

A theoretical-practical view over the way textbooks are used in the training of English teachers

Abstract

This article reflects on the role textbooks have in the initial training of English teachers, which is based on the guidelines given by the traditional didactics that considers the textbook as an essential tool to teach a foreign language.

Keywords: Textbook; English Teaching Training; Didactic Resources.

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Uma visão teórico-prática sobre como os livros didáticos são usados na formação de professores de inglês

Resumo

Este artigo reflete sobre o papel dos livros didáticos na formação inicial de professores de inglês, com base nas diretrizes da didática tradicional, que considera o livro uma ferramenta essencial para se ensinar uma língua estrangeira.

Palavras-chave: Livro Didático; Formação para Ensino de Inglês; Recursos Didáticos.

Una mirada teórico - práctica al uso de los libros de texto en la formación de docentes de Inglés

Resumen

Este artículo busca propiciar una reflexión sobre el papel que tiene el libro de texto en la formación inicial del docente de inglés la cual se apoya en los lineamientos de la didáctica tradicional en donde el rol del libro de texto es fundamental como guía para la enseñanza de una lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: Libro de Texto; Formación de Docentes de Inglés; Recursos Didáticos.

Introduction

This article intends to reflect upon the role textbooks have in the initial training of English teachers which is based on the guidelines given by the traditional didactics that consider the textbook to be an essential tool in teaching a foreign language. To better understand such a role, the textbook Cutting Edge used from 2003 to 2009 in the Foreign Language Department of a Colombian public university, which trains teachers, was analysed.

The presented reflection is in accordance with the debate surrounding the assessment of textbooks, and if it is acceptable to consider them a tool which quintessentially- transfers knowledge, since to some extent, textbooks consider knowledge to be something exhaustive and objective which should not be subject to revision, and thus subordinate and undermine the personal decision of teachers.

Some theoretical considerations surrounding the role of the textbook and the training of English teachers

To begin, this section will examine what different authors have understood about the textbook; its importance, the role it holds in the teaching of English as a foreign language, its advantages and disadvantages.

Awasthi (2006) suggests that the textbook is simultaneously a teaching material for Professors and a learning material for students. He adds that it is one of the most important aspects in the teaching-learning relationship and therefore is the visible heart of any English language program (Sheldon, 1987, p.237). Hutchinson and Torres (1994), for their part, suggest that it is a universal teaching element; a guide for teachers, and a support to students because it shows them what has been taught. Cunningsworth (1995) recommends one to understand the textbook as:

A textbook is as an effective resource for self-directed learning, an effective source of presentation of materials, a source of ideas and activities, and a reference source for students, a syllabus where they reflect predetermined language objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain confidence. (1995, p. 52)

Likewise, Fredericks (2005) in his work on the advantages and disadvantages of textbooks, suggests that they are:

A collection of the knowledge, concepts, and principles of a selected topic or course. It's usually written by one or more teachers, college professors, or education experts who are authorities in a specific field. Most textbooks are accompanied by teacher guides, which provide you with supplemental teaching materials, ideas, and activities to use throughout the academic year. (Fredericks, 2005, p. 1)

Furthermore, to address the purposes for which textbooks are used, Garinger (2002) claims that they have different objectives; they can serve as an important resource in the classrooms, as a source of supplementary materials, as inspiration for the planning of activities and in some cases can be used for the curriculum itself.

Hutchinson and Torres (1994) maintain that textbooks are used because they afford confidence and assurance to the teachers. This occurrence is not only imparted on the teachers, but also to the students for whom the book is a guide since it helps them to organize their learning both inside and outside of the classroom. This includes the undertaking of tasks and preparation for assessment, amongst other reasons. Thus it is clear that the texts endure because they not only satisfy the needs of the teacher and students (1994, p.23), but also the needs which emerge from the classroom.

Writers such as Richards and Mahoney (2002) agree with the previous view that suggests that textbooks have a positive impact on professors and the teaching itself as such, since teachers receive practical benefits in terms of timing and access to a variety of professionally produced resources. Harmer (1991) develops this idea and affirms that:

Where a textbook is involved there are obvious advantages for both teacher and students. Good textbooks often contain lively and interesting material; they provide a sensible progression of language items, clearly showing what has to be learnt and in some cases summarizing what has been studied so that students can revise grammatical and functional points that they have been concentrating on. Textbooks can be systematic about the amount of vocabulary presented to the student and allow students to study on their own outside the class. Good textbooks also relieve the teacher from the pressure of having to think of original material for every class. (Harmer, 1991, p. 257)

Irujo (2006) agrees with the previous points of view and addresses the suggested notion that textbooks are indisputably necessary because they provide a guide at the precise moment of teaching. Moreover their use is not only limited to what is taught, but also how to teach it. Equally, they provide trainee teachers with ideas of how to approach different topics. This notion is complimented by the inclusion of time investment as an important aspect in teaching, that is, textbooks allow teachers to invest time in different activities rather than the creation of activities and material in general.

Hutchinson and Torres agree with the point expressed by Irujo (2006):

Most of their responses centre around the facilitating role of the textbook: it saves time, gives direction to lessons, guides discussion, facilitates giving of homework, making teaching easier, better organized, more convenient and learning easier, faster, and better. (1981, p. 4)

In the same manner, Richards (2001) expresses that textbooks serve as the base of information which students receive and of practical work given to them in the classroom. The content of lesson plans can be based upon them. Equally, they can serve the important function of providing a source of contact with the foreign language, different to that given by the teacher. This writer mentions, among others, some advantages of using textbooks:

1. They provide structure and a syllabus for a program
2. They help standardize instruction
3. They maintain quality
4. They provide a variety of learning resources (workbooks, videos, etc)
5. They are efficient
6. They can provide effective language models and input
7. They can train teachers
8. They are visually appealing

Fredericks (2005) expands on these virtues expressed by Richards, suggesting that textbooks are especially beneficial for new professors since the included material and each lesson plan is explained in great detail. Equally, he says that the information is

presented in a balanced, chronological way, which explains the steps to be carried out in the classroom. Finally, he explains that textbook series provide a complete programme which is based on the most up to date research. All of this testifies that the textbooks are an excellent teaching aid and a valuable resource for professors and students alike.

After revising some of the advantages, the disadvantages of using textbooks will be examined, as raised by different authors. Ariew (1982) suggests that textbooks have been considered permanent and mythical objects, and thus the attitude towards them has become one of reverence. This attitude is known as reification and it makes reference to the unjustified attribution of the following qualities: excellence, authority and the validity of textbooks. This same author says that the use of textbooks can lead to a reduction of cognitive skills when teaching and that equally it often leads the teacher to base his or her decisions exclusively on the textbook and the corresponding teacher's book.

In a similar manner, Awasthi (2006) agrees with Ariew (1982) in suggesting that textbooks may be viewed by teachers as their 'masters' and they are followed religiously (Awasthi, 2006:3). Thus, professors become less creative and textbooks are easily transformed into the actual curriculum, which Fredricks (2005) describes as a common error amongst teachers.

In other words, teachers tend to depend too much on textbooks and so, it is the textbooks which end up determining the components and methods of teaching. Irujo (2006) suggests that when the professors use textbooks as their only guide, the textbook is converted into the curriculum. Equally if they are used as the exclusive source of guidance when preparing lessons plans, they become the lesson plan, and when they are used as the ineffable pump of ideas about how to teach, the textbook becomes the only form of professional development.

In this sense, Ur (1996) cited by Awasthi (2006) agrees with the points expressed by Irujo and adds the following elements as arguments against the use of textbooks:

- If every group of students has different needs, no one textbook can be a response to all differing needs.

- Topics in a textbook may not be relevant for and interesting to all.
- A textbook is confining i.e. it inhibits teachers' creativity.
- A textbook of necessity sets prearranged sequence and structure that may be realistic and situation friendly.
- Textbooks have their own rationale, and as such they cannot by their nature cater for a variety of levels, every type of learning styles, and every category of learning strategies that often exist in the class, and most important of all perhaps,
- Teachers may find themselves as mediators with no free hand, slave, in fact, to others' judgments about what is good, and what is not.

In accordance with the above, Hutchinson and Torres (1994) add that it is very difficult to avoid the claims of arguments against textbooks are based on ideological and cultural values which do not coincide with the real needs of students, especially if they come from different contexts or countries.

To conclude, it should be asserted that it is necessary to consider both the benefits and the limitations of the use of textbooks and equally, it is important to analyse the consequences of using them (Richards, 2001). No textbook is perfect, but it appears they can be considered as a resource or a guide which helps to direct the process of teaching English, and in accordance with Hutchinson and Torres (1994), if they are used appropriately they can become an excellent vehicle for effective and long-lasting change in the teaching field.

In order to be aware of the mentioned benefits and limitations, it is necessary to evaluate them; besides, their evaluation is a practical way to revise not only the textbooks themselves, but also how teachers in the classroom use them

There is a vast amount of literature about the evaluation of the textbooks supported by authors such as Rivers (1968), Williams (1983), Cunningsworth (1984), Grant (1987) and Sheldon (1987) amongst others; however, this evaluation is not a practice which dates back a long way.

Cunningsworth (1984) suggests that to evaluate a textbook is to examine it in light of two fundamental aspects which are the teaching objectives and the type of students for whom the textbook is directed. Cunningsworth, in agreement with

Hutchinson (1987) mentions just how important it is to evaluating them:

(...) materials evaluation plays such an important role in language teaching that its potential for influencing the way teachers operate is considerable. Materials evaluation can and should be a two-way process which enables teachers not just to select a textbook, but also to develop their awareness of their own teaching/learning situation. (Hutchinson, 1987, p. 22)

Therefore, the evaluation of a textbook could be understood as the assessment of the textbooks objectives in comparison with those of the professor or the programme interested in using it, and of its content and presentation, with the needs and preferences of the users (Forero, 2000).

Looking to obtaining a practical understanding about the use of textbooks in the initial programme of training English teachers, the evaluation of textbooks as proposed by McDonough and Shaw (2003), who put forward a two phase model, will now be examined:

We thus examine criteria in two stages, as external evaluation that offers a brief overview of the materials from outside (cover introduction, and table of contents), which is then followed by a closer and more detailed internal evaluation (2003, p.61).

McDonough and Shaw pose the need to primarily conduct an external evaluation in order to subsequently carry out an internal evaluation. These evaluations are comprised of the aspects mentioned below:

External evaluation

This initial evaluation examines what is self-evident about the books (Cunningsworth, 1995) and includes the analysis of the following aspects:

1. Type of recipient
2. Proficiency level
3. Teaching context (general English or specific)
4. Structure of the material in didactic units
5. The authors approach to the language, how it is learnt and taught.

6. Core course material and supplementary material
7. Availability of the teachers book
8. Inclusion of vocabulary lists
9. The type and characteristics of visual material including the design and presentation of the textbook and supplementary resources.
10. Layout of the textbook
11. Cultural aspects and the inclusion of a test

Internal evaluation

This evaluation examines the internal consistency and organization of the material through a thorough and sensible revision of the following elements:

1. Presentation of skills
2. Grading and order of the materials
3. Authenticity of the listening materials
4. Suitability of the material for different learning styles and clarity in motivating both students and professors.

A practical look at the use of textbooks in the training of English teachers

Concerning the role the textbook played in the training of teachers of English in the Foreign Language Department of a Colombian public university, it was decided to evaluate the textbook, used from 2003 to 2009 by the majority of teachers, based on the two-phase model evaluation proposed by McDonough and Shaw. The textbook used during this period was Cutting Edge.

The evaluation of this textbook was carried out in order to know, in first place, if it satisfied the needs of linguistic formation of the students. In second place, to know if the textbook supplementary materials were used (quality and usefulness) for the development of communicative skills. In third place, it was necessary to establish the way the textbook approached and developed the speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, and the way university teachers used it in order to distinguish if it was used as supplementary materials or turned to be the curriculum; finally, it was studied if this

textbook was considered as a motivating element in the English learning process.

It is important to mention that this textbook has had great influence in the teaching of English as a foreign language in the future teachers of this country as it will be shown then. In fact, it is still used by some teachers at this before mentioned university.

Analysis of the textbook

The use of this series began in the first semester of 2003 as fundamental aid to the development of the basic courses of the English teacher's training programme. The series is supported by the publishers Pearson Longman that published it for the first time in 1999.

The textbook was used for the Pre-intermediate level for the course Basic I, Intermediate for Basic II, Upper-intermediate for Basic III (units 1 to 6), Upper-intermediate for Basic IV (units 7 to 11), Advanced for Basic V (units 1 to 5) and Advanced for Basic VI (units 6 to 10); its adoption was decided in a teachers' meeting as reflected in the summary of minutes on 14th November 2001, but for various reasons the decision was discussed again in 2002 and thus it was finally adopted in 2003. It is interesting to present the following section, extracted from the minutes with regards to an opinion given about the series.

(...) it is very useful for establishing a collaborative approach which offers the possibility of working through tasks principally directed towards two productive skills: speaking and writing. Grammar is taught based upon the student's own discovery; new grammatical structures are built upon their knowledge, which can bring about the prediction of general rules. Listening activities are integrated into each module, as both large texts and as the practice of pronunciation models. The writing section develops related techniques like writing a first draft, the improvement of the draft and the production of the final written piece, which when complemented with the additional material can lead to the development of high-quality writing. (Minutes November 14th 2001)

External evaluation

In this section the external evaluation phase of the textbook will commence; First of all, the series consists of 6 textbooks distributed in six levels: Starter elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate y advanced. These are accompanied by a CD and a mini dictionary which contains approximately 2000 definitions and examples of some words which students may have difficulty with. A student's workbook is also included. The teacher benefits from other support material such as the teacher's book as well as a series of videos and corresponding guides, and access to certain internet pages, which contain additional exercises for each level.

This section will analyse the levels from the pre-intermediate book to the advanced book as series, and will provide specific discussions about the text.

1. The series is a general English course which caters to different levels as is noted above. It is aimed at adults and young adults, which explicitly shown on the back cover of the textbooks.

2. The proficiency level is also made explicitly evident, which varies according to the level of the textbook. For example, in the case of the advanced level, it clearly states that the users should be those with a level FCE, (First Certificate in English) which corresponds to level B2 in the European reference framework, who want to enrich their knowledge of the language.

3. The context in which the textbook was used is General English since it was used to teach English as a foreign language to teachers in training. It is made clear in the textbook that all versions are to support general English courses.

4. Regarding the structure of material in the didactic units, one can observe that all textbooks analysed have between 10 and 12 units, which are further divided into different sections depending on the level; for example the intermediate level includes language focus, vocabulary, reading and listening, task, further skills (writing and/or real life) and study practice remember, which is not included in all units. Whilst in the advanced level, these sections are reduced to skills and vocabulary, task, grammar, writing and further skills and vocabulary (Word spot and real life).

All the textbooks open with a contents page, which is then developed throughout

the units by means of different proposed exercises in the categories mentioned above. Attention is drawn to the weighting given to different skills in each of the levels. For example reading and listening in the intermediate level, leaving to one side writing skills to be worked in some units. In in the intermediate level writing is worked alternately in units 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 11; and in the advanced book it's worked in the majority of units with the exception of 1 and 9.

The authors of this series claim that it combines stimulating content with a thorough study of comprehensive grammar, vocabulary and skill work which is evident in the contents page in each one of the books in the series. The division shows a mix of two focuses: rules based and a task-based approach.

The course is designed to cover 120 teaching hours, which in the specific case of the training programme (10 hours a week) is used in its entirety for the development of what is established in the programmes. This includes the complete development of the topics put forward in the textbooks since each proposed unit can clearly correspond to the modules or units to follow in each class of a training programme.

5. In regards to the author's approach to language; how it is learnt and taught, one could say that there is a tendency towards a performance ground approach and a communicative focus which looks to develop the student's skills through tasks which become more complicated as the level increases, unit by unit and book by book. With regards to the syllabus, and in accordance with what is suggested by White (1998), this series presents a mixed syllabus since it puts emphasis on grammar until to the intermediate level, and on the language functions throughout the series. Also included are tasks or topics with the purpose of involving beginners in what is known as an exchange of values.

Now, for a deeper understanding of the author's approach to language, the discussion will focus on the presentation of the units, which, in the lower levels are presented as Language focus which contains namely grammatical structures and the presentation of some sporadic pronunciation elements. These grammatical structures are presented in two parts and at different times in each unit. Cunningsworth (1995) suggests that it's necessary to analyse the language and to divide it into small units in

order to promote more effective language learning. Cunningsworth notes that it though it may be fairly difficult to separate the individual aspects of a language from the language as a whole and to analyse them without losing authenticity and naturalness in the process, this important point is raised principally because language is a phenomenon which operates in different levels simultaneously

In some levels such as the advanced, grammar is presented in a section which does not figure as a prominent part on the content table; In this level, for example, just one topic is worked per module, and something called 'patterns to notice' is included, the function of which is to enforce the small but complex structures which are typical of the oral or written language and which have likely never before been studied by the students.

The series also provides the student with the possibility of revising these grammatical structures in the review which is worked every four modules, and in the student's workbook.

This demonstrates the importance given to grammar as a fundamental part of language learning in the lower levels, whereas the advanced levels are designed to be used in a more flexible manner, according to the needs of the students. It is necessary to point out that this section is taught in an inductive manner whereby students are presented with examples of the how the language is used with the aim that trainees make their own conclusions about the form and meaning building their own clear grammar.

Similarly, the authors present vocabulary as a separate part in the lower levels, whilst it is integrated with the other skills in the upper-intermediate and advanced levels. This important and fundamental aspect for good communication is presented in all units and is refreshed wherever possible especially in each of the assigned tasks at the end of a unit. The key aim here is to show how words are used and to reinforce how they are related to the key theme in each unit. This point is clarified by Cunningsworth (1995) who affirms that a basic principle of learning is to move on from what is familiar to what is new; to relate new themes with those which are already known, and the recycling of what has already been learnt when introducing a new topic.

The vocabulary taught consist of collocations, fixed phrases, semi fixed phrases and whole phrases. These are incorporated into the textbooks, as said above, in different sections such as the wordspot, useful language box and in the section called real life which is a clear test of the use of real themes.

6. Also to be evaluated in the external evaluation is whether or not the series was used as a central element or as a supplementary element. Discussions about the use of textbooks in the Department of foreign languages, which can be found in the minutes, make reference to the idea that a textbook must not be the definitive instrument in a class, but rather, it should be used as a guide. Nevertheless both the textbook and the student's workbook in the series were used as the principal material of developing the basic courses. To illustrate this, it was observed in the second level of the written component of the programme planned for the first semester of 2009, whereby they took elements from the intermediate book which were related to the written component such as reading and writing skills and the grammatical component.

7. The teacher's book was available locally for teachers, since its availability for sale is at the Publisher's disposition. The Department of Languages and the coordinators of English were given packs, which included all the test quality materials, by the Colombian representatives of the Publishers, Pearson Educación de Colombia, thus there was total availability of this support material.

The principal objective of the teacher's book in this series is the consolidation and extension of material provided in the student's book, through an additional 40 hours of extra material. The book includes some advice for the teachers, explanations and extra ideas of how to develop the units, a resource bank for each of the skills, a vocabulary resource bank, and finally an evaluation bank. Teachers in the department affirmed that, having used a high percentage of it, they found it useful. Amongst the reasons that they gave for having made use of this support material, the most important is the high quality of the grammatical and phonetic explanations included.

8. With regards to whether or not vocabulary lists and indexes we included, series A is characterized by not including neither vocabulary lists nor appendices, with the exception of those found in each unit entitled 'useful language box' which contain

phrases that can be adapted by the students for expressing their own ideas and opinions.

9. This next point is to do with the visual materials in the book, and if they are included as merely decoration or are integrated into the texts. Series A has a large quantity of visual material for which the majority is used as a didactic resource and not as a decorative element, since it supports the relevant information in the exercises and contextualizes different activities. For example, it may ask the students to look at the photos and to do the corresponding exercises. It is worth noting that visual material is used as a decorative element on some occasions.

With regards to whether the design and presentation of the textbook is clear or disorganized, one would describe it as organised. The cover of the student's book is attractively coloured, on the inside is a mini dictionary, and the material that the books are made from is resistant.

The insides of the book are full of colour photos, many of which are taken from real life situations which give it a special touch. The information is outlined by similar colours to the cover, in boxes or diagrams. Equally, clear explanations of the proposed topics are presented and there is an appropriate structure regarding the distribution of units and activities.

10. Being a textbook of international distribution, the material can be biased towards the English culture, because it includes specifically English themes and stories. In the teachers books, some information can be found which can shed light on or emphasize the attributes of this culture in a way which can be given to the students when they need it.

In addition this series presents the role of the women in different facets; as a mother, as a professional, without making any derogatory connotations. In the same sense, a variety of photographic material is presented which is related to men and women of different ethnicities and nationalities.

The series consists of the student's book, the student's workbook, audio tapes for the teacher and the student, the teacher's book, a photocopiable resource bank, a mini dictionary, as well as videos and access to web pages supplied by the publisher. Students had access to the CD which accompanies the student's book, and the professors had

access to the teachers CDs and videos which are to the disposition of teachers in the resource center.

Internal evaluation

Now that the external evaluation has been completed, the internal evaluation will take place, and the following aspects will be considered: the presentation of skills in the material, and the grading and sequencing of skills.

1. To begin, the development of reading skills will be evaluated, for which sufficient authentic, varied material is presented, also accompanied by coloured, well-designed forms; for example, the type of texts frequently included are extracted from newspapers, recipes, instructions, leaflets, poems, menus, stories, questionnaires and extracts from novels, which vary in complexity in accordance with the unit and the level of the text book; these passages can be informative, narrative and in some cases argumentative. However, despite wanting to treat academic themes as such, there is an absence of academic content in them. This point can be illustrated with an example in unit 5 of the advanced level, titled 'Education: fact or myth?' These readings with academic content are necessary for students who are training as future language teachers.

All the units in all the levels include reading exercises, which are mainly related to writing or listening skills, and are more generally associated with oral skills and vocabulary. Likewise, reading material is provided as a means to develop the task that is assigned in each module.

The texts presented in this series are of a reasonable length and their themes coincide perfectly with the content in each unit and moreover, they reinforce the given grammatical topics. Similarly, care is taken to develop reading strategies which include scanning, skimming, paraphrasing, transferring information, synthesis and predictions, amongst other skills. The development of this skill is permanently reinforced with exercises in the student's workbook and the resource bank provided to the teacher.

The development of listening skills includes the use of authentic material such as extracts taken from real radio programs. Also used are interviews and mini dialogues

especially to introduce practical new language. It is worth nothing that all the recordings are of a very high quality. Furthermore a variety of accents features in the series, which permit the student to learn to differentiate between one another. This can be illustrated by an example in exercise 1.3 of unit 1 of the advanced book, in which the students are shown three different accents. American English, Hindu English and Australian English.

Frequently, pre-listening exercises are used which basically introduce the listening activities, and enable the student to have prior contact with the material thus giving it greater meaning. This is the case of the exercises which feature before the task which provide key information or allow one to predict the topic of the planned activity in each unit. The development of each skill is reinforced with exercises in the student's workbook.

The textbook develops specific strategies such as listening for general understanding, listening for details and they provide at least two or three leisure activities like songs.

As far as the type of oral material included in concerned, it could be said that this series directs most of the activities towards the development of this skill and therefore could be considered the heart of the textbook. Great importance is given in each unit to developing the 'task' which characterises this series. The task should be understood as a special type of activity which is completed in class; the emphasis of the task is put on meaning and development of the process (the how) rather than the content, and the delivery of a result or product. The authors of the series suggest that this type of task is intended to develop the student's fluency and give them an opportunity to consolidate and reuse what they have studied in class.

For the development of oral skills, both dialogue exercises and role plays are proposed, as well as pronunciation sections which are integrated into each unit whereby the student listens to appropriate models of the oral language. In a similar manner, at the end of each unit a Real life section is included, the main goal of which is to provide an opportunity to carry out role plays which are similar to day to day situations.

It is worth saying that teachers in the Department set out a number of activities in order to develop this skill. Thus, in contrast to what was set out by the authors, the

teachers said that the textbooks do not sufficiently promote the development of communicative competence despite featuring a great number of role play activities and tasks. Similarly, they affirm that the books lack exercises which help students to differentiate between speaking and talking

With respect to writing skills, this series integrates writing exercises within the text and there are certain consistencies reinforced in the students textbook. This series explores the diverse reason for writing such as book or film reviews, posters, biographies, and personal descriptions etc. These textbooks seem to be lacking something at the writing level because this section is the least developed and that less attention is paid to it in proposed exercises throughout the entire series.

2. Another aspect to be considered in the internal evaluation is the sequencing of the materials. This series appears to have a logical order with regard to the presentation of grammatical content which goes from the simplest to the most complex. For example in unit 1 of the pre-intermediate textbook, the past, present and future tenses are worked, and in unit 14 the past perfect and indirect speech are taught. However, the order of the different topics and vocabulary does not seem logical and the content could be interchanged without presenting any serious difficulty.

3. In response to the final aspect to be evaluated, which makes reference to whether or not the material in this series is sufficiently motivating for the students as much as the professors, one could say that regarding some aspects it is considered to be motivating but that in other aspects not so, for various reasons.

Taking into account the variety of the activities presented in terms of the development of skills and strategies to support this, like pair work (jigsaw activities) and group work (plays and projects), it is evident that both professors and students are motivated towards using the textbook. Similarly, the inclusion of topical themes such as technology, literature, leisure etc and contact with daily life, customs and traditions of different English speaking countries are other factors which demonstrate that the textbook was in fact a motivating element in the learning process.

However, other aspects that could be considered motivating include whether or not the text promotes specific guidelines about how to develop the exercises, and if the

textbook encourages the use of other educational resources. With respect to this last point, there is not enough sufficient evidence to confirm that it was a motivating element. Furthermore, there is a lack of self-evaluation and co-evaluation activities which are so necessary to encourage autonomy in students.

Final global evaluation

To conclude with the evaluation of this textbook it is necessary make clear that it is a series with an ordered and attractive design; it takes a centered focus on the student and it offers a balance of activities. Nevertheless attention must be drawn to the treatment of certain skills which are not so equally developed, and on the contrary they are left to one side, as is the case with writing skills.

Emphasis is placed on the development of the grammar, but at the same time importance is also given to the communicative functions. Therefore, the units are presented in a multidisciplinary approach in accordance with the level of the textbook (as is described in point 4 of this evaluation). It presents a combination of the two focuses, rules based and performance-based.

Consequently, there is no predictability in terms of the development of the units or the exercises. The inclusion of a diversity of accents means that it is an important material for professors and students alike, as does the visual material in this book, for which the majority is used as a didactic resource.

The material provided for the development of the different skills is current and varies in accordance with the required complexity at each level; however, it is missing some type of academic material to complement the training of English teachers.

Conclusions

Having looked at the theoretical and practical use of textbooks in the initial teaching of English teachers, and keeping in mind the reasons the author had to carry out this evaluation, one could conclude that:

- The textbook achieved the basic requirements of linguistic training of future

teachers of foreign language.

- In the same manner one can affirm that the majority of teachers used this textbook as the principal source of their courses, which was evident in the programmes, and converted it into the curriculum as a way to guarantee quality, order and efficiency in whilst providing appropriate linguistic and methodological training to their students.
- Both the textbook and the inclusion of support materials that was provided in the series were evaluated. They were found to be an important source of resources for the teaching of English in the program of training English teachers. In other words, it showed that the majority of materials were highly used, and furthermore, they were found to be of a high quality and usefulness.
- Therefore, the textbook and its corresponding support material was highly used because it afforded confidence and certainty to the teachers who used them frequently; equally, the material was beneficial for both professors and students because it provided them a guide precisely at the moment of teaching, and it was not only limited to teaching but also to how things should be taught. This explains that the teachers found the suggestions given in the teacher's book to be incredibly useful; and finally, they provided practical benefits to the teachers in terms of saving time.
- The textbooks were a basic guide in the teaching of English to trainee teachers. However the professors followed them committedly often transforming them into the actual curriculum, inscribing them as a model of transmissive, techno-bureaucratic teaching, and thus instrumental in changing the conception of traditional didactics to the use of the textbook as the fundamental guide for the teacher and the student. That is, the teachers of the Department of Foreign languages expressed a dependency on the textbook. Despite affirming that they did not blindly follow the textbooks, the findings suggest something different: it seems that teaching revolved around the textbook and that it served to develop the cultural and curricular knowledge which teachers then develop.
- Ardent use of the textbook is also explained from the fact that they provide the

structure and syllabus for programmes, they maintain a high quality of teaching, provide a variety of resources for teaching, provide effective language models for students, amongst other reasons. In the same way, teachers expressed a tendency to trust excessively on the textbooks, and because of this it were the textbooks which determined a large part of the teaching components and methods.

- This allows us to deduce that the teachers had a complacent attitude with respect to the elaboration of the programmes, which resulted in a decreased level of creativity when teaching.

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