

THE ROLE OF TEXTBOOKS IN EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF A LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA

Aliyu, Adaora E.A and Ikele, Alochukwu L.M
School of Languages, Federal College of Education
(Technical), Umunze, Anambra, State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Textbooks are no doubt a key component in any language course. Sometimes they serve as the bases for of the language input learners receive the language practice in the classroom. They may provide the content of the lessons, create a balance of the skills taught and the kinds of language and the kinds of language practice In the student participates in. textbooks play a pivotal role in language classrooms in all types of educational institution be it public schools, colleges and language schools world over. In some cases teachers are free to chose their own textbooks. however, the vast majority of the teachers use suggested or assigned textbooks. On the one hand, textbooks may serve primarily to support the teachers institution and on the other hand it may a major source of contact they have with the language aside the input provided by the teacher. This paper therefore discusses the general roles of textbooks in effective teaching and learning of a language course as it concerns its need, advantages, how they are evaluated and adapted, its readability and how to make better use of textbooks. This is both on the part of teachers and learners for in the case of inexperienced teachers textbooks serve as a form teachers training by providing ideas on how to plans and teach lessons as well as methods that can be used. Much of the language teaching that are found world over today could not take place without the extensive use of commercial textbooks. Learning how to adapt and use textbooks is hence an important part of a teachers professional knowledge

INTRODUCTION

Language is a portmanteau word englobing the entirety of a peoples way of life and encompassing dimension that are material and non-material. It concludes the way a people perceive, and organize themselves, as well as how they perceive the world around them therefore the study of any language goes along with a partial study of the way of life of the group of the language owners. The quest for a strong based language teaching and learning in our nation requires the use of every available aid including textbooks. language teaching and learning is very important in any society and the world at large. Language being the most important tool for communication in the development of a country, the need for its effective teaching and learning cannot be over emphasized.

In Nigeria today, there is a great emphasis on Nigerian languages in the school system such that scholars are encouraged to develop resources that facilitates the teaching and learning of these languages to ensure complete realization of the objectives of language instruction in the country's educational system. In Nigeria we have three major languages which includes Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba languages. These languages are studied at all levels of educational system. The pursuit for the growth and development of these languages as a means of expressing cultural practices require a sound base in language teaching and learning. Sadly though ,most of the resources provided for this purpose in schools are deficient in a number of factors. Some of these factors include the choice, evaluating, adapting and the readability of textbooks. Readability being the assessment of the difficulties that readers of a certain level of skills may have in reading a piece of connected discourse or text Abonyi and Oluikpe (2013).It is the effectiveness of communication between an author of a written text and the readers. It is the overall interaction of all those elements within printed materials that affect the success which a group of readers have with it. It is usually a function of interest, good choice, fluency and comprehensibility. There are also agreement that a number of educational resources in use in the school system do not meet up with the stipulated criteria for usage, most of the emphasis and studies have been resources for sciences in Nigerian schools. With current

emphasis on language education in the nation it has become obviously imperative that the textbooks being offered for language teaching and learning be subjected to evaluation. It is against this background therefore that this paper seeks to discuss the role of textbooks in the effective teaching and learning of language especially in Nigerian schools.

THE ROLE OF TEXTBOOKS IN TEACHING LANGUAGE

Textbooks play a very vital role in language classrooms in all types of educational institutions and level. The vast majority of teachers however, have textbooks suggested, prescribed and assigned to them Garinger, (2001). Textbooks have great impact at all levels of language course from policy makers and administrators to teachers and learners, all rely heavily on textbooks to achieve set goals and objectives.

Language textbooks determine the components and methods of learning. It controls the content, method and procedure for learning. Learners learn what is presented in the textbook, in other words textbooks present material in a way the students learn it. In fact the educational philosophy of textbooks influences the class and learning process. It provides neat and clean platform for the users. Teachers get good ready made activities which provides concrete sample of classroom progress. textbooks are used for reasons as developing classroom material for teachers which can be a difficult process. Teachers having limited time to develop new materials due to the nature of their profession and also for extreme pressures fall back on textbooks and this make textbooks one of the most efficient ways of teaching.

ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF TEXTBOOKS

using commercial textbooks while teaching is not without its advantages and limited which all depends on how they are used and the contexts for their use. Among the principal advantages are:

- ✓ **Textbooks Provide Structure and A Syllabus For Language Teaching:** without textbooks, language teaching and learning may not have central core and learners may not receive a systematically planned and developed syllabus.
- ✓ **Textbooks Help Standardize Instructions:** using a textbook while teaching and learning any language ensures uniformity among learners of different classes. they receive similar content and therefore can be tested in same way.
- ✓ **Textbooks Maintain Quality:** with a well developed language textbook, learners are exposed to materials that have been tried and tested that are based on sound learning principles and are paced appropriately.
- ✓ **They Provide A Variety Of Efficient Learning Resource:** textbooks are often accompanied by workbooks, CDs and cassettes videos and CD ROMs, and comprehensive teaching guides, providing a rich, efficient and varied resource for teachers and learners. They save time enabling teachers to teach rather than materials production.
- ✓ They provide effective language models and input that provide support for teachers whose first language is not that which they teach and are not able to generate accurate language input on their own.
- ✓ Textbooks train teachers who have limited experience serving as a medium of initial teachers training.
- ✓ They are visually appealing because some of them come with high quality standard of design and production.

Textbooks also have potential negative effects which include the following;

- ❖ Textbooks may contain inauthentic language and this is because texts, dialogue and other aspects of content tend to be specially written to incorporate teaching points and are often not representative of the real language use.

- ❖ Textbooks may distort content due to the fact that they present an idealized view of the world or fail to represent real issues. In textbooks, controversial topics are avoided and an idealized white middle class view of the world is portrayed as the norm.
- ❖ They may not reflect students' needs since they are written for global markets, and as such may require adaptation.
- ❖ Textbooks can deskill teachers where it is used as a primary source of teaching leaving teachers manual to make major instructional decisions, for them the teachers' role can be reduced to that of a technician whose primary function is to present materials prepared by others.
- ❖ They are expensive: the cost of these books can be a financial burden for students considering the country's economy. Sometimes learners may require more than two or three books for language course especially in literature which have cost implications.
- ❖ The readability of some textbooks: sometimes the effectiveness in communication between the author and readers can be difficult. Some authors' style of writing can pose a source of challenge to understanding a piece of connected written discourse or text.

Putting together the advantages and limitations of the use of textbooks need to be well considered. If the textbooks that are being used in the language teaching are not found wanting in any area or found to have some negative consequences, remedial action should be taken by adapting or supplementing book or by providing appropriate guidance and support for teachers in how to use them appropriately or withdrawing the books completely.

EVALUATING TEXTBOOKS

With such an array of commercial textbooks and other kinds of instructional materials to choose from, the people responsible for choosing materials need to be able to make informed judgments about textbooks and teaching materials. Evaluation of textbooks however can only be done by considering something in relation to its purpose. A book may be ideal in one situation for matching the needs of that situation perfectly by having the right amount of material for the language course, It is teacher friendly by being easy to use with little preparation by inexperienced teachers, and the text as well has an equal coverage of programmed and the four skills. However the same book in a different situation may turn out to be quite unsuitable. It contains too little material, not sufficiently challenging for teachers and learners. Cuningsworth (1995) proposes four criteria for evaluating textbooks particularly language course books:

- ✓ They should correspond to learners' need, they should match the aims and objectives of the language learning course.
- ✓ Secondly, they should reflect the uses (present and future) which learners will make of the language. Textbooks should be chosen that will help equip students to use language effectively for their own purpose.
- ✓ They should take account of students' need as learners and should facilitate their learning processes, Without dogmatically imposing rigid "method".
- ✓ They should have a clear role as a support for learning like teachers mediating between target language and learner.

In any case, the type of evaluation a textbook receives however will also reflect the concerns of the evaluator. While one teacher may look at a book in terms of its usability, readability, whether the book works easily in her class, can be used flexibly and could easily be adapted, another teacher may look at a book more critically in terms of its theoretical orientation and approach, if it is a book that teaches conversation, skills, what theory of conversation is it based on? what kind of syllabus is it based on and what is the validity of the activities it makes use of? Two teachers evaluating a writing text may likewise look at it from different perspectives, on one hand is a process-oriented view of writing and looks for activities that practice such process as generating ideas, drafting, reviewing, revising and editing. On the other hand, another teacher maybe more concerned to see that adequate treatment is given to different conventions for expository and descriptive writing. In

any language learning course therefore, it is unlikely that a published checklist can be used without adaptation as a basis for evaluating and choosing textbooks.

On a general note, it is advised that before a textbook can be said to have been properly evaluated it must have been considered firstly in terms of , if its role in the language teaching covers a well developed curriculum that describes the objectives, syllabus and content of the language course program or if it will be determined by the textbooks. Again, will the textbook be used with small or large classes and will the learners be expected to buy a workbook as well or should the textbook provide all the practice students need? Secondly it should consider the teachers teaching which includes covering how experienced the teachers are. Are the native teachers of the language? if not, how fluently do they speak the language? should teachers follow the textbooks closely or do they use it as a resource,? do teachers play a part in selecting the books, above all are the teachers free to adapt and supplement the textbook. Thirdly and finally, is the consideration for learners which considers if each student requires to buy the books, how readable is the textbook, what do learners typically expect in the textbook? will they use it in the classroom and at home? how will it be used in the class? is the primary source of classroom activities? above all what is the financial implication of the textbook or books as the case maybe.

Worthy of note is the fact that no one textbook covers or is perfect for any language teaching and learning. While one may cover the grammatical, and phonological areas of the language, another may cover the cultural, literature and other areas. That is why there is always a textbook to cover an aspect of the language.

ADAPTING TEXTBOOKS

Commercial textbooks can seldom be used without some form of adaptation to make them more suitable for the particular context in which they will be used.

Adapting textbooks may take the following forms:

- ✓ **Modification of Contents:** this is a form which takes care of changing contents that need to be changed for reasons of factors relating to the learners age, gender, social class, occupation, religion or cultural background.
- ✓ **Adding or Deleting Content:** there may be need to add or delete some parts of text when it contains too little or too much for the educational level it prescribed for. Sometime a whole unit have to be dropped or sections and units throughout the books be omitted. For instance a course that focuses primarily on listening and speaking skills will have writing activities in the book omitted
- ✓ **Reorganizing Content:** a teacher may decide to reorganize the syllabus and units of the book in a more suitable order.
- ✓ **Addressing Omissions:** where a text omits items that the teacher finds vital the teacher adds it. the teacher may add vocabulary or grammar activities to a unit.

Other forms of adapting textbooks may come in form of modifying and extending tasks where exercises and activities may need to be changed to give them additional focus and additional practice tasks maybe added.

The ability to be able to adapt a commercial textbooks in these ways is an essential skills of teachers to develop. The process of adaptation avails the teacher the opportunity to personalize the text making it a better teaching resources as well as individualize it for a particular group of learners. Normally the process is gradual as the teachers become more familiar with the book since the dimensions of the text for adaptation may not be apparent until the book is tried out in the classroom. when a number of teachers are teaching from the same textbook it is useful to build in opportunities' for teachers to share information about the forms of adaptation they are making.

MONITORING

No matter the form of materials used by teachers whether they teach from textbooks, instructional aids or teacher prepared materials. They represent plans to teach effectively. As these materials are

used, teachers adapt and transform them to suit the needs of particular groups of learners and their own methodology. It is therefore useful to gather information on how teachers use textbooks and other teaching materials in their teaching for the under listed purposes:

- ❖ Documenting effective ways of using materials
 - ❖ Providing feedback on how materials work
 - ❖ To keep a record of additions, deletions and supplementary materials teachers may have used with the materials.
- Assisting other teachers in using the material monitoring textbooks may take the following forms.
- ❖ Observing by visiting classrooms to see how teachers use textbooks and find out how much it influences the quality of teaching and interaction that occurs in a lesson.
 - ❖ Feedback sessions of group meetings where teachers discuss their experiences with textbooks.
 - ❖ Writing reports on reflection sheets or other forms of written feedback in which teachers make brief notes about what worked well and what did not work well, or give suggestion on which best way to use the material
 - ❖ Reviewing written reviews by a teacher or group of teachers on their experiences with a set of materials and they liked or disliked about them.
 - ❖ Students review: finally, comments from students on their experience with the materials

CONCLUSION

The impact of new technology notwithstanding, textbooks will doubtlessly continue to play an all vital role in language teaching and learning effectiveness as well as provide a useful resource for both teachers and learners. Good textbooks serve to turn the official syllabus guidelines of the government into a rich source of content, texts and activities that would have been beyond the capabilities of most teachers to develop on their own. The use of textbooks should not be seen as reflective of a deficiency on the part of the teachers any more than the computer based materials would be so regarded. Textbooks should be rather regarded as one of the many resources teachers can draw upon in creating effective lessons however, Teachers need training experience to adapt and modify textbooks as well as in using authentic materials to create their teaching materials.

RECOMMENDATION

Given the above premise of this paper, it is recommended firstly, that proper interpretation of the official government syllabus should be made after which the due process of evaluating, modifying and adapting of the appropriate textbooks should be followed as to prescribe suitable textbooks for different levels of learners. Secondly, considerations should be made seriously towards making sure that the adapted textbooks are quite affordable as to avoid being a financial burden to both teachers and learners considering the fact that sometimes the need for more than two textbooks may arise especially in literature areas of the language teaching and learning. Thirdly, the readability of any chosen textbook should be guaranteed so that both teachers and learners will use it easily and effectively. Fourthly and finally is the need for adequate monitoring of adapted textbooks to know and confirm if it is meeting the expected target as to make changes and encourage the continued usage as the case may be.

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