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What can we learn from mainstream education textbook research?

Abstract

Although there is an ever-growing volume of research focused on TESOL textbooks (or coursebooks, as they are sometimes known), I argue that the TESOL research community should pay more attention to textbook research in mainstream education, that is, to the work of those scholars who focus on L1 rather than L2 education, given that there is a rich, methodologically sound tradition of L1 textbook research from which we can usefully learn lessons. I support this argument by describing in detail three exemplary empirical studies of textbooks from mainstream education, identifying how they can inspire and strengthen TESOL research.

Keywords: textbooks, coursebooks, teaching materials, curriculum materials, instructional materials

1. Introduction

Textbook research matters. In most teaching contexts around the world, a textbook is an integral part of the course and the syllabus—indeed, in many classrooms the book functions as a *de facto* syllabus, and institutional and national exams may be partly or wholly constructed around it (e.g., Garton and Graves, 2014b; Richards, 2014; Tyson and Woodward, 1989). Given the importance and centrality of the textbook, then, it is important to evaluate the soundness of its content and pedagogical approach. Yet there is far more to textbook research than studying textbooks at the level of the page, out of context. Teachers can use textbooks in any number of different ways, adapting and adding to them—or omitting some or all of any given activity (e.g., Gray, 2010b;

Shawer, 2010; X and Author, 2014; Y and Author, 2014). Hence the textbook can be seen as merely the textbook writer's *intended* curriculum rather than the *enacted* curriculum, that is, what actually happens in the classroom, the enacted curriculum being 'jointly constructed by teachers, students, and materials in particular contexts' (Ball and Cohen, 1996: 6). Thus the researcher can seek to understand why and how these adaptations take place, conducting studies which involve classroom observation and the solicitation of teacher explanations, as well as how the teachers' textbook use is received by the learners—who may respond favourably or unfavourably, impacting upon the educational effectiveness of the lesson. Such studies, then, focus on textbook *use* as well as textbook *content*.

TESOL textbook research can duly be found which focuses on each of these levels, but my focus in this article is on a very different research tradition from the community of mainstream education. By 'mainstream education', I am referring to those scholars whose focus is L1 rather than L2 education—for instance, those textbook researchers who study mathematics or science textbooks used by children in US secondary schools. As I have argued elsewhere (Author, 2010, 2014), the TESOL literature on textbooks and teaching materials customarily ignores most or all of this vast body of work, as evidenced by the rarity of references to research on mainstream education textbook research in the work of TESOL writers focused on materials. In this article I argue that the longer mainstream education tradition of work in this field has unsurprisingly led to powerful textbook research—some of which is methodologically superior to its TESOL equivalent, and from which we have much to learn, despite the differences between L1 and TESOL teaching contexts and materials.

I conclude by arguing that, by judiciously drawing upon these and other mainstream studies, we can strengthen our own research designs and research agendas in TESOL.

At this point, it would perhaps be expected that I point out the deficiencies in a range of TESOL textbook and materials research, to demonstrate our need to learn from what I have claimed is the methodologically superior work I am about to describe. However, rather than singling out specific pieces of TESOL work only to knock them down, I prefer to take what I believe is a more constructive approach, describing in detail three pieces of what I see as especially innovative, exemplary empirical textbook research from mainstream education, and inviting the reader to compare and contrast existing TESOL studies of textbook use with this work in terms of its methodological strengths and rigour.

2. Empirical contributions to textbook research from mainstream education

2.1 Collopy (2003)

In common with a number of mainstream educators (e.g., Davis and Krajcik, 2005; Grossman and Thompson, 2008; Manouchehri and Goodman, 1998; Remillard, 2000; Remillard and Bryans, 2004), Rachel Collopy was interested in determining the effect so-called ‘educative’ materials have on teachers—those materials designed to *support teacher learning* both at the level of content and of pedagogy. So, for instance, as well as providing units of classroom materials focusing on quadratic equations to be used with students, mathematics educative textbooks may enhance teachers’ knowledge of quadratic equations at the level of content, and inform teachers of arguments in favour of using group learning to teach equations at the level of pedagogy. Collopy’s

informants, Ms. Ross and Ms. Clark, were US elementary school mathematics teachers, with 11 and 26 years' experience respectively, and the study examined how the teachers' beliefs and practices changed as a result of working with the same educative textbook.

This innovative textbook was in marked contrast to the more traditional textbooks Ms. Ross and Ms. Clark had previously used; rather than rote learning and memorization of facts, it required students to work out mathematical problems for themselves. It also featured detailed teacher's notes aimed at developing knowledge: three sections devoted to teacher learning featured in every textbook unit, and these were written with teachers accustomed to more traditional approaches in mind, helping them grasp the new pedagogy while also providing information on the mathematical content knowledge in focus. These notes were developed in response to the questions teachers asked during the piloting and trialling of early editions of the materials.

Collopy conducted multiple classroom observations of each teacher's classes, watching 18 of Ms. Clark's lessons and 22 of Ms. Ross', tracking their content and the change in the teachers' focus over time. These were supplemented by multiple sets of formal and informal interviews which sought to uncover the teachers' beliefs about mathematics at the content and pedagogical level, soliciting reflections on the lessons Collopy had observed and the changes the informants noticed in their teaching. Since the study was conducted over the course of an entire school year, this longitudinal aspect provided an opportunity to determine the extent of change.

Interestingly, Collopy found that the textbook had very different effects on the two teachers: Ms. Clark's practices and beliefs remained stable, while Ms. Ross' changed considerably. Ms. Clark was confident in her knowledge of content and pedagogy, having a fixed set of beliefs about good mathematics teaching and the elements of the mathematics curriculum students required. These beliefs were thus unaffected by the textbook she happened to be using, whatever its pedagogical approach. Ms. Clark's approach aligned with a traditional approach to teaching mathematics, the emphasis being on rote learning of formulae and the ability to use them to perform calculations at speed. Her lessons were teacher-centred, as she demonstrated the algorithms students would need. All of this was in sharp contrast to the innovative problem-solving approach of the textbook, which stressed the importance of student-centred discussion of different ways of solving maths questions. Unsurprisingly, then, Ms. Clark radically adapted the textbook: on one occasion, for instance, she turned a textbook group work activity into an intense period of teacher-centred 'chalk-and-talk' instruction. Interestingly, Ms. Clark also misinterpreted the aims of some of the textbook materials. Since the textbook promoted the importance of the class discussing possible ways of solving mathematical problems, it featured sample dialogues of the kind that may have ensued when teachers initiated these discussions. These dialogues were designed to give teachers unfamiliar with this approach to teaching mathematics an idea of how these activities could be proceduralized. However, Ms. Clark assumed they were scripts to be read aloud as role plays (despite the fact the teacher's notes make clear this was not the case, and despite the fact she had read the guide), and mostly simply omitted them. As she progressed with the textbook, Ms. Clark grew frustrated with it as she felt it failed to provide the mathematical formulae students needed (presumably because of its innovative,

student-centred focus which may have meant any such formulae were supposed to come from the children rather than the teacher). Furthermore, she also expressed dissatisfaction with the teacher's notes, believing that, while the information the guide provided would be useful for inexperienced teachers and teachers lacking strong mathematical content knowledge, it was too 'cumbersome and time-consuming' for her purposes (p.299). She therefore abandoned the textbook and returned to a traditional alternative that adopted the teacher-centred approach she was comfortable with.

In contrast, there were substantial changes to Ms. Ross' beliefs and practices as she used the textbook, and her explanations for teaching the way she did began to align with the approach promoted by the materials. In contrast to Ms. Clark, Ms. Ross was less confident in her knowledge of mathematics, and had previously closely followed the pedagogical approach of the more traditional textbook she was using ('So I don't have...a real broad philosophy of teaching math. I just look at the curriculum and start plugging away', p.300). As she closely adhered to the educative textbook, her mathematics teaching duly moved away from the traditional memorization approach towards problem-solving, and the textbook obliged her to see mathematics and mathematics instruction differently ('You know, we were always taught there was only one way to solve an addition problem, and now we are teaching kids to look for different ways, that there are many ways to come to the same conclusion. So that's another big shift for me and something that is exciting for me to discover. And I really hadn't thought about it at the time I started working with this program', p.304). And in contrast to Ms. Clark, Ms. Ross used the textbook's sample dialogues as they were intended. She noticed her students making errors that the dialogues warned about, re-

read the teacher's guide about these errors after the lesson, and used the notes to help her plan how to deal with the errors in the next class.

How can Collopy's study speak to the TESOL community? It is exemplary in terms of its design, featuring a large dataset, a longitudinal period of data collection, and a repeating cycle of classroom observations and teacher interviews to enhance validity. In terms of presentation it is also excellent, inasmuch as Collopy includes a detailed account of her codebook, providing details of the analytical categories emerging from her data over the course of the year, as well as inter-rater reliability tests and member-checking, since she shared her provisional results with both teachers several times over the course of the year. All of these procedures are often recommended in the research methods literature (e.g., Dörnyei, 2007; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1994), but member-checking, in particular, is found rarely in TESOL research.

Turning to the findings, Collopy's research has several implications for the field, and can inform future TESOL textbook studies. One significant result is that textbooks may affect teachers' beliefs and classroom practices—but not always in ways that can be predicted. Whereas Ms. Ross' practice aligned itself with that of the textbook over the course of the year, Ms. Clark tried at first to bend the textbook to her will, before abandoning it—and so in her case, Ms. Clark's customary practices remained constant, innovative textbook notwithstanding. There was a shift in Ms. Ross' beliefs to match her growing enthusiasm for the textbook, while Ms. Clark's teaching philosophy was unaffected. All of this suggests that innovative materials do not necessarily help develop teachers. The study therefore also highlights the potential for

teacher resistance to change and innovation, and the need for researchers—and also, of course, in this case, for textbook writers—to understand the causes of this resistance, and to decide what should best be done about it. In Collopy's study and in some other studies of educative materials (e.g., Manouchehri and Goodman, 1998), there is evidence that the extent of teachers' content knowledge influences their willingness or otherwise to embrace the materials. In Collopy's study, Ms. Clark is assured in her own mind that her pedagogical approach works best and so isn't receptive to a radically different approach; whereas Ms. Ross has no such assured beliefs, and is open to trying out the innovative pedagogy. TESOL researchers could similarly attempt to chart a textbook's impact on changes in teacher knowledge over time with a similar longitudinal design, recruiting teachers with a wide range of profiles to ascertain the impact of these and other factors on the educational uptake of the book on teacher informants. So, for instance, teachers recruited for studies such as I am proposing could range from the inexperienced to the experienced; and could range from those who possess much content knowledge to those possessing little (e.g., in terms of grammatical and linguistic knowledge and metalanguage; and proficiency in the learners' L1 to more easily enable clear grammatical explanations).

Ms. Clark and Ms. Ross' differing readings of the teacher's notes also highlights the difficulty for textbook authors of catering to a range of different teachers: Ms. Ross was happy to take advice from the guide about preferred pedagogical approaches, while Ms. Clark 'did not expect the materials to educate her about mathematics or mathematical pedagogy' (p.307). There are several mainstream education studies of how educative teacher's guides are used by teachers, and these studies suggest take-up of the advice in the guides is varied in the extreme: some teachers ignore the

guides and thus fail wholly or in part to develop as a result of using innovative textbooks, while other teachers make use of the information, expanding their content and pedagogical knowledge by reading about the latest research findings and ideas for activities they have never previously considered (Remillard and Bryans, 2004; Valencia, Place, Martin, and Grossman, 2006. See also Remillard, 1999). Furthermore, there is evidence that inadequate teachers' guides which fail to provide teachers with sufficient guidance on how best to implement innovative activities can frustrate users and result in less teacher development than would have otherwise occurred; and guides which fail to provide their design rationale behind innovative materials can lead to some teachers simply ignoring these parts of the textbook (Remillard, 2000). The study of teacher's guides is a much-neglected area in TESOL. Two exceptions are unpublished doctoral theses by Bonkowski (1995) and Good (2003), but much more work on TESOL guides at the level of content and consumption is badly needed, as signalled by the disturbing findings of Collopy and of other mainstream education researchers. Many years have passed since Coleman (1986) and Sheldon (1988) expressed concerns about the quality of TESOL teacher's guides at the level of content. In addition to high quality content analysis of the teacher's guides of more recent textbooks which would help establish whether the situation has improved since then, consumption studies could determine whether and to what extent TESOL guides can educate teachers.

2.2 *Smagorinsky, Lakly, and Johnson (2002)*

The second mainstream education study I wish to focus on is by Peter Smagorinsky and colleagues. Smagorinsky et al (2002) examine what they call the 'chasm' between

the student-centred pedagogies taught to a pre-service teacher at university and those more traditional, test-driven pedagogies the focal teacher, Andrea, encountered when she began her career and secured her first teaching post (p.188). The study is located in a US high school and is relevant here because, among other things, it focuses on a teacher's attitudes towards and use of her textbooks as she struggled to come to terms with the demands of a new curriculum and institutional expectations and requirements as to how teachers deliver the curriculum.

The research took place over two years, the first year of data collection being when Andrea was doing her teaching practicum at university and the second year when she was in her first post as a language arts teacher. Data was collected via repeating cycles of classroom observations and pre- and post-observation interviews. In addition, Andrea's teacher trainers (at university) and mentors (in her teaching post) were interviewed; and the textbooks and other materials used were analyzed. As one of the study's co-authors, Andrea verified the other researchers' interpretations and reflects on her experiences at the end of the article.

We get a sense of the rigid curriculum constraints imposed by Andrea's school when we are given details of how Andrea was obliged to use mandated materials, and to use them in a set order:

The district issued each teacher a two-inch thick 3-ring binder that scripted the teaching.... The design assumed that when teaching with the prescribed commercial [literature] anthology, all teachers in all schools would read the same literature on approximately the same day, ask the same questions, use the same assessments, and otherwise provide each student in the district the

same instruction. [...] The curriculum was further tied to standardized county-wide tests that assessed students after each unit, further pressurizing teachers to follow the curriculum guide faithfully. (pp.198-9)

Andrea was also obliged to spend time in class preparing learners for various tests. She not only felt constrained by the lockstep approach to textbook use, but by the content of the materials, which she described as ‘boring’ and ‘unchallenging’ (p.199) for the learners. The mandated approach meant that Andrea was obliged to stick with the simpler material even when she would have liked to stretch her more capable learners with more difficult readings. Andrea felt the sole aim of the curriculum was to ensure examination success—to the detriment ‘of students’ interests in reading, writing, and other strands of the curriculum’ (p.200).

Smagorinsky et al identify three stances Andrea took towards the textbook materials and the curriculum: *accommodation* (‘grudging effort to reconcile personal beliefs about teaching with the values of the curriculum’), *acquiescence* (‘acceptance of, compliance with, or submission to the curriculum’), and *resistance* (‘opposition to the curriculum, either overtly or subversively’, p.201). Most common was evidence of accommodation: Andrea covered the textbook as prescribed, ensuring learners were prepared for their tests, but injected a student-centred flavour, asking learners for their reactions to the literature they were covering, leading to a ‘hybrid classroom’, ‘at once both student-centered in service of enriching literary experiences, and test-centered to help students score higher on standardized tests of achievement’ (p.206). As time went on, however, Andrea discovered that some of her colleagues only paid lip-service to the curriculum and taught the way they were comfortable with—in other words, they resisted using the textbook as mandated—and Andrea gradually gained

the confidence to make her own resistance more overt, having her learners respond to the set book, *Fahrenheit 451*, with art, video, drama, and music, despite none of this being on the curriculum, but which she reports they enjoyed far more than the book. This does not mean that she failed to enact the curriculum as required, but she managed to slot in these curriculum-resisting lessons amidst the test preparation and orthodox coverage of the textbook. Despite her increased resistance, though, Andrea struggled with her identity as a teacher, continuing to believe in the learner-centred pedagogy espoused by her trainers but feeling unable to implement it fully:

“...I don’t really like who I am in the classroom very much. I feel very controlling and authoritarian and when the kids say they don’t want to do it and they’re bored and it’s obvious and I just feel the same way. I would just rather say, okay, you’re right, let’s not do this. Let’s do something else.”

(p.209)

Andrea, then, wanted the freedom to implement the textbook in the way that best suited her learners, but felt she was denied the opportunity to do so. The article closes with a coda in which Andrea speaks of how she believed she would continue to learn how to learn to meet curricular expectations while at the same time injecting her preferred pedagogy into her classes.

What, then, can this fascinating study of a US language arts teacher teach the TESOL community? For one thing, it underscores how textbook use is highly context-driven. In Andrea’s case, we need to factor in the district curriculum and the school’s policy towards testing and mandated textbooks to properly understand the pressures impacting upon Andrea and shaping her attitudes. Furthermore, Smagorinsky et al show how Andrea’s beliefs and textbook use are affected by her teacher colleagues

and their beliefs/practices. Over the course of her year in post, Andrea talked to her colleagues about how they approached the textbook and the curriculum and slowly realised that they didn't follow the rigid curriculum requirements to the letter, and that she was also able to resist the institutional and district curriculum strictures. There are some TESOL studies of textbook consumption which give us details of micro and macro context and their interplay with teachers' textbook practices (Garton and Graves, 2014a; Gray, 2010a; Hutchinson, 1996; Wette, 2009, 2010, 2011; X and Author, 2014; Y and Author, 2014) which confirm that these contextual factors play a major role in shaping textbook use; but to date an in-depth qualitative case study of the type we see in Smagorinsky et al is lacking in the TESOL literature.¹ Furthermore, given the very diverse contexts in which TESOL practitioners operate globally, much more work is needed in a variety of settings to gain a better sense of how each of these contextual factors may assume greater or lesser importance depending upon the setting.

Returning to Smagorinsky et al's work, we also get a sense of how textbook use can be connected to a teacher's identity: the interplay between the textbook, Andrea's textbook use, her interaction with colleagues, and the wider institutional context affects Andrea's self-image as a practitioner, as the article ends on a rather gloomy note, with Andrea claiming that the rigid contextual strictures are making her feel like the kind of authoritarian teacher she doesn't wish to be. TESOL teacher identity is a burgeoning area of research (e.g. Liu and Xu, 2011; Vásquez, 2011), and connecting TESOL textbooks and teacher identity would certainly seem an intriguing area for future study, building upon that reported in Tsui (2007). Finally, Smagorinsky et al

¹ Hutchinson's (1996) PhD thesis comes closest, but it hasn't been widely disseminated in the TESOL community because it takes the form of an unpublished doctoral thesis.

gives us a sense of how Andrea's textbook use developed and will continue to develop with time—so suggesting that longitudinal studies comparing more and less experienced teachers' textbook use over time would be fertile ground for future research both in mainstream education and in TESOL.

2.3 *Ziebarth, Hart, Marcus, Ritsema, Schoen, and Walker (2009)*

The third and final empirical piece I wish to discuss, Ziebarth et al (2009), is a highly innovative study, in that it examines how textbook writers and teachers using the writers' draft materials interact and how and why the materials change as a result of these interactions. The study centres around the piloting of a second-edition mathematics textbook over a five-year period in the US, recording the materials' intended and actual uses. We also learn why the teachers use the materials in the way they do, what the textbook writers were aiming to do by designing the materials in the way they did, and whether and to what extent they revised the materials having seen how the teachers used them. Five of the six authors of this research were the textbook writers and the remaining author was the project evaluator. Data included the materials at various stages of development (i.e., before and after classroom use and writer-teacher interactions in the light of this use), teacher-annotated materials, classroom observations of teachers using the materials, writer-teacher interviews, and focus groups. Twenty teachers were involved in the study, working at schools in a range of urban and rural settings, teaching learners of a similarly wide range of abilities.

In one instance of a difference of opinion between textbook writers and teachers, teachers asked for the inclusion of standard geometry theorems that were missing from the materials. It was felt by teachers this was a particularly crucial addition because these theorems frequently came up in state and college entrance exams. On this occasion, the textbook writers acceded to teachers' wishes. However, other examples of tension and disagreements between writers and teachers were less neatly resolved. One such instance arose with reference to the end-of-unit test materials. The textbook writers felt that they could help develop learners' mathematical abilities by having them attempt more difficult, open-ended problems which were different in appearance from the exercises and problems which featured throughout the unit, obliging learners to apply their knowledge creatively. However, many teachers felt uncomfortable with this approach and modified the materials in various ways as a result in the classroom: some adapted the end-of-unit tests so they resembled the mathematical problems students had worked on through the unit; others omitted the open-ended test items altogether, substituting their own items. The textbook writers were unsuccessful in their attempts to persuade all teachers of the wisdom of their approach during focus groups, and so 'teachers who continued to be uncomfortable with such items...simply deleted or changed them' (pp.179-180). A final example concerns the constant demand by teachers for regular multiple-choice tests and quizzes because of the pressure they felt to prepare students for standardized exams. After due consideration, the textbook writers resisted providing regular tests of this sort; while they understood the teachers' request, they felt this constant testing did not sit well with their pedagogy and the pedagogy advanced in the textbook. For Ziebarth et al (2009), then, these episodes illustrate how both textbook writers and teachers are found to be 'decision-makers and dilemma managers' as they try to refine the

materials into maximally efficient pedagogical vehicles for action (p.174). The study powerfully illustrates the precarious line textbook writers must tread to satisfy as best they can the needs and wishes of various parties and contextual constraints.

How does this study speak to TESOL circles? For one thing, its innovative study design could be used with reference to a TESOL textbook; it would be intriguing to study the interaction between pilotee teachers and textbook writers preparing the second edition of a best-selling global EFL/ESL textbook. However, such a wish appears naïve. We learn from TESOL publishers' accounts that the rigorous, prolonged piloting of Ziebarth et al's US mathematics textbook is not an option in TESOL because of time and financial constraints (Amrani, 2011; and see similar accounts of hurried or non-existent piloting in Lee and Park, 2008 and Singapore Wala, 2003). This is not something to be celebrated, and it is hard to see how much more rigorous piloting would be detrimental in terms of producing a better TESOL writer-textbook-user nexus. Until TESOL publishers' thinking changes on piloting, however, an equivalent study to Ziebarth et al is unlikely to materialise.

Like Collopy's (2003) research, Ziebarth et al's study also underlines the difficulties and demands faced by textbook writers who are catering for a broad constituency of teachers, in terms of beliefs, pedagogical preferences, and competencies. These difficulties are captured by a few in-depth accounts by TESOL textbook writers themselves (e.g., Bell and Gower, 2011; Mares, 2003; Stoller and Robinson, 2014; Timmis, 2014) which reveal how the wishes of stakeholders (ministries of education, teachers, students, parents, publishers) must be met—sometimes to the cost of the quality of the materials, in the writers' view. And so studies such as these, as well as

innovative studies of textbook writers talking aloud or keeping logs as they design activities (Atkinson, 2013; Hadfield, 2014; Johnson, 2003) paint vivid portraits of the complexity and dilemmas of textbook writers—as well as arguably at times exposing unhelpful publishing procedures and practices. However, this type of work is presently uncommon in TESOL, and studies which build upon these efforts would continue to mine a very rich seam of research.

3. Conclusion: enhancing the quality of TESOL research

I have reviewed three particularly instructive articles on textbook design from the mainstream education literature which are not well known in TESOL circles, and identified ways in which we can learn from them and thereby enrich research in our own field. As I argued at the start of this piece, the mainstream textbook literature is vast, and I had many studies of textbook use from which to choose²; but I opted for three studies which in my view are as well designed as they are innovative. I now anticipate a few possible objections to my arguments which may have occurred to readers by this point.

Two of the three pieces I reviewed focus on textbooks from a rather different subject, mathematics, to our own. However, I hope I have shown how there are nevertheless lessons to draw from these, in terms of methodology, research design, and wider issues which are pertinent whatever the subject. Whether we have mathematics or TESOL in mind, for instance, the use of textbook guides is salient; and if a study of

² Here is a small additional selection from the many interesting mainstream studies of textbook use which interested readers could consult: Behm and Lloyd, 2009; Borko and Livingston, 1989; Chval, Chávez, Reys, and Tarr, 2009; Davis, Beyer, Forbes, and Stevens, 2011; Drake & Sherin, 2009; and Nicol and Crespo, 2006.

mathematics teaching highlights concerns in this area, an investigation into how guides are used in the TESOL classroom seems a potentially fruitful avenue for exploration—especially given the notable lack of TESOL studies with this focus. To draw an analogy between the point I am making and an argument used in favour of case study research, mathematics researcher-educators’ concerns with teachers’ guides may not be *generalizable* across all subjects and teaching contexts, but surely they are potentially *transferable* to TESOL contexts (cf. Duff, 2008).

Another possible objection to my approach in this article is that I have considered research undertaken in very different contexts (US schools) than the contexts of many TESOL readers. Again, my response is similar to that above: the contexts may differ, but the concerns about textbook use should resonate in the TESOL community, given the central place of the book in L1 as well as L2 contexts.

A possible final objection is the fact that, in a sense, all three studies I have reviewed go well beyond textbook use in their scope, and that we are learning as much about the teachers in the studies concerned, their identities, and their development as professionals as we are about the way in which they exploit textbooks and materials in class. But this can hardly be an objection to studies of textbook use, whether in mainstream education or TESOL contexts: it is difficult to see how such studies could be conducted which would avoid such issues, as mainstream educators have acknowledged, Brown (2009), for instance, speaking of the importance of studying ‘how teachers’ skills, knowledge, and beliefs influence their textbook use’ (p.22). As we learn about patterns of textbook use, and teachers’ rationale and justifications for using the materials in the way they do, we also learn much about the teacher—

whatever subject they are teaching, whatever their profile, whatever their context. All three of the studies in focus remind us that textbook use is necessarily mediated by the context—the teachers, learners, the classroom, and institution (Hutchinson 1996)—and it is necessary to account for these factors if we are to get a true picture of textbook use in all its complexity.

Having anticipated and, I believe, addressed some objections to my argument, I close by restating my position. In sum, it seems to me that TESOL and mainstream education textbook researchers are working in separate silos (cf. Tight, 2014), when we in TESOL could learn much from a better-established tradition of research. The separate silos analogy is sometimes used to highlight marked differences between camps in terms of epistemology and ontology, but I have nothing so radical or incompatible in mind: judging by the literature cited by researchers in both disciplines, it is simply that neither community is talking to the other. To repeat earlier appeals, then (Author, 2010, 2014), I am calling for much more cross-fertilisation between the two communities which, after all, are studying very similar research questions, and are both interested in enhancing textbook content/pedagogy, use, and production. I believe TESOL researchers can draw on the exemplary research designs I have outlined in the above studies to strengthen the designs employed in future TESOL textbook research. Not only should there be more focus on textbook consumption and production, but consumption studies should, where possible, enhance their validity by featuring a repeated cycle of classroom observations, so that the observer is confident s/he has a sound understanding of teachers' representative patterns of textbook use, gathered over many lessons. And longitudinal designs can then help us understand how teachers' textbook use

develops. Smagorinsky et al (2002) studied Andrea over two years, and it is not uncommon to encounter other mainstream studies collecting data over similarly extended periods: Grossman and Thompson (2008), for instance, studied inexperienced teachers' evolving patterns of textbook use during their first three years of teaching. Such a research design enables the researchers to gauge the effect of the teachers' training and the messages they received about materials and textbooks when it comes to their practice, and to study the extent to which the contextual factors associated with the teachers' classrooms and their institutions, as well as their support from colleagues, affects textbook-related behaviour. Such designs also allow researchers to explore how different textbooks seek to develop teachers by directly or indirectly teaching them about subject and pedagogical knowledge. Hence the value of 'educative' textbooks can be to some extent measured. I have also suggested that mainstream education research provides us with intriguing projects related to teacher resistance to the textbook and the curriculum, the connection between textbook use and teacher identity, and the process of piloting textbook materials. I make these suggestions fully aware that research funding for most TESOL researchers around the world is scarce to non-existent, limiting the extent to which implementing such strong, longitudinal designs will be possible. But I feel it is nevertheless appropriate to describe the kinds of designs we should strive for; and I would claim that even a modest cycle of classroom observations and teacher pre- and post-lesson interviews will likely go some way towards giving the researcher a sense of the context in which textbook use takes place in a way the ubiquitous textbook evaluation checklist method does not. It is, then, my hope that this article will play a small part in promoting an inter-disciplinary exchange between the mainstream education and TESOL communities and take the fascinating area of textbook research forwards.

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