CHAPTER II

TEXTBOOKS IN ENGLISH

Textbook and its importance - Purpose of textbooks - Types of textbooks in language teaching - Characteristics of good textbooks - Textbooks prescribed for study in schools in Kerala since 1952 - Need for quality textbooks - Basic principles for the preparation of textbooks in English - Evaluation of textbooks - Conclusion.
Textbook and its importance

The textbook is a very important instrument of education. To the student it represents the subject content and to the teacher it provides an operational definition of his duties. The textbook in language teaching, takes on an even wider responsibility, for it has to provide along with information, the basic skills required to use the language for purposes other than mastery of the textbook alone. The importance of textbook in language teaching has been recognised. Michael West\(^1\) has emphasised the use of textbook thus:

A textbook is the teacher's tool. It is to the teacher what the spade is to the gardener, the chisel and saw and screwdriver to the woodworker, the typewriter to the typist.

It opens new avenues of thought and study and widens experience.

According to Billows,\(^2\)

In opening up the textbook, the teacher opens windows on the world, which both show the world and let light into the home.

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The textbook has always been regarded in India as an integral part of learning process and it is worshipped during the national festival "Pooja".

A survey completed by the National Opinion Research Council\textsuperscript{3} reported in 1966 that the textbook is still the dominant teaching tool in the college as it is in the secondary school.

Teachers of English in our schools whose command of English is poor, need lists of teaching points - structures, vocabulary etc. - with advice as how to present, identify and drill each, and with reading passages and composition exercises introduced at appropriate points. Besides, a structural syllabus cannot work without being embodied in good books. The more planned the textbook, the easier the task of the teacher in making his pupils learn the language.

Purpose of textbooks

Several purposes are served by the textbooks. It is at once a guide to the teacher, a memory aid for the pupils, a means of reviewing and reorganising his knowledge. In the classroom, the textbook becomes an effective tool of learning, by generating educative interaction between the teacher and the learner and between the learner and other co-workers. At home it not only helps the learner in revising and reinforcing

his previous learning, but also stimulates his interest and enriches his learning experience. In a wider sense, the textbook is a generalisation, a unifying factor in language teaching, a means of extending linguistic experience beyond the local scene and limited experience of pupil. At the same time it has to be admitted that this is not the only means of learning, or reading the textbook the only method of organising mastery of a language. The invention and development of a large number and variety of alternative means and materials for learning languages has limited the role of the textbook and at the same time helped to overcome its limitation.

Types of textbooks in language teaching

Books that are usually used in schools in the teaching of English are classified as (a) Textbook (b) supplementary Reader and (c) Additional reading material which may be referred to pupils for incidental learning.

(a) Textbook

The textbook is to give the pupil vocabulary and structures of the most useful kind, what he may require for his every day use in the class as well as outside. A good textbook will provide for all types of English lessons and will thus form the centre of instruction. The main concern
in the teaching of textbook is the teaching of language. Hence provision has to be made for intensive language work. It is to give different types of sentences ordinarily used, on the model of which pupil can construct his own sentences. The words, structures and phrases in the textbook are to be constantly used by pupils in their own sentences. The textbook is also utilised for other English lessons such as precis writing or writing of summaries, dictation, transcription, comprehension and for every kind of inductive lesson in style, word order, choice of words, structure of sentences, paragraph construction, narrative, descriptive, expository and argumentative composition. Abundant exercises are to be provided giving further scope for the repeated and contextualised use of structures and words for effective learning.

(b) Supplementary Reader

Supplementary Reader enables pupils to revise the vocabulary and structures already learnt and also to enlarge their recognition vocabulary by the introduction of new words. It provides opportunities for rapid extensive reading for profit as well as for pleasure. It should be simpler in language content than the textbook. The pupils are expected to read the lessons on their own with little help from the teacher. The aim of extensive reading is to cover maximum space. At the end, a few easy questions will be put on the subject matter.
Characteristics of good textbooks

1. A textbook should be suited to the syllabus, the objectives, the teacher and learner using it at a particular level.

2. The entire language course should be presented in a series of textbooks sequentially integrated from the beginning class to the terminal.

3. The materials should be presented in such a way that they provide systematic practice in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

4. Presentation of situations and language should be meaningfully interwoven.

5. The length and complexity of the lessons should vary progressively from lesson to lesson.

6. Presentation in the subsequent textbooks should stress silent reading for comprehension and simple composition with listening and speech.

7. The materials presented should be well proportioned, and well balanced.

8. Presentation of topics should centre on children's interests, needs and environment.

9. The materials presented should maintain continuity.

Preparation and Evaluation of textbooks in English, Principles and Procedures, Department of Textbooks, NCERT, New Delhi: January 1970, pp.11-12.
sequence and integration from book to book.

10. Some of the materials presented should have the potential for dramatisation.

11. Stories, dialogues, descriptions, narrations, letters, etc. should be judiciously distributed over the entire book.

12. Greater variety of sentence forms should be provided.

13. Some simple rhymes and poems may also be given for light relief and interest.

14. The presentation must facilitate the gripping and sustaining the interest of the learner.

15. Some unadapted selections from standard literature may be made in the highest classes.

16. The vocabulary and structures should be controlled from lesson to lesson and adequate provision should be made for repetition, which is indispensable for reinforcement. The number of new words should be spread over the entire book.

17. The technical presentation of the textbook should conform to educational, hygienic and aesthetic considerations. The paper, lettering and print should be chosen with a view to rendering the reading of the text easy, and avoiding visual fatigue.
Textbooks prescribed for secondary school pupils in Kerala since 1952

During the year 1952-53 Government decided that all language textbooks should be published by them and accordingly the English Reader for Form V (Std.IX) was published in the same year. Textbook business was nationalised by purchasing the publishing rights of all language books approved and prescribed for study in various classes up to Form VI. Nationalisation of textbooks was supposed to achieve three important aims - cheapness of books, good quality in content and printing and a better deal to authors.

A committee was appointed to prepare a well graded series of English Readers for Form I to IV and it completed the work. Government approved the Readers and made arrangements for their publication. These books were prescribed for study during 1953-54. The Golden Readers Book IV prescribed for Form IV (Std.VIII) during 1952-53 was edited by an individual editor. English Prose and Verse for Form V prescribed for study during 1952-53 was prepared by the committee. The book of selections in English Prose and Verse for Form VI published during 1951-52 was allowed to continue.

The practice of prescribing English non-detailed books

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was given up during 1956-57 and non-detailed books in English were prescribed for Stds. VIII and XI (Common Public Examinations) only. For Standards IX and X suitable books would be approved and the Heads of schools were free to select books from the approved list. All books except non-detailed books were prepared by the Department of Education from 1957 onwards and non-detailed books were selected by committees. English Readers for Stds. IX and XI were published during the year 1957-58. English Reader for Std. IX was published in 1959 and all the English textbooks except a few non-detailed books which were in use, continued till 1960-61. English Reader for Std. VIII was prepared in 1962 in accordance with the revised syllabus. English Reader for Std. IX was newly prepared and published in 1963. English Reader for Std. X was published in 1965. English Reader for Std. VIII was published in 1969. Kerala Reader English for Std. IX was prescribed for study during the year 1970. This was designed broadly on the same pattern as Reader VIII. Kerala Reader English, published in 1972 was also designed broadly on the same pattern as Readers VIII and IX. All these textbooks continued till 1975-76.

Need for quality textbooks

The production of good textbooks and other educational literature to maintain and increase standards at school level is a top priority in a developing country like India where the
problem of overwhelming numbers makes it impossible for
effective teaching to be conducted without good textbooks.
The urgency of making available quality books, without let
or hindrance is felt in all quarters. In view of the impor-
tance of the textbooks in the learning of all subjects, parti-
cularly English, maximum care has to be given to their prepa-
ration. Though we cannot aspire to the qualities of American
or Russian books, at least we must be able to produce quality
books according to Indian standards.

The Education Commission\(^6\) observes:

Unfortunately, textbook writing and production have
not received the attention they deserve ... Lack
of research in the preparation and production of
textbooks is one of the factors which contribute to
this situation ... Emphasis should be placed in
developing the programme of textbook production on
right lines ... It is essential that the best talent
available in the country should be brought together
to produce the textbooks and other literature needed,
both at the school and the university stages. This
can be done at the national level by agencies set up
by the Government of India. Special encouragement
should be given to teachers to write textbooks.

It is perhaps not possible to write graded books
without the basic linguistic research being available. With a
view to improving the quality of textbooks, the National Board
of School textbooks was established which in co-operation with
the boards at the state level would continuously review textbooks.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training was set

\(^6\) Report of the Education Commission, Ministry of Education,
up in 1961 with the purpose interalia of bringing out model textbooks in various subjects at the school level of education. A variety of experiments are being tried in the domains of preparation, production, distribution, evaluation and research in the field of school textbooks.

The following are some of the decisions taken in the Conference on the teaching of English in India held in New Delhi from April 15 to 20, 1963.

A significant trend in the present day textbooks of English is the move towards a system in which structural selection and grading figures paramount. It is essential that prescription of textbooks should be more systematic, careful and controlled. A single graded series of Readers should be prescribed from the primary class to the higher secondary classes so that pupils are put through a well organised course in English. Books of selection are prescribed which bear no relevance to the needs of pupils at that stage, in the higher classes. All this has to be changed. No series of Readers should be prescribed which is not accompanied by teachers hand books and work books. Graded exercises for each year in all the skills should be devised to go with these books.

The need for proper spacing and repetition of the new words and structures introduced in the textbook is considered essential. The content of textbooks should be regional and national as well as international, the proportion depending upon the capacity of pupils at various levels to assimilate the subject matter.

A textbook writer needs to have creative imagination, skill and experience in teaching and knowledge of the techniques involved in the construction of text materials. To ensure that those who write textbooks are properly qualified for the task, it was suggested that:

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1. a short term course be planned and organised for training prospective writers in the preparation of textbooks with the help of the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, the English Language Teaching Institute, Allahabad and the National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi and

2. a directory of writers of textbooks in English be prepared on an All India basis.

Basic Principles for the Preparation of textbooks in English

The following are the basic principles for the preparation of textbooks.

(a) Selection

The process of selection should be basically synthetic and interdependent. The selection is based on the following considerations.

1. The purpose, level and duration of the course.

2. The choice of linguistic items covering:
   (a) Phonological selection
   (b) Grammatical selection
   (c) Vocabulary selection
   (d) Semantic selection

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The selection of linguistic items is determined by:

(a) the frequency of occurrence
(b) the range and usefulness
(c) the coverage in terms of inclusion, extension, combination and definition
(d) the learnability, covering such factors as clarity, brevity, regularity and learning load.

3. **Situation and type of content:** Appropriate situations should be used to couch the vocabulary and structures selected. The selection should cover school, home, games, village, town, country, cultural heritage, moral and cultural values, science and technology, national integration and international understanding.

(b) **Grading**

Proper grading and ordering of the linguistic items into the most practical teaching learning process is of great significance. Frequency, range, usability, teachability and classroom needs should be taken into account while grading.

(c) **Presentation**

Presentation should be considered in terms of the textbook, the teacher's handbook and workbooks which are allied to the teaching learning process. Much depends on good craftsmanship and artistry in choice and presentation of materials.
(d) Repetition

Repetition and contextualisation will help towards learner's unconscious assimilation of language. Hence the textbook writer has to exercise a great deal of ingenuity to provide natural repetition in a natural situation.

Evaluation of textbooks

Evaluation of textbooks before they are prescribed for use, is necessary to raise standards in English. It is essential to see that a textbook performs its functions effectively. Quality control in a textbook development programme will have to be backed by a well planned scheme of evaluation. A continuous evaluation of textbooks on the basis of well defined procedures and criteria is quite necessary. The problem should be whether the textbook is effective in terms of student learning. The Central Bureau of Textbooks developed criteria for evaluation of textbooks.

It would be ideal if there could be pre-production field try-outs of textbooks. Ascertaining the worth of a book in terms of student performance is called empirical\(^9\) evaluation procedure, which is illustrated in the diagram below.

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If this procedure is not economically feasible, the qualitative evaluation of textbooks in English for their continuous improvement should be undertaken. Both formative and summative evaluation may be used. Evaluation of textbooks will help towards further revision and improvement.

**Aspects to be evaluated**

There is need for evolving systematic procedures and designing effective instruments for evaluation of textbooks in terms of the following aspects:

1. (a) objectives of teaching English as a second language.  
   (b) class room teaching aims and purposes

2. selection of content  
   (a) Linguistic and  
   (b) Thematic: It is based on various factors like purpose, grade, maturation level of the age group for which it is intended, needs, interests, environment, etc.
3. Staging and gradation as a step towards effective assimilation of language elements unfamiliar to learners.

4. Presentation: Textbook-wise and lesson-wise which has a personal appeal and value to learners, with illustrations and exercises and a proper control over repetition of language items for reinforcement.

5. Other relevant factors like the title cover design, typography, glossary etc.

**Characteristics of evaluative criteria**

The criteria for evaluating various aspects of the textbook should be objective, specific, tangible and measurable and should be free from any personal bias. The criteria should cover all the important aspects of the preparation and production of textbooks and should be as simple as possible. It should preferably be set in a tabular form to facilitate closer scrutiny.

**Summary**

To sum up, textbook exercises a very potent influence in determining the content and methods of teaching English and there is urgent need for suitable, quality textbooks. Continuous evaluation is a sine qua non to improve the quality of textbooks and to raise the standards in English.