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The Coursebook as a Flexible Tool*

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Summary

Coursebooks have been regarded by teachers as the Bible, a guide, a crutch, a necessary evil, or even a burden. This talk will present coursebooks in their true dimension: a helpful tool which teachers can use flexibly, and combine with other resources, in order to cater for the needs of particular classes.

* Overhead transparencies and handouts from a guest seminar I gave at the TESOL Greece Special Event, *Issues in ELT: Persistent Problems, Practical Solutions*, Hellenic American Union, Athens, Greece, 22 October 2000.

ADAPTATION: OPTION OR NECESSITY?

BASIC PREMISES

There is seldom time to cover everything in the C/B.

C/Bs cannot cater for all possible teaching contexts.

C/Bs tend to offer a variety of materials
for teachers to choose from.

C/Bs may not offer enough material.

C/B selection criteria may not always be sound.

Teachers don't always have a say in C/B selection.



ENTAILMENTS

What the C/B offers cannot be exactly
what your learners need.

You will have to prioritise and select.

You may need to supplement the C/B

Your general aims may not match the aims of the C/B.

The aims of a particular lesson/unit in the C/B
may not match your lesson-by-lesson aims.

The C/B methodology may not match your own.



CONCLUSION

Coursebook adaptation is inevitable.

ADAPTATION: CHECKLIST (1)

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Identify C/B actual methodology
(which may differ from the stated one)

Identify C/B syllabus
(topic? notional? functional? structural? combination?)

Identify C/B organisation
(starting point, integration, recycling)

Identify lesson/unit aims - don't teach 'pages'.

LESSON / UNIT

Content & Balance

Grammar
Lexis
Pronunciation
Skills
Integration
Learning Strategies

Aims

Relevance
Quantity
Challenge

Topics

Relevance
Interest

ADAPTATION: CHECKLIST (2)

Methodology

Telling vs. Eliciting
Input vs. Discovery
Teaching vs. Testing
Teacher vs. Learner centered
Fluency vs. Accuracy
Communication vs. Mechanical Practice

Materials

Relevance
Quantity
Sequencing
Grading

Texts

Relevance to aims
Complexity
Authenticity
Length
Interest

Support

Rules
Explanations
Guidelines

COURSEBOOK ADAPTATION: ALTERNATIVES (1)

WHAT?

Aims	Guidelines	Explanations
Topics	Texts	Visuals
Tasks	Quizzes	Questionnaires

HOW?

Omit	Re-order	Combine
Replace	Change	Add

MATERIALS?

Same C/B	Other ELT book	Own materials
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COURSEBOOK ADAPTATION: ALTERNATIVES (2)

WHY?

Omit

- Learners are clear of a language point.
- Learners are competent in a skill.
- There are too many tasks on a specific area.
- The item/area concerned is not a priority.
- The item/task is not well designed.
- The item/task is not well-suited for its aim.
- The topic is not appropriate for learners.

Re-order / Combine

- To match your aims.
- To use a practice task for lead-in & elicitation.
- To revise an area earlier than the C/B does.
- To compare and contrast areas.
- To provide thematic unity.
- To provide an appropriate follow-up.

Replace

- Texts are of inappropriate length.
- Materials are inappropriate for the aim.
- Materials are inappropriate for learners' age/ experience.
- Materials are unclear/ confusing / misleading.
- Tasks are badly designed.

Add

- Areas are not covered (sufficiently).
- Texts/pictures/tasks are not provided.
- Texts/pictures/tasks are fewer than needed.
- Tasks are limited in scope.
- Tasks are of limited range re. methodology.

LEXIS

Content

Focus: single vs. multi-word items.
Meaning: denotation and connotation.
Use: register, genre, collocation, colligation.
Affixation: form and meaning.

Materials and procedures

Are learners given the meaning
or are they guided to discover it?

Is there a clear context for presentation/discovery
and practice? How rich is the context?

Are learners given enough language data
to discover/understand the meaning and use?

Are lexical items grouped?
Is the grouping meaningful and memorable?

Do activities teach or test?

Is there a balance between
global and focused activities?

Is there a balance between
free and controlled activities?

Are the activities realistic?

Are the activities personalised?

GRAMMAR

Data

Context
Text vs. Examples
Amount
Authenticity
Clarity
Interest
Usefulness

Rules & Explanations

Terminology
Clarity
Accuracy
Generality
Amount of detail
Exceptions
Usefulness

Practice

Context
Amount
Focus (meaning / form)
Communication (purpose and audience)
Interest
Personalisation
Effectiveness

ADAPTATION MAZE

CHECKLIST	
1	Are CB aims appropriate for my learners' needs? <i>No</i> ⇒ A <i>Yes</i> ⇒ 2
2	Can I achieve all the aims in the time available? <i>Yes</i> ⇒ 3 <i>No</i> ⇒ B
3	Are materials relevant to stated aims? <i>Yes</i> ⇒ 4 <i>No</i> ⇒ C
4	Are materials appropriate for learners' age and experience? <i>Yes</i> ⇒ 5 <i>No</i> ⇒ D
5	Is the amount of materials enough? <i>Yes</i> ⇒ 6 <i>No</i> ⇒ E
6	Are procedures relevant to stated aims? <i>No</i> ⇒ E <i>Yes</i> ⇒ 6
7	Are procedures appropriate for learners' age and experience? <i>No</i> ⇒ G <i>Yes</i> ⇒ 8
8	Is the sequence of procedures appropriate? <i>No</i> ⇒ H <i>Yes</i> ⇒ Ready for class!

REMEDIAL ACTION	
A	Adapt aims Go to 2
B	Limit aims Go to 3
C	Omit, re-order, combine, replace, add, devise Go to 4
D	Replace, add, devise Go to 5
E	Too many: omit Too few: add, devise Go to 6
F	Omit, replace, re-order, combine, add, devise Go to 7
G	Omit, replace, add, devise Go to 7
H	Re-order, combine Ready for class!

ADAPTATION EXAMPLES

LESSON 1

LEVEL: Advanced [*Proficiency Gold*. Longman.]

AIMS

- Revision of modals of deduction.
- Awareness that modals are not the only option.
- Listening (mainly practice)
- Speaking practice.

ACTION	PROCEDURE
<i>Change</i>	(Books closed). <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Elicit info re. Agatha Christie.➤ Input basic info if necessary.
<i>Omit</i>	➤ Skip grammar box.
<i>Use</i>	➤ Direct Ls to poster - elicit situation.
<i>Add</i>	➤ Ask Ls to note down facts from poster.
<i>Add</i>	➤ Ask Ls to form predictions re. mystery. If Ls say they haven't got enough info, ask them to guess. ➤ Write ideas on W/B - don't correct.
<i>Change</i>	(Books closed). <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Ls listen to compare predictions with policemen.
<i>Change</i>	➤ Ask Ls to read and locate / group predictions according to level of certainty. No distinction between 'positive/negative'.
<i>Change</i>	➤ (p.71) Ask Ls to match modals with other expressions (box).
<i>Re-order & Change</i>	➤ (p.219) Read out first part. Ask Ls if they're happy with the explanation - elicit reasons. ➤ Read rest of text - elicit responses.

LESSON 2

LEVEL: Upper Intermediate [*Headway Upper-Intermediate*. Oxford University Press]

AIMS:

- Avoid introducing exam-prep tasks so early on.
- Reading (identifying specific info, word attack)
- Speaking practice.
- Listening practice.

ACTION	PROCEDURE
<i>Add</i>	➤ Tell Ls a horror story.
<i>Change & Add</i>	(Lead in A) ➤ Do you believe in ghosts? Have you met anyone who does? What are the characteristics of ghosts (appearance and behaviour)? ➤ Ideas on W/B.
<i>Add</i>	➤ What would you do if your house was haunted? ➤ Tell Ls that haunted houses can become attractions for tourists.
<i>Change</i>	➤ Read and find how many different types of ghosts are mentioned.
<i>Use</i>	➤ Word attack task.
<i>Omit</i>	➤ Language study.
<i>Add</i>	➤ Ls listen to identify the type of ghost. ➤ Stop tape before 'communication with ghost' and ask Ls what they would do. ➤ Play rest of tape: Ls identify what the couple did.

LESSON 3

LEVEL: Advanced

AIMS:

- To exploit a text on a controversial topic
- To integrate work on Reading, Speaking & Writing.

Towards the end of the previous lesson

ACTION	PROCEDURE
<i>Use & Change</i>	Steps 1 & 2 (p.152) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Elicit views re. conventional vs. unconventional behaviour and unconventional groups (draw on Ls' experience and preconceptions). ➤ Don't let the discussion get too detailed.
<i>Omit</i>	Step 3 (pp. 152-153)
<i>Add</i>	Homework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assign roles to Ls (or pairs/groups): gutter punk, representative of the 'Organisation to Help the Homeless' (OHH), mother of a gutter punk arrested by the police, mayor of city, representative of the police department, representative of the 'Shop Owners Association' (SOA). ➤ If Ls complain that their role doesn't match with their views, tell them that they will have the opportunity to express their own views as well. ➤ Ls gather info from text (reading it from their role's perspective), as well as other sources (optional) and prepare for a TV debate to take place during the next lesson).

Next lesson

ACTION	PROCEDURE
<i>Add</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask learners to form two groups according to their 'alliance' with gutter punks (punk, mother and OHH on one hand and mayor, police and SOA on the other). ➤ Ls (in their groups) exchange ideas and co-ordinate before the TV debate. Help with vocabulary if needed.
<i>Add</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask a L to become the TV host (Ls who were absent, are not prepared or don't like the topic are good candidates). If no L volunteers, then T becomes the host (T participation should be kept to a minimum). ➤ TV debate. T takes notes re. speaking & language use (positive & negative aspects).
<i>Add</i>	➤ Feedback.
<i>Add</i>	➤ Homework: Ls are supposed to have watched the debate on TV. They write a letter to their newspaper expressing their own views on the topic.

LESSON 4

LEVEL: Advanced

AIMS

- Avoid 'heavy' Section B -type work from beginning of course.
- Provide a more interesting lead-in.
- Provide topic-based work on Reading, Speaking and Vocabulary development.

ACTION	PROCEDURE
<i>Re-order & Change</i>	(Pictures on p.6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What's common in the pictures? ➤ What do they make you think of? ➤ Direct conversation towards burgers and Ls' attitude towards them. ➤ Ask Ls re. place & time of origin of burger.
<i>Use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ls read title and form predictions - explain 'bun' if needed. ➤ Ask re. the significance of 'crisis' in title.
<i>Omit</i>	Ex.2 (p.2) Too general.
<i>Omit</i>	Ex.3 (p.3). See aims.
<i>Add</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Draw table on W/B (3 columns): Date, Social Events, Burger. ➤ Ls read to gather info and transfer it to table (in note form). ➤ Feedback on strategies and problems, as well as accuracy of info in table. ➤ Ask Ls if they see any connections between social events and burgers.
<i>Omit</i>	Ex. 4 (p.3). Not relevant to aims.
<i>Re-order & Change</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ (Pictures on p.6) Which part of the text could be a caption for picture A?