

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the summary of the research results, discussion and suggestions for further research.

Summary of Research Results

The research questions and the findings of this study were as follows:

1. Do teachers follow the lesson plans provided by the coursebook?

The teachers did not follow the coursebook but adapted it by selecting some activities, rejecting others, and supplementing the coursebook to create their own lesson plans. The coursebook was seen as contributing to the lesson plan, but not controlling it. This is similar to what Allwright mentions, that materials can contribute to, but do not determine content (Allwright, 1981, p.7). Teachers provided extra activities such as games which they created by themselves or brought from other materials. Also, the lessons of the different teachers were very different. There is no evidence for coursebooks written as lesson plans leading to “standardized classrooms” (Littlejohn, 1996).

Moreover, there is no evidence for teachers being controlled by materials as observed in the study of Ghosn, who found that “There is a strong sense that the textbook is firmly in control of what is permissible and what needs to be

accomplished” (Ghosn, 2003, p.293). Although Ghosn makes the point that the coursebook had considerable authority in terms of setting up tasks, she also says that many ELT coursebook tasks were realized in unexpected ways , as was found in this study.

2. What sections of the coursebook do teachers use, and which parts they not use?

The sections that the teachers frequently used were the grammar points and reading passages. Some parts of grammar section and the reading passage were used by all teachers. Gap-fill activities and grammar reference sections were selected most often but speaking and listening skills development, oral practice, and pronunciation were largely absent in the classrooms. Even the context from the grammar presentation was only used by some teachers. For the reading, the reading passages and the pre-reading activities were used, but the students did not do the post-reading discussion. The vocabulary section was used by around half of the teachers. Gap-fill activities were used but practice activities were not. Moreover, there was little use of the Everyday English section. Also, presentation, clarification and practice of grammar points often made use of replacement and supplementary tasks.

3. How do the teachers modify the sections of the book they used?

The tasks were often modified in ways so that the teachers were at the center in the classroom. Pair work was changed to whole class interaction, students discovering information was changed to teacher explanation. Also, teachers frequently gave feedback on gap-fill exercises with students repeating sentences rather than listening to the tape. Materials or teacher were the main source of content rather than it being derived from the students.

4. In what ways do the teachers supplement the coursebook?

The tasks supplemented and replaced in the classroom were different from the tasks in the coursebook. Over half the tasks observed were replacement or supplementary tasks. When the replacement tasks were compared with the coursebook tasks, they very frequently involved teacher-directed interaction, often characterized by explanations, in contrast to the learner-learner participation and the hypothesizing about language suggested in the coursebook. The supplementary tasks also were found to be frequently characterized by teacher-controlled interaction. The students did not have opportunity to create either written or oral extended discourse in the supplementary tasks. Also, the source of the content was often from teacher and learners rather than from the coursebook.

5. What factors contribute to the decision to select, adapt, supplement, and omit material?

Teachers viewed the coursebook as a resource in planning their lessons, showing that the teachers did not feel controlled by the coursebook. Speaking and listening activities, and oral practice tended to be omitted because of the influence of the final examination. For the same reason, reading and grammar sections were seen as a priority. Time limitation was another reason to omit speaking and listening, and oral practice activities. The data from the study showed that teachers used the time to focus on grammar and reading that would be in the final examination. Coursebooks seem to play a role in teacher education with only a very few teachers. They have learned the organization of activities, new expressions, and some interesting content from the coursebook. Some teachers did not like the coursebook because of the irrelevance of the content found in the coursebook, so they preferred adapting the tasks by modifying, replacing, and supplementing them.

Discussion

This research suggests that the materials do not control the teachers. Maley (1998, p.279) warns that material may control and constrain teachers but that teachers can adapt materials. In this study, even though the coursebook unit was written essentially as a lesson plan, the teachers did not follow it but freely adapted and supplemented the material according to their

teaching styles and their perceptions of their students' needs. This is in agreement with Hutchinson and Torres (1994) who cite studies from other areas of education indicating that teachers are not too constrained by materials, but instead, freely adapt, omit and replace textbook tasks. There are many ways to adapt and supplement material. In this study, the teachers preferred creating their own supplementary material rather than taking it from the published resources. Richards (2001, p.255) writes that textbooks help standardize instruction to ensure that the students in different classes get the same content and can be tested in the same way. However, as the teachers in this study planned their lessons by themselves by selecting what to teach from the book and also created their own supplementary activities, there was considerable difference in the content of the different classes. For example, some teachers emphasized the vocabulary part (synonyms and antonyms), and some emphasized finding main idea of each paragraph in the reading passage, but others ignored these parts.

Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argued that the coursebook can act as an agent of change, having a role in teacher education. However, in this study, the teachers used the coursebook as a guide to what to teach in their classroom, but they did not seem to be influenced nearly so much about how to teach. For example, the coursebook gave the guidance about using jigsaw activities and post-reading discussion in the teaching of reading but teachers left out these parts and preferred teaching reading with their own plan. Also, teaching of grammar through presentation in context, practice and production was adapted. Teachers preferred teaching on their own by describing the rules of the grammar in a deductive way rather than following the instruction

from the coursebook that let the students find the grammar rules through presentation in context by themselves.

The decisions about adaptation of the coursebook by modifying, supplementing and replacing tasks included personal teacher preferences for particular kinds of activities and lack of confidence with other kinds of tasks. According to the interview, one teacher claimed that she is not good at doing jigsaw activities and another claimed that they could not do oral practice activities in the classroom because of the big class size. So, teachers could probably benefit from training in how to use the coursebook more effectively. The irrelevance of some of the content, for instance the activity on the interview about living in Sweden, may well have been another reason to adapt the coursebook. The teachers could adapt with other content more suitable and familiar to the students.

Backwash from the achievement test was frequently cited as accounting for the prioritizing of reading and grammar exercises, and the omission of oral practice activities, oral and aural skills development and the section dealing with everyday language (in this unit, giving directions). The teachers especially paid attention to teaching grammar and reading so the students would be able to pass the final examination. The listening and speaking parts were not in the examination so teachers do not see them as a priority but would use them only when the time was available. The importance of parts of the coursebook seemed to be their importance in helping the students to pass the exam. The teachers mentioned this without being asked directly about the influence of the exam. The implication is that if listening, speaking, pronunciation and functional English are to be given more of a

priority, they should be examined. The mismatch between speaking and listening skills in the syllabus and the examination should be corrected by having all aspects in the examination because all aspects of the English language are important for the students to learn.

Material supplementation and adaptation may be useful to suit the needs of the students and teacher, but sometimes the activities in the book also seem good for helping the students to learn and practice language. Some teachers may have been taught that good teachers should not follow the commercial textbook, but create their own lessons. However, teachers should consider what activity is better between the activities in the book or the activities that the teachers prepare for the students in order to develop their language skills.

Suggestions for Using the Coursebook

1) Speaking and listening skills are very important. Presently, Thai students have difficulty communicating in English even though they have studied English since they were in the primary school. Students should have time to practice listening and speaking in class in order to use language to communicate in the real situation, so speaking and listening skills should not be omitted in the classroom. This will require a change in assessment. In order to prioritize speaking and listening, the ways students are assessed should be changed to focus more in speaking and listening skills.

2) Material publishers should pay more attention to the practice activity areas. From this coursebook, the practice sections are put in a small

area with unclear instructions given to the users. For example, one activity asks students to work with a partner asking and answering questions about the places Todd visited. There is only the short instruction and a little example of the practice that is not interesting for both teacher and students when they use the coursebook. So, the coursebooks should give clear instructions so that the teachers can have ideas about how to use these sections.

3) Teachers should be trained in learning how to use the activities suggested in textbook in their classroom. The teacher's book can give clear suggestions and ideas of how to use each activity in the coursebook and teachers can follow or adapt it in their classrooms. However, this study found that the teachers did not use the teacher's book as a guide. It might be good for teacher development for teachers to meet each other for discussing and sharing their use of their coursebooks.

4) Teacher training is very important for teachers in order to suggest techniques and experiences on how to use the coursebook effectively. So, training in coursebook use should be provided for the teachers and also included in MA courses.

Limitations of Study

This research is a case study, and the teachers were operating under a specific set of constraints by the assessment of the university. Thus, while the results are illuminating, they are not generalisable to other contexts.

Further Research

This study was an illuminative evaluation, which had the aim of increasing understanding of classroom processes. Further research could include studies carried out as formative evaluation, with the aim of improving the delivery of particular courses. This may help the teachers to improve their teaching.

In addition, this research study was conducted in a university which focuses on assessment of students in achievement tests. Further research studies should be conducted in language schools which focus more on the use of language.

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