

**English Language Teaching Textbooks: Content, Consumption, Production, Nigel Harwood (Ed.). Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke/New York (2014). 373 pp., ISBN 978-1-37-27630-8.**

Textbooks have been recognised as an important part of ELT, because they are an indicator of what is happening in the classroom (Bocanegra Valle, 2010; McGrath, 2013; Tomlinson, 2012). However textbook writing was long regarded as an essentially practical activity (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) and as a relatively less important representative of the class of academic genres (Swales, 1995), therefore it did not receive much attention as an object of scientific inquiry. Moreover, fierce debates over the pedagogical usefulness of textbooks have developed (Harwood 2005; Hutchinson & Tores, 1994; Swan, 1992). Consequently questions of relations between teachers, learners, textbooks and textbook authors have been raised. Nevertheless, ELT textbooks were not completely absent from research. Despite their contested value for learning/teaching and a lack of systematic theoretical interest, textbooks were studied from pedagogic and from linguistic perspectives (e.g. Meunier & Gouverneur, 2009; Tomlinson, 2008). They were also analysed in their broader social contexts and were often seen as carriers of ideology and of cultural content (Shin, Eslami & Chen, 2011; Taki, 2008).

The aim of *English Language Teaching Textbooks: Content, Consumption* is to present current research into published ELT textbooks. While Tomlinson describes materials development for language learning and teaching as a “relatively new field” (Tomlinson, 2012, p.143), only two years later Nigel Harwood observes that ELT textbook research “is on the rise” (Harwood, 2014, p.30). Starting from the premise that the pool of research into textbooks should be broadened in order to establish a firm theoretical basis for the research field, the book editor takes a cultural studies perspective to delineate the dimensions of textbook study.

The book opens with Nigel Harwood’s introductory paper. Harwood suggests that textbooks should be studied at ‘three levels of textbook research’: content, consumption and production. He reviews previous textbook research in the mentioned three levels, highlighting not only the areas that were covered but also the underrepresented areas and limitations of each approach. Within the studies of content he distinguishes between content analyses of language, culture and pragmatics. Harwood finds that content analyses of language mostly concentrate on deficient vocabulary syllabi or on a specific item, while pronunciation has been less studied. The studies into cultural contents focus on inappropriateness of specific topics for a given teaching context, absence of some topics, and development of cultural contents through time and sexist representations of reality. With reference to studies of consumption, Harwood deplores the gap in research and relies on non-ELT textbook research to suggest that learner textbook and teachers’ guide consumption should be studied more thoroughly. In reviewing the studies on textbook production he highlights research on the complexity of the process and reveals some questionable editorial practices.

The three levels of textbook analysis, introduced by Harwood, form the skeleton for the organisation of contributions under individual sections.

Part One is entitled ‘Studies of Textbooks Content’. It starts with a paper on the representations of the working class in ELT textbooks, continues with one on the distribution of different types of reading comprehension questions in global EFL textbooks, and ends with a paper on

contents of reading texts in textbooks of pre-service teachers. Investigating into a set of UK produced ELT textbooks which were published between 1970 and 2010 Gray and Block find out that the working class characters have progressively disappeared and try to explain this fact by ideological motivations. In her study on reading comprehension questions, Freeman establishes a taxonomy of question types and discusses the variation across textbooks by relying on information elicited from textbook authors and editors. Dixon et al. analyse locally and internationally produced textbooks assigned for courses in reading instruction in order to find out how important literacy concepts are explored and what information is conveyed to pre-service teachers. Based on the lacking coverage of English language learning issues, the authors recommend that the textbooks should be revised.

Part Two, entitled 'Perspectives on Materials', features three studies of textbook consumption. The first study deals with teachers' conceptualization and use of a textbook on a medical English course. Menkabu and Harwood report on a study carried out among Saudi Arabian teachers, who were using a global textbook on nursing. The authors used classroom observations and interviews to get insights into the teaching context, focusing on the metaphors that teachers used to describe the textbook, on the degree of textbook use and on the adaptations teachers made to the materials. The second paper is a qualitative research into a classroom usage of a textbook in an academic English course. Grammatosi and Harwood use a combination of classroom observations and interviews to investigate a teacher's textbook use in a UK-based EAP course. Their research leads them to conclude that a descriptive analysis should be complemented by evaluative studies in order to better contextualise the results. Observing that isolated case studies cannot shed light on patterns of textbook use, they call for further research into textbook consumption. Finally, Hadley's paper analyses the role of a global ELT textbook in a university language programme in Japan. Based on qualitative and quantitative analysis, the author finds out that the global textbook used by the teachers in the studied context contributed to students' language acquisition.

Part Three entitled 'Materials for the Language Syllabus' introduces four studies of textbook production. Relations between a materials writer and the publisher are studied in the first paper. Drawing on introspection, Timmis describes his experience with writing for publication. He analyses the process of adaptation of principles under the pressure of editorial feedback, raising the question of how to engage in effective compromising without disturbing the principle based textbook writing. The second study by Stoller and Robinson describes their own process of writing and publishing of a textbook for native and non-native chemistry students. The third paper looks into the process of the textbook revision process of two EAP textbooks by Feak and Swales. The authors give a detailed account of the concerns raised by different stakeholders: editors, external reviewers, students and instructors. Finally, Hadfield describes the creative process of textbook writing and compares it to existing literature on materials creation. Her experience with the production of a teacher resource book suggests that textbook production is far from being orderly, which does not mean that chaos is the only rule in the process. Instead of embracing the image of an ever progressive line of thought, the author feels that the process requires constant flexibility and responsiveness thus implying a more cyclic and recursive movement.

When Wala (2003, p.58) wrote that "a coursebook is what it is because of what it has to do", she was already trying to present materials writing in a broader context of an ELT textbook

as a genre, a line of thought that was later explored also by authors like McGrath (2013) and Gray (2013). By presenting textbooks in a holistic manner *English Language Teaching Textbooks: Content, Consumption, Production* makes an effort to study ELT coursebooks as phenomena, shaped by different actors and processes and as active contributors to the ELT culture. It can thus be seen as a valuable contribution to the field of materials writing, especially because it endeavours to fill the research gap by complementing the content analysis with insights into the under-researched areas of textbook consumption and production.

Rather than giving answers, the book opens questions by showing the complexity and richness of ELT textbook practice and research. Harwood's contribution gives a useful overview of textbook research and clearly outlines the potential for further development of the field. The case studies deal with very diverse textbooks and contexts. Most of them use mixed methodological approaches combining quantitative and qualitative analyses. The value of the contributions is not only the announced objective of enlarging the empirical basis but also opening new avenues. The reader gets the impression that the surface has just been scratched in order to unveil the depths and the scope of the methodological and disciplinary issues.

The book is intended for teachers, teacher trainers, researchers and materials writers. ESP teachers will find particularly interesting the contributions dealing with ESP/EAP textbooks. Even though fragmentary and episodic, these studies mirror the extraordinary challenge of ESP/EAP teaching and versatility of the LSP profession. Going beyond the analysis of production or consumption, they single out the specificity of this subgenre of textbook production, i.e. the need for cooperation with a subject specialist. Furthermore, they confirm that the ESP teachers' traditional obligation to design their in-house materials should be based on sound theoretical principles, therefore the bridges should be built between the urge for textbook writing and the rigorous research into the processes as well as into the results surrounding this activity.

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