

Rathert, Stefan; Cabaroglu, Nese

Theorising textbook adaptation in English language teaching

CEPS Journal 12 (2022) 2, S. 169-188



Quellenangabe/ Reference:

Rathert, Stefan; Cabaroglu, Nese: Theorising textbook adaptation in English language teaching - In: CEPS Journal 12 (2022) 2, S. 169-188 - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-252277 - DOI: 10.25656/01:25227

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-252277>

<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:25227>

in Kooperation mit / in cooperation with:



University of Ljubljana
Faculty of Education

<http://www.pef.uni-lj.si>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Die Nutzung stellt keine Übertragung des Eigentumsrechts an diesem Dokument dar und gilt vorbehaltlich der folgenden Einschränkungen: Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use

We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to use this document.

This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. Use of this document does not include any transfer of property rights and it is conditional to the following limitations: All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Kontakt / Contact:

peDOCS

DIPF | Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsforschung und Bildungsinformation

Informationszentrum (IZ) Bildung

E-Mail: pedocs@dipf.de

Internet: www.pedocs.de

Mitglied der


Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

Theorising Textbook Adaptation in English Language Teaching

STEFAN RATHERT*¹ AND NEŞE CABAROĞLU²

Even though textbooks are a central component of the daily instructional practice of English language teachers, relatively little research has been conducted on how teachers actually use (i.e., adapt) textbooks in the classroom. This gap is aggravated by the fact that the terminology proposed in the literature to analyse teachers' textbook use is characterised by inconsistencies because different terms denote the same adaptation techniques, identical terms refer to different techniques and suggested frameworks differ in the fact that comparable techniques are allocated to different categories. This inconsistency mirrors the difficulty of operationally defining adaptation techniques, as the terms used may be unambiguous but vague and therefore of reduced explanatory power or more specific but potentially unreliable because an adaptation may be matched to different terms given the complexity of a particular textbook adaptation. Discussing these aspects, this paper proposes a research-informed framework to contribute to a systematic description of textbook adaptation in foreign and second language teaching. Examining adaptation as a process, it is argued that teachers, driven by an identified or felt mismatch between the textbook and other factors (e.g., school facilities, the learners, teacher cognition, course requirements, or outdatedness of the materials), engage in adaptation based on principles (i.e., ideas about best practices, by making changes to the content, the language and/or the sequence of activities offered by the textbook authors). Even though related to English language teaching, this paper does not exclusively inform this context as it offers implications for research on textbook use in other disciplines.

Keywords: adaptation, adaptation techniques, coursebook, foreign language teaching, textbook

1 *Corresponding Author. Faculty of Education, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, Turkey; strathert@gmail.com.

2 Faculty of Education, Çukurova University, Adana, Turkey.

Razmislek o prilagoditvi učbenika pri poučevanje angleščine

STEFAN RATHERT IN NEŠE CABAROĞLU

Čeprav so učbeniki osnovna sestavina vsakodnevne učne prakse učiteljev angleškega jezika, je bilo opravljeno zelo malo raziskav glede tega, kako učitelji dejansko uporabljajo (tj. prilagodijo) učbenike v učilnici. Ta vrzel je še poslabšana z vidika predlagane terminologije, ki se nanaša na učiteljevo uporabo učbenika, saj je ta prepletena z nedoslednostmi, pri katerih se na primer različni izrazi sklicujejo na isto prilagoditev tehnik, identične oznake označujejo različne tehnike in predlagana ogrodja se razlikujejo v tem, da primerljive tehnike dodeljujejo različnim kategorijam. Ta nedoslednost zrcali težavnost operativnega poimenovanja prilagoditvenih tehnik, saj so nekateri izrazi sicer rabljeni nedvoumno, a vseeno nedoločno, kar posledično niža razlagalno moč, pri čemer pa tudi bolj specifični izrazi nazadnje postanejo potencialno nezanesljivi, saj je prilagoditev lahko vezana na številne termine glede na težavnost posamezne adaptacije učbenika. Pri razpravi o teh vidikih prispevek predlaga raziskovalno-informirano ogrodje kot prispevek k sistematičnemu opisu prilagoditev učbenikov pri poučevanju tujega oz. drugega jezika. Pri analizi adaptacij kot procesa argumentiramo, da se učitelji, gnani s strani zaznanega ali občutenega neujemanja med učbenikom in drugimi faktorji (npr. šolske infrastrukture, učečih se, učiteljevega vedenja, zahtev predmeta, zastaranosti gradiva), lotijo prilagoditev na osnovi načel (tj. zamisli o najboljši praksi, prek sprememb vsebine, jezika in/ali sosledja aktivnosti, ki jih ponujajo avtorji učbenika). Čeprav je povezano s poučevanjem angleščine, članek ne zadeva ekskluzivno le tega konteksta, ampak ponuja raziskovalne možnosti glede rabe učbenikov tudi znotraj drugih področij.

Ključne besede: prilagoditev, prilagoditvene tehnike, poučevanje tujega jezika, učbenik

Textbooks in language teaching: the need for adaptation

The significance of textbooks as the main medium in English language teaching (ELT) (Mishan, 2021; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018) as well as in other subject areas (Smart et al., 2020) has been widely recognised. As a convenient tool, textbooks allow teachers to plan and administer their lessons by using them as a guideline and resource; they expose learners to samples of the target language and help them preview and review lesson content that is presented in a visually appealing way; moreover, they encourage administrators to base courses on the sequence given in textbooks so that they function as course-books (Gray, 2016; McGrath, 2013). Based on these advantages, textbooks appear to be an indispensable (and for publishers highly lucrative) component of institutional language teaching as their utilisation fulfils learners' and teachers' expectations, thus they provide courses with 'face validity' (Mishan, 2021, p. 2; Vitta, 2021), and serve as the actual curriculum in numerous contexts (Garton & Graves, 2014): without a coursebook, 'a program may have no central core and learners may not receive a syllabus that has been systematically planned and developed' (Richards, 2001, p. 1).

For language teaching, an important distinction is made between global, localised, and local textbooks (López-Barrios & Villanueva de Debat, 2014). Global textbooks are produced for learners worldwide by publishers usually located in countries where the target language is spoken, while localised (i.e., modified global textbooks) and local textbooks are designed for learners situated in a specific location where the target language is learned but not the environmental language. They include materials that engage learners in the comparison of the target language and culture with their own language and culture and may address specific incentives to learn the target language. Local textbooks are usually issued by publishers located in the countries where the language is learned. They comply with curricular regulations enacted by state authorities to receive permission to be used in state schools and are comparatively inexpensive for parents and state schools; due to these production conditions, locally produced textbooks usually do not produce innovative methodological approaches or startling content (Kovač & Šebart, 2019). Especially (but not exclusively) global textbooks are likely to cause the need for adaptation, (i.e., modifications applied to the textbook materials) because of the distance between textbook authors and users (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018) and the fact that they 'are written for everyone and therefore for no one' (McGrath, 2013, p. 59). Because textbook authors and publishers cannot consider the numerous specific conditions of varying local contexts where the textbooks are

used, the textbook materials are potentially incongruent with the teaching and learning environment (Madsen & Bowen, 1978). Mismatches between what the material offers and the conditions of the learning context (e.g., learner expectations or proficiency levels, teacher beliefs about best teaching practices, school culture and infrastructure, institutional regulations as evidenced in curricula, examinations, or expected methods) force teachers to adapt textbooks (Ariyan & Pavlova, 2019; Macalister, 2016a; McDonough et al., 2013). Furthermore, adaptation is considered a sign of professionalism because it lessens the danger that teachers are patronised by textbooks given their potential ‘to exercise a tyrannical function as the arbiter of course content and teaching methods’ (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 7), to deskill teachers (Akbari, 2008; Littlejohn, 2012; Pouromid & Amerian, 2018; Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2021) and to reinforce transmission-based teaching (Smart et al., 2020).

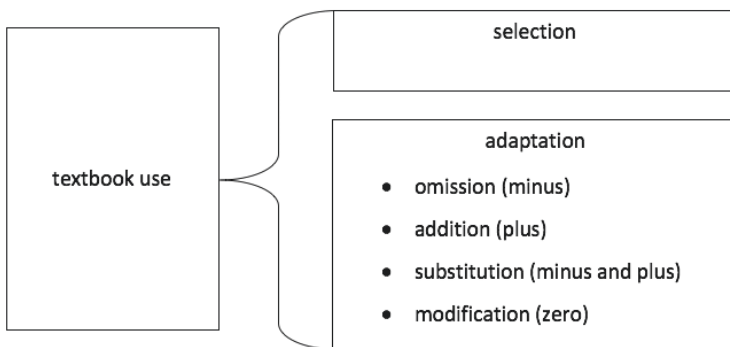
Research has recently started to pay increasing attention to the use and adaptation of textbooks and other learning materials in language teaching. In relation to this, materials as a field of inquiry currently appear under-theorised both in terms of what learning materials actually are and how materials function as both objects used by teachers and learners and subjects shaping classroom interaction (Guerrettaz et al., 2021; Harwood, 2021). Specifically related to textbook use, there is inconsistency in operationalised terms to analyse and describe why and how teachers and learners engage in adaptation (McGrath, 2013, p. 63; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018, p. 105). Recognising the wide spectrum of learning materials and the role of teachers, learners and administrators as users and adapters of materials (Guerrettaz et al., 2021; Harwood, 2021), this paper focuses on textbook adaptation carried out by teachers and identifies techniques employed, principles, reasons and purposes driving teachers to engage in textbook adaptation. Additionally, procedures are reported that teachers can follow to arrive at reflective adaptation approaches. In other words, this contribution aims to theorise textbook adaptation by defining key issues surrounding textbook adaptation. Explicating this issue, our contribution aims at encouraging researchers who are interested in examining this field of study and practitioners to raise their awareness of the complexity of adaptation and to help them reflect on the utilisation of this central medium in instructional practice. Based on scholarly monographs and research conducted in ELT, we hope that the considerations and suggestions are informative for other educational domains.

Techniques in textbook adaptation

Teachers can select textbook materials as they are or adapt them to varying extents ranging from slight modifications without deviating from the guidance offered to use the textbook as a resource book when developing procedures not foreseen by textbook authors (Ur, 2015). The potential utilisations of textbooks by teachers are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Components of textbook use



For adaptation purposes, teachers can benefit from the techniques of omission, addition, substitution, and modification to engage in adaptation. These adaptations may be directed toward the language of texts, the content that is conveyed through the language, or the activities and procedures in which the textbook aims to engage learners. Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004) reasonably point to the reduction or increase of textbook materials, and replacement or modification without change of material amount (indicated through *plus*, *minus*, and *zero*) as criteria to classify adaptation techniques. Table 1, extending an overview by McGrath (2013, p. 64), allocates the terminology used by different authors in relation to the four basic adaptation techniques.

Table 1*Adaptation techniques suggested in the literature*

	Omission	Addition	Substitution	Modification
Cunningsworth (1995, p. 136)	leaving out some parts of the material	adding material	replacing material with something more suitable	changing the published material
Harmer (2007, pp. 182–183)	omit		replace (the book completely)	add, rewrite, replace activities, reorder, reduce
Islam and Mares (2003)	deleting; subtracting and abridging	adding including extending and expanding	replacing materials	simplifying, reordering
Maley (2011)	omission	addition	replacement	rewriting, modification, reduction, extension, reordering, branching
McDonough et al. (2013, pp. 69–78)	deleting or omitting including subtracting and abridging	adding including expanding and extending		modifying including rewriting and restructuring, simplifying, reordering
McGrath (2013, pp. 139–147; 2016)	omission	addition including extemporisation, extension, exploitation	change including reordering, replacement, simplification, localisation, complexification, conversion (converting a text into a play)	
Richards (2017, p. 251)	deleting content	adding content addressing omissions extending tasks		modifying or reorganising content, modifying tasks
Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004, as cited in McGrath 2013, p. 64)	minus: delete, subtract, reduce	plus: add expand	zero: modify, replace, reorganise, resequence, convert	

The overview in Table 1 indicates a lack of standardised terms and inconsistencies. Some of the terms are apparently synonymous (e.g., *leaving out*, *omit*, *deleting*), but other terms and classifications appear to be problematic. For example, McGrath (2016) defines *exploitation* as ‘creative use of what is already there (e.g., text, visual, activity) to serve a purpose which is *additional* to that foreseen by the textbook writer’ (p. 71; emphasis in the original); this corresponds to *branching* denoting a technique ‘to add options to the existing activity or to suggest alternative pathways through the activities’ proposed by

Maley as a form of modification (2011, p. 382). According to Harmer (2007), *reducing* is a kind of modification, which is reasonable because the appearance of the material is changed, while McDonough et al. (2013), equally plausibly, subsume the corresponding techniques of *subtracting* and *abridging* under *omission* emphasising the reduction in the amount of material. Another example of inconsistent and confusing terminology, given by McDonough et al. (2013), is the definition of *rewriting* as an attempt to make materials more communicative and learner-centred, which they exemplify with the instance of a teacher who rewrites a reading text and delivers it orally to generate an extra listening practice for the learners. However, there is some overlap to *restructuring* referring ‘essentially to a “modality change”’ (p. 74), and it is not completely convincing to introduce *simplifying* as another subcategory denoting language modification: Simplification may be more appropriately comprehended as a principle guiding adaptation (McGrath, 2013; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018). To execute a fair evaluation, it should be noted that the scholarly publications considered in the survey in Table 1 differ in that some of them are specifically related to textbook research (e.g., McDonough et al., 2013; McGrath, 2013, 2016; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004), while other books allude to the topic as they are introductions to ELT (Harmer, 2007) or deal with curriculum development in language teaching (Richards, 2017).

The fact that two core contributions to the field (Mishan & Timmis, 2015; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018) abstain from presenting their own frameworks may be indicative of the difficulty of systematising adaptation techniques. To address the unsatisfactory inconsistency in terminology, we propose a research-informed framework that was developed and tested in a study examining the textbook utilisations of two English language teachers (Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2021). The framework is shown in Table 2.

Table 2*Research-informed framework of adaptation techniques*

Main techniques	Sub-techniques	Descriptions and examples
omission (reduction in material amount)	subtracting	quantitative reduction without changing procedures (e.g., number of gap-fill sentences in exercise is reduced)
	abridging	qualitative reduction with change of procedures (e.g., prereading questions are skipped)
addition (increase in material amount or enhanced function)	extemporisation	(often ad hoc) explanation to address perceived or anticipated challenges (paraphrasing of instruction)
	exploiting	adding a new purpose to materials in the textbook (e.g., learners use reading comprehension questions to generate a text before reading the text in the textbook)
	extending	addition of materials without changing procedures (e.g., number of gap-fill sentences in exercise is increased)
	expanding	addition of activity or material leading to procedural change (e.g., after answering comprehension questions, the learners create their own questions)
	supplementing	adding a component that leads into the textbook material without changing it (e.g., playing hangman to preview vocabulary in the textbook unit)
substituting		replacing material in the textbook with other material for the same or a similar purpose
modification (change of language, procedures, or content)	restructuring	changing the task procedures or modality (e.g., a listening text is delivered as a reading text due to the lack of technical equipment or pair work changed into group work)
	rewriting	changing the vocabulary, grammar or content in texts or rubrics (e.g., reference to alcoholic drinks is removed from a text because drinking alcohol is not considered acceptable in the cultural context of the teaching/learning environment)
	reordering	textbook or text components are presented in a different order (e.g., order of exercises on a textbook page)

Remaining with the four main adaptation techniques, the framework attempts not only to consider forms of minor and major adaptation but also to find a balance between establishing unambiguous but potentially vague categories and more specific categories that may be reduced in their validity because adaptations may fall into more than category given ‘all the combinations and permutations’ (McDonough et al., 2013, p. 76) in textbook adaptation. The following remarks will clarify and highlight some aspects of the framework.

The main technique *omission* with its sub-techniques is primarily based on McDonough et al.’s (2013) classification. The category *addition* combines

the systematic accounts presented by McGrath (2013, 2016) and McDonough et al. (2013). The sub-techniques *extemporisation*, *extending*, *expanding*, and *exploiting* may be best distinguished by observing that *extending* and *expanding* change the ‘appearance’ of the material in terms of length while *extemporising* and *exploiting* add clarification and a new purpose to the material. Differently from *expanding*, *supplementation* has no direct impact on the textbook material. McGrath (2013) argues that supplementation does not count as adaptation, claiming that ‘supplementation involves introducing something new’ (p. 72). His own example of supplementation, a ‘*presentation* activity (based on a new topic – preparatory; books closed)’ (p. 145, emphasis in the original), however, suggests that supplementation counts as adaptation because the supplementary material is connected to a component in the textbook as it prepares learners for the textbook component. To give another example, supplementing an image to pre-teach vocabulary in a reading text in the textbook, does count as adaptation because the learners’ cognitive load while doing the reading tasks is lowered so that they face fewer difficulties in comprehending the text or engaging in follow-up tasks based on the reading text. Supplementation can also address the content of a textbook component that has already been dealt with in a lesson. A teacher may supplement, for instance, a text that is thematically unrelated to the content of a unit in the textbook but contains examples of a grammar point introduced in the unit to give the learners extra practice.

A significant criterion to identify a realised adaptation as *substitution* is that the replaced and replacing components serve approximately the same purpose. *Modification* draws on the terminology employed by McDonough et al. (2013), but the term is differently defined in our framework, and the corresponding sub-techniques are related differently to each other. We do not follow McDonough et al.’s (2013) definition of *rewriting* based on the more common understanding of the term according to which this technique aims at the change of the language or content of a material, possibly in combination. *Restructuring* addresses a change in modality (i.e., a text is used to practice a different language skill than in the textbook material), or in classroom management. In particular, we consider *simplification* as a principle in line with McGrath (2013; see the next section).

Principles

From a pedagogical standpoint, textbook adaptation should be informed by overarching considerations and guidelines that are beyond immediate purposes arising from specific reasons (McGrath, 2013, p. 66). To label such

considerations and guidelines, the term *principles* (used by McDonough et al., 2013, p. 69; McGrath, 2013, p. 66; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018, p. 108) referring to ‘research and theory about best practices in language teaching and learning’ (Macalister, 2016b, p. 44) has been suggested.

The most original contributions to delineate such principles were given by Islam and Mares (2003), McGrath (2013) and Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018). Table 3 summarises their accounts.

Table 3
Principles guiding adaptation offered in the literature

Islam & Mares (2003, pp. 89–90)	McGrath (2013, pp. 66–70)	Tomlinson & Masuhara (2018, p. 108)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- personalise- individualise- localise- modernise- add a real choice- cater for all sensory learner styles- provide for more learner autonomy- encourage higher-level cognitive skills- make the language input more accessible*- make the language input more engaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- localisation- modernisation- personalisation- individualisation- humanising- simplification/complexification/differentiation- variety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- match the needs of target learners- match the wants of target learners- make relevant connections with learners’ lives- stimulate affective engagement- stimulate cognitive engagement- provide achievable challenges- provide exposure to language in use- provide opportunities to communicate in L2- provide opportunities for learners to notice and make discoveries about language use- provide enough varied recycling

Note. *Listed by the authors, but not explicated in the text.

While each of the three sources has things in common (e.g., *personalise/personalisation/make relevant connections with learners’ lives*), Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018) more strongly emphasise the need to integrate validated insights gained in second language acquisition (SLA) research into textbook production (cf. Macalister, 2016b). McGrath’s notion of *humanising* is a very broad term entailing connecting materials to learners’ lives and serving their intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional needs (McGrath, 2013, p. 69). The need to humanise textbooks is grounded in the presupposition that textbooks with their texts, tasks, and activities suit learner needs and will lead to intended outcomes irrespective of the context they are used in. However, local or individual

differences such as learner needs and interests, their previous knowledge, gained abilities or learning styles may guide teachers to engage in some kind of adaptation to enhance the relevance, attractiveness or complexity of textbook material (Maley, 2018). Tomlinson (2015, 2018) developed and collected a variety of adaptation ideas to make materials a better match for the learners. Some examples are presented here:

- closed questions (requiring one correct answer) are turned into open questions by, for instance, asking learners to justify their answer (*Explain your answer.*) or to evaluate the content (*Do you think it is a good idea...?*);
- learners invent interviews with characters from a textbook reading or listening text;
- before reading a textbook text, learners write a text based on the comprehension questions in the textbook and then compare their text with the text in the textbook;
- the teacher reads a text in the textbook aloud in a dramatic manner and the learners act it out;
- learners chant out a drill in different voices, imitating, for instance, a young child, an old man, or an angry person.

Such activities along with the integration of music, dance, art, or drama provide learners with sensory experiences and address their kinaesthetic or aesthetic preferences, intensify engagement and lead to deeper cognitive processing (Tomlinson, 2018; cf. Maley, 2018).

An obvious example of an activity that engages learners neither affectively nor cognitively is in the language textbooks' frequently employed *textually explicit comprehension question* activity (Freeman, 2014). For example, a question may read 'What do they have for breakfast?' and the text 'They have eggs and coffee for breakfast'. Because the wording in the question matches the wording in the text, this activity 'simply involves surface recognition' (Tomlinson, 2018, p. 24) and is, therefore, unlikely to facilitate language learning. In the example given, learners do not even have to understand the meaning of the words 'breakfast', 'eggs', or 'coffee' to answer the question correctly. An adaptation to make the question cognitively more activating would be a change of the wording, for example, 'What do they eat in the morning?' Asking the learners to compare the breakfast habits described in the text with their own habits would enhance the relevance of the reading activity for the learners.

In order to compare and synthesise the principles listed in Table 3, we suggest an identification of the main foci addressed. Our reorganisation distinguishes between principles mainly associated with the learners and their

personal dispositions, the learning process as contributing to SLA, and the textbook itself.

Following our categorisation, adaptation is associated with the learners specifically addressing:

- their personal needs and interests by selecting relevant content (personalising);
- their individual learning styles, strengths and weaknesses by integrating activities that suit, for example, kinaesthetic or aesthetic preferences or aim at differentiation through simplification or complexification (individualisation);
- their geographic location/cultural background or experienced (thus expected) forms of instruction (localisation).

Adaptation may consider SLA research by employing texts and activities that

- are cognitively challenging and compelling;
- are affectively engaging;
- increase learner self-efficacy;
- expose learners to authentic language and tasks (i.e., language examples and activities referring to language use outside the classroom);
- build communicative competence;
- are informed by the principles of discovery learning.

Adaptation may be a response to the quality of the textbook when

- its content, language, or methodological approach is outdated (modernisation);
- it is characterised by repetitiveness or a lack of variety in activities or linguistic input.

Admittedly, the principles are overlapping. For instance, the provision of cognitively challenging and compelling materials can be potentially realised via personalisation and individualisation. It should also be noted that a specific instance of an adaptation is likely to be driven by one or two principles but not by all principles shown. Putting it differently, teachers are likely to be informed by some of the principles when they engage in an adaptation that is caused by the perceived incongruence of the textbook material with the learning context. In line with this, Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018, p. 108) remark that a principled approach to adaptation is based on the identification of deficiencies in the textbook. For instance, if content in the textbook is outdated (e.g., a reading

text dealing with a technological novelty at the time of textbook production that is no longer a novelty when it is used in class), the teacher may decide to substitute the text based on the principle of modernisation.

Reasons and Purposes

The example given at the end of the previous section shows that principles, by nature, point to specific reasons and purposes to adapt textbook materials. Reasons and purposes are intertwined as they are ‘like a flip of a coin. The former focuses on what needs improving, the latter targets improving’ (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018, p. 102). In the example of the outdated textbook content (the reason), a teacher may substitute the text in the textbook with another text in order to avoid material that is likely to have a demotivating effect on learners because they perceive it as irrelevant (the purpose). Menkabu and Harwood (2014) report on an English teacher who delivers instruction in medical English: The teacher omits textbook components because her content knowledge is insufficient (the reason). One may assume that the teacher does not want to expose their learners to erroneous information or embarrass herself in the class by revealing her limited content knowledge (the purpose), but this conclusion entails some speculation.

To lift these and other examples reported in the literature to a more explanatory level, the distinction between external forces including curriculum, assessment and methodology regulations set by authorities (e.g., ministries, school districts), internal forces such as teacher beliefs about teaching and learning or received teacher education and situated forces encompassing expectations of school authorities, parents, colleagues, and learners is a useful starting point to account for teacher decisions on instructional practices including textbook use (Zheng & Davison, 2008, p. 172). More specifically related to how language teachers adapt textbooks, Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018, pp. 102–104), based on a concise review of case studies on textbook use, identified five factors that impact teachers when they utilise textbooks in their instructional practices:

- the national, regional, institutional and cultural teaching environment (e.g., curricula, examinations, school culture, views about appropriate content);
- the learners (e.g., age, learner biographies, learning styles, interests, incentives for learning);
- the teachers (e.g., personalities, belief systems, teaching styles, levels of teacher autonomy, educational background and professional experience);

- the immediate course and lesson context (e.g., objectives, syllabi, the time/day of a lesson);
- the textbook (e.g., outdatedness or modernity, methodological approach favouring a deductive or inductive approach to language learning, presentation/explanation of language features).

Zheng and Davison (2008) and Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018) emphasise that these factors do not exert an effect in isolation. Indeed, textbook adaptation is realised in a complex interplay of factors, may be realised intuitively or unconsciously (Islam & Mares, 2003), or even in ‘a haphazard way’ (Loh & Renandya, 2016, p. 107). Studies documenting that textbook adaptation by teachers may undermine validated principles of language teaching (Abdel Latif, 2017; Seferaj, 2014) or may be an outcome of routinised behaviour (Menkabu & Harwood, 2014; Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2021) underline the need to inform teachers and teacher educators about procedures to identify needs for adaptation and steps to implement adaptation in a more systematic way.

Procedures

We have seen that textbook adaptation aims at removing mismatches between the textbook material and other factors. It is a process in which teachers employ (or at least should employ) specific techniques based on principles as a response to an identified problem. However, textbook adaptation is not necessarily an outcome of a reflective process: teachers may not be aware of their own adaptations (Menkabu & Harwood, 2014) and beliefs about one’s own textbook adaptation may not reflect actual adaptation (Tasseron, 2017). Teachers may engage in adaptations that are not based on pedagogic concerns but serve pragmatic purposes: Rathert and Cabaroğlu (2021), for example, show that teachers may simplify cognitively engaging textbook activities in order not to fall behind the institutional schedule. They also provide evidence that a strictly structured sequence of textbook tasks encourages teachers to follow the procedures prescribed and prevents them from reflecting on how to enhance the potential of textbooks as a means to facilitate learning through adaptation. It has been argued that particularly global ELT textbooks with their ‘recurring structure, ensuring predictability across the materials as a whole’ (Littlejohn, 2012, p. 291) contribute to the standardisation of teaching and the deskilling of teachers. These effects are likely to materialise in overreliance on textbooks along with the avoidance of principled adaptations that reflect the learning context.

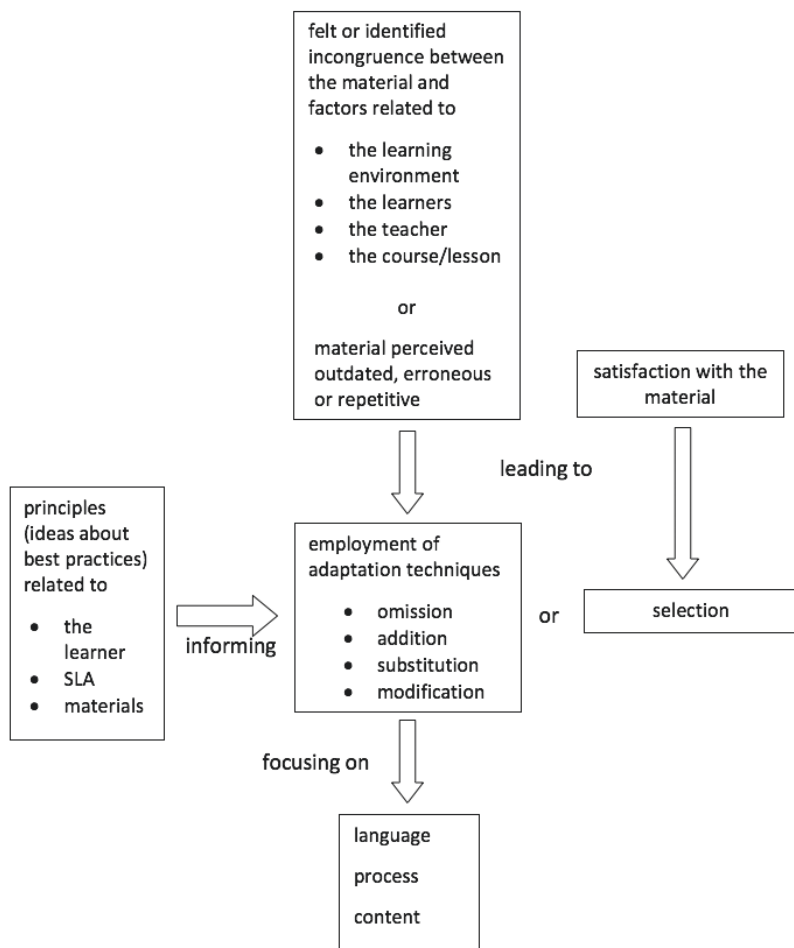
To arrive at informed and target-oriented adaptations, Cunningsworth (1995, p. 137) calls for an examination of contents, topics, methods, and unit objectives to evaluate whether they are congruent with the teaching context. A more detailed seven-step procedure was proposed by Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004, as cited in Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018, p. 104). Starting from the development of the teaching context by evaluating, for instance, learner needs, course objectives or school equipment in order to base adaptations on accurate assumptions, reasons to engage in adaptation are identified and objectives informed by the principles explained above are formulated. The adaptation of the textbook material is then realised, and adaptations may be revised in the light of classroom experiences, for example, when the same content is taught in a parallel class the following day. This cyclical procedure is idealised, and teachers will not have to follow the steps to the letter. Indeed, Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018) find it noteworthy that textbook adaptation is

an intuitive, organic, dynamic but principled creative process that is stimulated by the teachers' motivation to provide the best teaching input and approaches for specific learners in a specific context with specific learning objectives. We would discourage the prescribed use of techniques or advice as this could be counteractive or even damaging to teachers' creativity. (p. 105)

To summarise, adaptation can be a proactive decision as a part of lesson planning as a response to an anticipated challenge, a reactive, ad hoc intervention based on a perceived difficulty while teaching (Islam & Mares, 2003; Li & Harfitt, 2017; McGrath, 2013) or an outcome of experiences of using the material (Amrani, 2011). Even if an unprincipled attempt to adapt material may – by chance – generate learning, the need to tailor adaptation to the learner context in order to generate learning opportunities appears to be crucial irrespective of the procedure followed.

Conclusion

To research textbook adaptation and to inform practitioners (teachers, teacher educators and teacher trainers) about what it means to adapt textbook materials, it is important to possess an array of terminology to describe techniques, underlying principles as well as specific reasons and purposes that contribute to the act of adapting textbook materials. Figure 2 displays a visual summary of the steps and factors involved in textbook adaptation discussed in this paper.

Figure 2*Textbook adaptation: factors and steps in textbook adaptation*

Appreciating the need to allow teachers to shape instructional practice creatively, we have focused on principles in textbook adaptation that are calibrated to generate learning opportunities. These principles do not exclusively aim at a textbook utilisation conducive to achieving expected learning outcomes measured in exam scores or desired learner behaviour (Ariyan & Pavlova, 2019; cf. Taggart & Wilson, 2005). They aim to raise the teachers' awareness of the need to critically assess what the textbook offers as 'the engine that drives much current practice' (Thornbury, 2013, p. 217) and to evaluate alternative practices. From this it follows that teachers need support in teacher education

and professional development to become critical and informed textbook users with the perspective to develop their own materials (Agba, 2018; Bouckaert, 2019; Matić, 2019; Waltermann & Forel, 2015). We hope that our paper contributes to this issue by providing a theoretical underpinning of textbook adaptation in English language teaching.

References

- Abdel Latif, M. M. (2017). Teaching grammar using inductive and communicative materials: Exploring Egyptian EFL teachers' practices and beliefs. In H. Masuhara, F. Mishan, & B. Tomlinson (Eds.), *Practice and theory for materials development in L2 learning* (pp. 275–289). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Agba, Y. K. M. (2018). EFL materials – from adoption to adaptation. Definitional, practical and operational aspects on textbook development by teachers. *International Journal of English and Education*, 7(4), 260–274. http://ijee.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/21YOBOUE.28065606.pdf
- Akbari, R. (2008). Postmethod discourse and practice. *TESOL Quarterly*, 42(4), 641–652. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40264492>
- Amrani, F. (2011). The process of evaluation: a publisher's view. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Materials development in language teaching* (2nd ed.; pp. 267–295). Cambridge University Press.
- Ariyan M. A., Pavlova L. V. (2019). An English language textbook: A friend or a foe. In Z. Anikina (Ed.), *Going global through social sciences and humanities: A systems and ICT perspective*. Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing, vol 907 (pp. 83–90) Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11473-2_10
- Bouckaert, M. (2019). Current perspectives on teachers as materials developers: Why, what, and how? *RELC Journal*, 50(3), 439–456. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688218810549>
- Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your coursebook*. Macmillan Heinemann.
- Freeman, D. (2014). Reading comprehension questions: The distribution of different types in global EFL textbooks. In N. Harwood (Ed.), *English language teaching textbooks: Content, consumption, production* (pp. 72–110). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gray, J. (2016). ELT materials. Claims, critiques and controversies. In G. Hall (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 95–108). Routledge.
- Guerrettaz, A. M., Engman, M. M., & Matsumoto, A. Y. (2021). Empirically defining language learning and teaching materials in use through sociomaterial perspectives. *Modern Language Journal*, 105(S1), 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12691>
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Harwood, N. (2021). Coda: An expanding research agenda for the use of instructional materials. *Modern Language Journal*, 105(1), 175–184. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12683>
- Islam, C., & Mares, C. (2003). Adapting classroom materials. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Developing materials for language teachers* (pp. 86–99). Continuum.

- Kovač, M., & Šebart, M. (2019). Educational publishing: How it works: Primary and secondary education publishing. In A. Phillips & M. Bhaskar (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of publishing* (pp. 1–18). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198794202.013.14>
- Li, Z., & Harfitt, G. J. (2017). An examination of language teachers' enactment of curriculum materials in the context of a centralised curriculum. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 25(3), 403–416. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2016.1270987>
- Littlejohn, A. (2012). Language teaching materials and the (very) big picture. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 9(1), 283–297. [http://www.andrewlittlejohn.net/website/docs/Littlejohn%20Language%20Teaching%20Materials%20and%20the%20\(Very\)%20Big%20Picture.pdf](http://www.andrewlittlejohn.net/website/docs/Littlejohn%20Language%20Teaching%20Materials%20and%20the%20(Very)%20Big%20Picture.pdf)
- Loh, J., & Renandya, W. A. (2016). Exploring adaptations of materials and methods. *The European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL*, 4(2), 93–11.
- López-Barrios, M., & Villanueva de Debat, E. (2014). Global vs. local: Does it matter? In S. Garton & K. Graves (Eds.), *International perspectives on materials in ELT* (pp. 37–52). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Macalister, J. (2016a). Adapting and adopting materials. In M. Azarnoosh, M. Zeraatpishe, A. Faravani, & H. R. Kargozari (Eds.), *Issues in material development* (pp. 57–64). Sense Publishers.
- Macalister, J. (2016b). Applying language learning principles to coursebooks. In W. A. Renandya & H. P. Widodo (Eds.), *English language teaching today* (pp. 41–51). Springer.
- Madsen, H., & Bowen, J. (1978). *Adaptation in language teaching*. Newbury House.
- Maley, A. (2011). Squaring the circle – reconciling materials as constraint with materials as empowerment. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Materials development in language teaching* (2nd ed.; pp. 357–378). Cambridge University Press.
- Maley, A. (2018). Creative materials: An oxymoron? In D. Bao (Ed.), *Creativity and innovations in ELT material development* (pp. 35–50). Multilingual Matters.
- Matić, L. J. (2019). The teacher as a lesson designer. *CEPS Journal*, 9(2), 139–160. <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.722>
- McDonough, J., Shaw, C., & Masuhara, H. (2013). *Materials and methods in ELT* (3rd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- McGrath, I. (2013). *Teaching materials and the role of EFL/ESL teachers*. Bloomsbury.
- McGrath, I. (2016). *Materials evaluation and design for language teaching* (2nd ed.). Edinburgh University Press.
- Menkabu, A., & N. Harwood. (2014). Teachers' conceptualization and use of the textbook on a medical English course. In N. Harwood (Ed.), *English language teaching textbooks: Content, consumption, production* (pp. 145–177). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mishan, F. (2021). The global ELT coursebook: A case of Cinderella's slipper? *Language Teaching*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444820000646>
- Mishan, F., & Timmis, I. (2015). *Materials Development in TESOL*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Pouromid, S., & Amerian, M. (2018). Iranian and Japanese language teachers' operationalization of materials mode and their pursuit of immunity. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 15(1), 5–22. <https://e-flt.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/pouomid.pdf>

- Rathert, S., & Cabaroğlu, N. (2021). Teachers as slaves or masters to their coursebooks: An in-depth study on two English language teachers' coursebook utilization. *Language Teaching Research*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688211036239>
- Richards, J. C. (2001). *The role of textbooks in a language program*. <http://www.professorjackrichards.com/wp-content/uploads/role-of-textbooks.pdf>
- Richards, J. C. (2017) *Curriculum development in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Seferaj, K. (2014). Coping with new teaching approaches and materials: An East-European EFL teacher's interpretation of communicative teaching activities. In S. Garton & K. Graves (Eds.), *International perspectives on materials in ELT* (pp. 89–103). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Smart, A., Sinclair, M., Benavot, A., Bernard, J., Chabbott, C., Russell, S. G., & Williams, J. et al. (2020). *Learning for uncertain futures: the role of textbooks, curriculum, and pedagogy. Background paper for the futures of education initiative*. UNESCO.
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374078>
- Taggart, G.L., & Wilson, A.P. (2005). *Promoting reflective thinking in teachers. 50 action strategies*. Corwin Press.
- Tasseron, M. (2017). How teachers use the global ELT coursebook. In H. Masuhara, F. Mishan, & B. Tomlinson (Eds.), *Practice and theory for materials development in L2 learning* (pp. 290–311). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Thornbury, S. (2013). Resisting coursebooks. In J. Gray (Ed.), *Critical perspectives on language teaching materials* (pp. 204–223). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tomlinson, B. (2015). Challenging teachers to use their coursebook creatively. In A. Maley & N. Peachey (Eds.), *Creativity in the English language classroom* (pp. 24–28). British Council.
- Tomlinson, B. (2018). Making typical coursebook activities more beneficial for the learner. In D. Bao (Ed.), *Creativity and innovations in ELT material development* (pp. 21–34). Multilingual Matters.
- Tomlinson, B., & Masuhara, H. (2004). *Developing language course materials*. SAEMO Regional Language Centre.
- Tomlinson, B., & Masuhara, H. (2018). *The complete guide to the theory and practice of materials development for language learning*. Wiley Blackwell.
- Ur, P. (2015). Using the coursebook: A teacher's perspective. *The European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL*, 4(2), 1–17.
- Vitta, J. P. (2021). The functions and features of ELT textbooks and textbook analysis: A concise review. *RELC Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0033688211035826>
- Walterman, E., & Forel, C. (2015). Why and how to include textbook analysis in language teacher education programs. *English Language Education and Development Journal*, 18, 43–48.
http://www.elted.net/uploads/7/3/1/6/7316005/elted_vol_18_paper_6_waltermann__forel.pdf
- Zheng, X.-M., & Davison, C. (2008). *Changing pedagogy: Analysing ELT teachers in China*. Continuum.

Biographical note

STEFAN RATHERT, PhD, is an assistant professor in the field of English language teaching at the Faculty of Education, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, Turkey. His research interests include language teaching materials development, teaching methods, translanguaging in language teaching and professional development for teachers.

NEŞE CABAROĞLU, PhD, is a full professor in the field of English language teaching at the Faculty of Education, Çukurova University, Adana, Turkey. She received her Master of Arts Degree in 1993 (Çukurova University) and Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Reading, UK in 1999. Her research interests and expertise are in the areas of foreign language teaching and learning, language teaching methodology, pre-service teacher education and teachers' professional development.