The Problematic Nature of "Global" ELT Coursebooks and the Challenge of Effective Teaching-Learning

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This paper attempts to present and summarize two related research projects together with an integrated theoretical argument, constituting the key elements of an MA TESOL dissertation submitted to the University of Birmingham April, 2011. The dissertation comprises two main topics directly related through the day-to-day experience and practice of teaching English as a foreign language: What shapes the content and design of the "global" ELT "communicative" coursebook – and why? And, how can this be assessed in terms of effective teaching-learning? "Beliefs on the nature of learning can … be inferred from an examination of teaching materials" (Nunan 1991: 210).

The first of the two research projects - the *teacher* research project took the form of a questionnaire survey and single interview conducted with the participation of native English-speaking (NS) teachers employed in the *Oral English* programme at Kinki University.

The purpose of the teacher research project was to determine how much evidence there was to support the idea that *experienced* teachers of TESOL more often than not, find using global ELT coursebooks (CBs) problematic; and to identify what the key areas of difficulty were. This perception had been informed by long experience of using commercial ELT materials, in common with fellow practitioners, who have tended to find them – with little exception – often less than satisfactory:

> Too many textbooks are often marketed with grand artificial claims by their authors and publishers yet these same books tend to contain serious theoretical problems, design flaws, and practical shortcomings. They also present disjointed material that is either too limited or too generalized in a superficial and flashy manner. (Litz 2005: 8)

The second research project was designed to investigate, as far as possible, the rationales used by the publishing industry in determining the design and content of the global ELT CB. This involved comparing pedagogical "claims" and promotional content

with the actual market determinants as revealed in questionnaire responses. The relational tension and balance of priority between market determinants and ideas of what might be effective pedagogically could then be examined.

The initial hypothesis, which led to the cited research projects, was expanded and developed into a comprehensive theoretical argument as the projects proceeded. Resulting data from each of the survey projects lent significant support to the thesis, as will be shown.

The basis of the enquiry and accompanying thesis give rise to the thematic core argument that, having superceded (what I have chosen to designate) the previous "**structural-behaviourist *paradigm***" – academically speaking (Woodward, citing Kuhn 1970 in Willis and Willis 1996: 4-9; Richards and Rodgers, 2001), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is nevertheless, still influenced by it in problematic ways, in practice; coinciding, moreover, with commercial considerations (in CB production) that appear to maintain and engender it. This poses challenges for CLT as an *evolving* "project", from which important developments like Task Based Learning (TBL) have emerged; raising questions about the practice of ELT, and the nature and use of instructional materials. Hence the CB is subject to varying, often conflicting and contradictory pressures and influencing factors. In particular, the powerful sway of "conventional practice" and the need to appeal to and supply market demands is countered by theoretical and pedagogical notions emerging from ELT, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Linguistics, and general education on the nature of teaching-learning, increasingly understood as a *developmental* process (Allwright, 1982; Edge, 1996; Holliday, 1994; Lange, in Richards and Nunan 1990). As White states, this has created a certain dilemma whereby a tension exists "between the linear, graded organization of content, which is such a strong tradition in language teaching, and the non-linear, organic growth picture of language learning ... emerging from second language acquisition (SLA) research" (1988: 36).

Implications resulting from consideration of these factors will be discussed in regard to the "usability," effectiveness, and degree of "communicativeness" of the global ELT CB as a generic entity, through a focus on one specific example taken as typologically representative, in line with Willis's observation that: "many coursebooks are rooted in a presentation methodology" (1996: 51).

The nature of the paradigmatic tension here referred to is one in which the central

notion of a **structural-behaviourist** (S-B) "approach" such as the Audiolingual Method (ALM) requires conformity to "set pattern" both in terms of pedagogical "delivery" (teaching methodology) and learning mode since it, "[makes] the over-simplified assumption that what teachers 'do' in the classroom can be conventionalized into a set of procedures that fit all contexts" (Brown 2001: 15). It therefore depends on "training" (the crux of behaviourist habit-formation), which applies both to the inducting of teachers and to classroom learning methodology.

In direct contrast, the basis of a communicative approach, as it has evolved, and if it is to avoid being over-compromised and diluted by methodological pre-determination, should be posited on a *developmental* understanding (in individual practitioners). Such a developmental awareness involves a reflexive interaction with the multiple demands of a variety of teaching contexts and teaching-learning contingencies including factors such as student profiles, learning-style variation, affect, motivation, class size, and macro and micro "cultural" (ethnic, social, institutional) concerns (Hofstede, 1986; Holliday, 1994).

Thus, CLT differs significantly from previous developments in ELT in its recognition of the importance of *variables* that affect the teaching-learning process, again, in direct contrast to S-B approaches. The two major dichotomies of *training versus development* and *standardized procedure versus contextual variables* are the reason for the paradigmatic designations here chosen (the S-B and the CLT paradigms).

With this in mind, faced with the common institutional pressure to adopt a CB for a specific teaching assignment, the fundamental question becomes: to what extent is the CB potentially *enabling* (rather than limiting) for both teachers and students?

Teacher Questionnaire Survey and Interview

The objectives and research questions for the teacher questionnaire survey and interview are reproduced below:

Objectives

The main purpose in conducting the survey was to attempt the following:

1. To ascertain how common a perceived dissatisfaction with CBs for spoken communication is among experienced teachers, and to investigate the causes

2. To ascertain what the actual limitations of such CBs are by focusing on a specific, best-selling CB, representative of the "global," "communicative" genre

3. To find evidence of the causes of such limitations in the underlying pedagogical assumptions manifested in the CB by assessing the "interpretation" of CLT they constitute, and the influence on this of commercial considerations

Research Questions

The key research questions designed to address the foregoing objectives are as follows:

1. How communicative is the CB?
   - To what extent does it embody key principles of CLT?

2. What kind of "surface" or inherent methodology does it contain?
   - How pedagogically effective is it?

3. If a satisfactory, workable methodology is only realizable through "intervention" (teacher adaptation), how valuable is presenting a design *suggesting* a set methodology rather than a more explicitly flexible, adaptive format?

4. How far does the CB design *facilitate* adaptation?

5. How much scope for student personalization is there?

6. Is a more explicit and greater degree of built-in choice and "open-endedness" in the CB desirable? (Irrespective of the presence or not of options / suggestions in the Teacher's Manual)

Regarding the question of research methods it was decided to use a qualitative approach containing salient quantitative elements. Both qualitative and quantitative methods clearly have a role to play, and their interrelation may be more fruitful than a singular focus on either. Most significantly, a merely quantitative approach can limit the

vital role of interpretative exposition which allows the researcher to "say things" where quantitative statistical data may lend itself only to cautious hedging (as the field demands) and often the need for further, more rigorous studies because of perennial contextual limitations. This mainly practical consideration can be viewed at a more theoretical level with the following position providing important support for a qualitative framework in the face of a well-established tradition prioritizing the importance of quantitative studies:

> Scientific knowledge lays claim to generalizability; in positivist versions, the aim of social science was to produce laws of human behaviour that could be generalized universally. A contrasting humanistic view implies that every situation is unique, each phenomenon has its own intrinsic structure and logic. Within psychology universal laws of behaviour have been sought by natural-science oriented schools such as behaviourism, whereas the uniqueness of the individual person has dominated in humanistic psychology. In a postmodern approach the quest for universal knowledge, as well as the cult of the individually unique, is replaced by an emphasis on the heterogeneity and contextuality of knowledge, with a shift from generalization to contextualization. (Kvale 1996: 232)

Contextual considerations are therefore of primary importance to any research project and played a major role in shaping the nature of the study. The particular context of the *Oral English* programme at Kinki University provided a number of elements that enabled a clear focus and a solid basis from which to gather response data.

As has been established, the subject of enquiry was the global, communicative ELT CB. For first year students at Kinki University there is a choice of several commercial ELT CBs from which teachers may select. Of these, one particular CB has proved to be consistently the most popular, *English Firsthand 1* (Helgesen et al. Pearson Longman Asia ELT 2010) (*EF1*). In 2009, for example, 57 teachers taught in the *Oral English* programme at Kinki University, of which, 20 opted for *EF1*. Other CB choices measured in single figures. Given that *EF1* was clearly a popular option it meant that there was a relatively large pool of teachers as potential survey respondents. Also, its "popularity" made it a challenging focus for critique, and if there were serious issues as to its effectiveness less popular CBs would likely face similar scrutiny even less favourably. *EF1* could therefore be taken to represent a commercially successful typological example of the generic designation: global, communicative.

The choice of CB focus led directly to the "convenience or opportunity sampling"

(Dornyei 2010: 61) of the participant sample. The pool from which the sample was taken was reasonably substantive given that the *Oral English* programme is the largest English language programme at Kinki University employing up to 60 native-speaking English teachers. It is also one of the largest English teaching programmes within a single institution in Japan. Kinki University is also one of the largest such institutions in Japan.

The first step of the research project was to conduct an interview with a full-time NS member of staff in order to test the research questions and survey objectives, and to allow a format in which unpredicted issues might arise and / or relevant topic features might be explored at some length. This also served the purpose of honing and refining the questionnaire survey subsequently administered to the participant sample in line with Brown's (2001: 78-79) recommendation that interviews are best used initially for "formulating research questions and specific survey questions," while "questionnaires are well suited to gathering data once the issues, research questions, and specific survey questions have been clearly delineated." The single interview, additionally – and significantly – confirmed the underlying hypothesis (the respondent had serious reservations about the effectiveness of *EF1* and about ELT CBs in general).

The main challenge in using a largely qualitative questionnaire survey is that the administrator is dependent upon the cooperation of potential respondents in taking the time required to answer open-ended questions rather than simply selecting or checking multiple-choice answers. It was therefore decided to limit the number of respondents to colleagues of personal acquaintance. 10 respondents returned the completed survey questionnaire in addition to the responses provided by the single interviewee.

The data supplied by respondents would, it was hoped, allow greater depth and breadth of analysis given a qualitative format:

> Open-format items can provide a greater 'richness' than fully quantitative data. Open responses can yield graphic examples, illustrative quotes, and can also lead us to identify issues not previously anticipated … [as Fowler states (2002)] respondents often like to have an opportunity to express their opinions more freely. (Dornyei 2010: 36-37)

The questionnaire survey (see Appendix) contained 10 questions elaborated from the nine core questions reproduced below:

The Nine Core Questions:

1. To what extent does *EF1* facilitate communicative interaction?

2. How effective and usable are the unit design and procedures?

3. How logically progressive and integrated is the unit design?

4. How well do the coursebook component features work together?

5. Are there enough opportunities for student personalization?

6. What kind of elements mostly need adapting – How? – Why?

7. What are the priorities of a coursebook for spoken communication?

8. How much of the coursebook do you find usable?

9. How satisfactory do you find it (in context of use)?

Publishing House Questionnaire Survey

The second of the two research projects was a questionnaire survey administered to three major international publishing houses specializing in ELT materials. The nature of the research was to discover what factors actually determine the content and design of ELT CBs in the face of highly organized and sophisticated public relations strategies designed to impress the market with apparent pedagogical knowhow. It was therefore necessary to be prepared for possibly ambivalent, opaque, or evasive responses to potentially sensitive, professionally confidential information. Two of the three publishers approached completed and returned the questionnaire supplying largely clear and informative data.

The publishing industry questionnaire is reproduced below:

1. What are some key reasons why *English Firsthand 1* was produced (given the range of coursebooks on the market)?

2. What are its main features, do any of them distinguish it from other coursebooks, and how do they serve to characterize it?

3. What educational principles (within ELT or beyond) form the basis for the content and design of *English Firsthand 1*, especially the organization of each unit?

4. What commercial considerations influenced the content and design?

5. Is *English Firsthand 1* designed mainly for use in private language schools or for colleges/universities?

6. What class size, and what age range is it designed for? (Please specify actual numbers/ages)

7. Are coursebooks such as this designed and/or produced mainly with the perceived needs of the student in mind, or the perceived needs of the teacher?

8. a) To what extent are non-native speaking teachers (also) a potential market for *English Firsthand 1*?

   b) Are there any aspects of *English Firsthand 1* that take NNS teachers into account?

9. Is *English Firsthand 1* intended mainly for relatively inexperienced or relatively experienced teachers?

10. Is it assumed or expected that teachers use *English Firsthand 1* according to the set organization of each unit?

11. The "usability" of a coursebook can be judged by the kind of adjustments that need to be made for the classroom, and how easily these are aided by the coursebook itself (as distinct from the Teachers' Book) – in other words how flexible and adaptable it is:

How important is this to coursebook producers, given that coursebooks are made to be systematically structured and near to or complete in particulars, therefore pre-determining possibilities for use?

12. Are there certain "requirements" a potential coursebook should satisfy in order to be commissioned?

Do they include any of the following?

- standardized organization of unit content?

- a linear sequence of unit content (even if only for the purposes of layout)?

- assumed step by step linear coverage of unit content? (as indicated by the layout)

- situational presentation settings (such as dialogues) that are culturally specific (through description/language and/or visual graphics)?

13. a) Is *English Firsthand 1* one of the top sellers in Japan? - and worldwide?

b) What percentage of sales of *English Firsthand 1* are to colleges and universities?

c) How big is the Japanese market for ELT coursebooks?

Key Themes and Response Patterns in Survey Results

(Please refer to the Appendix for the two tables showing quantitative results for the questions designed to elicit quantitative data in the teacher questionnaire survey – also in Appendix – questions 6 and 10, and the two appended, concluding, un-numbered

questions.）

The purpose of the quantitative survey questions were to assess the overall effectiveness and usability of *EF1* （discussed below）, and to help identify and confirm its typological profile in order to position it in terms of the ongoing theoretical argument. Most respondents identified it as:

（a.）*pre-determining situational/contextual, language, and procedural features within a set, repetitive unit format with all the relevant particulars supplied*

Two CB types were posited （*b* and *c*） as possible preferred options to （*a*） the main generic global model. Types （*b*） and （*c*） are not mutually exclusive but complementary, with design / content features not directly realized （it is believed） in extant CBs; a slight majority of respondents opted for the （*b*） / （*c*） alternatives.

The qualitative questions constituting the remaining, main body of the questionnaire expand on specific areas and underlying themes of the quantitative questions.

The initial hypothesis leading to the cited research was the belief that ELT CBs are inherently problematic in use in a particular context, irrespective of how popular or "well-received" they might otherwise be. Over half of the survey responses indicated that this is a shared perception among experienced teachers in a particular tertiary setting （Kinki University）.

Context is clearly understood by the respondent sample to be a key determinant of appropriate pedagogy-methodology "I adapt and adjust almost everything, depending on the class." The primary importance of the *flexibility* and *adaptability* of CB content was a central theme of the teacher survey. The aspects of the CB that require intervention and the ways in which it needs to be managed were the major index for respondents of its usability and effectiveness. Most respondents found half, or less, of each *EF1* unit usable without having to make （significant） adjustments.

Attention was drawn to the value of the Teachers' Manual （TM） as a flexible resource, but it was also pointed out that for teachers in a tertiary setting – with a corresponding assumed degree of experience and expertise it should not be necessary to employ it. According to this view the TM is intended for the relatively inexperienced. A major Hong Kong-based ELT publishing house confirmed this "［Defining］ as important … the ability of inexperienced teachers to use the materials" which the TM

plays a key role in assisting. While another major publishing house stated that:

> The non-native teacher market is the largest market – and we have always aimed to target the NNS teacher as the primary market … We include lots of support for NNS teachers in the TMs, including exact scripting of what the Teacher can say to introduce activities, provide correction, etc.

This contrasts with the needs of experienced (and qualified) teachers, with roughly half of survey respondents finding such a degree of "guidance" unnecessary and restrictive, incorporating more pre-determination than is desirable. Those qualified in the field tended to be more critical of *EF1* in this and in other respects, indicating that they use pre-existing lesson plan schemata to which the CB is adapted. Others saw the CB itself as the "guide" to lesson planning. As one teacher respondent stated:

> A repetitive format can be helpful to students because they will be gradually "trained" in classroom procedures the teacher wants to use. On the other hand for experienced teachers who have developed their own preferred ways of dealing with these things such a textbook can be obstructive to classroomgoals and confusing to students.

Such pre-determination serves not only market demand as shaped by inexperienced and NNS teachers, but also the familiar profile of the "busy teacher" requiring a ready-to-go, "finished" product with (all) content supplied, guided, and formatted in a repetitive way. This places a premium on CB designers to produce something with the appearance of "an immediate", highly usable "**surface methodology**" inherent in the unit design / layout. As one publisher stated, "all the textbooks are working within the limitations of designing a book that fits everybody." A number of respondents saw this global, "one-size-fits-all" CB model as an expedient compromise between what appears to be a communicative methodology and the above-cited market determinants.

The term *surface methodology* has been formulated in recognition of these factors, which give rise to the design and content of the ELT CB. The concept is part of the theoretical argument addressing the question of the extent to which an "embedded" pedagogy helps serve market aims and, at the same time, advances the commonplace claim of "communicativeness" (a further promotional credential designed to appeal to market expectations).

The main pedagogical issue at the centre of the theoretical argument is then, the question of the degree to which *EF1* and other such generic CBs are in fact

communicative.

Most respondents believed that a basis of controlled practice unit stages was essential for any CB and that *EF1* adequately provides this. However, more than half believed it did not provide students with adequate opportunities for meaningful *communicative* activity. As Ellis states:

> Controlled practice is designed to automatize items that are already part of the learner's interlanguage; qualitative studies suggest that it does not achieve this … the old axiom 'practice makes perfect' may not apply to language learning … practice may only facilitate acquisition directly if it is communicative, i.e. meaning-focused in nature. (1988: 20-39)

Respondents were most critical of the "freer" *productive* activities in *EF1* because of an insufficiency of appropriate language and / or procedural guidance – *scaffolding* (Thornbury 1999: 94). And because of insufficiently engaging rationales for communication, "'Communicative' activities are almost impossible without modeling or explicit guidelines"; "many of the activities (in *EF1*) are not sustained enough for students to get any benefit from them." Moreover, as Swan warns, "communicative" activities (such as the information gap) may prove not to be appropriate or motivating, "the information conveyed should ideally have some relevance and interest for the students" rather than being "imposed" on them (Swan 1985: 84). Implying a key role for personalization.

One of the main claims the writers of *English Firsthand 1* make is that it "provides a lot of personalized tasks" (2010: 4). However, this was only partially affirmed by respondents. Effective personalization requires student *investment* (Allwright, 1982: 10) that is not pre-empted by conforming to "imposed" scenarios. CBs that supply most particulars (situational examples, scenarios, and determining details) may often work against potential personalization by requiring students to adopt and conform to such content, depriving them of the valuable opportunity to formulate their own ideas in relation to their own circumstances and thereby generate a motivating curiosity and sharing vital to good classroom rapport and co-operation.

The most salient reason that a number of respondents saw the need for adaptation was to introduce more *engaging*, more *extensive*, and more *authentic* (personalized, meaning-focused) communicative activities.

Since personalization and communicative interaction are inter-dependent in

common topic domains (e.g. "experiences"), contextual considerations have a direct bearing on appropriate teaching-learning content, which may be precluded or "imposed" by a global "all-inclusive" CB approach.

Central to the issue of the degree to which *EF1* is communicative is the question of what kind of approach informs its *surface methodology*. One respondent drew direct attention to it:

> A textbook is confined in scope to the expected methodology behind it. It is quite clear that a typical unit sequence in English Firsthand follows a PPP methodology. Presentation of vocabulary and target forms via Preview, Listening and Conversation, moving into "controlled" practice of target forms in Pairwork A&B and so called "free practice" in the Interaction. The Language Check and Real Stories seem to fall into the category of optional extras. The sequencing in *EF1* suits the methodology it uses.

It has been repeatedly argued and demonstrated that Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) falls short in regard to providing productive activities that are anything more than opportunities to practice the target language, "the methodology which realizes a notional-functional syllabus may be a presentation methodology which involves virtually nothing in the way of genuine communication" (Willis 1990: 57). Lewis, in discussing the serious limitations of PPP, implies the firm influence of the S-B paradigm evident in the desire for "control" of what is being "taught":

> One of the main attractions of the PPP paradigm is that it allows teacher-training courses to introduce trainees to the idea of a neat lesson plan, with neat and distinct phases to the lesson. But language and 'the good lesson' are both organic, holistic concepts, where the success of the whole is much more than the success of the apparent component parts. Teacher training has over-valued PPP precisely because it allows teaching to focus on discrete, and apparently manageable, language items; the teacher has control over what is being 'taught'. But this control is illusory. All forms of procedural or skill-based learning are, in fact, not subject to the kind of linear sequencing intrinsic to any assertion that we know exactly what is being learned at any given moment. (Willis and Willis 1996: 13)

A key claim by the writers of *EF1* intended as a statement of its philosophy is: "We learn English by using English" (2010: 4). Which begs the question: "by using English"... *to do what?* – To "practice" (the target language), *or* to "make use" of it in realizing a communicative aim? Nine out of eleven respondents considered that, in the case of *EF1*, on the whole students are "basically 'practicing' the target language in a

pre-determined way"; "they are mainly 'learning to use English' as opposed to ['using English to learn it']" (Howatt 1984, cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 155). There is a perceived need, therefore, to *significantly* adapt the CB to facilitate more authentic communicative activities which, if they are to be effective, focus on realizing communicative aims based on tasks that involve "interpretation, expression, and negotiation [as] the essential or 'primary' abilities within any target competence" (Breen and Candlin, in Hall and Hewings 2001: 12).

The designation *communicative*, as we have seen with the example of *EF1*, is often applied to a common "weak" version of CLT still showing the influence, through PPP, of the S-B paradigm. This inhibits the proper realization of *evolving* CLT and the key principles that define it. As Scrivener states:

> It assumes that learning is 'straight-line', that following a certain routine will guarantee the required results; in this respect it is essentially *behaviourist*, and therefore largely out of step both with discoveries about second language acquisition and with a lot of current classroom practice. (italics mine) (Willis and Willis 1996: 80)

Conclusions and Implications

The S-B paradigm has been identified and so designated in the course of the foregoing research and argumentation in order to highlight its historical position in the evolution of ELT. It was an "approach" exported worldwide in the 1950s in the form of ALM at a time of burgeoning growth in the ELT market (Phillipson 1992: 137-164) and still retains an evident long-standing influence, largely because of its systematic nature; the "illusion" of "control" that it engenders, making it saleable, especially, to the novice and to NNS practitioners. The point is not to denigrate its worth wholesale in favour of CLT, it clearly still has an important role to play. However, the limits of that role need to be clearly understood as *pre-communicative* methods involving automization (the limits of which are indicated by Ellis (1988: 36-37) and specifically, phonology, where the use of drills typical of ALM, have an important function. S-B methods have shown some effectiveness with beginner or lower-level abilities where the *intensive* use of drills seemingly produced positive results. For students with developing communicative competence (Hymes, 1967, 1972; Canale and Swain, 1980) in need of productive interaction its relevance and effectiveness encounter serious failings:

> The audiolingual view creates robot-like learners who ... are expected to carry out

mechanical manipulations in order to form habits which are expected to lead them to fluency in the target language. Individuals take little responsibility ... students are spoon-fed and carefully led from one step to the next with minimal room for failure, error, or experimentation." (Dubin and Olshtain 1986: 48)

A key theme throughout the enquiry has been the primacy of context in determining appropriate pedagogy-methodology (as well as in shaping the Survey Report). As shown, it necessitates teacher intervention via the negotiation of teaching materials in enabling a more effective teaching-learning experience, especially regarding the realization of more authentically communicative interaction. As indicated, the role that context plays has been recognized implicitly by Allwright (1982), and explicitly by Holliday (1994), and Edge (1996). It entails a necessary abandonment of the constraints of the pre-determined and formulaic in favour of the *emergent*, recognizing the presence of variables influencing the teaching-learning process and, moreover, the unpredictability of language use (Widdowson, 1978; Lightbown, 1985), of language uptake, and of learning outcomes (Long 1988). Consequently, CBs for the ELT *professional* should provide:

> ... at best ... only a base or a core of materials [and be a] jumping-off point ... They should not aim to be more than that. A great deal of the most important work in a class may start with the textbook but end outside it, in improvisation and adaptation, in spontaneous interaction in the class, and development from that interaction. Textbooks ... can only provide the prop or framework within which much of this activity occurs. (O'Neill 1982: 110)

O'Neill is perhaps referring more to the way in which CBs should be "handled" rather than how they are "put together"; given the recommendations for the former, the latter also needs to reflect and facilitate them to a greater degree, in ways discussed. Dubin and Olshtain (1986: 30), in assessing ELT materials, make the following point:

> (3.) ... Ideally materials should present teachers and learners with a jumping-off place, a stimulus for the learning process at each point. Effective materials should enable *experienced* teachers and autonomous learners to develop their own alternatives according to their needs and personal preferences. (italics mine)

This necessitates intervention by the teacher irrespective of a "convenience" approach in the materials, and allows the kind of *investment* (Curran 1972 and 1976, cited in

Allwright 1982: 10) needed to engage and motivate students.

Given the foregoing theoretical discussion and the contextual evidence generated via the cited research projects it would seem advisable to approach the question of what CB (?) with a degree of caution and flexibility, particularly in regard to the idea of singular or prescriptive use, and particularly in a tertiary setting.

One possible outcome of this enquiry is the further investigation into, and development of, the brief profile contained herein for a seemingly new, alternative, CB "model". Acknowledging the growing wish for a database of modifiable materials, not yet realizable in many contexts for a range of reasons including administrative ones, it would need to allow *appropriate methodology* to emerge naturally (Edge, 1996: 11) and thus developmentally, avoiding the need for a surface methodology. At the same time providing opportunities for student investment, based on options, flexibility, and open-endedness (as profiled in the Survey Questionnaire: question 10, design 'b'). And, moreover, incorporating elements of the "ideas resource" book within a topic-based conceptual organization it would include task-based activities, a focus on meaning, and predominantly communicative activities "designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes" (Brown 2001: 43).

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APPENDIX
ELT Coursebook Questionnaire: *English Firsthand 1*

If you are able to take the time to consider and respond to the following questions I believe the answers will provide a useful perspective on the coursebook in question, and by extension, its possible commonality with other similar "global," "communicative" ELT coursebooks

The questionnaire covers 3 main areas regarding English Firsthand 1: the extent to which it is "communicative"; how "usable"/ "teachable" it is; how easy it is to adapt and how much it needs to be adapted. The aim is to discover limitations encountered relating to these areas.

Please answer as many questions as you can, however briefly. Short, succinct answers are welcome, as are longer, more detailed responses

Be assured that answers will be treated in strict confidentiality and respondents' names will not be disclosed

It is recommended that you briefly look over all the questions prior to answering them to avoid possible duplication

*[Spacing should automatically expand to accommodate answers; if possible please use a **coloured font**]*

1.) Given that spoken communication is the main emphasis of *English Firsthand 1*, does it actually contain a key unit stage where students are seriously engaged in using language to communicate for a (specified) purpose in a relatively extended and personally involving way, or are they basically "practicing" the target language in a pre-determined way?
   – Are they mainly "learning to use English" or are there opportunities for "using English to learn it"? (Howatt, 1984, cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 155)

2.) Do the unit organization, the separate unit "stages", and the built-in procedures for handling them seem to be effective for classroom use? – Have you had any difficulties with these features?

3.) Are the stages of each unit fully integrated into a ***logical continuity*** that keeps students engaged (and makes sense as a teaching-learning sequence/cycle), allowing a lesson to take shape and build progressively, or do they seem somewhat separate and inter-changeable (a series of "exercises") perhaps resulting in motivational "highs" and "lows", unless adapted/adjusted in some way?
(***logical continuity*** relies on, for example, preparatory "set up" stages and consolidatory follow-up stages, before and after a communicative/productive stage)

4.) How appropriate is the "fit" between the topic content, the target language and functions, and the unit organization, stages and procedures, considering the uniformity of unit design and the possible variety of and ways to handle different topics and functions?

5.) Does the coursebook adequately enable students to involve aspects of their own personal lives, experiences, knowledge, and creativity? (Does it allow them to apply their own frames of reference through situational/contextual features – and to generate any relevant language, or are they expected orrequired to relate to pre-determined contexts, situations, and language?)

6.) How much of each unit in *English Firsthand 1* do you find usable without making

any changes?

(a) a little   (b) less than half   (c) about half   (d) over half   (e) most

7.) What features of the coursebook have you found it necessary to adapt? What additional features have you found it necessary to introduce?
– How typical of coursebooks in general are the kinds of features that seem to need adapting or introducing?

8.) How have you adapted the features mentioned or introduced additional features – and what are the main reasons you have chosen to do so? (Do you mainly adapt the coursebook content by making **basic adjustments** to, for example, the target language, the situational setting, the type of unit stage/procedure, or do you make more ***significant changes*** such as omitting, reformulating, introducing, or replacing important stages?)

9.) How easy or difficult was it to adapt the coursebook the first time you used it?
– Did you have to discover how best to adapt it? – Did the coursebook lend itself to such adaptation or did you have to "think it through" and do some serious re-jigging?

10.) How far should coursebooks go and what should the balance be among the following:
(a.) pre-determining situational/contextual, language, and procedural features within a set, repetitive unit format with all the relevant particulars supplied;
(b.) providing a degree of option-based content, open-ended choices/jumping-off

points, and opportunities for contextual/situational and topic variation, and possible student input in generating language and content;

(c.) providing logical continuity and integration of coursebook unit sequences of a few essential, clearly designated stages, allowing more depth of engagement, with possible additional, non-essential ones specified as optional extras or supplements.

– Which of (a), (b), (c) most closely approximates *English Firsthand 1*?

How suitable do you find this coursebook for use in a Japanese university?

(a) unsuitable   (b) not very suitable   (c) somewhat suitable   (d) mostly suitable

(e) suitable

Overall how satisfactory do you find it?

(a) unsatisfactory   (b) mostly unsatisfactory   (c) partly satisfactory

(d) mostly satisfactory   (e) completely satisfactory

If you have anything further to add regarding *English Firsthand 1* or issues in common with other ELT coursebooks for spoken communication please state here:

Table 1: Showing each "closed response" for each separate respondent

<u>1</u> Numbering of respondents

<u>2</u> Question (6.) How much of each unit in **_English Firsthand 1_** do you find usable without making any changes?

(a) a little   (b) less than half   (c) about half   (d) over half   (e) most

<u>3</u> Question (10.) How far should coursebooks go and what should the balance be among the following:

(a) set format with all particulars   (b) options/ variation/ student input

(c) key integrated stages + extras

<u>4</u> Question (10.) – Which of (a), (b), (c) most closely approximates **_English Firsthand 1_**?

<u>5</u> How suitable do you find this coursebook for use in a Japanese university?

(a) unsuitable   (b) not very suitable   (c) somewhat suitable

(d) mostly suitable   (e) suitable

<u>6</u> Overall how satisfactory do you find it?

(a) unsatisfactory   (b) mostly unsatisfactory   (c) partly satisfactory

(d) mostly satisfactory   (e) completely satisfactory

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
1	(e) most	(a)	(a) [b and c]	(d) mostly suitable	(d) mostly satisfactory
2	(e) most	(b)	(a)	(d) mostly suitable	(d) mostly satisfactory
3	(e) most	(/)	(a)	(c) somewhat suitable	(d) mostly satisfactory
4	(b) less than half	(b)	(a)	(c) somewhat suitable	(c) partly satisfactory
5	(c) about half	(/)	(a)	(c) somewhat suitable	(c) partly satisfactory
6	(c) about half	(c)	(a)	c or d	between (c) and (d)
7	(c) about half	(a b c)	(a)	(b) not very suitable	(b) mostly unsatisfactory
8	(c) about half	(a)	(a)?	(e) suitable	(d) mostly satisfactory
9	(c) about half	(a)	(b?)	(b) not very suitable	(b) mostly unsatisfactory
10	(c) about half	(b)	(a)	(c) somewhat suitable	(c) partly satisfactory

Table 2: Showing comparative variation of responses

Question										
(6.) How much of each unit in *English Firsthand 1* do you find usable without making any changes? (A) a little (B) less than half (C) about half (D) over half (E) most	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	E	E	E
(10.) How far should coursebooks go and what should the balance be among the following: (A) set format with all particulars (B) options/ variation/ student input (C) key integrated stages + extras	A	A	A	B	B	B	C	A B C	/	/
Which of (A), (B), (C) most closely approximates *English Firsthand 1*?	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A (B/C)	(A)	B(?)
How suitable do you find this coursebook for use in a Japanese university? (A) unsuitable (B) not very suitable (C) somewhat suitable (D) mostly suitable (E) suitable	B	B		C	C	C	C	C~D	D	D / E
Overall how satisfactory do you find it? (A) unsatisfactory (B) mostly unsatisfactory (C) partly satisfactory (D) mostly satisfactory (E) completely satisfactory	B	B		C	C	C	C~D	D	D	D