

EFL Materials- from Adoption to Adaptation: Definitional, Practical and Operational Aspects of Textbook Development by Teachers.

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***Abstract:** This paper makes the claim that teachers should take the step from materials adoption to materials development. As no textbooks is tailored to exactly take into account every single context, teachers should be able to develop textbooks that fit their specific contexts based on factors related to students(age, learning style, interests etc.), teachers (need and preferences) and to the teaching-learning environment. The process does not start from scratch. It is a creative re-designing of exiting textbooks using a rational and principled decision making process which starts from textbook evaluation. The author also provides teachers with theoretical and practical considerations for textbook development. However, he makes it a point that textbook development is an arduous endeavour which requires teachers to have a good knowledge in English, enough practical classroom experience, and a good knowledge of teaching and learning theories.*

***Key Words:** adaptation, development, evaluation, materials, textbook.*

Introduction

There is no denying that materials, especially textbooks, are critical for learning to take place in a classroom. As Tomlinson (2012) (Citing Richards, 2001, p.251) rightly observes, they "serve as the basis of much of the language input that learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom". As such, they are perceived as indispensable in exposing learners to the language (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998) and in facilitating teaching.

In Côte d'Ivoire, like elsewhere, centralized decisions are made by the ministry of education as to which textbooks to use in schools. But, different schools may use different series of textbooks, provided they are selected from the authorized list. Teachers may also simultaneously use other materials available on the market if these fall within the curricular requirements. However, many among them would rather choose to rely on a single textbook, which they flip through with their students from the first to the last page. On realizing that it does not, in many places, adjust with their teaching/learning realities, they appeal to the argument that learners have a weak background in English or that their level is decreasing, and keep on using the same book as it is.

We believe that the teacher who can make principled decisions in choosing and developing suitable materials for his students, unlike he who relies on ready-made ones, is more likely to escape from the 'bondage' of inappropriate materials. He can more easily bridge the gap between what the existing the textbooks offer and what his students really need. Thus there a necessity to help teachers develop a rational procedure for selecting, evaluating and implementing textbooks in a way that fits their learners' needs and their teaching practices.

This paper aims at giving teachers some insight about materials selection and materials adaptation/ development. It also sets out to encourage them to take a leap towards professional development, through self- made teaching materials. To reach these objectives, it will first examine the nature and function of English as Foreign Language (EFL) materials, with a focus on textbooks. Then, it will go on to look at teachers' various attitudes towards textbooks. Finally, it will ponder on the idea of teachers as textbook developers before explaining the practical and operational considerations in materials and textbook development.

I. Nature and function of EFL materials

" Materials" is a common term used to describe the tangible teaching and learning aids whether print, non-print, digital or any combination thereof, used by teachers and learners in instructional programs (Pender County Schools, 2012). They "can be in the form (...) of a textbook, a workbook, a cassette, a CD-ROM, a video, a photocopied hand-out, a newspaper, a paragraph written on a whiteboard: anything which presents or informs about the language being learned" (Tomlinson, 2011, xiii–xiv) and which is used in the classroom to facilitate the process of teaching and learning (Morales, 2012 as cited by Sesma and Fontes, 2016, p. 1). Basically then, materials serve as: (1) a resource for language presentation materials (spoken and written), (2) a source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction, (3) a reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, (4) a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom activities, (5) a syllabus (where they reflect learning objectives that have already been determined), (6) and a support for teachers (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 7). As such, they can be informative (informing the learner about the target language), instructional (guiding the learner in practicing the language), experiential (providing the learner with experience of the language in use), eliciting (encouraging the learner to use the language) and exploratory (helping the learner to make discoveries about the language) (Tomlinson, 2012, p.143). It therefore goes without saying that materials play a significant role in helping "stimulate learners' senses as they acquire concepts, abilities and skills, attitudes and values (Ogalde and Bardavid, 2003, p. 20). They are definitely "the center of instruction and one of the most important influences on what goes on in the classroom"(Kitao 1998, p. 1)

I.1. Textbooks as materials

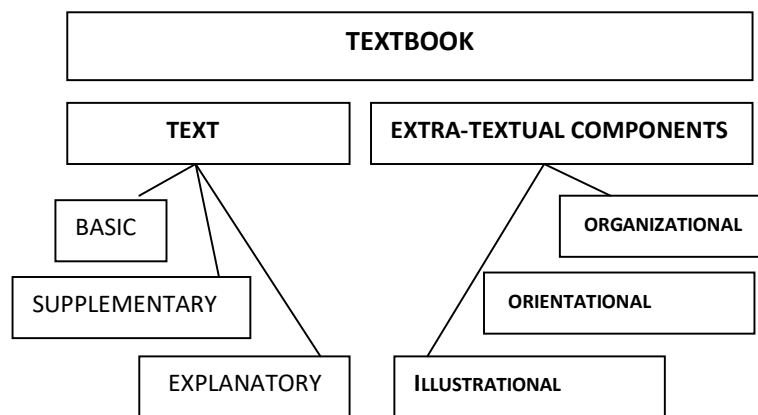
Textbooks, as part of materials, are widely used in foreign language classes. The term, *textbook* is made up of two lexical items: 'TEXT' and ' BOOK'. This suggests that it refers to a book that contains texts.

Zujev (1983) explains that textbooks have texts and extra textual components. Texts are divided into (1) basic texts, which present the teaching content students must know (concepts, terms, facts, theories, definitions, skills, etc.), (2) additional or supplementary texts, which help students understand and remember the basic text (tables, charts, registers, lists, documents, etc.), and, (3) explanatory texts which facilitate self -study (annotations, notes, footnotes, endnotes, list of

abbreviations, etc.). The extra textual components are: (1) organizational: they help stimulate and direct learning processes, facilitate various learning strategies, serve as learning “scenario” (questions, tasks, exercises, etc.), (2) orientational: they help students to get orientation in teaching contents and in the textbook (table of contents, conclusions, indexes, glossaries, etc.), and illustrational: they demonstrate the teaching content visually or audibly (pictures, illustrations, drawings, photographs, graphs, schemas, recordings, podcasts, etc.) (See fig.1.)

Figure 1

The structure of textbooks (Zujev, 1983, p.106 In Hrehovcik, 2002).



Another key characteristics of textbooks is that they present the subject matter defined by a curriculum and exemplify a systematically planned syllabus (Richards, 2007, pp. 254-255) with units/sections aimed at specific topics and focusing on language points and problems to be solved using the language. So, they provide teachers with a sensible progression of language items (Harmer, 2003, p. 257), "an appropriate sequence to follow, and a support to base their daily teaching." (Salas, 2004: 3). Moreover, textbooks enable teachers to get more organized in their class lessons (Richards, 2007, pp. 254-255) as the content to be covered and the design of each lesson are carefully spelled out in detail. In that way, they give teachers and learners the feeling of having achieved something when they finish each chapter, and then finally the whole book (Woodward, 2001, p.46). Overall therefore, textbooks broadly serve:

- An informational function: they are a source of information in the presentation of the teaching content, especially situations of language use, spheres of social life, culture and background.
- A systematic function: they divide the teaching material according to type of school, age, stage, etc.
- A self-educational function: they help learners to acquire skills and motivation for independent acquisition of the material, and,

- An integrational function: they help learners to select and integrate information gained from different sources (Zujev, 1983; Bim, 1984 as cited by Hrehovcik, 2002, pp.221-222).

Consequently a textbook is a core resource, a source of supplemental material, an inspiration for classroom activities, and even the curriculum itself (Garinger, 2002).

However, teachers' attitudes regarding textbooks, vary a great deal from considering them as the "bible, a guide, a crutch, a necessary evil, to a burden" (Gabrielatos, 2004, as cited by Awasthi, 2006, p.2). These attitudes determine not only how teachers manipulate and use textbooks, but also how teaching and learning take place in the language classrooms.

I.2. Materials and teachers: from textbook adoption to textbook development.

There are three basic attitudes to textbook use: adhering or adopting, elaborating or adapting and developing.

I.2.1. The textbook adoption attitude

To adopt a textbook is to decide to use it as the main teaching material. However, the textbook selection process in many educational systems is not open to teachers. At ministerial level, centralized decisions are made about the types of textbooks and syllabus to be used throughout the country. These textbooks contain the kind of language the learners will be exposed to, and suggest the methods and techniques by which the learners will learn (Ellis and Johnson, 1994, as cited by Vičič, 2011, p. 111). So, teachers soon become passive adopters and slavish followers of a textbook that controls the classroom and what occurs therein (Crawford, 2002, p.82). Since they are concerned about whether they are doing the 'right thing (Clark 1987), such teachers, also referred to as passive technicians (Kumaravidelu 2003), hardly ever question the soundness or appropriateness of the teaching materials they use in class, and feel secure in presenting materials prepared by others" (Richards and Renandya, 2002, p. 67).

Teachers as material adopters are basically found in educational systems with poorly educated and untrained teachers (Beeby, 1973, as cited by Clark, 1987, p.83) who lack the ability, the resources, or the willingness to initiate anything in the classroom (Kumaravidelu, 2003).

Policy-makers tend to encourage this textbook adoption attitude based on the "deficiency view", which holds that learners need to be protected from their 'deficiencies', and on the «difference view", which holds that teachers should leave the making of textbooks to experts and be free to concentrate on fostering learning in the classroom (Allwright, 1981 as cited by Wyatt, 2011). Overall however, the danger is that teachers end up feeling disorientated, lacking in self-confidence, and reduced to presenting materials without ever minding its possible negative impact on learning. Indeed as Rudd (1973, In Clark, 1987, p.85) declares:

" the teacher who learns from his own experience understands in a way which is just not available to persons who merely try to follow the instructions of others..."

I.2.2. The textbook adaptation attitude

Teachers who adapt textbooks may change a lesson, activity objectives, a topic, the sequencing of activities, tasks etc. (Masuhara, 2004). They believe that "no pre-prepared teaching materials can meet the needs of any given class precisely; [so] some level of adaptation will [always] be necessary." The process "involves changing existing materials in some form so that they become suitable for specific purposes, learners, teachers or situations." (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, p.1). As a result,

"an experienced, skilful teacher may transform a "bad" textbook into a "good" one by modifying and supplementing certain parts in the textbook in such a way that serves the specific objectives of the lessons" (Bahumaid, p.424)

Unlike textbook adoption, textbook adaptation is therefore about changing or adjusting, re-organizing the various parts of a textbook. Teachers who like to adapt materials sense from experience that there is a mismatch with:

1. their teaching environment, e.g. the materials does not take into account cultural and ethnic diversity of their class.
2. their learners (age, language level, prior learning experience, learning styles, etc.),
3. their own preference (personality; teaching styles; beliefs about language learning and teaching), e.g., the materials offer a lot of communicative activities but seems to neglect other aspects of the language (pronunciation, study skills etc.).
4. the course objectives (syllabus, institutional targets, etc.), e.g., the materials focus on teaching grammar but the course objectives focus on helping learners to develop communication strategies.
5. materials (texts, tasks, activities), e.g., the text is interesting but the activities are boring and do not seem to fully exploit the text(Tomlinson& Masuhara, 2004 as cited by Indriyati & Sa'jaun, 2009, p. 12).

Adaptation is accordingly, basically not only about improving textbooks in order to bridge the gap to bridge the gap between the materials learners' needs (Malley, 2011). It is also about achieving congruence among such related variables as teaching materials, methodology, students, and course objectives (Islam & Mares, 2003).

What then is essential in understanding adaptors' philosophy is the fact that they do not believe in an 'unfailing obedience to authority' (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) but rather want to adjust materials to contextual realities. They like to tinker with official guidelines and with course materials to make them more suitable for their own circumstances (Clark, 1987). They cut up the textbook components into pieces and then rearrange it to suit the needs, abilities and interests of the students in the course. But, can all teachers take the leap from materials adoption to materials adaptation and development?

II. Teachers as textbook adaptors/developers

The labour-intensiveness of developing classroom materials, the pressures of heavy timetables, and the highly restrictive nature of most teaching situations (Sheldon, 1988, p. 238) have been put forward to support the idea that materials development is a risky endeavour for teachers. Yet, the case can be made that they should!

II.1. Why they should

Despite the wide acknowledgement of the value of textbooks in providing teachers and learners with a solid tool for teaching and learners, they can restrict teachers in what they can or cannot do in class. They may for example, be irrelevant or inappropriate for a specific group-class. In that case, texts, dialogs and other aspects of content may incorporate teaching points with no concern for real language use (Basturkmen, 2010; Graves, 1996, 2000). Also, a textbook may fail to represent real issues by avoiding controversial issues and by presenting an idealized view of the world to appear acceptable all contexts (Richards, 2001). What's more, many textbooks are deficient in terms of genuine communicative activities (Grant, 1990) and "contain serious theoretical problems, design flaws (...), practical shortcomings, and present disjointed material that is either too limited or too generalized in a superficial and flashy manner." (Litz, 2005, p.8). Textbooks therefore need to be 'contextualized' to cater for a possible lack of 'fit' between teaching context and coursebook content (Block, 1991). They also need to be updated as "all too often, one finds reading texts in (...) materials which are so dated as to be practically unusable" (Block, 1991, p.213). Besides, teachers need to bring their 'personal touch' to the textbooks they use to prepare something that shows how much effort they can make for their students (Block 1991).

Another valuable argument is that developing materials can increase teachers' awareness, criticality, creativity and self-esteem. Those who have tried developing materials acknowledge that it contributes to professional growth, provides a link between theoretical research and classroom practice, and helps awareness of audience and context. They also consider it as a rewarding activity which stops them from being staid and helps them make informed decisions of teaching activities (Tomlinson, 2016).

Materials development can give not only a greater understanding of the characteristics of effective materials, but also help teachers improve their teaching insights, practices and procedures. As they begin developing teaching materials teachers usually enter into in a process of continuous and systematic reflection and gain self-confidence, self-esteem and expertise, and achieve development (Tomlinson, 2003).

Now, what would a teacher developed materials look like? This calls for some clarification.

II.2. A teacher developed textbook: What and how?

A 'teacher developed textbook' is the result of his efforts to compose a textbook well adapted to his situation. It is based on the strengths and weaknesses of existing textbooks and on language learning principles likely to help maximize teaching and learning.

To develop a textbook, a teacher tries to answer the following question: what can I offer that the textbook at hand cannot and what can the textbook at hand offer that I need for my teaching and my students? What is at stake in this endeavour is the identification of gaps in a given textbook and finding materials to cope with them. From such a perspective, a teacher developed material encompasses "the production, evaluation, adaptation and exploitation of materials intended to facilitate language acquisition and development." (Tomlinson, 2016, p.2) It includes 'any kind of activity and/or exercise totally [or partially] developed (...) to address a section of the course content that seems to be weak or lack further development or practice, [and] it ranges from creating a short grammar exercise to writing a complete textbook' (Salas, 2004, p.2). Such a textbook is not obtained 'from scratch' (Lotz-Sisitka and Russo, 2003). By way of "a strange mixture of imagination, insight, and analytical reasoning" (Low, cited in Johnson, 1989, p.153), different textbooks are creatively used by the teacher to develop one that fits his context,

II.3. Some principles to consider

Graves (1996) considers two essential criteria in developing materials: 'effectiveness' of the materials in achieving the purpose of the course and 'appropriateness' for the students and teachers. Tomlinson (2011, pp.8-23) rather proposes (among other principles) that materials should achieve impact, make learners' feel at ease and develop confidence, require and facilitate learner self-investment, take into account positive effects, permit a silent period at the beginning of instruction, encourage, intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional involvement, provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes, provide learners with opportunities for outcome feedback.

More recently, Crawford (2015) rather suggested that in developing effective materials it is necessary to consider the following principles:

1. Language is functional and must be contextualized
2. Language development requires learner engagement in purposeful use of language
3. The language used should be realistic and authentic
4. Classroom materials will usually seek to include audio visual component
5. Effective teaching materials foster learner autonomy
6. Materials need to be flexible enough to cater to individual and contextual differences
7. Learning needs to engage learners both affectively and cognitively
8. Technologically complex world, Second language learners need to develop the ability to deal with written as well as spoken genre

Bao (2016, pp.195-199) in an attempt to be more comprehensive contends that four dimensions mark the interest of language teaching materials. These are:

- (1) linguistic values:
 - a. attending to both form and meaning.
 - b. allowing learners to observe rules in the language
 - c. rehearsing features of written and spoken discourse
 - d. moving beyond the initiation-feedback model
- (2) cultural content
 - a. including learners' individual knowledge and interpretation of events,
 - b. demonstrating open view towards topics
 - c. creating interesting, believable characters
 - d. avoiding stereotypes
- (3) learning resources,
 - a. combining materials with other resources,
 - b. allowing for choices
 - c. leaving room for conceptualizing learner needs
- (4) learners' identity and living environment
 - a. making materials reflect learners' identity
 - b. utilizing resources from real life,
 - c. caring about learners' feeling, bringing learning enjoyment,
 - d. catering for diverse learning styles.

From the list of principles and criteria suggested above, it would seem that each author, writer or researchers has his own criteria for developing materials. In fact, this diversity simply reflects a variety of visions about what is essential in materials development. However, what really appears to matter is that to develop materials one needs, as much as possible to follow principles deriving from teaching and learning theories known to foster language learning. It is also necessary to take into account national curriculums and the peculiarity of teaching and learning contexts.

III. A 'teacher-developed' textbook: The process

The process starts with textbook evaluation and analysis, and then follows the stage where the teacher has to make decisions whether to use the textbook with or without any change, and the extent to which adaptations can be made.

III.1. Textbook Evaluation

Whenever teachers look through a textbook to decide whether it is worth using, whether the lessons in it should be taught, whether the content and sequencing of the activities in the textbook are appropriate, whether something is incorrect etc., they are evaluating the textbook (Garnier, 2002). In so doing, they also try "to see 'inside' the materials and to take more control over their design and use." (Littlewood, 1998 as cited by Khodabakhshi, 2014).

Byrd (2001) argues that textbook evaluation should be done for two purposes: for selection and for implementation. We take this idea for our account but we add that implementation can be coupled with development.

III.1.1. Evaluation for selection

The basic question when conducting evaluation for selection according to Byrd (2001), is: ‘Does this book have the features that we want it to have so that we can adopt it?’ The issues addressed by this question are related to:

- 1- The fit between the materials and the curriculum: Whether **content/ explanation** in the materials are of interest, appropriate or help learners understand what they need in order to learn.
- 2- The fit between the materials and the students: whether **examples** are appropriate and fit the concepts they explain.
- 3- The fit between the curriculum and the teachers: whether the **presentation/format** is right with illustrations and graphical designs appropriate for students’ age and level, and whether printed text is easy to read and appropriate for level etc. (see fig.2)

Figure 2

Textbook evaluation for selection. Inspired from Byrd (2001)

<p>Evaluation for Selection: Does the textbook have the features we want it to have so that we can adopt it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fit between curriculum and texts: material appropriate and carries the particular curricular goals? ❖ Fit between Students and Texts? Material fits the needs of students as learners of English? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Content/ Explanations:</i> interesting? offensive? help learners to learn? 2. <i>Examples:</i> appropriate to students’ lives and interest? Fit with the concepts supposed to be explained? 3. <i>Exercises/Tasks:</i> provide enough variety? Of interest to students? 4. <i>Presentation/Format:</i> looks right to students? Illustrations, graphical and design elements appropriate? Text easy to read and appropriate to students level?, book well constructed etc. ❖ Fit between Teachers and Texts? Can teachers handle the material? Meets teachers’ needs and preferences for teaching materials? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Content/ Explanations:</i> teachers find content useful? Friendly? Teachers’ manual? Audio? Workbooks? ... 2. <i>Examples:</i> can they be expanded on or recast to be useful in the lessons? 3. <i>Exercises/Tasks:</i> enough? Doable? Cater for learning styles? Instructor’s manual? Answer keys? 4. <i>Presentation/Format:</i> illustrative material provides teaching opportunities? Content and illustrations linked?

The focus therefore is on how the textbook matches curriculum, students and teachers insofar as content, exercises and presentation format are concerned. The content of this evaluation is in line with Richard’s (2001, as cited by Awasthi, 2006, p. 7) suggestion that textbooks should be assessed bearing in mind: (1) *the role of the textbook in the program* (Whether there is a curriculum which describes the objectives, syllabus and content of the program? Whether it one of several different books that will be used? Whether it be used with small classes or large ones? Etc.), (2) *the learners in the program* (Whether they are required to buy a book? Whether they prepared to pay for a book etc.), and (3) *the teachers in the Program* (Whether they are native

speakers of English? Whether they play a role in selecting the book? Whether they are free to adapt and supplement the book? Etc.). Thus evaluation for selection includes macro dimensions, i.e. general concerns having to do with curriculum guidelines, content, students' needs as learners and teachers' needs and preferences.

III.1.2. Analysis for implementation and development

The process at this level includes, analyzing the contents of the textbook tasks and content to find out whether they are appropriate for a particular group of learners so that decisions can be made as to what to adopt, update or substitute (Cunningsworth, 1995; Riazi, 2003). This should hopefully lead to the development of a 'new' textbook.

Analysis for implementation and development is a two-phase process: implementation and development.

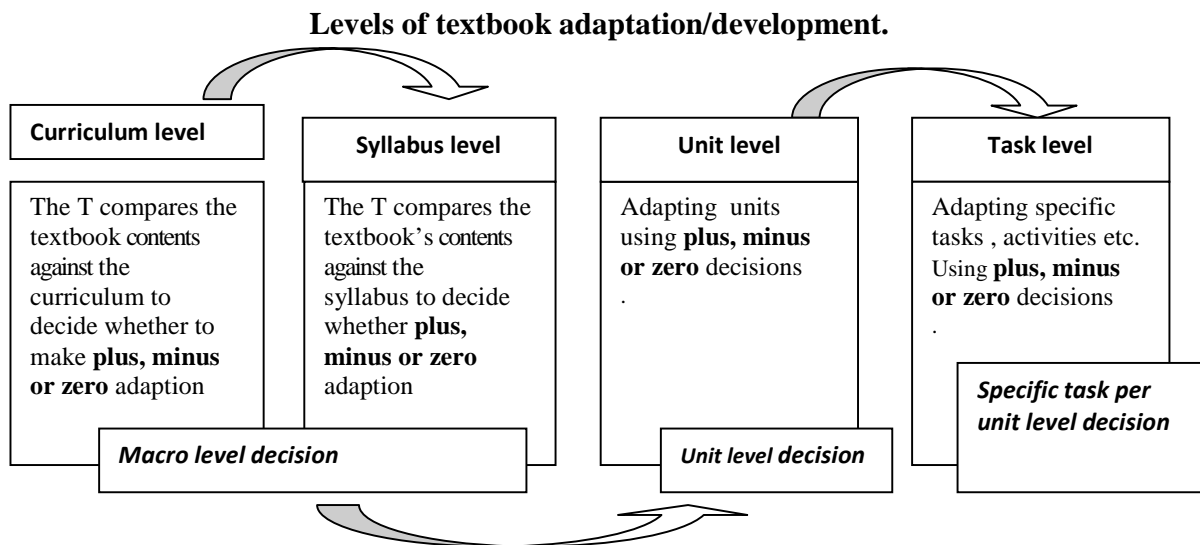
At the level of implementation, decisions have to be made about the presentation/format, the content/information, practice activities, evaluation activities, and support for teachers (is there an instructional manual? etc.). Then, the teacher goes on to analyze the linguistic (what language is being taught? In what chunks and sequence? Etc.), and the thematic content (what topics are used in each unit? What is the connection between the topics? Etc.).

At the level of development, decisions have to be made regarding the following questions: What can I adopt/adapt? How can I adapt it? Do I need to create or find alternative materials? Or should I shorten or lengthen, skip or change anything? Three types of decisions can be made resulting from these questions: to omit or replace, to change or replace, and to keep. Masuhara (2004) classifies them into three groups that he labels 'plus' to mean that the teacher will add or expand details, 'minus' to refer the deletion or subtraction of elements, and 'zero' for the modification of elements without addition or deletion.

- *Plus*: Teacher may *add* different texts and/or activities or, they may *expand* texts and activities by increasing the length, difficulty, depth, etc.
- *Minus*: text and activities may be *deleted* or may be *subtracted* (number sentences in a text or part of an activity decreased) , or they may be *reduced* (length, difficulty, depth, etc. decreased)
- *Zero*: Teacher may make changes to instructions (*modification*)or swap one activity with another (*replacement*), or change the position of texts and illustrations (*reorganization*), or change the sequence of the activities (*re-sequencing*) , change the genre of a text (from narrative to poem) or move the content from one medium to another (e.g. from print to web page) (*conversion*).

As shown in figure 3, development ideally operates at four levels: curriculum, syllabus, units and tasks/exercises.

Figure 3



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- *At the curriculum level*, the teacher compares the textbook content with the explicit and official knowledge and skills and competence students are expected to learn, and with the 'hidden' or unwritten curriculum made up of the unspoken or implicit academic, social and cultural messages that can be communicated to students while they are in school. He will have to make a plus, minus or zero decision as a result of the evaluation.
- *At the syllabus level*, teacher compares textbook content with the summary of what is to be covered in the class to see whether there is a match or a mismatch. He then has to adapt textbook by adding items or even whole units that are important to students, such as topics on cultural understanding.
- *At unit level*, teacher may add exercises for more practice or may skip over confusing or irrelevant parts of a unit or re-sequence the parts of the unit to fit the course. Also activities like warm up, presentation and consolidation may be changed to make them more creative more and adapted to learners' level.
- *At task level*, teacher may decide, in line with curriculum, syllabus, unit, to adapt textbook activities by reordering them, rewriting them etc. s

Figure 3 also shows that at macro level (curriculum and syllabus), teacher evaluates the textbook according to curriculum objectives (2), then he goes through the syllabus and compares it with textbook content (3) after that, he analyses textbook at unit level (4), finally he moves on to analyze the textbook at task level (5). It is notable the different levels of adaptation are closely related and there is a correlation between all the stages.

Concluding remarks

This paper has shown that there are avenues for teachers to start developing textbooks. It has made the claim that a teacher who develops his own materials is more likely to teach according to his specific context and learners' needs. This may appear a difficult venture but a teacher-developed textbook does not start from scratch. It is based on improving the existing textbooks by creatively adapting, readjusting and enriching them in such a way that they have the qualities of the weaknesses of the existing materials. So, the idea of teacher-developed materials, as shown in this paper, focuses on teachers re-designing the textbooks at hand taking into account, student-related factors (age, learning style, interests etc.), teacher-related factors (teaching preferences), program factors (curriculum, syllabus etc.). Another underlying claim in this paper is that it is advisable for teachers to take ownership of textbooks by reconstructing them in such a way that they reflect their own context and students' needs, levels, learning styles, culture etc. This can be achieved through textbook evaluation and adaptation. However, the process can be arduous as a teacher may use a book over a certain period before finding the right adaptation. Moreover, to be an adept at materials development a teacher will need among other qualities, some good knowledge in English, have enough practical classroom experience to draw on, have a good knowledge about theories of teaching and learning, master teaching techniques and strategies, and be creative. What's more, there are administrative constraints obliging teachers to complete the program for students to be better prepared for exams. But no matter the difficulties teachers in classrooms have to be prepared either in teacher training schools or during in-service training if learning is to be enhanced, and teachers to grow professionally.

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