

Adapting our lessons and course
books.

Making the most of our location.

Opening gambit

- Why do we use course books?
- Are they a help or a hindrance?

In favour...

- Rivers (Teaching Foreign Language Skills: Chicago,): “The importance of the textbook cannot be overestimated. It will inevitably determine the major part of the classroom teaching and the students’ out-of-class learning.”

Useful things, coursebooks.

- They provide topics
- They've been piloted
- They provide structure
- The teacher doesn't have to re-invent the wheel every lesson.

On the fence....

- Sheldon (Evaluating ELT textbooks and materials. *ELTJournal* 42(4) pp237-246.): “ELT course books evoke a range of responses, but are frequently seen by teachers as necessary evils. Feelings fluctuate between the perception that they are valid, labour-saving tools, and the doleful belief that masses of rubbish is skilfully marketed.”

Not so sure....

- Hutchinson & Torres (The textbook as the agent of change. *ELTJournal* 48(4) pp315 – 327.): “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.”

Not so sure 2

- “Without a textbook, I can create curriculum that engages students by relating the topic to their everyday lives. Lessons become clearer when I link the topic to an issue that affects them personally”
- <https://www.edutopia.org/teaching-without-text> (2005)

Therefore, we need to ask ourselves...

- To use or not to use?
- (that isn't really the question)

- BUT
- When to use and when to go elsewhere for our materials?

3 types of coursebook

- 1. a double page = the lesson
- 2. a variety of integrated activities that allow you to find your own thread (Headway/Cutting Edge)
- 3. “And now for something completely different”

Extremes: The dogma of dogme

- Proponents of dogme say we should “go with the flow” and focus on the interaction with students.
- They claim the coursebook is a series of “*Grammar McNuggets*” (not my phrase)
- This is the extreme example of rejecting coursebooks.

However...

- The coursebook provides the teacher with the crutch
- It gives the students a sense of progress
- It is the spring from which other things can happen.
- Local education authorities are **very** unlikely to sanction a course without materials

That's all very well, but....

- How can we make the materials relevant?
- Dubin F and Olshtain E (1986) *Course Design* p33. CUP: “Do teachers make any cultural adaptations with the textbooks?”
 - - by changing place names
 - - by altering culture bound topics, for example, using local or national holidays, foods, sports etc in place of those in the textbooks?”

Generalised list of possibilities to help provide variation and contextual relevance

- Dramatisation of the text
- Prediction work
- Good supplementary materials
- **Transfer from book to reality**
- Character creation
- Creative drilling
- Student created exercises

Cherry picking

- Just because it is in the book, it doesn't mean it is 100% right for YOUR class.
- Therefore, just because it is in the book, it doesn't mean you have to teach that bit of language that way.

The best resources

- The students themselves
- The community they come from
- You!

External Inspection Processes

- In the UK: British Council, ISI, Ofsted and IALC inspectors are keen to see the local community incorporated into courses - not just social programme trips but as part of the academic course...

Therefore....

- Let's share some ideas on:
- (a) how we exploit the course book so that it works for us.
- (b) how we bring the local area into our lessons.
- (c) Simply: how can we make what we do in our schools different to other schools?