Task

The understanding of the term, ‘task’ for this study took Littlejohn’s (1998 p.198) view of “any proposal for...action to be taken by learners, which has a direct aim of bringing about the learning of the foreign language”.

Organization of the Study

The current study is reported in five chapters. Chapter One has introduced the study and presented the rationale, objectives, research questions, significance, and definition of terms. Chapter Two discusses the basic concepts of coursebook evaluation, adaptation, supplementation, and reviews related studies. Chapter Three describes the methodology of the current study which includes research design (setting, course materials, participants of the study), data collection instruments (class observation, video recordings, interview, checklists), pilot study and data analysis. Chapter Four reports the findings of the investigation. Chapter Five concludes, discusses and interprets the main findings, recommends pedagogical implications for coursebook use, and suggests areas for future study.