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International Perspectives on English Language Teaching

Edited by Sue Garton and Kathleen Graves

International Perspectives on Materials in ELT

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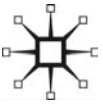

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Series Editors' Preface

Anyone looking back on the history of English language teaching could be forgiven for thinking that teaching materials are the flotsam and jetsam of our profession, floating on the tides and currents of ELT fashion. Every so often some enterprising beachcomber in search of littoral treasure holds them up for inspection and we are reminded of their value, but our attention is soon drawn back to the navigational challenges of our profession and we sail on by.

This is a pity because as the editors of this volume, drawing on Richards, make clear at the outset, much teaching depends on materials; they are part of the waters on which we move. This is of fundamental importance, for as long as we see materials as mere objects available for our use and, if necessary, analysis, we deny ourselves the opportunity of understanding their place in our pedagogic world. What makes this collection distinctive is its focus on materials *in situ*: on the relationships between teachers and their materials; on the challenges of using, adapting and creating materials; and on their developmental potential.

In keeping with the theme of this series, the relationship between local and global emerges strongly in the collection, but it also includes López-Barrios and de Debat's (Argentina) provocative challenge to the relevance of the distinction itself. Ultimately, responses to this challenge must be formulated not just in terms of local contingencies but in the connection between teacher and students realised through the design and use of relevant materials. Igielski (US) touches on the essence of this relationship in her engaging chapter on designing culturally and linguistically sensitive materials: 'My prior knowledge of the students as learners at school and my willingness to recognize them as possessors of valuable cultural capital were the building blocks of the unit's design.'

At one level, this demands of the teacher sensitivity to local constraints and opportunities, and a willingness to design or adapt materials accordingly. We see in this collection the various ways in which teachers have responded to this, whether wrestling with the challenges of the cultural adaptation of existing materials (Messekher, Algeria), developing supplementary materials (Nuangpolmak, Thailand), or seizing opportunities offered by new technologies (Rahman and Cotter, Bangladesh). At another level, however, teaching materials raise profound questions about the nature of pedagogy and its place within political and ideological systems. They can be facilitators of change (Humphries, Japan) but also instruments of control, representing the imposition of potentially alien approaches, as Seferaj (Albania) indicates.

If we narrow our view of materials to embrace only issues of design, evaluation, and application, we obscure their indexical significance and may thereby fail to appreciate their potential. We believe that this collection offers a broader perspective and that it represents an opportunity to think differently about materials and their place in our pedagogic world.

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1
Materials in ELT: Current Issues

Sue Garton and Kathleen Graves

Overview

Materials in general, and commercial materials in particular, play a central role in language learning and teaching. As Richards (2001: 251) notes 'Much of the language teaching that occurs throughout the world today could not take place without the extensive use of commercial materials.' Yet, until relatively recently, this was a neglected area in English Language Teaching (ELT) research and publication. Tomlinson (2012) identifies the early nineties as the decade in which serious attention began to be shown towards materials development. Fortunately, the last few years have seen an increase in this attention with a number of new publications, including Harwood (2010), Tomlinson (2008), Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010a), Tomlinson (2013), as well as new editions of previous publications (McDonough and Shaw, 1993, 2003; McDonough, Shaw and Masuhara, 2013; Tomlinson, 1998, 2011). An important contribution to the field has also come from Tomlinson's (2012) state-of-the-art review of materials development.

Two things are noticeable about the majority of these publications, however. First, the field is generally under-researched. Many of the books published are 'how to' books, with advice for teachers (see for example McDonough, Shaw and Masuhara, 2013; McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003, 2011). These books may draw on research and theory, especially in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), but they are not based on research studies into materials. Most certainly such volumes have an important role to play but we think it is fair to say that the field is generally lacking in empirical studies, a point also made by Chapelle (2009) in relation to materials evaluation and Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010b) in relation to materials development. Three notable exceptions are the edited collections by Harwood (2010), Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010a) and Tomlinson (2013). The chapters in these volumes generally take a more theoretical perspective in looking at what underlies the development of

ELT materials, although they tend again to be based on relating theories of language and language learning to materials development rather than research into the materials themselves or their use.

The second point to be made is that the majority of previous publications focus primarily on certain aspects of ELT materials. Thus we find books and chapters on materials design and development (Harwood, 2010; Jolly and Bolitho, 2011; McGrath, 2002), materials evaluation and adaptation (Islam and Mares, 2003; Littlejohn, 2011; McDonough, Shaw and Masuhara, 2013; McGrath, 2002; Nation and Macalister, 2010; Richards, 2001), the materials writing process (Bell and Gower, 2011; Mares, 2003; Maley, 2003) and types of materials (Tomlinson, 2008).

Tomlinson's (2012) review, for example, is concerned with 'materials development', which he sees as both practical and a field of academic study. From a practical point of view, 'it involves the production, evaluation and adaptation of materials' (p. 144), while as an object of study, the focus is on 'the principles and procedures of the design, writing, implementation, evaluation and analysis of materials' (p. 144). There seems to be, however, a curious omission from these definitions – that of use. Any view of materials that neglects their actual use by teachers and/or learners can, in our view, only be partial, and yet none of the recent publications listed above (and indeed earlier ones such as Cunningsworth, 1995; McDonough and Shaw, 1993; Tomlinson, 1998) focus on this aspect, although Tomlinson (2012) does say that investigations into materials should ideally inform and be informed by their use.

This volume therefore focuses not only on materials but on their use, not only by teachers but also by learners. Where it is original is in the number of chapters written either by or about practitioners and based on research into the preparation and use of materials in everyday teaching in a variety of contexts around the world.

The field of materials is vast and cannot possibly be covered in one introductory chapter. What follows will focus on the areas identified by the contributors to this volume as important in their work. As such, it will examine aspects of materials that have been neglected, as well as look at more common aspects from new perspectives.

The coursebook

Current developments in materials, particularly in the use of technology (see for example, Macaro, Handley and Walter, 2012; Maggi, Cherubin and Garcia Pascual, Chapter 12; Pereira, Chapter 11; Rahman and Cotter, Chapter 10), challenge traditional definitions. Harwood (2010: 3) uses the term materials to include texts in all forms (paper, audio, video) and language learning tasks, with the expressed intention of including everything from teacher handouts

to global coursebooks[1]. Tomlinson (2011: 2) gives an even broader definition when he states that materials are 'anything which is used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language'. His list of examples ranges from videos, emails and YouTube to grammar books, food packages and instructions given by the teacher.

Yet in spite of the broad definitions of materials that are now generally accepted, the coursebook is still ubiquitous and plays a fundamental role in ELT around the world (Littlejohn, 2011; Richards, Chapter 2; Tomlinson, 2003), as can be seen in the number of chapters in this volume that focus on some aspect of it. Thus we find discussions of different types of coursebooks (Lopez-Barrios and Villanueva de Debat, Chapter 3; Richards, Chapter 2); of how coursebook materials are developed to meet local conditions (al Majthoob, Chapter 4) and of cultural content (Messekher, Chapter 5). Other chapters focus on how teachers use coursebooks and factors affecting their decisions (Bosompem, Chapter 7; Humphries, Chapter 15; Seferaj, Chapter 6) or how they can be used in teacher education (Augusto-Navarro, de Oliveira and Abreu-e-Lima, Chapter 14).

The global coursebook

The advantages and disadvantages of global coursebooks are well documented in the literature, as well as being experienced by teachers in their daily professional practice. Below is a list that some of Garton's students on a graduate TESOL programme drew up when asked why they would or would not want to use a coursebook in their teaching:

Why use a coursebook?

1. It gives structure to lessons and to a course.
2. It saves time – teachers are too busy to prepare their own materials.
3. It gives a sense of security – teachers feel they know what they are doing.
4. It promotes autonomy as learners can use and refer to it outside the classroom.
5. It is reliable as it is written by experts and published by well-known publishers.
6. It gives a sense of professionalism in the way it is presented.
7. It offers different perspectives as it focuses on different cultures and different places.

Why not use a coursebook?

1. It cannot meet the needs of a particular group of learners.
2. The language taught might not be appropriate.
3. It might not be culturally appropriate.
4. It is outdated.

5. It is not authentic.
6. It is not representative of the local context.
7. It takes away the teacher's creativity.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this list is very similar to those in the literature (see for example, Masuhara and Tomlinson, 2008; McGrath, 2002; Richards, 2001, Chapter 2).

Different views of coursebooks were also noted by McGrath (2006) in the metaphors that teachers use to describe them. McGrath (2006: 174) categorised these metaphors into four groups, on a continuum from dependence to independence, the first three of which demonstrated a relatively positive attitude: Guidance (map, compass); Support (anchor, petrol); Resource (convenience store, menu); Constraint (millstone, straightjacket). Although this study, and the list above, show that teachers generally have quite favourable views of coursebooks, they also underline a certain ambivalence and highlight a number of issues.

In-depth reviews by Tomlinson, Dat, Masuhara and Rubdy (2001) and Masuhara, Hann, Yi and Tomlinson, (2008) have revealed perhaps less obvious issues with the global coursebook. For example, overall Tomlinson, Dat, Masuhara and Rubdy (2001) found that the coursebooks they reviewed did not encourage adaptation or facilitate the tailoring of the materials to learners' needs or to local contexts. Moreover, Masuhara, Hann, Yi and Tomlinson (2008) found a lack of suggestions for personalisation, localisation and mixed-level classes. They also found that topics were generally banal and that there was a focus on politeness rather than conflict and competition. Yet most of the above are issues that have long been recognised as key principles that should underlie successful materials (see, for example, Tomlinson, 2008, 2011, 2012).

Critical views

In the wake of critical approaches to TESOL (see, for example Block, Gray and Holborrow, 2012; Edge, 2006) global coursebooks have also come under more critical scrutiny. At its most basic this can be seen in the open acknowledgement that global publishing is a multi-million pound business (Masuhara and Tomlinson, 2008), a realisation that is often something of a surprise to graduate students and teachers. Masuhara and Tomlinson (2008) point out that, in an attempt to maximise profits, global coursebooks for general English are aimed at the dual markets of language courses in English-speaking countries and in English as a Foreign language contexts. The result is that they may not satisfy the needs of learners and teachers in either (Masuhara et al. 2008: 310) and al Majthoob (Chapter 4) makes a strong case for materials that reflect different realities.

Tomlinson (2008) even goes so far as to assert that coursebooks are at least partly to blame for the failure of learners to learn in that they conform to the expectations of stakeholders and the demands of the market rather than to what we know about language acquisition and the learning process. Underlying Tomlinson's criticism are pedagogical premises, which still view materials as 'curriculum artefacts' (Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991: 4 as cited in Gray, 2010: 2). However, Gray (2010, 2012), building on the work of critical applied linguists such as Pennycook (1994) and Phillipson (1992, 2009) makes a compelling case for considering the global coursebook as a cultural artefact which presents a particular view of reality and is value laden. He describes how ELT publishers focus on 'aspirational content' with frequent use of topics around personal and professional success, celebrities, cosmopolitanism and travel, all of which are believed to be motivating for language learners (Gray, 2012: 87) and with the underlying message that English equates with success (Gray, 2012: 104). However, such images may not be motivating and may be resisted by learners (Canagarajah, 1993) or may leave them feeling inadequate (Masuhara and Tomlinson, 2008: 19).

The values portrayed by coursebooks are also inscribed in the methodological approaches they adopt (Prodromou and Mishen, 2008). Global coursebooks tend to be based on approaches developed in western academic departments, exhibiting what Prodromou and Mishen (2008: 194) call 'methodological correctness'. They define methodological correctness as:

> a set of beliefs derived from prestigious but incomplete academic research in the Anglophone centre that influence the decisions one makes regarding materials and methods in the classroom, even if those decisions are inconsistent with the local context and particular needs and wants of the students. (ibid.: 194)

The effects of the introduction of western methodological approaches, and the pressure it may put on teachers who are expected to use new approaches and materials, are well documented (see Garton, Copland and Burns, 2011 for a summary of the issues).

Gray (2012: 111) calls for alternative articulations of English, a call that is reflected in alternative approaches such as that outlined by Guiney Igielski (Chapter 9) through the development of materials that are based in culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.

However, in spite of criticisms, teachers and learners themselves may generally view global coursebooks favourably, albeit with a healthy lack of idealism (Yakhontova, 2001; Zacharias, 2005). This is far from the view of teachers and learners as unquestioning consumers, which sometimes seems to emerge from more critical approaches to materials.

Global vs. local coursebooks

An alternative to the global coursebook lies in books that are produced for specific countries or regions. In some cases these are local versions of global books; in others they are books written especially for a particular country, either by 'experts' from English-speaking countries, or by local writers, or in collaboration. The solution in China has been to use cooperation between local education departments, local publishers, overseas publishers and textbook writers (Hu, 2005). Al Majthoob (Chapter 4) provides an excellent example of how a local version of a coursebook can meet the needs of learners in a specific context far more effectively than any global coursebook.

However, these books do not necessarily address the issues raised above in relation to global coursebooks. As Hoque (2009) points out, in Bangladesh, for example, textbook writing committees are led by academics with little experience of teaching in schools. Taking the case of Algeria, Messekher (Chapter 5) notes how, even in locally produced coursebooks, the culture of Inner Circle (Krachu, 1985) countries may still predominate, and even where local culture is included, it may be in a diluted form. Moreover, the approach taken to culture is one of acritical information-giving, which does little to develop the intercultural awareness needed by learners who are more likely to be using English to communicate with other 'non-native speakers' than with 'native speakers'[2]. As Graves and Garton note (Chapter 16) 'localizing content enables learners to talk and write about their own experiences, concerns and culture through English'. Producing local textbooks that do not reflect local contexts seems like a missed opportunity to promote positive attitudes towards both local culture and English.

Interestingly, Chapelle (2009) points to US national guidelines that state the focus of materials should be on contexts where language is used. Given that, in the case of English, that now means everywhere in the world, all materials should be taking an awareness-raising approach to language and culture (see Graves and Garton, Chapter 16).

However, local publishers can also have a positive influence on their global counterparts. Prodromu and Mishen (2008) look at the example of Greece as what they call (ibid.: 203) 'an interesting example of the local determining the global, the periphery fighting back against the centre'. In response to local demands, Greek publishers produced coursebooks that introduced a stronger form-focused element, which was not only more suited to local 'cultures of learning' (Jin and Cortazzi, 2006) but also went some way to reinstating practices that had long fallen out of favour, such as use of the L1 and grammar explanations. As a result, this 'hybrid' approach has now become the norm in materials published for the Greek market.

It is worth noting that such hybrid practices have probably always been very much alive in the majority of English classrooms around the world, as teachers adapted global materials to their own contexts (see Humphries,

Chapter 15; Seferaj, Chapter 8). However, at least with the advent of more hybrid practices in published coursebooks, such practices can again be considered respectable.

Materials and their users

We made the point in the introduction that there is surprisingly little written about materials users and so far, in this chapter, we have considered the coursebook as a tool. Yet any discussion that sees materials independently of their users, the learners and teachers in a variety of learning contexts, can only be partial. As Edge and Garton (2009: 55) put it:

> the teacher's purpose is not to teach materials at all: the purpose is to teach the learners and the materials are there to serve that purpose.

They go on to note (ibid.: 60) that what published materials cannot provide are *insights* into the needs and interests of particular groups of learners and *decisions* about how best to use the materials. It is precisely how teachers use materials to serve the purpose of teaching learners, their insights and decision-making, as well as learners' attitudes towards, and use of materials, that is currently missing from the literature. As Moulton (1997: vii quoted in Opoku-Amankwa, 2010: 162) noted:

> It is difficult to find out how teachers use textbooks without actually observing them ... what they think about their use without actually asking them ... Observing how teachers use textbooks and asking them why they use them as they do will reveal significant information about the learning-teaching process and how it can be improved.

Moreover, the continued separation of materials and their actual use risks entrenching the old theory/practice divide that Clarke was problematising twenty years ago (Clarke, 1994).

One notable exception is Opoku-Amankwa (2010), whose ethnographic study looked at the interaction between teachers, learners and textbooks in an urban primary school in Ghana. Opoku-Amankwa (2010) identified a number of factors that influenced students' access to and use of textbooks, including class size, seating arrangements and teachers' interpretation of policy concerning student access to textbooks. He concluded that there was a discrepancy between the availability of materials and students' access to and use of them and that this could have a negative impact on literacy development. This study underlines the importance of looking at the role materials play in actual classroom contexts.

Studies such as this, together with those looking at teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards materials (see, for example, Lee and Bathmaker, 2007; Zacharias, 2005), learners' attitudes (Yakhontova, 2001) and those comparing teachers' and learners' attitudes (see, for example, McGrath, 2006; Peacock, 1997) offer an important insight into materials and their users.

A number of chapters in this volume go some way to addressing this gap in the literature and from a variety of perspectives. Seferaj (Chapter 6) and Humphries (Chapter 15) both report on teachers' actual classroom practices in using materials, while Bosompem (Chapter 7) shows how a group of teachers in Ghana actually adapted their materials and also examines their motivations for doing so. What is also interesting about Bosompem's chapter is the attention it draws to the power of the coursebook in some contexts as her teachers, far from seeing adaptation as necessary for learners and the sign of a good teacher, felt guilty and inadequate. Detailed and personal accounts of materials adaptation to suit a particular context are given by Nuangpolmak (Chapter 8) and Guiney Igielski (Chapter 9), both of whom are responding to issues that have been identified in the literature. By focusing on materials for mixed levels, Nuangpolmak addresses a problem that has not only been raised by Masuhara, Hann, Yi and Tomlinson (2008) in regard to coursebooks, but which is also seen by English teachers, at least at primary level, as their biggest challenge (Garton, Copland and Burns, 2011). Guiney Igielski's focus on culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy is an effective contribution to the debates around how best to value the multilingual and multicultural experiences of learners in the language classroom.

However, most of the chapters in this book address materials use from the teacher's point of view, rather than from that of the learners. Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010b) note that investigations into the effects of materials on language learning would be desirable, but that there are practical difficulties to carrying out such studies: they would have to be longitudinal, requiring considerable resources; and it would be extremely difficult to control for variables influencing acquisition in a classroom situation. This remains an area for research.

Materials use and change

As outlined above, one of the reasons for the popularity of coursebooks is that they are deemed to provide a clear set of activities and guidelines that both teachers and students can follow. Writers such as Hutchinson and Torres (1994), Masuhara and Tomlinson (2008) maintain that materials can support novice teachers or those who lack confidence.

It is also often argued that appropriate coursebooks can facilitate curricular change because they provide a visible framework that both teachers and

students can follow (Rubdy, 2003) and they help teachers to 'fully understand and "routinize" change' (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994: 323). However, it would seem this is often not the case.

In response to the perceived global demand for communication in English, new language curricula around the world have generally emphasised communicative competence. Recent curriculum changes at all levels, together with the introduction of English to primary schools, have created a series of challenges for teachers (see Garton, Copland and Burns, 2011 for a detailed discussion), and their use of materials, putting to the test the assertion that coursebooks can facilitate change.

First, while curricula may change, the books used may not. Thus in many countries, teachers have found themselves with a lack of suitable materials, either because materials are not available (Hoque, 2009; Hu, 2007; Mathew and Pani, 2009) or because those that are available do not reflect changes in the curriculum (Hu, 2007; İnal, 2009; Nunan, 2003).

Second, it may simply not be enough to give teachers a new book and expect them to change how they teach. As Nur (2003) notes, teachers may need training to use the new books, otherwise they continue to employ previous methods. While multimedia packages may offer support to teachers with low levels of English proficiency (Mitchell and Lee, 2003; Nunan, 2003), actually changing the way that teachers teach is far more complex, as Seferaj (Chapter 6) and Humphries (Chapter 15) both show. Humphries (Chapter 15) identifies a range of factors that influence the way that teachers use coursebooks and shows that simply changing a coursebook will not necessarily change the way a teacher teaches. Seferaj's teacher informant also raises the question as to what extent teachers should be expected to change the way they teach and brings us back to Prodromou and Mishen's (2008) idea of methodological correctness. As Seferaj's (ibid.) teacher shows, teachers demonstrate a clear understanding of, and are able to clearly articulate, the very good reasons for adapting the new materials they are given rather than changing the way they teach. So, while governments mandate communicative language teaching, the typical pragmatic response from teachers is to interpret and adapt the approaches according to their local context (Littlewood, 2007).

It seems, therefore, that the introduction of new coursebooks alone may not lead to changes in practice. Although coursebooks may represent the new curriculum and provide some basic support when there is a shortage of qualified practitioners, the teachers may not understand the underlying principles (Nur, 2003). Moreover, beginning teachers do not always have the confidence to challenge the authority of the coursebook (Bosompem, Chapter 7; Gray, 2000) potentially leading to confusion and feelings of guilt.

Teacher education is necessary to help practitioners to understand materials better, together with how and whether to introduce changes inherent in new

materials. Yet courses on materials evaluation, adaptation and design seem to be relatively rare on graduate programmes. Tibbits and Pashby (Chapter 13) and Augusto-Navarro, de Oliveira and Abreu-e-Lima (Chapter 14) show how teacher education programmes can ensure that teachers are informed users of materials rather than mere consumers.

Technology

No overview of materials in ELT can ignore the enormous impact that technology has had in recent years. It is no exaggeration to say that developments in digital technology have revolutionised language learning materials (see Macaro, Handley and Walter, 2012 for a review of Computer Assisted Language Learning in primary and secondary education).

On the one hand, technology has been embraced by publishers who now use it to accompany coursebooks, producing not only CD-roms and DVDs but also companion websites and versions of their materials for the Interactive Whiteboard (IWB). This is what we might call top-down uses of technology. However, perhaps the most exciting developments are the affordances given for the bottom-up development of materials by teachers and learners through the use of Web 2.0 tools. Thomas (2009) shows the range of possibilities afforded by these tools with chapters on Skype, mobile phones, Personal Learning Environments, social networking sites, podcasts and weblogs, to name just a few. Motteram (2011) also gives examples of how teachers can use technology to develop materials. The use of digital audio and video, the Internet, blogs, wikis, Virtual Learning Environments and so on has put 'the possibilities of the adaptation and creation of a broad range of language learning materials into the hands of the teacher, but also into the hands of the learners' (Motteram, 2011: 304).

This last point is important. Prensky (2001) calls the current generation of students, the first generation to have grown up with digital technology, *digital natives*. On the other hand, he calls their teachers *digital immigrants*, a group who needs to get used to a new way of thinking and learning and who have varying degrees of success. Therefore, the use of technology can place the learner squarely at the centre of materials in a way not always possible with traditional materials. Pereira's use of interactive fiction in language learning (Chapter 11) shows how learners can be active users of materials. The project described by Maggi, Cherubin and Garcia Pascual (Chapter 12) is a clear example of how learners can take control of the materials and of their own learning.

However, not all learners have the opportunity to become digital natives. Chapelle (2009) points out that the global spread of technology in language learning and the social, political and economic realities of learners around

the world may not be compatible. However, Rahman and Cotter's experience (Chapter 10) shows that widely accessible and relatively low-cost technology, such as mobile phones, can be effective in language learning and actually has the potential to reach learners who may otherwise struggle to access English classes.

The example that Rahman and Cotter (Chapter 10) give is a very significant one. The use of mobile phones to deliver English courses in Bangladesh is an example of how technology contributes to clear pedagogical goals and enhances the learning experience. As Kervin and Derewianka (2011: 328) note, the concern should always be with the contribution that technology can make to learning, and they list a number of important pedagogical considerations (ibid.: 349) concerning how the electronic materials fit with learning aims and objectives as key. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Mukundan (2008: 100) notes the money wasted on technology through investments such as language laboratories, leaving teachers to puzzle over how to fit new materials into existing practices and with the risk they will focus on technology and not on learners.

Conclusion

This introduction, and indeed this book cannot focus on every aspect of materials in ELT, which is a huge area. We have only very briefly mentioned well-covered ground such as materials development and evaluation. We have ignored aspects of the content of materials, such as gender, and the language used (see for example, Jones, Kitetu and Sunderland, 1997; Nguyen, 2011; Sunderland, 2000) as well as debates around authentic materials (see for example, Guariento and Morley, 2001; Gilmore, 2007; Peacock, 1997). We have also not mentioned the use of corpora in materials or as materials (see for example, Willis, 2011). Finally, we have also, to an extent, ignored learners, both from the perspective of learner-developed materials (see, for example, Maley, 2011; Willis, 2011) and the effects of materials on learners (but see Rahman and Cotter, Chapter 10). Tomlinson (2012) called for more research on the empirical effects of materials on SLA. Ellis (2011) also calls for evaluation based less on the appeal of materials and more on what learners do with them and what they learn. We would certainly endorse both these calls.

However, in this volume we have focused on the materials themselves and the way that teachers use them, relatively neglected areas to date. We see the underlying message of this introduction and of this volume as how materials need to be a fit with learning aims and objectives. Materials are fundamental to language learning and teaching (although see Thornbury, 2000 for an alternative view) but materials cannot be viewed independently of their users. What this volume does is look at how materials are actually used to fulfil the

learning aims and objectives in a variety of local contexts and how these local experiences can resonate with practitioners around the world in order to help them become more effective materials users.

Notes

1. Throughout this volume, the terms coursebook and textbook will be used interchangeably.
2. We use these terms purely for convenience, fully aware of how problematic they are.

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