Off the page:
Mediating the course book
Craig Thaine
Languages International, Auckland

1

Overview

- Course books these days
- Teacher attitudes towards course books
- Some drawbacks
- Approaches to mediating them
- Practical examples of getting material off the page

2

Task:
McGrath's metaphors (2016)

- Which of these metaphors for course books reflect you view? Why?

  - recipe   - springboard   - straightjacket

  - supermarket   - survival kit

  - crutch   - compass   - holy book

3

My history with course books

- Trained to use them as little as possible
- Taught 25 / 30 hours a week

4

Issues with course books

- Often don't meet learners' needs
- Don't work in many contexts → NZ
- Sometimes aren't very communicative
- Occasionally include dubious language rules

5

On balance

- I always use them ...

6

On balance

- I always use them …
  - but with a skeptical eye.

7

Course books today

" .. course books are the main teaching resource used by many of the world's English teachers. The extent of English teaching worldwide could probably not be sustained without the support of many kinds of text books and their ancillaries …"

- Richards 2014

8

They've improved …

- Stronger student-centred focus
- More emphasis on speaking
- More logical sequencing of activities
- More appealing design
- Wider range of ancillary resources available

9

Do they facilitate language learning or acquisition?

"I have seen no convincing evidence that a global course book has facilitated durable language acquisition. But to be fair, I have seen no convincing evidence that a global course book has ever not facilitated durable language acquisition."

- Tomlinson 2016

10

Hadley: Interaction between teachers, teacher experience and attitudes towards textbooks (2018)

11

Role of course books in English language programmes

- More often than not they have a central place in English language programmes
- In many institutions they are the syllabus
- Provide consistency for students
- Provide support for teachers, particularly those with little experience

12

Slide 13

Potential drawback

Boil-in-the-bag teaching

Set task → students do task (heads down) → check in pairs → feedback → next task ... etc.

... and at some stage students will do a little bit of speaking.

13

Slide 14

face2face Pre Intermediate (2nd edition) Redston & Cunningham 2012

Vocabulary and Speaking Employment

1 a Work in pairs. Which of these phrases do you know? Check new phrases in VOCABULARY 3.1 p131.

a good salary   friendly colleagues   my own office
long holidays   a good boss   job security   a company car
flexible working hours   opportunities for travel
opportunities for promotion   holiday pay   sick pay
on-the-job training   lots of responsibility

b Write five sentences about your job now, or the job you'd like to have in the future. Use phrases from **1a**.
In my job now, I have/don't have ...
I'd like to have (a job with) ...

c Work in pairs. Compare your ideas. How many are the same?

14

Slide 15

face2face Pre Intermediate (2nd edition) Redston & Cunningham 2012

Listening and Speaking

2 a Look at photos A–C. Who is: a paramedic? an interpreter? a football referee?
   b Work in pairs. Which phrases from **1a** are true for each job, do you think?

3 a Match sentences 1–3 to the photos A–C.
   1 I **had to study** a lot and do on-the-job training for three years. But I **didn't have to pay** for it – the government did.
   2 You **don't have to go** to college, but you have to do a special course.
   3 You usually **have to have** a degree in languages.
   b CD1 26 Listen and check.

15

Slide 16

face2face Pre Intermediate (2nd edition) Redston & Cunningham 2012

HELP WITH GRAMMAR
have to/had to: positive and negative

4 a Match the phrases in bold in **3a** to these meanings.
   a This is necessary.
   b This is not necessary.
   c This was necessary in the past.
   d This wasn't necessary in the past.
   b Fill in the gaps with *have to, don't have to, has to* and *doesn't have to*. Which verb form follows *have to*?

POSITIVE
I/You/We/They _____ do a course.
He/She _____ do a course.

NEGATIVE
I/You/We/They _____ pay for it.
He/She _____ pay for it.

   c How do we make the Past Simple positive and negative forms of *have to*?
   d Check in GRAMMAR 3.1 p132.

16

Slide 17

face2face Pre Intermediate (2nd edition) Redston & Cunningham 2012

HELP WITH LISTENING *have to* and *have*

5 a CD1 29 Listen and notice the difference between *have to* and *have* in these sentences.
   1 You have to /hæftə/ learn 130 pages of rules.
   2 Now I have /hæv/ a job I love.
   3 You don't have to /hæftə/ go to college.
   b CD1 30 Listen and write the sentences you hear. You will hear each sentence twice.

6 CD1 31 PRONUNCIATION Listen and practise.
You have to /hæftə/ do a special course.

7 Read about Bernie's training. Fill in the gaps with the correct form of *have to*.

You ¹ _don't have to_ (not) go to college, but you ² _have to_ do a special course. The good thing is you ³ _____ (not) pay very much for the course. But it's a lot of work. A referee ⁴ _____ know everything about the laws of the game. That means you ⁵ _____ learn 130 pages of rules. When I did my course eight years ago, we ⁶ _____ do practical and written exams. I'll never forget my first practical exam. I ⁷ _____ (not) referee for 90 minutes, only the first half of a match. I was terrified because I ⁸ _____ give a player a red card after only five minutes. He wasn't happy about it! But dealing with angry footballers is something a referee ⁹ _____ learn very quickly. A referee ¹⁰ _____ (not) be super-fit like a footballer, but he ¹¹ _____ run for 90 minutes and he ¹² _____ practise running backwards. That's really difficult! I love my job, but people never remember the good decisions I make, only the bad ones.

17

Slide 18

face2face Pre Intermediate (2nd edition) Redston & Cunningham 2012

- Staging is clear and logical
- Tasks are provided
- Plenty of opportunity for student-centred interaction

but ...
the lesson may not get off the page without some teacher intervention.

18

Task:
How could you get this activity off the page?

19

Ex 1a
1 Sort vocabulary into categories: people, basic benefits, special benefits.
2 Collocation matching task.
2 Use concept questions to check the meaning of more difficult vocabulary e.g. *promotion*.
3 Drill words with difficult pronunciation e.g. *colleagues*.

20

Ex 1b&c
1 Students makes notes and tell each other.
2 Students rank benefits from most to least desirable.
3 Set up role play – job offer – negotiation of benefits.
4 Students have two or three benefits and negotiate a swap with a student who has different benefits.
5 Students give reasons for a benefit choice – partner infers what the benefit is.

21

Alternative approach

Dogme

" … take the view that language is an emergent phenomenon, and that the learning of it is a jointly constructed and socially motivated process … then the argument for coursebooks starts to look a bit thin."

Meddings & Thornbury 2003

22

Alternative approach

Dogme
- Classroom discourse and learning starts with students' own lives
- Shared construction of knowledge
- Teachers responds to learners' needs as they emerge

23

Strengths and weaknesses of Dogme

- Good opportunity to re-think methodology
- Students and teachers placed at the centre of classroom activity

but

- Risk of introducing its own prescription
- Can prove challenging in some teaching and learning contexts

24

Localised adaptation

- Curriculum and institutional restraints may limit a teacher's ability to adapt materials
- Teachers may have little choice in the materials they work with
- Adaptations are made on the basis of the learner group you are working with

25

Localised adaptation

Adaptation of materials - Addition
- Extemporisation: spontaneous response to a learning opportunity
- Extension: adding and supplementing material
- Exploitation: exploiting what's there in a slightly different way

McGrath 2016

26

Localised adaptation and getting material off the page

- Exploitation – using what's in your course book in a slightly different way
- " … the creative use of what's already there …"
- "Whereas extension involves *quantitative* change, exploitation represents a *qualitative* change …"

McGrath 2016

27

Localised adaptation

Getting material off the page involves **exploiting course book activities in a different way**.

Teachers use:
- their experience to **critically evaluate** course book material
- their creativity to make it **more lively** and **more communicative**.

28

Pre listening adaptation

Cambridge English Empower B1
Doff, Thaine et al. 2015

29

Pre listening adaptation:

Role play first

Student A
Read the instructions and write answers to the questions in *italics*. Speak to Student B who has already done an online course.
You are planning to study university courses next year.
One of the courses you really want to do is online.
What is the topic of the course?
You're not sure you want to do a course online.
There are some things you're not sure about.
What do you want to know about online studying?
You're not sure if your IT skills are good enough.
Why not?

30

Pre listening adaptation:

Role play first

- Students do role play
- Gist task – similarities and differences between students' version and the audio
- Detailed comprehension task
- Students repeat role play

31

While reading adaptation

Step-by-step interactive read

- Put students in small groups of three or four students and write the following criteria on the board:
  - ✓ I already know this.
  - ✗ I didn't know this
  - ✶ This is interesting / surprising.
  - ▲ I'm don't like this idea.
  - ? I'm not sure what this means.
- Students read for about a minute. As they read, they make notes next to the information in line with the board criteria.
- Tell students to stop reading and one student in the group comments on something in the text using the board criteria and the group discusses it. Students take turns being the first to comment.
- Continue in this way until the reading is complete and then do feedback by asking the whole class for examples from the criteria on the board.

32

Clarifying grammar form

face2face Pre Intermediate (2nd edition)
Redston & Cunningham 2012

33

Clarifying grammar form

Students' questions for you

- Ask students to look at the text (reading or listening) that the grammar came from. Students underline more examples.
- Put students in small groups of three or four students and ask them to think of questions that can ask you about the form of the grammar point.
- On the board, give students some question starters, for example:
  - *What's the correct order for …?*
  - *Which verb changes when … ?*
  - *Is this example correct?*

34

Practising functional language

Cambridge English Empower A1
Doff, Thaine et al. 2015

35

Practising functional language

Cambridge English Empower A1
Doff, Thaine et al. 2015

A: Excuse me.
B: Yes? How can I help?
A: What time's the next bus to Cambridge?
B: The next bus leaves in 20 minutes.
A: So, at 5.15. And is it a direct bus?
B: No, you change at Birmingham.
A: OK, and which bus stop is it?
B: It's stop 7, near the ticket office.
A: Great! Thanks for your help.
B: No problem.

36

Slide 37

Practising functional language

Rebuild the dialogue

A: Excuse /
B: Yes? How / help?
A: / time / next bus / Cambridge?
B: The next / leaves / 20 /.
A: / 5.15. And / direct /?
B: No / change / Birmingham.
A: OK / bus stop /?
B: / 7 / ticket office.
A: Great! Thanks / help.
B: / problem.

37

Slide 38

Practising functional language

Rebuild the dialogue

- Point to the first two prompt exchanges on the board and elicit the complete expression.
- Don't write up the full version and don't let students write down what you are drilling.
- Give a clear oral model with a natural rhythm and stress and do choral and individual drilling of these two examples.
- You can also do open pairs – nominate a Student A and a Student B and they say the exchange in open class.
- Do the same with the next two exchanges then students practise the dialogue so far in pairs – they take both parts.
- Continue in this vein (elicit – model – drill – pairs practice) for the remainder of the dialogue. Whenever students practise in pairs, they start at the beginning of the dialogue.

38

Slide 39

Off the page: Core principles

- Provide a communicative focus
- Get students talking more
- Get students up and moving – vary the interaction
- Provide a problem-solving, task element to an activity
- Include a game / competition element
- Allow students to explore language and ask questions
- Be alert to the language students produce

39

Slide 40

References

- Hadley, G. 2018. Learning Through Textbooks. In A. Burns & J.C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge Guide to Learning English as a Second Language* (pp. 298-306). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McGrath, I. 2016. *Materials Evaluation and Design for Language Teaching (2nd edition)*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Meddings, L. & S. Thornbury. 2003. Dogme: a nest of NESTS? *Global Issues IATEFL SIG Newsletter* 2: 15.
- Richards, J.C. 2014. The ELT Coursebook. In S. Garton & K. Graves (Eds.), *International Perspectives on Materials in ELT* (pp. 19-36). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tomlinson, B. 2016. Achieving a match between SLA theory and materials development. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *SLA Research and Materials Development for Language Learning* (pp. 3-22). New York: Routledge.

40