

Do Algerian High School EFL Teachers Adapt Textbook Materials?

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to assess Algerian high school EFL teachers' practice of adapting English textbook materials. The latter doesn't always meet the learners' needs. Therefore, EFL teachers should adapt and develop these materials or design new ones to meet their learners' needs and interests and to enhance and facilitate the process of learning. The present research explores if EFL teachers do adapt textbook materials according to the requirements of their specific classroom contexts through an interview and a questionnaire delivered to high school EFL teachers. The obtained results showed that Algerian high school EFL teachers believed that adapting textbook materials is required to facilitate the teaching/learning process and meet the learners' needs. Moreover, most of the teachers confirmed that they are familiar with adaptation to meet their learners' needs and achieve their teaching objectives since textbook materials do not always suit the learners' levels and interests. They also agreed that adapting or designing new textbook materials is not an easy task, it requires time and energy.

Keywords: *Materials; textbook; adaptation; textbook adaptation; textbook materials*

1. Introduction

Teachers' pedagogical practices mostly depend on the materials provided in textbooks to enhance the teaching/learning process. But, these materials do not always fulfil the learners' needs, attract their attentions and inspire their interests. Consequently, teachers need to adapt and adjust textbook materials to meet their learners' needs though textbooks afford the structure and the syllabus for a program and considered the central core of a variety of language

learning and teaching programs (Richards, 2001). Besides, the selection of materials for a classroom use is a challenging task for EFL teachers as it provides a platform through which students learn the English language. The use of the right and suitable materials makes teaching and learning a worthwhile activity and creates an efficient classroom environment. However, if the teaching materials are out of the context of situations and do not fit the learners' needs, teaching and learning become a dull and monotonous activity. In order to get rid from such a negative classroom

environment and enrich their lessons to be very interesting to the learners, teachers are required to adapt the textbook materials in a way that serves the needs of the learners and their abilities in accordance to the curriculum provided by the ministry .

In any educational system, textbooks have an elementary role in classrooms. They may serve to supplement the instructions of teachers, and in the case of inexperienced teachers, they guide them; provide ideas on how to plan a lesson and what to teach too. Textbooks assist the learners; they provide them with resources to learn more about the language (Clandfield, 2010). Thus, textbooks are very significant in the teaching/ learning process (Hutchinson & Toores, 1994; Cunningsworth, 1995).

Though the importance of textbooks in teaching, they may not help teachers to meet their learners' needs. Therefore, they will look for solutions to enhance learning such as adapting and developing textbook materials according to their teaching environment. There are minimally two reasons why teachers adapt textbooks: First, when the methodology used in the course book is not clear concerning what to teach and how to teach, and second, when the course book do not suit the teaching and learning context (Gabriealatos, 2004).

Among the factors that might hinder the successful acquisition of the target language is the textbook. Though it is the most popular teaching material and plays a vital role in language learning, it does not always meet the learners' needs and the teaching contexts. Some materials are inappropriately presented which misleads

the learners and affects their learning negatively and thus the learning objectives may not be met to the full. Porreca (1984), Cathcart (1989), Allwright (1990), and Renner (1997) confirmed that textbooks lack authentic texts since they depict preferences and biases of their authors; therefore, they may generate misjudging, misconceptions and stereotypical representations of people from other countries. Nevertheless, some teachers are still slaves to textbooks without awareness of the students' needs. They teach them without any adaptation .

Many scholars and researchers such as: O'Neil (1982), Grant (1987), Harmer (1998), Nunan (1998), Hedge (2000), Graves (2000), Richards (2001), Harmer (2001), McGrath (2002), and Nation (2009) pointed out the importance of improving textbook resources with materials that fit the learners' needs, the teaching objectives and the learning contexts. Teachers should evaluate, adapt, improve and develop textbook materials according to their teaching contexts and the needs of their learners and not to teach them blindly from cover to cover. Using the accurate and appropriate materials creates efficient classroom environment which makes teaching and learning a valuable activity.

Hence, the present research approves that adapting English textbook materials would efficiently enhance learning. Its objectives are to underline the importance of adapting textbook materials in the teaching/ learning process and evaluate Algerian high school EFL teachers'

adaptation of the English textbook materials .

In this regard, the present paper tackles the following questions:

- Do Algerian high school EFL teachers adapt textbook materials?
- How do they adapt textbook materials?
- What are the adaptation techniques they implement?
- What are the problems they face in adapting textbook materials?

2. Background of the Study:

2.1. Textbook Materials:

Textbook materials are printed materials designed to provide the essential resources for a course to help language learners to improve their linguistic and communicative abilities (Sheldon, 1987). They provide the language input and the learning experiences to raise the learners' knowledge and achieve the learning objectives in accordance with the learners' needs (Cunningsworth, 1995). They are used as a guide for instruction for teachers. They are described as a "resource book for ideas and activities" rather than as "instructional material" (Allwright, 1990, p.25).

EFL textbooks are designed to provide learners with the essential elements of languages learning. "Such a book usually includes work on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, functions and the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking" (Tomlinson, 1998, p. 9). They play a vital role in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms all over the world (Mukundan and Ahour, 2010; Mukundan and Kalajahi, 2013).

Though textbook materials are very important in the language teaching/learning process and provide structure and a syllabus for a program (Richards, 2001), they need to be revised and reassessed by teachers to fit their learners' needs and their teaching contexts. Good teachers are always looking for adapting their teaching materials to meet their learners' needs, the teaching context, the teaching objectives and methodology (Nation, 2009). "Materials are fundamental to language learning and teaching (...) but materials cannot be viewed independently of their users" (Garton & Graves, 2014, p.11). In short, textbook materials provide a framework which may not suit all the teaching/ learning situations; therefore, teachers need to adjust these materials and reinforce them by additional materials based on the needs and preferences of their specific group of learners.

2.2. Textbook Adaptation:

Adaptation is the adjustment and modification of materials to make them suitable for a specific group of learners. Adapting textbook materials requires matching its materials to the needs of the learner, the demands of the teacher and the learning experience. Harmer (1998) claimed that teachers can use textbook materials and present them in their own way. Therefore, they can particularize their lessons and make them more interesting and attractive for the learners.

McDonough and Shaw (2003, p. 77) suggested a list of the possible reasons that push teachers to adapt textbook materials. They are some non-congruent illustrations

that teachers may find and need to adapt in textbook materials.

1. Not enough grammar coverage in general.
2. Not enough practice of grammar points of particular difficulty to these learners.
3. The communicative focus means that grammar is presented unsystematically.
4. Reading passages contain too much unknown vocabulary.
5. Comprehension questions are too easy, because the answers can be lifted directly from the text with no real understanding.
6. Listening passages are inauthentic, because they sound too much like written material being read out.
7. Not enough guidance on pronunciation.
8. Subject matter inappropriate for learners of this age and intellectual level.
9. Photographs and other illustrative material not culturally acceptable
10. Amount of material too much or too little to cover in the time allocated to lessons.
11. No guidance for teachers on handling group work and role play activities with a large class.
12. Dialogues too formal and not preventative of everyday speech.
13. Audio material difficult to use because of problems to do with room size and technical equipment.
14. Too much or too little variety in the activities.
15. Vocabulary list and a key to the exercises would be helpful.
16. Accompanying tests needed.

Selecting and adapting a textbook material is not an easy task. It is a difficult process (Duarte & Escobar, 2008). It is a set of steps that includes planning (needs analysis and textbook structure analysis), teaching, re-planning (after completing one course,

planning again is necessary using all conclusions reached during the previous course), and re-teaching (implementing new conclusions and decisions) (Graves, 2000). Alibakhshi (2007) summarized the objectives behind adapting textbook materials as follows:

1. To eliminate the unnecessary content,
2. To consider individual differences,
3. To provide the content based on learning strategies and cognitive styles of the learners.
4. To justify the content based on the learners' culture and values,
5. To establish challenges for the talent learners,
6. To accomplish the learners' interests and goals,
7. To maximize the learners' involvement in teaching process,
8. To reduce stress and anxiety on the part of the learners.

In order to achieve adaptation objectives, Alibakhshi (2007) suggested some adaptation techniques teachers need to follow; they are:

- **Adding:** Adding means to add necessary materials (examples, exercises, etc.) by expanding or extending to contextualize the pattern.
- **Simplifying:** Simplifying means rewording or rephrasing the text without damaging its authenticity.
- **Deleting:** Deleting refers to the omission of some exercises or parts of the teaching material quantitatively by answering a proportion of it or qualitatively by omitting a tedious and boring exercise for example.

- **Reordering:** It is the change in the order or sequence of materials, so that they become more tangible and learnable for the learners.
- **Replacing:** In this technique, teachers may replace some activities and exercises in textbooks with more appropriate ones.

3. Methodology:

In order to investigate the research questions and meet the research aims, a mixed research method (qualitative and quantitative) is used. Two research means were employed to provide more reliable data and grant access to more objective results, an online questionnaire for Algerian EFL high school teachers using Google forms and an interview with two expert high school teachers of English.

3.1. Participants

Twenty two Algerian high school teachers of English were randomly selected to participate in collecting data for the present research. They are from different Algerian schools in different places so the researcher can investigate if EFL Algerian high school teachers adapt textbook materials. Twenty teachers responded to the research online questionnaire and two teachers were concerned with the interview. The interviewed teachers are experts in the field; they are from Kamel Abdellah Bacha High School in Mila.

3.2. Research Instruments:

To explore Algerian EFL high school adaptation of textbook materials, two research tools were used: an online questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire was administered to EFL high school teachers, and the interview was conducted with high school expert teachers .

Concerning the teachers' questionnaire, on the one hand, it is made up of 11 questions (open ended and multiple choice type questions), arranged in two sections: Section one deals with general information (two questions) and section two is devoted to research questions (nine questions). Concerning the interview, on the other hand, it consists of six questions. It aims at confirming the questionnaire's obtained results and thus providing valuable and reliable results in this research..

4. Data Analysis:

4.1. Teachers' Questionnaire:

Section One: General Information:

The first section of the questionnaire accrues general information about the teachers. It consists of two questions: gender and years of experience in the field. Table one below represents the participants' gender.

Table 1: The Participants' Gender

Description		Freq	%
Participants' Gender	Male.	5	25
	Female.	15	75

Table one shows that the majority of teachers participated in the study are females with 75%, and the other 25% are males.

The results obtained concerning the participants teaching experience are presented in table two below.

Table 2: The Participants' Teaching Experience

Description		Freq	%
Teaching Experience	0-5 years	2	10
	5-10 years	4	20
	More than 10 years	9	45
	More than 20 years	5	25

As indicated in table two above, 10% of teachers had a teaching experience less than five years, 20% had a teaching experience between 5-10 years, 25% had a teaching experience more than twenty years, and 45% had a teaching experience more than ten years. This indicates that most of the teachers participated in the questionnaire have a good experience in teaching. They are aware and knowledgeable about the teaching process and consequently about the textbook materials too and their suitability for the teaching/ learning process.

Section Two: Research Information:

Section tow is devoted to investigate high school textbook materials' adaptation by Algerian EFL teachers. It aims at determining how teachers deal with these materials in terms of adoption and adaptation and seek to determine if they help them to achieve their teaching goals and objectives.

Question 1: Are the teaching materials involved in EFL high school textbooks well designed?

Table 3: Textbook Materials' Design

Description		Freq	%
Are the teaching materials involved in EFL high school textbooks well designed?	Yes.	13	65
	No.	7	35

Table three displayed that 65% of teachers (the majority) agree that high school textbook materials are well designed. This implies that they do not have problems when dealing with textbook materials and do not feel that there is any kind of ambiguity or inappropriateness when teaching its content to their students; they do accept and adopt them in their classes.

However, 35% of teachers (the minority) agreed that textbook materials are not well designed; this signifies that they face problems while dealing with these teaching materials.

Question 2: Do they suit your students' level, needs and interests?

Table 4: Suitability of Textbook Materials to the Students' Level, Needs, and Interests

Description		Freq	%
Do they suit your students' level, needs and interests?	Always	5	25
	Often	3	15
	Sometimes	10	50
	Never	2	10

Table four demonstrates that teachers have different opinions about textbook materials' suitability for the learners' level. 50% of them believed that textbook materials sometimes suit the level and needs of their students. In this case, teachers sometimes adapt some materials. Moreover, 15% of them stated that textbook materials often suit their students' level which means that teachers from time to time adapt textbook materials. However, 25% of teachers were satisfied with the

teaching materials provided in textbooks, and believed that textbook materials always fit their learners' needs, level, and interests. These teachers are slaves to textbooks; they never adapt; they only adopt and use textbook materials in their teaching contexts. In contrast, there are 10% of teachers who totally disagreed with the suitability of the textbook teaching materials and the level of their students; those teachers are the ones who create and design their own materials.

Question 3: Do textbook materials match with your teaching objectives?

Table 05: Accordance of the Textbook Materials and the Teaching Objectives

Description		Freq	%
Do textbook materials match with your teaching objectives?	Always	7	35
	Often	3	15
	Sometimes	9	45
	Never	1	5

According to the results presented in table five above, teachers had different attitudes towards the accordance of the textbook materials and their teaching objectives. 5% of them claimed that textbook materials never help them to achieve their objectives, 15% of them stated that textbook materials often help them to achieve their objectives,

35% of them stated that textbook materials sometimes help them to achieve their objectives, and 45% of them stated that textbook materials always help them to achieve their objectives.

Question 4: As an EFL teacher, do you adapt textbook materials?

Table 06: Teachers' Adaptation to Textbook Materials

Description		Freq	%
As an EFL teacher, do you adapt textbook materials?	Always	2	10
	Often	3	15
	Sometimes	13	75
	Never	2	10

As table six designates, 65% of teachers claimed that they sometimes adapt the teaching materials of the textbook which means that they adopt textbook materials but at times they adapt some. 10% of teachers never adapt these materials; they teach them as they are without any modification; this is may be because they are novice, because of their satisfaction about the textbook content, their laziness,

or their ignorance about adaptation techniques. In addition, 15% of teachers claimed that they often adapt textbook materials. That is, they mostly adapt them to fit their learners' level and meet their teaching objectives. In converse, 10% of teachers confirmed that they do not use textbook teaching materials at all; they design and create their own teaching materials to meet their learners' needs.

Question 5: Why do you adapt textbook materials?

This question was asked mainly to determine the reasons behind adapting textbook materials. Teachers admitted that there are different and various reasons to adapt these materials such as: meeting students' needs and interests, realizing the ultimate objectives, bringing new tasks and challenges to the classroom, facilitating

learning, and enhancing comprehension. Moreover, teachers claimed that most of the themes in textbook materials are old-fashioned and odd, and referred to some shortcomings such as lack of vocabulary glossary and the way of presenting grammar lessons.

Question 6: How do you adapt textbook materials?

This question aims at identifying the techniques used by teachers when adapting textbook materials. The answers were approximately the same among different teachers. They claimed that they adapt textbook materials through changing, using worksheets, adding, replacing, and sometimes reordering.

Question 7: What kind of adaptation techniques do you often use?

Table 07: Adaptation Techniques Used by the Participants

Description		Freq	%
What kind of adaptation techniques do you often use?	Adding	8	25
	Omitting	10	15
	Replacing	2	50
	Others	0	10

According to table seven above, it seems that teachers' preferred adaptation techniques of textbook materials are limited in adding and omitting with the

rates of 40% and 50% respectively; however, 10% of them use the replacing technique in their adaptation of textbook materials.

Question 8: Can all textbook materials be replaced or substituted easily?

Table 08: The Substitution of the Textbook Materials

Description		Freq	%
Can all textbook materials be replaced or substituted easily?	Always	5	25
	Often	3	15
	Sometimes	10	50
	Never	2	10

The results obtained in question nine show that the substitution of some textbook teaching materials is not considered as a difficult task for 65% of teachers. They claimed that textbook materials can always be replaced or substituted. 20% of teachers stated that textbook materials can sometimes be replaced or substituted

easily and 10% of them asserted that these materials can often be replaced or substituted easily. The rest 5% of teachers confirmed that textbook materials can rarely be replaced or substituted. In short, the majority of teachers agreed that textbook materials can be replaced and substituted.

Question 9: What challenges do EFL teachers encounter while adapting textbook materials?

The interest of this question is to know the challenges that face teachers of English while adapting textbook materials. Consistent with the answers provided by teachers, one can say that the participants nearly encounter the same challenges. Teachers claimed that adapting textbook materials is a hard process and it is even more difficult than creating their own materials. Time is among the most frequent challenges teachers face during such process; it is time consuming; it needs selection and required conditions. Moreover, the fear of deviating from the assigned objective as well as failing in covering the important points or suiting students' level is another challenge that EFL teachers face while adapting textbook materials, in addition to the lack of resources, keeping the same topic, lack of motivation, satisfying and meeting all the students' needs, and achieving the teaching objectives.

4.1. The Interview

The interviewed teachers approved that adapting textbook materials is important and required in the teaching/ learning process. They also claimed that they usually adapt textbook materials to enhance learning and achieve their learning objectives. They stated that they adapt textbook materials because of their difficulty or simplicity, length, boredom, restriction or seeking authenticity. They attempt to improve textbook materials and include better teaching resources that fit the level and needs of their students.

Concerning the textbook materials adapted by teachers, they claimed that they mostly adapt some reading texts, listening scripts and some grammar lessons in order to attract the learners' attention and improve their linguistic and communicative skills .

Concerning the strategies they follow while adapting textbook materials, teachers stated that they adjust the existing materials by adding, omitting, simplifying, modifying, reordering, or replacing them by new designed materials. They also integrate some authentic materials and technological devices to enhance and promote learning .

As far as motivation is concerned, teachers affirmed that their students became more motivated when they employed adapted teaching materials in their classes. They confirmed the successfulness of textbook materials adaptation in enhancing learning and improving and refining the students' level of comprehension. According to the teachers' experience and observation, most of their students show enthusiasm and willingness to participate and react to the adapted teaching materials rather than to the textbook materials and their learning outcomes show better results .

Concerning the problems they face while presenting adapted textbook materials, the teachers claimed that they sometimes encountered many obstacles that made it impossible to present an adapted teaching material. All these problems are related to schools' equipment, namely, the lack of internet and technological devices, data

show, etc. which reduces the teachers' options in selecting materials and media through which they will represent them.

5. Discussion of the Results:

After analysing and interpreting the results of the teachers' questionnaire and the interview, it can be concluded that adaptation is one of the most challenging tasks in EFL teaching. Further, most Algerian high school teachers adapt and develop textbook materials in order to enhance learning and improve their learners' linguistic and communicative competence.

Moreover, Algerian high school EFL teachers adapt textbook materials using different techniques to facilitate the teaching/learning process. Furthermore, textbook materials help, to some extent, high school English teachers in their teaching process. Nevertheless, teachers find it difficult and challenging most of the time to cover all the textbook materials, because of their length and the insufficient time to adapt them.

Moreover, teachers pointed out some weaknesses of textbook materials and issues they face in the adaptation process; first, they believe that textbook materials are not at the level for all the learners. Furthermore, most teachers indicated that textbook materials do not motivate their students and create a boring atmosphere that makes the teaching procedures very challenging. Another confrontation is the materials' themes; they are archaic and far from the students' real life situations. This makes teachers work harder and push them to adapt textbook materials; trying to

involve the learners in the context of those materials. This hard process goes through different steps to end up with a material that suits the students' level, their needs and of course the learning objectives.

In other words, adapting textbook materials is not that easy task, because of the challenges faced by EFL teachers since they are restricted to a given curriculum provided by the ministry of education. Nevertheless, the majority of EFL teachers are doing their best to improve the teaching/ learning processes through adaptation. After all, textbook materials remain just one option for teachers and they are allowed to develop and design their own teaching materials.

To sum up, based on the outcomes gathered from both the teachers' questionnaire and the interview, all the research questions are answered.

6. Conclusion:

Adapting textbook materials is a fundamental practice to achieve the teaching objectives and fit the learners' needs. The present research was conducted to reveal Algerian EFL teachers' adaptation of textbook materials to meet the needs of their learners and their teaching contexts. The research data were collected through an online teachers' questionnaire and an interview with two expert teachers.

Throughout the analysis of the collected data, nearly all the participants confirmed that they are familiar with the adaptation method which is necessary for the effectiveness of the learning experiences. Algerian high school EFL teachers claimed that they adapt textbook materials using

different techniques in order to prepare teaching materials that help them and their students in the teaching/ learning process. They also stated that they faced problems and challenges while adapting textbook materials. These results provide answers for all the research questions.

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