

# **How far do ‘global’ ELT coursebooks realize key principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and enable effective teaching-learning?**

*An assessment of the extent to which ‘communicative’ ELT coursebooks actually embody key tenets of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as an evolving approach, with implications for the possible emergence of more authentic models*

by

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## ***ABSTRACT***

As an essential resource to many teaching contexts much depends on the ‘usability’ and pedagogical worth of the ELT coursebook. Given a perceived ambivalence among experienced teachers toward its effectiveness, a teacher questionnaire survey was undertaken, focusing on a popular coursebook used in a tertiary setting. A separate questionnaire was administered to ELT publishing houses. The coursebook, *English Firsthand 1*, seemingly constitutes a generic ‘type’ based on ‘global’ market appeal and a ‘Presentation-Practice-Production’ model. The model has been the subject of much criticism for its failure to incorporate authentic, non-linguistic aims, and, as argued here, to embody key tenets of Communicative Language Teaching. A behaviouristic legacy is discernible both in this, and in the formulaic content design, leading to a ‘surface methodology’ serving the need for ‘guidance’ of the less experienced and non-native speaking teacher, as the main user market. Response-data showed confirmation that experienced teachers find this as obstructive as it is facilitative, necessitating significant ‘intervention’, mainly necessary in providing more effective communicative activities. Such effort might be better engaged in the potential decision-making called for by a more flexible, open-ended, option-based, alternative model, recognizing the expertise that the experienced teacher will bring to it.

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***A note on the use of terms:***

- Mention is made of two major ***ELT publishing houses***, not named to protect anonymity, but distinguished by reference to geographical ‘base’.
- The term ‘***communicative***’ is commonly used by a variety of sources. A ‘provisional’ template of key communicative principles is supplied by Brown (2001: 43), cited in Appendices.
- ‘***Students***’ is used in preference to ‘learners’ for reasons of contextual relevance, in keeping with Holliday’s distinction (1994: 14), and in line with its use by survey respondents.
- ***Teacher’s Manual*** (TM) is used in preference to ‘Teacher’s Book’ as it is employed by Pearson Longman (*English Firsthand 1*) and other publishers, and survey respondents.

## **CHAPTER 1: The ‘Communicative’ Coursebook**

### ***1.1 The significance of the ELT coursebook***

The teaching-learning experience is mainly comprised of three essential entities: the students, the teacher, and the instructional materials. One of the most commonly recognized and used forms of instructional materials is the ELT coursebook (CB). The CB offers structured content in a uniform format for ready implementation. As such, it is a primary resource for use in the teaching-learning process, “... the essential constituents to many ESL/EFL classrooms and programs are the textbooks and instruction materials” (Litz 2005: 5).

The CB conveniently and compactly serves a number of useful purposes: it bestows a notional authority on the teacher as mediator of its content; it provides students with a quantifiable record and token of what is to be studied or ‘learned’ (Haycroft 1998); it acts as a resource and point of reference (Cunningsworth 1995); often, it is “the tangible element that gives a language course face validity to many learners and teachers” (Dubin and Olshtain 1986: 167). Where no curriculum exists it may form an entire study course, “the writers themselves [becoming] the curriculum designers when their textbook is adopted” (ibid.: 170).

The prominent role that CBs play should therefore make them the focus of attention with regard to theoretical and practical ideas on the nature of effective pedagogy, important in assessing and understanding their limitations, parameters, and potential: “Beliefs on the nature of learning can ... be inferred from an examination of teaching materials” (Nunan 1991: 210).

For a subject so central to the practice of ELT there are relatively few examples in the literature that focus directly on it (Allwright, 1982; O’Neill, 1982; Dubin and Olshtain, 1986; Sheldon 1988; Johnson, 1989; Hutchinson and Torres, 1994; Brown, 1995; Cunningsworth, 1995; Ellis, 1997; McDonough and Shaw, 1997; Miura, 1997; White, 1997; Tomlinson, 1998; Litz, 2005). While other ‘non-pedagogical’ issues relating to the CB have received as much attention: stereotyping / cultural biases (e.g. Porreca 1984);

language-culture issues (e.g. Prodromou 1988); and linguistic ‘inauthenticity’ (e.g. Brazil et al. 1980).

### ***1.2 Enquiry rationale, and context***

One context in which the CB plays a particularly significant role, both from an educational and commercial perspective is that of the tertiary sector (college and university), especially in a country like Japan with a relatively large percentage of one of the most densely populated countries in the world, completing tertiary education. As part of which students either elect to, or are compulsorily (in the vast majority of cases) enrolled in English language programmes. According to a major U.S.-based ELT publishing house, in Japan, “Approximately 600,000 new students enter university each year, all of which study English for at least two semesters and some for three or more.” From my own personal experience of working in the tertiary sector in Japan it seems that universities providing programmes based on the production of in-house materials are in a definite minority, mainly limited to majors and elective courses. Competition between ELT publishers for this market is consequently intense.

Publishers therefore put much effort into promoting CBs, supplying them with ‘credentials’ that testify to their ‘usability’, applicability, relevance, and above all to their ‘communicative’ content: “... the tasks in this book ... help you practice real communication”; “Focus on communicating ideas and meaning”; “Updated Methodology” (*English Firsthand 1* Pearson Longman 2010).

Due to the ‘wealth’ (or surfeit) of CBs currently on the market, and a history of many “... single edition, now defunct [text]books ... [testifying] to the market consequences of teachers’ verdicts” (Sheldon 1988, cited in Litz 2005: 8), caution and a degree of skepticism are necessary in regard to issues of ‘quality’:

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



The ability of CBs to facilitate meaningful, effective teaching-learning experiences, and the challenges of realizing a communicative approach still remain in question some three decades after O'Neill, then an 'established' CB writer, first acknowledged:

A great deal must depend on spontaneous, creative interaction in the classroom. Textbooks can help to bring this about, and a great deal in their design can be improved in order to do this. (1982: 111)

### ***1.3 Theoretical and thematic framework***

It is the intention of this enquiry, throughout subsequent chapters, to develop a line of argument that makes significant distinctions between what is often perceived as 'communicative', and what, more accurately, deserves to be so described. And subsequently, to discuss the implications this has for the CB and the consequent realization, or otherwise, of effective pedagogy. The thematic core of the argument is that, having superseded the previous **structural-behaviourist paradigm** – academically speaking (Woodward, in Willis and Willis 1996: 4-9; Richards and Rodgers, 2001), CLT is nevertheless, still influenced by it in problematic ways, in practice; coinciding, moreover, with commercial considerations that appear to maintain and engender it. This poses challenges for CLT as an *evolving* 'project', from which important developments like Task Based Learning (TBL) have emerged; raising questions about the practice of ELT, and the nature and use of instructional materials. Hence, the CB is subject to varying (as will be shown), often conflicting and sometimes contradictory pressures and influencing factors: on the one hand is a degree of 'conventional practice', and the need to appeal to and supply market demands; on the other, theoretical and pedagogical notions emerging from ELT, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Linguistics, and general education on the nature of teaching-learning as a *developmental* process (Allwright, 1982; Edge, 1996; Holliday, 1994; Lange, in Richards and Nunan 1990). Implications resulting from consideration of these factors will be discussed in regard to the 'usability', effectiveness, and degree of 'communicativeness' of the CB as a generic entity, through a focus on one specific example taken as typologically representative, in line with Willis's observation that: "many coursebooks are rooted in a presentation methodology" (1996: 51).

Since ‘communicativeness’ refers to the essential, defining nature of CLT, a central tenet, chosen for use as a benchmark reference is offered here:

Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, *authentic*, functional use of language for *meaningful purposes*. Organizational language forms are *not* the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes. (italics mine) (Brown 2001: 43)

#### ***1.4 Scope and organization***

Chapter 2 sets forth the argument (as described), citing relevant scholarship in ELT, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Linguistics, and associated fields. Chapter 3 describes the inception, and presents the findings of a survey report on interview and questionnaire responses to a particular CB (*English Firsthand 1* Pearson Longman 2010) in use, in a specified tertiary setting in Japan. Additionally, a separate questionnaire was prepared and administered to three major, international ELT publishing houses in respect to the three CBs cited in regard to Kinki University, Japan. Two of whom completed the questionnaires, from which responses have been selectively quoted throughout. Finally, Chapter 4 summarizes the main implications of the survey data in line with the foregoing argument and publishing house responses, and discusses the consequences with regard to the limitations of the existing broad generic model, and the potential emergence of a new, more communicatively authentic one.

## **CHAPTER 2: Challenges for the Coursebook and Evolving Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

### ***2.1 The commercial context of the ELT coursebook***

CBs are a mainstay of the commercial ELT market, one major Hong Kong-based ELT publishing house stating, “The English language teaching market [for CBs] is huge globally.” While CBs are aimed at particular market niches, the broader the potential appeal the more commercially viable the product, as the author guidelines on submitting book proposals for a major U.S.-based ELT publisher indicate, requiring prospective authors to provide:

An analysis of the market this product should address; please note that this is a critical factor in determining the potential of your project, as publishers generally focus most heavily on projects that will bring in the highest revenue and/or fill a hole in the market with substantial potential for growth.

Intended for sale to teachers and administrators, CBs need to be more-or-less identifiable with a recognized methodological approach, set of theories, or type of pedagogy, in order to promote them as ‘informed’, ‘relevant’ and up-to-date’, as the cited author guidelines also stipulate the need for, “a rationale for the creation of [the] product, e.g., why the approach is appropriate / preferable”

The question of what informs the content and organization of CBs therefore needs to be scrutinized with regard to the many claims made on their behalf in order to aid assessment of both their intrinsic value and their appropriateness for use in a given context.

Richards and Rodgers, following Anthony (1963), describe ‘approach’ as “[referring] to theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching” (2001: 20). While Brown defines methodology as, “Pedagogical practices in general (including theoretical underpinnings and related research)” (2001: 15-16).

As periodic, historic shifts in the theory and practice of ELT have taken place (Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Brown, 2000; White, 1988) CBs have come to incorporate

corresponding changes. At the same time they are produced in response to a perceived market demand that may be at variance with the latest theoretical developments in ELT and SLA, particularly where local cultural contexts might not be predisposed to new and challenging ‘foreign’ ideas (Hofstede 1986), emanating from the native English-speaking countries of Britain, Australasia and North America (BANA) (Holliday 1994: 12). As one major Hong kong-based ELT publisher states, “The non-native teacher market is the largest market – and we have always aimed to target the NNS teacher as the primary market.” Hence the importance of the local cultural context and its notions of what is appropriate regarding teaching practice and materials. This implies particular CB features that may be expected in order for the product to sell. Market appeal is clearly a primary consideration over and above considerations of pedagogical or theoretical worth as the same publisher concedes:

Some state school markets, for example, allow for little flexibility in terms of both language items covered and [their] teaching. Some authors have a very set of way of covering material (e.g. ‘gurus’ of the field) and should market appeal be wide enough, a publisher would certainly produce it.

At worst this may result in “the pedagogic principles that are often displayed in many textbooks [being] conflicting, contradictory or even outdated depending on the capitalizing interests and exploitations of the sponsoring agent” (Litz 2005: 6).

## ***2.2 Challenges for the realization of ‘authentic’ CLT***

Since a great many CBs have, for some time, laid claim to a ‘communicative’ methodological approach the following question needs to be asked: To what extent does the (inherent) methodological approach embody key tenets of CLT?

The principles of CLT have been stated in different ways by Widdowson (1978), Breen and Candlin (1980), Savignon (1983), Nunan (1991a), Lee and Van Patten (1995), Richard-Amato (1996), Brown (2000), and Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983); the latter defining them in contrast to the prior, *paradigmatically* (Kuhn 1970, cited by Woodward in Willis and Willis 1996: 4) opposite ones of the Audiolingual Method (ALM), cited in

Brown (2001: 45) and Richards and Rodgers (2001: 156-157). Of these ‘interpretations’ the most concise version seems to be Brown’s (2001: 43).

Referring to the challenges to the realization of authentic CLT Brown warns of the dangers of appropriation, “Beware of giving lip service to principles of CLT ... but not truly grounding your teaching techniques in such principles” (2001: 44). This might equally be taken to apply to CB producers as well as teachers, as will be discussed. Concerning the ‘position’ of CLT Holliday stresses its *developmental* nature in order to dissociate it from the “serial” Methods that pre-date it:

The serial view sees communicative language teaching as just another method to be considered amongst all the others. A developmental view, on the other hand, sees the advent of communicative language teaching as an important breakthrough ... Once this breakthrough is appreciated, it is no longer possible to go back to choose an earlier method if communicative language teaching does not appeal. What is needed is a further development of the communicative approach. (1994: 166)

If CLT is accepted as *developmental* and *evolving* it follows that more recent methodological approaches, such as TBL and Content-Based Teaching (CBT), coming to attention in the 1990s, and the Natural Approach, developed by Krashen in the 1980s, exemplify that development (Richards and Rodgers 2001).

Of the approaches to emerge from CLT, TBL especially, is seen as “a logical development of Communicative Language teaching” by Willis (1996, cited in Richards and Rodgers 2001: 223), which “seeks to reconcile methodology with current theories of second language acquisition” (ibid.: 151). Breen and Candlin stress the importance of “*negotiation*” “through and about ... conventions” as a “primary ability” “essential” to a communicative curriculum. Negotiation is predicated on the execution of “activities and tasks ... [to] generate communication” (italics mine) (Hall and Hewings 2001: 9-25).

According to this shared view, TBL can be seen as a necessary and logical progression of CLT, such that without the inclusion of a task element CLT remains not ‘fully realized’. Objections have been made regarding the ability of TBL to accommodate transactional language (Yule 1996: 59), however, the argument here is not to advocate TBL as distinct from CLT, but to see *evolving* CLT as inclusive of it. Moreover, as the unfolding argument illustrates, without this evolving inclusivity it may be ‘diluted’ by the surviving influences of the **structural-behaviourist (S-B) paradigm** (discussed below), most obviously ALM (originating in North America) and the structural-based approaches (e.g.

The Oral Approach) of the British context (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 36-39). This is evident at the classroom level, and in certain ELT materials, where the inevitable lag between theory and practice is found. As Lange states: “Audiolingualism is no longer the reigning theory of language learning, but it has been deeply ingrained in foreign language teachers’ routines as basic practice” (Richards and Nunan 1990: 253).

This view coincides with the difference between the “strong” and “weak” versions of CLT elaborated by Holliday, (1994: 170-172), and by Howatt (cited in Richards and Rodgers 2001: 155). At the time of writing, Howatt (1984) describes the “weak” version as having “become more or less standard practice.” Summarizing the difference as, “learning to use English” (‘weak’), versus “Using English to learn it” (‘strong’). By the ‘strong’ version, he means that:

Language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself.  
(Howatt 1984: 279)

“Language system” is essentially a reference to *interlanguage*, an important feature of SLA, defined by Lightbown and Spada as:

A learner’s developing second language knowledge. It may have characteristics of the learner’s first language, characteristics of the second language, and some characteristics that seem to be very general and tend to occur in all or most interlanguage systems. Interlanguages are systematic, but they are also dynamic. They change as learners receive more input and revise their hypotheses about the second language.  
(2006: 201)

The challenge that “interlanguage systems” present is that *input* does not necessarily result in *uptake*, as an emphasis on controlled practice (a mainstay of the S-B paradigm and ‘weak’ version CLT) is intended to achieve:

Controlled practice contributes directly to explicit (i.e. declarative) knowledge, but not to implicit (i.e. procedural) knowledge. Implicit knowledge is dependent on meaning-focused input which the learner processes in accordance with the current state of her interlanguage. Communicative output draws predominantly on implicit knowledge ... Controlled practice is designed to automatize rather than to sensitize ... There may be more efficient ways (such as problem-solving tasks) of helping learners develop useful explicit knowledge.  
(Ellis 1988: 36-37)

Hence authentic, *developmental* CLT is based on “meaning-focused” interaction.

Consequently, The main question in regard to this discussion, is how the principles of authentic CLT can best be incorporated in teaching materials. This needs to be understood in the light of the need for teachers to make a host of decisions affected by a range of considerations not recognized or acknowledged by the previous S-B Methods such as ALM since it, “[made] the over-simplified assumption that what teachers ‘do’ in the classroom can be conventionalized into a set of procedures that fit all contexts” (Brown 2001: 15). Such considerations include student profiles, learning-style variation, affect, motivation, and other *contextual* concerns such as class sizes and macro and micro cultural (ethnic, social, institutional,) factors, (Hofstede, 1986; Holliday, 1994).

A “conventionalized set of procedures” however, is very convenient as it allows a relatively broad market appeal that (in theory) “fits” a range of “contexts.” As one major ELT publishing house states, the standardized organization of unit content (which largely presupposes it) “is a ‘preference’ from many markets from both teachers and students. Standard organization allows both to become quickly familiar with how the coursebook is organized.” Criticism has resulted from such ‘accommodation’, “Too often ... writers have ignored theory and have followed procedural rather than principled instincts ... and publishers have been driven by considerations of what they know they can sell” (Tomlinson 1998: 23). This has created a certain dilemma whereby a tension exists

... between the linear, graded organization of content, which is such a strong tradition in language teaching, and the non-linear, organic growth picture of language learning ... emerging from second language acquisition (SLA) research. (White 1988: 36)

As illustrated, this poses serious challenges to the realization of CLT principles, particularly, as Brown (2001: 43) puts it, the proviso that:

Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, *authentic*, functional use of language for *meaningful purposes*. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes. (italics mine)

As indicated by the “market preference” cited above certain CB ‘conventions’ have an enduring appeal for ‘good’ practical reasons, “ease-of-use for teachers” in the words of one major publisher, being foremost. Equally, the aspects of the S-B paradigm that coincide with those conventions have an enduring appeal given also that it was an ‘approach’ exported worldwide in the 1950s at a time of burgeoning growth in the ELT

market (Phillipson 1992: 137-164). Aspects of the S-B paradigm clearly retain value, given its former pre-eminence. However, these are ‘pre-communicative’ methods involving automatization (the limits of which are indicated by Ellis, above) and specifically, phonology, where the use of drills typical of ALM, have an important function. Recitative phonological drills tend to be of low cognitive demand (Lightbown and Spada 2006: 38-46) and as such may offer an important ‘respite’ or punctuating role in a lesson, galvanizing a class (in choral repetition) or creating a needed change of pace / mood. Consequently S-B methods often proved effective with beginner or lower-level abilities where the intensive use of drills seemingly produced positive results. For students with developing communicative competence (Hymes, 1967, 1972; Canale and Swain, 1980) in need of productive interaction its relevance and effectiveness encounter serious failings:

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

The manifestation of the ‘weak’ version of CLT, most clearly recognizable, especially, in the British context, is the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) model. A growing awareness of its limitations has taken hold in the light of developments in theory and SLA:

Trainees schooled in PPP come out believing themselves to be trained in ‘communicative language teaching’. The dilution and subsumption of CLT within a PPP framework raises serious questions about the lack of principled thought behind much current classroom work. (Scrivener, in Willis and Willis 1996: 80)

While Lewis recognizes a clear connection between PPP and, implicitly, the S-B paradigm:

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



Finally, Scrivener describes the direct legacy of the S-B paradigm on PPP, which has compromised much in CLT:

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

As is evident, the presence of a PPP methodology, identifiable in many CBs claiming to be ‘communicative’ raises serious questions about the authenticity of such a claim.

### ***2.3 Implications for the ‘communicative’ coursebook***

This section discusses the key pedagogical challenges of the ‘communicative’ CB based on the identification of three categories through which to assess its potential effectiveness: *conceptual organization*; *meaningful integration*; and *personalization*. These intersect with, but also overlap in some degree, the following sub-sections: (1) Design and organization, (2) Adaptation and choice.

#### **2.3.1 Design and organization**

According to Richards and Rodgers:

*Design* is the level of method analysis in which we consider (a) what the objectives of a method are; (b) how language content is selected and organized within the method, that is, the syllabus model the method incorporates; (c) the types of learning tasks and teaching activities the method advocates; (d) the roles of learners; (e) the roles of teachers; and (f) the role of instructional materials. (2001: 24)

In addition to the incorporation of the PPP model (as discussed), a common organizing principle of many ‘communicative’ CBs seems to be that of a ‘suitable’ exploitation of the four skills in terms of their receptive / productive features, using ‘activities’ that employ some variation in the cognitive and other demands made on students. This may or may not produce an effective teaching-learning experience and probably accounts for the consternation felt by teachers when it ‘works’ on some occasions but not others. What may be lacking is, in effect, a better ‘realization’ of *evolving*, authentic CLT.

In order to expand on this notion it is important to consider categories that have a bearing on format and organization. A useful starting point is *meaningful integration*, a way of identifying (the possible lack of) a cohesive, unifying principle behind the *staging* of CB unit content. Without PPP, CLT needs something to fulfill this vital function.

A serious weakness of CLT, if it is separated from its evolution toward TBL, is that, according to Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983), “sequencing is determined by any consideration of content function or meaning that maintains interest” (cited in Brown 2001: 45). This pre-dates TBL, and seems to be very much dependent on variation in classroom context and possible subjective interpretation, creating a challenge in seeking a suitable organizing rationale for what some, including Dubin and Olshtain (1986), refer to as the “one size fits all”, “global” CB.

One of the strengths of TBL is that it offers sound principles for the sequencing and staging of teaching-learning content – and thus CB – ‘units’, and in this way can be seen to be the most direct – and necessary – development of evolving CLT. TBL places an emphasis on the staging and sequencing of the teaching-learning process with regard to both language and cognitive factors as informed by SLA research, as Skehan, Willis, D. and Willis, J. demonstrate (Willis and Willis 1996).

The point, however, is not to advocate that CB’s adopt a specific TBL ‘model’, but that CLT without recognition of task inclusion lacks an underpinning rationale for classroom organization and interaction (aside from that of PPP). Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) imply the use of tasks in their itemizing of communicative features, while Breen and Candlin, in detailing “the essentials of a communicative curriculum”, discuss how “personal and joint negotiation” comes about “through the provision of ... problem-posing texts” (Hall and Hewings 2001: 12, 20).

Without a proper realization of adequate tasks meaningful *integration* of teaching-learning staging and sequencing will be difficult to achieve. As a result, the ‘parts’ of a CB unit may not add up to a satisfactory ‘whole.’

Meaningful integration can be found where each stage of a teaching-learning ‘unit’ contributes to and facilitates the following one; or consolidates or expands on the preceding stage(s). And where a pivotal communicative stage based on task performance is the focal point, toward which the preceding stages build, and after which the

subsequent stages provide follow-up. This creates a ‘whole’ integrated with its ‘parts,’ in turn integrated with each other. It also provides a clear organizational sequence on which to base CB unit content.

Underpinning this is *conceptual organization*, which is concerned with the type of syllabus employed, curricula assumptions, and considerations of approach. Although functional / notional syllabuses (White 1988) have been identified with CLT, the organizing categories used produce a similar effect to that of a structural syllabus in that language tends to be itemized in a discrete and selective way similar to traditional S-B notions (inherited by PPP). In fact, the functions and notions themselves – more so with functions, less so with notions – tend to run the risk of creating artificial boundaries for language, of being themselves, too discrete. This raises the issue of the unpredictability of the language students will actually use at any given juncture (Widdowson, 1978; Lightbown, 1985), the unpredictability of what elements of the language will be acquired in what order (Long 1988); and hence, the degree to which it should be ‘managed’ (see section 2.3.2):

All forms of procedural or skill-based learning are, in fact, not subject to the kind of linear sequencing intrinsic to any assertion that we know exactly what is being learned at any given moment.  
(Lewis, in Willis and Willis 1996: 13)

Graves cites Das (1998: viii) who points out that materials should not “pre-specify learning outcomes or attempt to control or substantially guide learning: their function is primarily to provide opportunities for learning through interaction” (Hall and Hewings 2001: 188). Since functions / notions are a means of dividing and categorizing language, this identifies them more with the linguistic than the real world. Though clearly, they are an attempt to move away from the abstract realm of language as system (Chomsky 1965) to the actual world of transaction and interaction (Halliday, 1994; Yule, 1996).

However, for the learner who may not be instrumentally, extrinsically or intrinsically motivated (Brown 2000: 162-166) a given function may not be particularly meaningful or interesting in itself (Swan 1985: 84). ‘Real-world’ subject categories, therefore, are a more effective basis for conceptual organization in the form of ‘topics.’ They are more inclusive and comprehensive than functions or notions, allowing expansion of themes and greater potential content variation, resulting in greater potential for contextual adaptation.

Dubin and olshtain consider syllabuses for “overall proficiency” where, “learners ... take a foreign language as part of their school program [with] an open and general objective” (which mostly describes the Japanese compulsory educational context for native-speaker (NS) teachers):

Motivation and interest in the target language become significant goals of the program ... Course content becomes, therefore, of primary importance. The learners need to become involved in interesting themes and exciting tasks ... The systematic organization of the course, in this case, might be derived from a *thematic approach*. Themes/topics would be selected and sequenced according to the learners’ interests and background knowledge, while lexis, semantico-grammatical features, and communicative functions would be selected to serve the treatment of each theme ... all language skills would be utilized in an integrated manner within each thematic unit. (italics mine) (1986: 103)

Ideally, topics for use in ELT should have the same interest-value as they would if exploited in the students’ own native language, as intrinsically worthy of consideration. As Miura states:

In the EFL situation in Japan, where there is little need for students to speak English outside the classroom, choosing appropriate topics is essential for enhancing students’ motivation to participate in class. (1997: 9)

### 2.3.2 Adaptation and choice

Adaptation implies a degree of applied ‘expertise’, and both the limitations and (perhaps often unforeseen) potential of the materials in question:

For teachers who are required to use a certain text, course development *is* the adaptation of the text, for the content of the text determines the content of the course. However, the text is not the course; rather, what the teacher and students do with the text constitutes the course. Textbooks are tools that can be figuratively cut up into component pieces and then rearranged to suit the needs, abilities and interests of the students in the course. The material in a textbook can be modified to incorporate activities that will motivate students and move them beyond the constraints of the text. (Graves, in Hall and Hewings 2001: 188)

The area in which CBs are most deficient and thus need teacher ‘intervention’, Graves implies, is that of meaningful communicative interaction (see survey conclusions). Which is the area of language ‘activity’ where learning is most likely to take place (Ellis 1988: 36-37 – see above) and therefore central to CLT.

A major distinction between the S-B paradigm and CLT is that the former promotes a “conventionalized set of procedures to fit all contexts” (Brown 2001: 15). While the latter, according to Brumfit and Finocchiaro’s itemization of its key principles (italics mine) maintains that:

(8.) Any device that helps the learners is accepted – *varying* according to their age, interest etc.

(15.) Linguistic *variation* is a central concept in materials and methods

(17.) Teachers help learners in *any way* that motivates them to work with the language

(21.) The teacher *cannot know exactly* what language the students will use

(cited in Brown 2001: 45)

Thus, CLT differs significantly from previous developments in ELT in its recognition of the importance of *variables* that affect the teaching-learning process. This results in the unpredictability of learning outcomes, and the unpredictability of the language that students will use (as cited above: 2.3.1), and hence the inadequacy of prescriptive and pre-determining methodological approaches (as noted). Leading to a recognition of the importance of the ‘emergent’:

If we define ‘content’ as the sum total of ‘what is taught’ and ‘what is available to be learned’, then it becomes clear that ‘content’ (potential intake) is not predictable. It is, rather, something that emerges because of the interactive nature of classroom events ... [teaching] materials may *contribute* in some way, but cannot *determine* content.  
(Allwright 1982: 8)

Holliday has emphasized the significance of “becoming-appropriate methodology” (1994: 177), while Edge (1996: 11) offers the formulation: “Appropriate methodology is emergent methodology.” A further key consequence is the responsibility this places on the professional expertise of the teacher in managing such variables and adjusting to emergent conditions, entailing a *developmental* awareness where ‘development’ contrasts with the notion of being ‘trained’, an essentially S-B approach (Edge, 1996; Lange, in Richards and Nunan 1990).

All of which leads to the need for anticipating and facilitating adaptation in ELT materials. If adaptation (of materials) is central to the teaching-learning experience, primarily to meet students’ needs (and perhaps preferences), then it must be recognized in materials’ design, “writers must provide places in the text for ... local adjustments to be

made” (Dubin and Olshtain 1986: 170). The degree to which choice and variation might be explicitly present in CBs relates to their potential for effective communicative interaction, since the accommodation of contextual factors is central to the success of such activities, often through their need for personalization.

Most (particularly experienced) teachers will not wish to depend on a voluminous TM for suggestions (see Survey Report responses). If the inferred methodology in the CB supposedly incorporates flexibility, it needs to be *seen* to do so because, in the view of one major Hong Kong-based ELT publisher, of “teachers [feeling] obligated to follow the organization of the unit.” This mainly applies to the ‘first-time user’ and the inexperienced. Experienced teachers invariably adapt CBs, as Brown implies, “Numerous observations of language teachers in action have led me to conclude that good language teachers must be very flexible” (1995: 4). It is thus seen as an index of ‘professionalism’ and expertise.

Given this, a major test of a CBs ‘usability’ is how readily it lends itself to adaptation. It should not do so merely incidentally, but ‘actively’ as a result of design considerations. CBs incorporating a basic PPP approach are often overly pre-determining and therefore require some effort in adapting on a ‘first run’.

Dubin and Olshtain (ibid.: 29) offer a set of questions to assess materials where they ask:

(3.) Do most of the materials provide alternatives for teachers and learners? Alternatives may be provided in terms of learner-tasks, learning styles, presentation techniques, expected outcomes, etc. This is a significant feature of *effective* materials ... When there are no *built-in* alternatives which allow teachers and learners to choose what suits them in their particular situations, then the materials might be *imposing* and *restricting* rather than allowing for *expansion* and *enrichment*. (italics, mine)

Adaptability needs to be incorporated in two ways: *firstly*, (procedural) options for exploiting a particular topic, function, notion or situation and *secondly* language options and scope. Regarding the second point, a further trace left by the S-B paradigm is the presentation of specific lexical items intended for student uptake in connection with designated activities. Often these are limited, can incur cultural difficulties, and appear prescriptive and “imposed.” Furthermore, they may pre-empt, co-opt, or ignore actual, authentic, personally related information directly pertaining to the students that may be far more valuable and engaging for the students themselves to supply and expand on, “The whole business of the management of language learning is far too complex to be

satisfactorily catered for by a pre-packaged set of decisions embodied in teaching materials” (Allwright 1982: 9). This leads to the third category: *personalization*.

In order for students to fully engage with a topic it should be personally meaningful to them at some level. To cite Finocchiaro and Brumfit (op. cit.: 45) again, “Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in what is being communicated by the language.” If students are given opportunities for self-expression and personalization, interest and motivation will be stimulated. As Brown states, “The *communicative approach* focuses on the need for students to express meanings that are important to them and their lives” (1995: 6). Consequently, opportunities for personalization of CB content should always be maximized.

Personalization is a form of ‘*investment*’ by the student in the teaching-learning process. There are other effective ways in which it can be incorporated. Rather than thoroughly pre-determining specified situations, related role options and associated language, teachers – and where appropriate – students, might engage in determining aspects of such ‘settings’, and aspects of the kind of ‘exchanges’ that occur in them. This kind of ‘creative’ involvement can be very motivating and allows for serious investment in teaching-learning content. Allwright makes reference to such in considering teacher ‘overload’ – which might be re-rendered here as ‘CB overload’:

Teacher ‘overload’ often entails learner ‘underinvolvement’ since teachers are doing work learners could more profitably do for themselves. Involvement does not just mean ‘activity’, however ... ‘Involvement means something more akin to Curran’s ‘investment’ (Curran, 1972 and 1976), which suggests a deep sort of involvement, relating to the whole person ... related not simply to ‘participation in classroom activities’ but to ... decision-making, and ... the whole business of the management of language learning.  
(1982: 10)

CBs, therefore, rather than providing ‘made-to-order’ scenarios with their discrete apportioning of selected language, need to provide the necessary scaffolding (frameworks) for the generation or realization of *appropriate* scenarios and language options. Obviously there are limitations on what might be asked of both the teacher and the student, but there needs to be some element of participatory ‘setting up’ to encourage such investment. One of the main reasons students become ‘disengaged’ is because they are effectively *required* to take on ready-made situations and language that they have had

no part in shaping. In the same way (especially inexperienced) teachers themselves can become passive servants of CB teaching-learning content:

The materials writer and the publisher who [produce] the materials have more direct control of the course design processes than the teachers. The degree of dominance depends on how much and how closely the teachers choose to follow the coursebook or how much teachers take initiative in making flexible use of the materials. In fact, this ... has featured in the recent debate on whether the textbook could cause teachers to be over-dependent on books or not. Littlejohn (1992: 84) reported in Hutchinson and Torres (1994: 315), expressed such concern by saying that 'the precise instruction which the materials give reduce the teacher's role to one of managing or overseeing a preplanned classroom event. (Masuhara, in Tomlinson 1998: 249)

Given this, "It is important that textbooks should be so designed and organized that a great deal of improvisation and adaptation both by teacher and class is possible" (O'Neill 1982: 107). Such a design would need to be more obviously and explicitly 'open' to such aims and not obscured by a 'surface methodology' needing to be 'navigated', which those lacking expertise, time or patience "feel obligated to follow."



## **CHAPTER 3: Coursebook Survey Report: *English Firsthand 1***

### **3.1 Objectives**

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

- 1.) To ascertain how common a perceived dissatisfaction with CBs for spoken communication is among experienced teachers, and to investigate the causes
- 2.) To ascertain what the actual limitations of such CBs are by focusing on a specific, best-selling CB, representative of the ‘global’, ‘communicative’ genre
- 3.) To find evidence of the causes of such limitations in the underlying pedagogical assumptions manifested in the CB by assessing the ‘interpretation’ of CLT they constitute, and the influence on this of commercial considerations

### **3.2 Research Questions**

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

- (1.) How communicative is the CB?
  - To what extent does it embody key principles of CLT?
- (2.) What kind of ‘surface’ or inherent methodology does it contain?
  - How pedagogically effective is it?
- (3.) If a satisfactory, ‘workable’ methodology is only realizable through ‘intervention’ (teacher adaptation), how valuable is presenting a design *suggesting* a set methodology rather than a more explicitly flexible, adaptive format?
- (4.) How far does the CB design *facilitate* adaptation?

- (5.) How much scope for student personalization is there?
- (6.) Is a more explicit and greater degree of built-in choice and ‘open-endedness’ in the CB desirable? (Irrespective of the presence or not of options / suggestions in the Teacher’s Manual)

### **3.3 Methods**

#### **3.3.1 Theoretical considerations:**

One major consideration behind the decision to pursue a qualitative survey was the importance of contextuality in the data-gathering process. This contrasts with standardized quantitative methods that impose an abstract structural framework and process onto a particular set of circumstances. As Kvale points out:

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

Context, as evident from the unfolding report, played a central role in procedural decisions and organizational structure, “qualitative research reports will often set out to tell the story of the research, and that story may differ in structure from project to project and report to report” (Brown 2001: 257). This coincided with a pragmatic approach to the project, “of working within your level of expertise, selecting research methods which are suitable for the task and which can be readily analysed, interpreted and presented (Bell 2010: 209).

#### **3.3.2 Coursebook focus rationale:**

The choice of *English Firsthand 1* (Helgesen et al. Pearson Longman Asia ELT 2010) (*EFL*) as the sample coursebook focus of the questionnaire directly relates to the factors that determined the participant sample selection.

Since it was decided to use known fellow teachers as the participant sample this meant choosing the coursebook(s) most commonly used by them.

In 2009, 57 teachers taught in the *Oral English* programme at Kinki University, Osaka, Japan, from which the participant sample was taken. Teachers were offered a choice of seven CBs from which to select for first year students, three of which had been options in previous years after having been selected as the most popular three choices. Of the coursebook options for 2009, the most widely selected choice was *EF1* (one of the extant choices of previous years). 20 teachers opted for *EF1* in 2009 (full data for 2010 was unavailable at the time of compilation).

Using *EF1* as the survey focus was therefore determined by circumstantial factors whereby the teachers in the participant sample had all chosen the most widely selected CB for the *Oral English* Programme at Kinki University. This fact, taken together with the perception that there was nevertheless some lack of satisfaction with it – whether because it embodied the limitations of CBs *per se*, or for more specific reasons – made it a potentially challenging focus of enquiry.

*EF1* was thus clearly representative of the ‘better’ CBs currently available. The intention was to evaluate *EF1* with reference to the ‘global’, ‘communicative’ genre from which it derives. Hence an implicit objective of the survey was to see it *in commonality*, as indicated by certain questions.

### **3.3.3 The Participant Sample:**

The participant sample was selected for the reasons outlined above, constituting “convenience or opportunity sampling” (Dornyei 2010: 61).

It was decided to administer a survey questionnaire to teachers, and not to students, in the belief that they would provide a more in-depth, critically informed response-base, with a clearer perception of learning needs and teaching-learning issues.

The *Oral English* programme is the largest English language programme at Kinki University employing up to 60 native-speaking English teachers. It is also one of the largest English teaching programmes within a single institution in Japan. Kinki University is one of the largest such institutions in Japan. The pool from which the participant sample was drawn was, therefore, relatively large. Most of the teachers in this

pool, both male and female, are between 40 and 60 years of age with considerable teaching experience, mainly in Japan, and including all native-English speaking nationalities. Just over half of the sample respondents have ELT qualifications.

Of those approached, 10 agreed to complete and subsequently returned the questionnaire survey. In addition, an interview was conducted prior to administering the questionnaire, with a Head of the Oral English programme at one particular department.

The rationale for participant selection was based on the hope that personal colleagues might be more willing to complete an open-ended questionnaire requiring time and thought than would unknown respondents. This necessitated the questionnaire be as user-friendly as possible. The subject of the questionnaire was of direct relevance to teachers, and an ongoing factor in the daily exercise of their work that they could clearly relate to. Finally, the sample represented a variety of teachers teaching in the various departments to whom the *Oral English* programme is administered.

#### **3.3.4 The Survey:**

A key theoretical factor in determining the type of survey to use was the wish to undertake a qualitative investigation using open-ended questions eliciting responses that it was hoped, would be carefully considered. This was due to the desire to explore and analyze the relevant issues (as cited) in more depth than would be possible with a quantitative study which would not have allowed for (fuller) explanation or qualification of responses:

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

Quantitative surveys tend to have a more specified and therefore narrower focus, with much attention given to discrete elements. The subject of enquiry, in this case, seemed better suited to a more holistic and interconnected form of assessment (Kvale 1996: 45).

A key context-related factor in deciding to use an open-ended qualitative survey was that the number of potential respondents would not be a decisive issue in determining the validity of the data. As Bell points out:

In relatively small projects, generalization may be unlikely, but reliability may be entirely possible. Well-prepared, small-scale studies may inform, illuminate and provide a basis for policy decisions ... As such, they can be invaluable (Bell 2010: 210)

Although the number of potential respondents was limited to those directly approachable, within such limits a greater breadth and depth of information could be gathered.

Due to the fact that the current enquiry was prompted by a long-standing concern with the perceived issues surrounding ELT CBs, I had inevitably developed certain questions and hypotheses: questions requiring exploration; hypotheses needing testing. The balance between exploring and hypothesis-testing at first suggested the possible use of interviews as an appropriate data-gathering means.

The experience of initially embarking on an interview project led to a more focused conception of the questions and issues at stake. The questions were formulated so as to “thematically ... relate to the topic of the interview, to the theoretical conceptions at the root of (the) investigation, and to the subsequent analysis” (Kvale 1996: 129). Two unrecorded trial interviews were conducted as an initial piloting step. The first took the form of a discussion of ‘communicative’ CBs in general, with particular examples as a reference point. The second focused on one particular CB (*World Link 1* First Edition, Heinle Cengage) – one of the three original options for first-year students at Kinki University).

The first interview raised the following key points:

- i) The primary issue for CB use is contextual appropriacy – ‘what works and what doesn’t vis-à-vis the context*
- ii) CBs aimed at a broad market always entail challenges of appropriacy necessitating adaptation for any given context*
- iii) CBs without a clear, simple ‘methodology’ (too much ‘clutter’) are confusing and difficult to adapt*

The second interview confirmed point (iii) above and made the additional point that in the case of *World Link 1* and other similar CBs the main communicative stage(s) of each unit reside in the TM and would be better placed as key stage(s) in the Student's Book. The subsequent single recorded interview will be discussed after the Survey Questionnaire.

The three interviews (two trial, one recorded) served to pilot the questions used in the questionnaire survey formulated from the original research questions, based on the principle that "A good conceptual thematic research question need not be a good dynamic interview question" (Kvale 1996: 130). This helped refine and reorganize them, in addition to developing a sharper focus of the main issues. Consequently, the data-gathering process then took the form of one recorded interview followed by a questionnaire survey.

In the process of developing the Interview Guide and through the experience of conducting the interviews, it began to seem that a questionnaire might yield more concrete, focused data than an interview format. More condensed, focused and pertinent responses might be obtained in written form. Brown (2001: 78-79) recommends using interviews initially for "formulating research questions and specific survey questions," while "questionnaires are well suited to gathering data once the issues, research questions, and specific survey questions have been clearly delineated."

Although more interviews could have been conducted in order to provide a fuller triangulation so as to "corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research in question" (Rossman and Wilson 1985, cited in Brown 2001: 227), the initial interviews had seemed sufficient in respect to these three points. Resulting in a confirmation and clarification of the original hypotheses, therefore creating much less need for exploration. A further important factor was that respondents could answer in a place and at a time of their choosing, with the questions referable to and the option of amending answers before sending.

Other considerations favouring a questionnaire included a direct correlation existing between a questionnaire question and response – even if misconstrued – than might be the case in an interview where digressions, non-sequiturs, and circumlocutions often

occur. Being obliged to write responses also entails a much greater degree of filtering and condensing of information (Brown 2001: 74-77).

The number and form of the survey questions was determined based on the wish to condense the underlying issues as much as possible without conflating them. The number of questions could then be limited so that response time, at a conservative estimate, would take approximately 30 minutes; more than that would have been potentially too daunting and demanding; less, potentially insubstantial. This was also in keeping with the recorded interview having taken approximately 35 minutes using almost the same number of questions. It seemed that 10 questions was a suitable limit within which to frame the key issues and the response time approximation, both for the interview and the questionnaire.

Adapting the questions in the Interview Guide for use in the Questionnaire Survey was relatively simple and straightforward given that they had been adjusted and refined in the interview pilot. The two main considerations were organizational sequence, and question expansion and condensation. The Interview Guide contains several subordinate clarifying questions for each main question, amalgamated where appropriate, with the main questions more condensed. The key questions were mostly given more exemplification and extrapolation for greater clarification. Regarding organization (discussed below), a clearer demarcation into two main portions was made: (i) evaluation of content / design (ii) issues of adaptation, in keeping with the recommendation that the “*item format*” be constituted by “a series of logically organized sequences” (Dornyei 2010: 47). With the addition of a final, main, concluding question to elicit a summary of the respondents’ views on what a communicative CB should prioritize.

*The following section describes in more detail the rationale for the organization and use of specific question types:*

In order to provide guidance and clarification for respondents it was decided in the case of three of the questions and two of the question clarification statements to offer opposing ‘a’/’b’ answer choices with an implicit continuum between. One question (#6) is closed response (Likert scale), as is a single sub-question of question 10; while question 10 itself

offers a triple ‘a’/‘b’/‘c’ choice. The remaining four questions are more direct and open-ended, in view of the potential variability of the information provided.

In addition to the 10 main questions there is a brief addendum of two short, (Likert scale) closed-response questions designed for brief, concluding assessment; the first for evaluation vis-à-vis the tertiary setting, the second, as both a comparative CB evaluation, and an intrinsic evaluation of *EFL*.

One problematic item that arose in the course of conducting the recorded interview was the placement of the most pivotal and possibly most challenging question at the beginning of the Interview Guide. To some extent it was necessary to work back to it throughout the course of the interview to arrive at a satisfactory resolution of the issue of communicativeness. However, for the purposes of the Questionnaire Survey, in line with the prioritizing and categorizing of the research questions, it was decided to keep what seemed the most demanding question at the beginning of the questionnaire because it would require respondents to focus on the issue of communicativeness from the outset and help frame other questions in relation to it. It would also ensure that if responses were not sustained throughout, the opening question might be better served than latter ones.

In terms of the organizing sequence, Questions 2 – 4 deal with design and ‘methodology’ and pertain to ‘communicability’ and effective pedagogy. Question 5 concerns the singular though communicatively significant issue of personalization, and, along with question 6, serves to separate the questionnaire into two thematic portions. Question 6 is closed response (Likert scale) and links the first thematic portion – in terms of CB ‘usability’, with the second: adaptation. The second portion (Questions 7 – 9) concerns the nature of and reasons for CB adaptation.

Question 10 is designed both to identify the ‘type’ of communicative CB *EFL* represents, and more particularly and mainly, to elicit responses about what type – or potential type – of CB teachers (would) find of most value, and thus define what their conception of the priorities of a communicative CB should be. It functions, therefore, both as a closed-response question (choose: a/b/c) and, as open-response, should respondents wish to elaborate.



Finally, it was decided to include potential cover letter and other details in the preamble to the questionnaire. A separate cover letter was unnecessary since all respondents were personally acquainted and directly approachable.

### ***3.4 Presentation and Discussion of Results***

The data from the Questionnaire Survey is organized into two main categories: quantitative results from ‘closed-response’ questions, and qualitative results from open-ended questions. The qualitative results make up the bulk of the data and pertain to the key areas of enquiry posed by the survey objectives and the corresponding research questions. Since the survey is qualitative based, the results of the questionnaire take the form of discursive responses to the (adapted) 7 open-ended core questions. For this reason the mode of the data presentation is also discursive and *interpretative*: quotations and paraphrases are presented in interpretative juxtapositions with relevant commentary.

The mode of understanding implied by qualitative research involves alternative conceptions of social knowledge, of meaning, reality, and truth in social science research. The basic subject matter is no longer objective data to be quantified, but meaningful relations to be *interpreted*. (italics mine) (Kvale 1996: 11)

The open-ended responses are therefore presented *and discussed* contiguously rather than separated into discrete ‘results’ and ‘discussion’ sections, as is more commonly the case.

The quantitative results, intended to ‘frame’ relevant overviews related to the more specific open-ended questions, are organized into two tables: ***Table 1*** itemizes each response as it corresponds to the relevant question for each separate respondent.

***Table 2*** illustrates comparative variation regarding response categories in order to identify the most common response types. In addition, there is a following, itemized results and commentary section.

The results presentation and analysis will concern the main qualitative data from the Questionnaire Survey, followed by a discussion of the single recorded interview data. The quantitative data, and brief concluding commentary, is presented in the appendices.

**The Nine Core Questions:**

- 1.) To what extent does *EF1* facilitate communicative interaction?**
- 2.) How effective and usable are the unit design and procedures?**
- 3.) How logically progressive and integrated is the unit design?**
- 4.) How well do the coursebook component features work together?**
- 5.) Are there enough opportunities for student personalization?**
- 6.) What kind of elements mostly need adapting – How? – Why?**
- 7.) What are the priorities of a coursebook for spoken communication?**
- 8.) How much of the coursebook do you find usable?**
- 9.) How satisfactory do you find it (in context of use)?**

***3.4.1 Questionnaire Survey: open-ended question responses***

The analysis is made in respect to each thematic, core survey question, in sequence, as itemized.

The purpose of the following discussion is to consider the areas relating to the core questions on which respondents have taken a *critical* position. While the ways in which *EF1* succeeds as a CB are deservedly acknowledged they are not the main focus of the assessment.

Two types of related assessment are made: the coursebook in *contextual use* – specific to the *Oral English* programme at Kinki University (and by extension the tertiary setting in Japan); and the coursebook ‘in potential’ as a conceptual entity. At the same time, it is seen in the context of the generic category of ‘global’, ‘communicative’ ELT CB.

***1.) To what extent does EFL facilitate communicative interaction?***

– The first question is perhaps the most important and consequential question of the survey, since it raises the issue of whether authentic, *evolving* CLT is sufficiently represented, forming a thematic link with the subsequent questions. Of the 10 respondents, 4 believe that there is no substantive or no authentic communicative element to *EFL*:

There is no exercise that gets students using language they know to talk about shared knowledge of their world, or would lead them that into the ‘Gap’ whereby the teacher can rescue them by introducing new language and exercises where students can learn.  
(Respondent #4)

2 respondents identify, respectively, the *Interaction* stage and the *Pairwork* section as communicative, the effectiveness of the latter, however, “varies rather greatly.” While the remaining 4 respondents express reservations, “there are some activities which *potentially* allow for ... communication” (italics mine). The problems of “low-level” students and large classes (especially in combination) are seen as serious impediments to realizing communicative activities, placing greater dependency on ‘pre-communicative’ stages.

Most respondents cite the prevalence of unit stages for *controlled practice*, “Much of the language is already laid out ... The students just go through the motions.” Opinion seems evenly divided on whether or not *EFL* contains key communicative stages, with the authenticity of the nominally communicative *Interaction* stage questioned, and the ‘usability’ of communicative activities, especially for lower-level students, also put in question. Consequently, controlled practice is seen as the main – and often necessary – though “restricted”, but less problematic, content ‘activity’. ‘Activity’ here refers to all possible CB unit stages requiring student application. Such stages can be identified in terms of ‘*controlled*’ and ‘*productive*’ activities – the latter implying the potential for communicative interaction.

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

Again, stages for controlled practice are seen to predominate, but are considered a necessary content-base, as mentioned, especially for ‘low-level’ students. Both the value, “They are effective for use in classrooms where students have limited ability and/or motivation and need to be spoon-fed or pushed/pulled/dragged along”, and limitations of such “spoon-feeding” are recognized, “As the book stands, it takes students through a series of exercises where they see and practice vocabulary and structure in a confined and safe bubble.”

Respondent opinion is again about evenly divided on ‘effectiveness’/‘usability’ partly because controlled practice is seen to be (contextually) necessary and useful – though a few responses indicated dissatisfaction “disjointed preparatory exercises”. The perceived lack by some, of effective *productive* (potentially communicative) activities, such as ‘extension inserts’, was notable: “The blunt instruction at the bottom of the ‘real stories’ section of unit 3 is hilarious. *Discuss*, it says”;

The extension inserts are often not helpful, they assume that the target language has been ‘learned’ or call for language the students haven’t practiced or are weak in, leading to breakdown. (Respondent #4)

One respondent, indicating the rationale behind ‘global’ CB design, affirms the importance of being aware of the impact of market values on pedagogical concerns so that the CB user should not feel constrained in any way by the CB ‘design’:

The coursebook’s saving grace (or biggest shortcoming) is that it provides for the teaching of students individually, in small groups, in full-class activity, all at varying levels. Some have said ‘too much of everything, not enough of anything’, a conscious effort I am sure to attract teachers and school situations of all kinds. The only difficulty is not being aware of this when the teacher approaches the book.  
(Respondent #8)

This clearly raises issues about whether one need be at all concerned with CB unit design except insofar as it presents potential ‘options’ amenable to selective use and organization – the immediate pragmatic concern of most teachers, especially more experienced ones who have almost certainly developed their own (*contingent*) methodologies, “I do not generally use the units in the way they are set out”; “My classes are not planned based on the text.” Given this, and as implied above, the CB design seems to be partially based on an appeal to all potential users and, at the same time to

constitute a default, or ‘*surface methodology*’ largely for reasons of ‘presentation’ and the benefit of the new, inexperienced and NNS teacher needing a ‘ready-to-go’ structural-procedural framework.

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

Respondents’ interpretation of ‘logical continuity’ appears to be at some variance – with opinion again about evenly divided. It seems respondents attributing ‘logical continuity’ to the unit design are perhaps focusing on ‘surface-level’ design – or layout – rather than at the methodological level of Richards and Rodgers’ (1986: 24-31) conception. There are one or two objections about implicit pedagogy-methodology:

The units aim for logical continuity but in my experience particular units or exercises have weak points that need adapting for lead in and pre-productive stages and for the post productive / consolidation stages.  
(Respondent #4)

For one respondent the question appears somewhat irrelevant since it seems, the CB user should be taking their methodological cue not from the CB itself, but from the TM:

If one refers to the Teacher’s Manual (TM) and the way the authors suggest the text be used, there is a sensible learning cycle ... Using material in the back of the book and the TM, the design takes students into and out of each particular unit. One need not, nor is it suggested, that a teacher strictly follow the material of each unit as it is set out.  
(Respondent #5)

This is clearly an important point which begs the question, if appropriate and flexible methodologies are to be gleaned from the TM then can the CB itself be said to contain a ‘realizable’ methodology or does it contain, rather, as mentioned, simply a default, ‘*surface methodology*’ – as part of “a conscious effort ... to attract teachers and school situations of all kinds”, but which should be recognized as such “when the teacher approaches the book.” It must also be stated that some, particularly in the given context, object to the need for TM ‘guidance’:

The teachers book gives ideas and procedures to follow, with short explanations into the method and relevant theory behind the procedures, but any trained and experienced teacher should be able to analyze and use the units without the need for ‘how to’ approach each unit or part of a unit. (Respondent #4)

Indeed, returning to the earlier respondent (#5) who, despite the advocacy of the TM as a valuable resource, (and as stated elsewhere) prefers a much more independent approach, “I don’t teach the text. I fit texts into what I want to do”.

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

One respondent (#8) finds a marked inconsistency, “I find the book patchy in this regard. A few units cleverly tied together, one or two others obscure to the point of almost being unusable” (see the *Commentary on Interviewee Responses* section for a similar standpoint). However, 8 respondents make a largely positive assessment in regard to the question, making it somewhat exceptional. It would seem then, that the issue is relatively unproblematic (or relatively insignificant) for most respondents and / or *EFL* largely succeeds in this regard. It should be considered, perhaps, that the question is not directly pedagogical or relatable to methodology or approach, but more to overall design synthesis. In this respect the question in point might not have needed inclusion in the survey. On the other hand design synthesis clearly has an impact on impressions of ‘usability’, and while *EFL* appears to mainly succeed in this respect other CBs may not.

#### ***5.) Are there enough opportunities for student personalization?***

The pattern of roughly even division of responses is repeated here, with just over half of respondents offering qualified recognition of “some” degree of personalization. While one or two responses are affirmative, “I find students often getting genuinely engaged with the content”, difficulties are perceived, again with regard to students’ ‘low’ level. And by several (though less than half of) respondents, because of a perceived ‘cultural’ (and maturity-related) personal tendency to avoid open self-expression, “the issue is actually getting the students to give (personal) information.”

The main concerns are contextual issues rather than those of the CB *per se*. However, in the case of respondents taking a more critical line, the reason for insufficiently effective personalization is the emphasis on controlled practice activities at the perceived expense

of more communicative ones, “No [personalization exists]. The textbook is to guide students through a set of structured exercises that are restricted to the topic and language presented.”

Although some respondents believe personalization to be challenging as a realizable aim given a context of ‘low-level’ students, the challenges of realizing communicative interaction which must assume some degree of personalization (in regard to common ELT topics such as pastimes, experiences, ambitions etc.) is implicitly, the main problem.

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

Context is crucial to the rationale for and nature of adaptation “it [is] the teacher’s job to adjust the textbook written for a wide audience to local needs” (Dubin and Olshtain 1986: 170), as evidenced by a number of responses, “Often (the CB) is adapted differently in different classes”; “I have had to adapt and extend most of what is in the textbook based on the particular group I am teaching.” The same respondent (#4) cites a series of variables: conditions, affect, time, season, changing needs, all of which determine the type and extent of adaptation.

A common form of ‘*basic adjustment*’ is the extending or expanding of dialogues and pairwork activities “In coursebooks in general, pairwork activities are often not developed enough, and need to be expanded”; “(there is a need for) extending or slightly modifying some of the conversation exercises as is typical for most CBs”.

Half of respondents find the need to make ‘*significant changes*’ including omission of unit stages or elements thereof, and replacement of given stages with their own material:

I mostly adapt the textbook when I want to use it. This often means making a worksheet that includes the activities presented in the way I want and my extra tasks.  
(Respondent #10)

“I have found it necessary to introduce contextual meaningful example conversations – this is not typical of coursebooks that are written in clear *topic based* units” (italics mine). One way of identifying problematic CB unit stages is in terms of the extent to which they need to be altered or even replaced altogether. This is a clear index of a CBs ‘usability’ and effectiveness. While contextual variables may call for *basic adjustments* such as

“extending” or “modifying”, the need for *significant changes* also potentially calls into question the suitability of the pedagogical-methodological underpinning of the CB. Of the main types of activity constituting unit stages, it is implied that the ‘free’ or productive ‘communicative’ activities seem to be the most problematic – by dint of the need for ‘*significant changes*’. There is a noticeable tendency among respondents to find the need to omit and / or replace them by introducing activities that are more authentically communicative:

Mostly I omit [unit stages] ... I select activities ... [depending] on the class ... Basically I want students to speak English in my classes, and using a textbook they tend not to, so I use my own activities instead.”  
(Respondent #9)

“Communicative activities that do not require target language often need to be (introduced).”

A further implicit and explicit problem with regard to dialogues, pairwork, and especially to productive activities, is the need for adequate *scaffolding*. In the context of lower level abilities the need for it is crucial to manageable language use and interaction:

‘Have a conversation’ is an impossible instruction. There is no (suitable) framework for the students to refer to ... many of the activities [in *EFI*] are not sustained enough for students to get any benefit from them. They finish and forget.  
(Respondent #9)

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

The framing of this question included the citing of three varying design rationales from which respondents could select and on which they could comment. Design ‘a’ was based on the common ‘global’ ELT CB genre that *EFI* is taken to be representative of. As a key figure in its commissioning states:

A major consideration for the series was designing a course that could be used in large classes (as one finds in colleges/universities) and with students who are in mixed level classes, as one finds in colleges/universities and language schools.

Similarly, of the three CB options (from which teachers in the *Oral English* programme at Kinki University selected), a senior editor states, “World Link (Heinle Cengage) was designed to appeal to a variety of markets and users.”



In contrast ‘b’ and ‘c’ are based on potential, alternative designs (‘b’ based on flexibility, variable option, and open-endedness; ‘c’ on essential interlocking stages, closer to a task-based prototype, with optional extras) perceived as possibly neglected but desirable models, both of which, it is believed, may more effectively and authentically embody communicative goals and content, as will be elaborated below.

As previously, the context of ‘low-level’ students features as a strong determinant of the type of CB deemed appropriate:

I would have to select choice (a) due to time constraints and the fact that 99% of my students are very low level. It is always nice to have options and some open-ended choices but they have to be clear, quickly accessible and not too difficult.  
(Respondent #1)

‘Options’ connote the likely greater responsibility and (perhaps unavoidable) investment of the teacher in lesson planning and seem therefore in some senses to signal a reflexive caution – Is the CB really doing its job if all it does is provide options like “a glorified shopping list”? However, an option-based CB can be of different types: one which contains a series of suggestions about *what* to do (content) – much like an ‘ideas resource’ book; and one which also contains varying proposals about *how* to do (procedural), but within an overall, organizing conceptual framework – such as a topic-based book – distinguishing it from the simpler resource book. Furthermore, the potentially greater involvement of the teacher in the planning and use of an option-based CB would need to be balanced against the existing need – as the current responses indicate – of most teachers to make *significant changes* in the way they adapt *EFL* (and other similar CBs).

If the “global”, “one-size-fits-all”, ‘ready-to-go’ CB model often ‘doesn’t fit’ the context, to whatever degree, then making it ‘fit’ by teacher ‘intervention’ is an *unavoidable investment* that is anyway called for, rather than one which might reasonably be expected, within limits, where a built-in degree of decision making and planning are implied by a more ‘open-ended’, option-based model; this seems to be implicitly understood by those respondents who selected choice ‘b’.

Opinion was evenly divided between choices ‘a’ and ‘b’, with 3 respondents opting for each category (not all respondents chose to select one – or only one – of the designated

categories). The issue of pre-determination of CB content versus greater open-endedness and the relative merits of each, was tellingly encapsulated by one respondent:

It depends what your aims are as a teacher. If you believe that PPP methodology works with a functional structural syllabus and you want students to memorize specific forms to be tested on, then a textbook which gives students these forms to be learned, and a way of testing them is a good idea. A repetitive format can be helpful to students because they will be gradually “trained” in classroom procedures the teacher wants to use.

On the other hand for experienced teachers who have developed their own preferred ways of dealing with these things such a textbook can be obstructive to classroom goals and confusing to students.

On the other hand again, if you don’t mind the students buying a text but not using it completely, it can be useful to have such a text to dip into when appropriate. (Respondent #10)

Focusing on the primacy of context, specifically tertiary education, the respondent cites the case of *experienced* teachers who may find such CBs “obstructive to classroom goals”. For the inexperienced teacher, such a pre-determined, guided format, much like the teacher ‘training’ provided for ELT initiates with its conventional adherence to a PPP methodology, such a *modus operandi* may well be of considerable use early on before it begins to constrain context-informed *development*:

A process of continual intellectual, *experiential*, and attitudinal growth ... [distinguished] from training and preparation as encompassing *more* ... [suggesting] that teachers continue to evolve in the use, adaptation, and application of their art and craft. (italics mine)

(Lange, in Richards and Nunan 1990: 250)

Thus for the experienced teacher the determining role of the CB, evident in a design layout incorporating a *surface* methodology designed to appeal to the *less experienced*, becomes less and less useful, and often more and more “obstructive.”

It is, then, a sign of increasing professional competence and personal investment when the role of the CB is reduced to that of “a reference and selective resource”, or “a guide, a useful reference, and a notebook of some examples.”

***Further remarks regarding English Firsthand 1 and / or issues in common with ELT coursebooks for spoken communication:***

Key themes and issues are repeated and summarized in this section in which 5 (half of) respondents chose to make comments.

A major defining problem is seen to be the “global”, “one-size-fits-all” nature of *EF1*, “It is a text with a huge target audience. It tries to be all things to all people and fails. It is as good as most of its kind.” The same respondent (#5) elsewhere attests to the value of the TM in providing “a sensible learning cycle” and a range of possible teaching options. However, without sufficient recognition of the importance of contextual variables evident in the CB itself, it seems the content and design, and the resulting ‘*surface methodology*’, though it may be “regarded highly ... being done as it is contains dangers both for students and teachers if one solely relies on this book to teach / learn English.” According to this respondent (#4) (and as indicated elsewhere), the “dangers” are those of an over-emphasis on pre-determined, controlled practice at the expense of productive activities, which – without *significant* adaptation – are not felt to be communicatively effective.

On the key theme of context, an adequate recognition of its importance in determining the appropriacy of materials might result in the abandonment of CBs altogether:

My opinion is that textbooks should not be used at all. Publishing companies should instead produce resource materials and activities which the teacher can use and adapt to suit the needs of the students and the teaching situation ... I think a textbook can encourage some teachers to be lazy and not actually to do anything except go through it from start to finish without preparing or catering to the abilities and needs of the students. I think the fact that textbooks like *EF1* and most of the others exist at all is a sign that there are too many teachers (especially at university level ...) who are either too inexperienced or too lazy to make their own syllabus and plan their classes properly. Unfortunately, a lot of the time, even experienced teachers who want to use their teaching skills in this way are unable to do so because an administration, usually ignorant of English language education, has forced a textbook on them.

(Respondent #10)

Sheldon, cited by Masuhara, has suggested something akin in discussing the problem of:

teachers’ needs for more theoretically and practically sound coursebooks and their frustration in not getting them. And [welcoming] as one future option of ‘published’ core materials, computer programs, which teachers could modify and supplement as required according to their local and on-the-spot needs.

(Tomlinson 1998: 246)

Given that administrative bodies do “force textbook[s]” on teachers, even those with considerable experience and expertise, and that teachers may not have time to assemble their own materials, it would seem there is a need for a type of CB that would make greater allowance for contextual and teaching ‘style’ variation in its design and content, and accept the need for greater teacher ‘investment’ in its use, eschewing the commercially inspired need for a ‘surface methodology’. As argued, this would not simply be ‘an ideas resource’ book but a CB with a topic-based conceptual framework, using task-based communicative activities.

### ***3.4.2 Commentary on Interviewee’s Responses:***

The goal of the interview was *exploratory hypothesis-testing*, thereby combining rationales (exploration; hypothesis-testing), in attempting to achieve the following: “Ideally, the testing of hypotheses and interpretations is finished by the end of the interview, with the interviewer’s hypotheses having been verified or falsified during the interview” (kvale 1996: 132).

The interviewee has clear reservations about the usefulness and effectiveness of *EFI* and of the ‘global’, ‘communicative’ CB genre.

However, he has opted for *EFI* mainly because there is somewhat less need to supplement it with alternative materials than is the case with other CBs, finding “at least half of it ... or more” usable. Thus, despite being the favoured CB choice, a significant proportion of the content is deemed less than satisfactory.

The type of adaptation the respondent feels the need to provide, in the form of printed ‘supplements’, is mainly for purposes of communicative interaction: mainly activities for personalization. Although the ‘*Interaction*’ unit stage is made reference to, it is implied that, in itself, it does not seem to allow for sufficiently extensive or engaging communicative activity, nor is it necessarily always appropriate for the particular teaching context.

The most positive evaluation for any aspect of the CB is for the *controlled practice* of specific language structures / functions that it offers, “I like the structured part to some

extent.” This refers to the procedures for managing and manipulating language items such as the *Pairwork* section and gap-fills. Controlled practice items are seen as necessary and useful, particularly for lower-level students. This aspect of the CB, which constitutes the bulk of the content, is pre-communicative (Littlewood 1981), in contrast to the productive stage represented by the *Interaction* section.

A specific criticism is that the incorporation and ‘placing’ of some topics, functions and language features does not seem to make sense or be appropriate in itself (in methodological-design terms), or with regard to the target user level. This perception is not limited to the Interviewee’s specific teaching context, but is more singularly about *EFL* as a CB.

Of the two main ‘activity’ types: *controlled* and *productive*, especially for the level at which *EFL* is aimed, it is considered more important that adequate controlled practice and related language items are sufficiently represented. In the case of communicative / productive activities the lack of adequate personalization is lamented, “static choices,” resulting in the feeling that “I could get something better than this thing ... allow them to have more voice drawing on their interests and experiences to carry on a real conversation.”

On the other hand, regarding the role of the teacher vis-à-vis the CB, it is seen as the teacher’s responsibility to “intervene” – especially on behalf of more able students – in providing adequate communicative / productive activities. And, in general, “The teacher has to get involved, adjusting it so that everybody’s getting something out of it – if you can.” A large part of this seems to be because controlled practice items are seen as a less problematic, more dependable, and necessary staple. While productive items are less consistent and reliable, largely due to being insufficiently communicative and / or not personalized enough, or simply not appropriate, therefore prompting the teacher to provide more adequate, or more adequate versions of productive activities.

With hindsight, perhaps the conceptual tensions in these responses: controlled vs. productive ‘activities’; CB responsibility vs. teacher responsibility could have been pursued to a clearer resolution by the Interviewer. Or they may indicate the actual

contradictions that seem to obtain for the interviewee. It seems that the key gauge of what is most appropriate for students is determined by their level – but this is evidently also a question of student / classroom motivation and behavioural tendencies, as indicated, which serve to characterize the variability of context.

The interviewee's attitude to the CB genre as a whole is significant in shaping the assessment of *EF1*. Limitations are recognized in the fact that “all textbooks have (the) problem” of a set, repetitive, unit format. Furthermore, “from what I've seen all the textbooks are working within the limitations of designing a book that fits everybody.” This results in the fact that:

The textbook can only generalize – they don't know the exact group you are dealing with ... the book is only an approximation of any (class / level) and for some it will be very appropriate, others – either at the lower end or the higher end – totally inappropriate.

Uniformity, generality and approximation are the unavoidable results of aiming at a broad market, defining the limits of the ‘global’ CB and creating the need for teacher ‘intervention’ in interpreting and rendering the content more usable. For the Interviewee the extent to which any CB can reduce this potential burden is a mark of its very relative and qualified success.

### **3.5 Survey Conclusions**

*[The interviewee's opinions have been largely factored into the overall balance of respondent views – making a total of 11 respondents]*

One of the main reasons for pursuing this enquiry was the belief that CBs are inherently problematic in use in a particular context, irrespective of how popular or ‘well-received’ they might otherwise be.

Over half of the survey responses indicate that this *is* a shared perception, seemingly, especially among experienced teachers in a tertiary setting.

CB's are seen to manifest serious difficulties and limitations “I find this one (*EF1*) to be a little more satisfactory than many – maybe I haven't found a better one yet”; “I do not

think real engagement with the language can be provided in any textbook, and only happens after the book is closed.”

The present enquiry was inspired by certain hypotheses concerning what it is that makes CBs problematic – what the actual difficulties are – how they are manifested and what their underlying causes might be.

A number of respondents cited the ‘global’ – broad, market-based appeal of *EFL* and the associated genre as a significant limiting factor, “As stated, this textbook is meant for a mass market ... It however falls short of a highly usable and adaptable textbook”; “It is a text with a huge target audience. It tries to be all things to all people and fails. It is as good as most of its kind.” According to Dubin and Olshtain, if teaching materials are “produced for the international market which at best is concerned with the broadest possible definition of the target population ... this may be the central drawback in their design” (1986: 29).

Context is clearly understood by the respondent sample to be a key determinant of appropriate pedagogy-methodology “I adapt and adjust almost everything, depending on the class.”

The aspects of the CB that require ‘intervention’ and the ways in which it needs to be managed are the major index for respondents of its usability and effectiveness – clearly pragmatic issues:

In the end it is the teacher ... that must design and control for each and every section of students ... In that context, a good textbook is one that facilitates the teacher, makes the job easier, not more difficult.  
(Respondent #8)

Two main approaches among respondents toward CB use are evident: the first is to see the CB as the basic programme for teaching-learning content:

Ultimately the teacher must decide how to conduct class using the textbook lesson as a template or guide, introducing his own ideas or approach best suited to the students, or the needs of his students.  
(Respondent #1)

The second is to proceed on the basis of pre-existing lesson plans or overall schemata and ‘delve into’ the CB where appropriate, “My classes are not planned based on the text. I use it for sequencing, vocabulary, speaking tasks, reading and homework.” In the case of the sample, it seems that those teachers who take *EFL* as their starting point tend to be

less critical of its limitations and see it as a necessary classroom content-base, while those who accommodate it to pre-existing ‘schemes’ are more critical, finding it less usable. The two approaches lead to two different types of evaluations being made: one which assesses the CB mainly in relation to other CBs; the other assessing it in relation to (hypothetically) appropriate teaching-learning content. Such content, as indicated by respondents, is flexibly adaptive and often more-or-less permanently ‘in process’ – always contingent on context and emergent from it (Allwright, 1982: 8; Edge 1996: 10-13; Holliday, 1994). Respondents fall into a roughly equal number inclining to each approach.

Two respondents draw attention to the value of the TM as a flexible resource, but it is also pointed out that for teachers in a tertiary setting – with a corresponding assumed degree of experience and expertise it should not be necessary to employ it. According to this view (only made explicit by one respondent – #4 – but forming part of a cogent argument), the TM is intended for the relatively inexperienced. A major Hong Kong-based ELT publishing house confirms this “[Defining] as important ... the ability of inexperienced teachers to use the materials” which the TM plays a key role in assisting. While another major publishing house states that:

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

Experienced NS teachers may therefore – and in the case of the sample roughly half do – find such a degree of ‘guidance’ unnecessary and restrictive, incorporating more pre-determination than is desirable.

The set format or ‘**surface methodology**’ is mainly appropriate for those with less experience, and NNS teachers, as it requires less intervention. However, the notion of the ‘busy teacher’ also feeds into the perceived need – and demand – for a CB that is ‘ready-to-go’. The attempt to cater to a pragmatic need in some, resulting in a ‘finished’ product where most content is supplied, guided, and pre-determined in a repetitive way creates serious impediments for others:



A textbook which gives students ... forms to be learned, and a way of testing them is a good idea. A repetitive format can be helpful to students because they will be gradually “trained” in classroom procedures the teacher wants to use. On the other hand for experienced teachers who have developed their own preferred ways of dealing with these things such a textbook can be obstructive to classroom goals and confusing to students.  
(Respondent #10)

It also places a premium on CB designers to produce something with the appearance of ‘an immediate’, highly usable ‘*surface methodology*’ inherent in the unit design / layout. This places some weight on the potential usability of the ‘surface methodology’ – including in-built procedural guidelines, and the need to have a back-up resource in the form of the TM wherein the ‘surface methodology’ can be deconstructed and reconstructed according to preference, for those with the time and patience, or lack of sufficient expertise. Such ‘surface methodologies’, it has been deduced by several respondents, are an expedient compromise between the wish to incorporate a particular methodological approach (PPP), and supplying the perceived market demand for a ‘ready-to-go’, ‘global’ CB replete in particulars of varying usefulness:

The coursebook’s saving grace (or biggest shortcoming) is that it provides for the teaching of students individually, in small groups, in full-class activity, all at varying levels. Some have said “too much of everything, not enough of anything,” a conscious effort I am sure to attract teachers and school situations of all kinds. The only difficulty is not being aware of this when the teacher approaches the book: there is no possible way to cover everything presented for the students.  
(Respondent #8)

Methodologies, like the ‘name’ Methods that preceded them are no longer considered capable of universal application as they are “limited and restricted”: “There is little proof that any one way of teaching is better in all settings than another” (Gebhard et al. in Richards and Nunan 1990: 16), yet CB designers seem to persist in striving for ‘best case’ ‘surface methodologies’ with the widest potential appeal, “all the textbooks are working within the limitations of designing a book that fits everybody.” As a major Hong Kong-based ELT publisher states in regard to CB design:

Teachers will [often] feel obligated to follow the organization of the unit ... So we have found it is much easier to make the organization of the unit exactly the order we expect teachers to follow.

Hence ‘design’ considerations ‘accommodate’ theoretical-pedagogical ones within an overall attempt to anticipate user preference, creating ‘surface methodologies’.

Alternatives to the ‘surface methodology’ model are briefly profiled in the ‘b’ and ‘c’ examples cited in Question 10 of the Questionnaire Survey. Of the respondents who answered (there were 2 omissions), almost half opted in favour of model ‘b’:

*Providing a degree of option -based content, open-ended choices/jumping-off points, and opportunities for contextual/ situational and topic variation, and possible student input in generating language and content*

An equal number opted for ‘a’, representing the generic ‘type’ exemplified by *EFL*. This would seem to indicate a sufficient desire among experienced teachers in a tertiary setting for a new kind of model (as cited).

A noticeable differentiation exists in the assessment of the effectiveness of *controlled* and *productive* activities, with a more positive evaluation of the former, and a more critical evaluation of the latter being made. This also pertains to the actual perceived needs of the students in the contextual setting, designated as ‘low level’ and seen to require much controlled practice, considered “effective for use in classrooms where students have limited ability and/or motivation and need to be spoon-fed or pushed/pulled/dragged along.” However, as Ellis points out:

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

Most respondents believe that a basis of controlled practice unit stages is essential and that *EFL* adequately provides this. However, more than half believe it does not provide students with adequate opportunities for meaningful *communicative* activity.

Criticism seems to arise in proportion to the degree to which activities are ‘freer’ (*productive*). The basis of which is both an insufficiency of appropriate language and / or procedural guidance – *scaffolding* (Thornbury 1999: 94) and insufficiently engaging rationales for communication, “ ‘Communicative’ activities are almost impossible without modeling or explicit guidelines”; “many of the activities (in *EFL*) are not sustained enough for students to get any benefit from them.” As Swan warns, ‘communicative’ activities (such as the ‘information gap’) may not be appropriate or motivating, “the information conveyed should ideally have some relevance and interest

for the students” rather than being “imposed” on them (Swan 1985: 84). Implying a key role for personalization, and with it, the corresponding notion of *investment* (Allwright, 1982: 10 – see section 2.3.2).

Miura emphasizes the importance and interrelation of the foregoing factors especially in regard to the Japanese educational context:

Self-expression activities focus on meaning rather than on form and allow students to generate their own language ... since this ... is considered effective for enhancing students’ motivation to participate in classroom activities. McDonough and Shaw (1993, cited in Edwards, Shortall, Willis, Quinn and Leek, 1994) stress the importance of such materials to involve learners in meaningful talk to enhance learning ... Letting students express their own ideas in the target language in a Japanese EFL classroom is no easy task. I have previously suggested (Miura, 1991) that preliminary activities must be used to provide essential background for the students before they attempt self-expression activities. Such pre-communicative activities provide students with the motivation, ideas, lexical items, and discourse models that will culminate in successful self-expression. (1997: 11)

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

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

Since personalization and communicative interaction are inter-dependent in common topic domains (e.g. ‘experiences’), contextual considerations have a direct bearing on appropriate teaching-learning content, which may be precluded or “imposed” by a ‘global’ ‘all-inclusive’ CB approach.

A major underlying issue regarding the degree to which *EFL* is ‘communicative’ is the question of what kind of approach informs its ‘surface methodology’. One respondent is in no doubt about this and draws attention to it:

A textbook is confined in scope to the expected methodology behind it. It is quite clear that a typical unit sequence in *English Firsthand* follows a PPP methodology. Presentation of vocabulary and target forms via Preview, Listening and Conversation, moving into “controlled” practice of target forms in Pairwork A&B and so called “free practice” in the Interaction. The Language Check and Real Stories seem to fall into the category of optional extras. The sequencing in EF1 suits the methodology it uses.  
(Respondent #10)

It has been argued and demonstrated that PPP falls short in regard to providing productive activities that are anything more than opportunities to practice the target language, “the methodology which realizes a notional-functional syllabus may be a presentation methodology which involves virtually nothing in the way of genuine communication” (Willis 1990: 57).

A key claim by the writers of *EF1* intended as a statement of its philosophy is: “We learn English by using English” (2010: 4). Which begs the question: “by using English”... *to do what?* – To ‘practice’ (the target language), *or* to ‘make use’ of it in realizing a communicative aim?

Nine out of eleven respondents consider that, in the case of *EF1*, on the whole students are “basically ‘practicing’ the target language in a pre-determined way”; “they are mainly ‘learning to use English’ as opposed to [‘using English to learn it’]” (Howatt 1984, cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 155). There is a perceived need, therefore, to *significantly* adapt the CB to facilitate more authentic communicative activities which, if they are to be effective, focus on realizing communicative aims based on tasks that involve “interpretation, expression, and negotiation [as] the essential or ‘primary’ abilities within any target competence” (Breen and Candlin, in Hall and Hewings 2001: 12).

Such is the reason for questioning the designation ‘communicative’ as applied to a common “weak” version of CLT still showing influence, through PPP, of the S-B paradigm. Inhibiting the proper realization of *evolving* CLT and the key principles that define it.

## CHAPTER 4: Consequences for the Coursebook

### 4.1 Conclusions and implications

As illustrated, *EF1* is seen to represent the generic “global”, “one-size-fits-all” (Dubin and Olshtain 1986) ‘ready-to-go’ CB, employing a common PPP model, identified by Litz with *EF2* (in the same design as *EF1*), the shortcomings of which are described as follows:

... virtually every unit in *EF2* is deficient in many of the types of task-based learning, consciousness raising, and discovery learning activities that are ... intended to ... engage [students] in truly meaningful and effective communication such as negotiation of meaning ... Many of the activities [are] repetitive, [fail] to encourage truly meaningful practice, promote realistic discourse, nor lead to the internalization of language.  
(2005: 22, 33)

The advantages of a PPP methodology, and its advocacy (e.g. Swan, 1985; Harmer, 1996), despite the cited criticisms, are fully acknowledged by Litz. They are precisely the factors that tend to recommend it to the inexperienced and the NNS teacher lacking the relevant expertise and needing the support and guidance of a pre-determined procedural organization. Such support can be found also (as noted), in an impressive back-up parcel of guided resources in the TM and elsewhere, which, as indicated by the response data is, *in the main*, designed to appeal to the *less* experienced teacher, and to the NNS: “we have always aimed to target the NNS teacher as the primary market.”

Some respondents (including those from publishing houses) have inferred or discerned a seeming ‘formula’ (which *EF1* is seen to represent), in the ‘compromise’ between notions of what best suits a broad market, “expected” pedagogical design, and an organizational presentation, combining to produce a ‘user-friendly’ *surface methodology*. Much as this seems to ‘fit’ the needs of those ‘passing through’ the field of ELT, or those (NNSs) for whom ‘communicative’ English might present challenges, the experienced (qualified) ELT practitioner mostly working in a tertiary context, is not so ready to submit to the pitfalls of a ‘pre-packaged’, ‘global’ product, or to resort to the TM for ‘guidance’ with alternative lesson plans. Those with such expertise, recognizing the limitations, will make the necessary context-based methodological adjustments and thereby ‘negotiate’ the procedural and organizational framework and related content,

intended to preclude the very decision-making in question by the ‘convenience user’. And this may need to be done as an ongoing process, in different ways, as contexts and variables shift and change. Consequently, given that such pre-determined content needs – anyway – to be adjusted and negotiated to facilitate *more effective* teaching-learning, an alternative, more flexible design and *presentational* approach, with *explicitly* built-in choices, would seem to be of greater benefit to the teacher with a concern for developing their own potential expertise, as well as the ‘experienced-user’. The existence of such a CB ‘type’ would imply the recognition of a level of professionalism in a field (ELT) that often struggles with the problem of a less than professional identity (Phillipson 1992).

#### ***4.2 The theoretical case for an emergent ‘model’***

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

Given the theoretical confluence described, CBs for the *ELT professional* should provide:

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

O’Neill is perhaps referring more to the way in which CBs should be ‘handled’ rather than how they are ‘put together’; given the recommendations for the former, the latter

also needs to reflect and facilitate them to a greater degree, in ways discussed (see Survey Conclusions). To take up Dubin and Olshtain (1986: 30) again, in assessing materials (as cited in 2.3.2):

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

This necessitates intervention by the teacher irrespective of a ‘convenience’ approach in the materials, and allows the kind of *investment* (Curran 1972 and 1976, cited in Allwright 1982: 10) needed to engage and motivate students.

One possible outcome of this enquiry, if its premises, thesis, and findings are accepted, is the further investigation into, and development of, the brief proposals contained herein for a seemingly new, alternative, CB ‘model’. Acknowledging the growing wish for a database of modifiable materials, not yet realizable in many contexts for a range of reasons including administrative ones, it would need to allow *appropriate methodology* to emerge naturally (Edge, 1996: 11), avoiding the need for a surface methodology. At the same time providing opportunities for student investment, based on options, flexibility, and open-endedness (as sketched in the discussion of responses to core question 7, Chapter 3; and as profiled in the Survey Questionnaire: question 10, design ‘b’). And moreover, incorporating elements of the ‘ideas resource’ book within a topic-based conceptual organization it would include task-based activities, a focus on meaning, and predominantly communicative activities “designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes” (Brown 2001: 43).

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## ***APPENDICES***

### **Research questions on ELT coursebooks**

#### ***To the Respondent(s):***

As part of my MA dissertation on Communicative Language Teaching and ELT coursebooks I am seeking information from **publishing representatives** and **commissioning editors**

*Below is a set of questions intended to aid understanding about the kind of factors influencing writers, designers, and publishers of ELT coursebooks focusing on spoken communication*

*If you are able to take the time to consider and respond to the following questions, I believe the answers will provide a useful perspective on ELT coursebooks*

*Please answer as many questions as you can, however briefly. Short, succinct answers are welcome, as are longer, more detailed responses  
(If you are unable to answer any of the questions below could you briefly indicate why)*

*While most of the questions focus on a named coursebook some are intended, by extension, to refer to ELT coursebooks in general*

*[Spacing should automatically expand to accommodate answers]*

Thank you in advance for your time and expertise.

Please state your title (e.g. ELT consultant, commissioning editor,

Series Editor (responsible for commissioning authors, coordination of market research with publishing colleagues, development of content with authors, development of design with design team, and interface with marketing teams for promotion)

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

In some sense a coursebook or coursebook series is like a novel – there are a zillion novels in print, but authors and publishers continue to churn them out, as each is different, has a unique ‘story’, has a unique voice, a unique perspective on language learning, a unique niche it is aiming to reach. Also because the English language teaching market is so huge globally it is possible to find a niche somewhere!

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

There is an overriding ‘firsthand’ philosophy – that learners acquire language by using it directly, so every unit, every activity is designed with ‘immediate use’ and ‘spontaneous activity’ in mind. While there are similarities with other coursebook series (even within the same publishing house), this is a defining feature. This means less ‘serious’ focus on grammar and vocabulary and pronunciation. In some sense, the Firsthand series was designed so that ‘false beginners’ who had failed to learn much in their previous encounters with English would begin experiencing success right away, through not focusing on ‘test like’ components of English (which many learners had previously had bad experiences?), and focusing more on immediate personal topics and intention to communicate and understand.

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

Basically, the EF series is a constructivist approach to education, often attributed to Dewey and Bruner: the learner ‘constructs’ the content, through ‘inquiry’ and ‘reflection’ – this is achieved very simply through learners’ involvement in activities, and a subtle solicitation of personal commitment. The series also applies the scaffolding approach of Piaget and Vygotsky – meaning that content and task demand is gradually increased, only gradually, and lots of support is provided learners at each step.

4. What commercial considerations influenced the content and design?

What commercial considerations *didn’t* influence the content and design?... In the very competitive environment of language education publishing, we knew we had to have cutting-edge design. Similarly, we knew we had to address current considerations of language learning theory, involving ‘processing instruction’, ‘strategy instruction’, ‘corpus based content’, in addition to ‘task-based teaching’ and ‘communicative language teaching’ and current trends in testing, specifically the Council of Europe framework. Teachers who are considering adoption of the series need to know that the author and

editorial team is up to date on content considerations, just as the students and teachers demand an up to date visual design.

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

Both; a major consideration for the series was designing a course that could be used in large classes (as one finds in colleges/universities) and with students who are in mixed level classes, as one finds in colleges/universities and language schools.

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

Large classes, over 20 learners, and for learners high school age through college age

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

Both have needs of course; teachers have needs for easy to teach material, but also material that allows them to personalize in ways they see fit – i.e. it has to be somewhat open and not overly prescribed.

Student needs would of course be considered primary – and these include need for success, for stimulation, for entertainment, for clarity of goals.

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

The non-native teacher market is the largest market – and we have always aimed to target the NNS teacher as the primary market, while not alienating NS teachers, in terms of not watering down the language or authenticity of the tasks.

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

We include lots of support for NNS teachers in the TMs, including exact scripting of what the Teacher can say to introduce activities, provide correction, etc. NNS teachers are often reluctant to use the TL as the primary means of communication, and so we address this. Also the textbook itself has a light amount of written language; even though nearly all NNS teachers are proficient in written English, they still don't want to feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of English on the page.

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

I think a major aspect of the success of the EF series is that it attempts to satisfy both types of teacher. Experienced teachers will take advantage of the multiple options for expansion and insertion of new content – much of this is indicated in the TM.

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

It is often surprising how teachers will feel obligated to follow the organization of the unit, even when invited to vary the order or skip certain activities. So we have found it is much easier to make the organization of the unit exactly the order we expect teachers to follow. There are however steps within activities that teachers can skip.

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

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

I’m not sure I understand this question, but it seems you’re asking about the range of variations that are possible or allowable or encouraged for each activity. To address this, we literally made one aspect of each activity much larger – take up more space – than other parts of the activity. In this way, we’re emphasizing the central task that students should spend the most time on.

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

Coursebooks are probably the most collaborative type of publishing – the author team may have a ‘potential’ coursebook outline, but it is developed closely with the publisher through several versions, pilot tested etc. (And lots of ‘commissioned’ coursebooks never do see the light of day) So a book or series may be commissioned or contracted based on an outline and a sample chapter, and then it is ‘commissioned’, to be worked on collaboratively with a publishing team.

Do they include any of the following?

- standardized organization of unit content?

Yes, there is a standard order in each unit. Generally, in a large program in which more than one teacher is using the same book, uniform organization is preferable.

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

Yes, again.

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

Yes.

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

One thing we have done in EF series situations (in conversation, listening, reading extracts) is avoid cultural specific – e.g. specifically U.S. or U.K. – references.

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

Not sure about comparisons, but it is a popular series in Japan and throughout Asia.

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

Not sure.

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

Not sure.



## Research questions on ELT coursebooks

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*If you are able to take the time to consider and respond to the following questions, I believe the answers will provide a useful perspective on ELT coursebooks*

*Please answer as many questions as you can, however briefly. Short, succinct answers are welcome, as are longer, more detailed responses  
(If you are unable to answer any of the questions below could you briefly indicate why)*

*While most of the questions focus on a named coursebook some are intended, by extension, to refer to ELT coursebooks in general*

*[Spacing should automatically expand to accommodate answers]*

Thank you in advance for your time and expertise.

Please state your title (e.g. ELT consultant, commissioning editor, coursebook producer):

Senior Development Editor, Heinle Cengage Learning  
Product Director, Cengage Learning Asia.

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

At the time of publication (World Link 1<sup>st</sup> Edition ©2005) there was a lack of coursebooks in the market for materials that focused on fluency as a defined outcome of the syllabus. Fluency, as defined by author and development team, focuses on a non-linguistic outcome communicative activity rather than have students perform shorter, closed and controlled activities. Furthermore, at the time, courses with integrated video material were less available. Finally, there was an editorial direction to make materials

that were more appropriate for foreign language learners that presented fluent non-native speakers as models for language production.

These conditions, combined with strong conceptual direction from the author team, lead the publishers to commission the text after extensive survey of market demand.

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

The presentation and practice of the vocabulary and grammar changes from unit to unit. Rather than taking a single approach to teaching, *World Link* has some flexibility in presenting material sometimes inductively and sometimes deductively, depending on the authors' experiences on how students retain this information best.

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

Communicative approach, with language building to a non-linguistic outcome. The approach being that we learn language to communicate, not to pass an exam. Recycling of vocabulary is extensive in the first edition, and a greater focus on 'chunking' language (collections, fixed expressions, etc) can be found in the forthcoming second edition.

4. What commercial considerations influenced the content and design?

The publisher sought to create materials that are most appropriate to the target market while preserving the concepts and approach of the author team. As such, feedback from potential users, especially large institutions are vital to the development of the series. Illustrations may be chosen to appeal to the target users. Layout may reflect preferences of teachers. As use across markets, even within a single institution, may vary, content was designed with a degree of flexibility in mind. From a cost perspective, the page count of the book affects cost, and since we know that students are not willing to pay more for a thicker book, page count is often limited for commercial reasons. Also, revisions to content are made based on feedback of large customers.

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

This question is interesting because it depends on your definition of "private language school". It is designed for language classes at college/universities that are part of the language program, not the English lit courses. In that regard, it is also appropriate for private language schools.

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

Age range is “young adult to adult” (16+). Class size would be around 20 students, however, we have a special feature in the Teacher’s Edition to help adapt activities for classes of 50 or more students, as well as small group classes (<10 students).

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

Both. Coursebooks must meet the needs of students (i.e. promised outcomes are delivered) but also for teachers who need to integrate the coursebook into their curriculum. Ease-of-use for teachers and appropriateness for students can be considered two of the most important driving factors in coursebook development.

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

As the stage of conception, World Link was designed to reflect that now well-accepted premise that the majority of language learners will use English with other non-native speakers. Examples of fluent non-native speakers can be found in the video program and (in the second edition) listening sections. ‘World Link’ sections were also created to give students a window onto non-English speaking cultures.

World Link was designed with both non-native and native speaker teachers in mind. Non-native speakers reflect the majority of language teachers across the world. The teacher’s edition includes culture notes as well as a professional development section to aid all teachers in developing their skills.

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

Extensive research was done with potential NNS teachers (and existing NNS users in the second edition) to reflect their needs and preferences. Perhaps not surprisingly, these needs were not dissimilar from NS teachers: content that reflects the interests of students, course design that allows recycling of language while maintaining student motivation, models of both NS and fluent NNS language, easy-to-navigate units. Additional culture notes are not aimed specifically at either NS or NNS teachers, though we expect both may take advantage of them. The video course has been cited as especially useful to NNS teachers as it shows contextual usage and examples of non-verbal communication of which NNS may not be aware. NS have also found this useful.

9. Is *World Link 1* intended mainly for relatively inexperienced or relatively experienced teachers?

The authors of *World Link* recognize that institutes include a variety of teachers including the experienced and inexperienced. Furthermore, even within one teacher's repertoire of techniques and practice, one will find varied levels of experience. As such, the course was designed to be flexible enough to be used by both 'types' of teachers.

As such, the scope and sequence of a level as well as the structure of each unit can be used 'as is' by inexperienced teachers (along with guidance for the teacher's editions with includes specific as well as generic guidance on the teaching of skills, classroom management, and other areas). For more experienced teachers, a variety of expansion activities are suggested as well as a variety of ancillary materials that an instructor may choose to include depending on the needs of his or her curriculum.

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

The author team and publishers assume that teachers will use the material in the way that is best-suited and/or demanded by their program. As there are clear communicative outcomes to each unit, a teacher must 'cover' key vocabulary and structure points, as well as specific skills use. On the other hand, *World Link* recognizes that students come with a bank of existing knowledge and teachers may seek a variety of outcomes. As such, a teacher may select, omit, adapt, rearrange, or supplement sections of the unit as he or she sees fit. For example, in a number of markets, the curriculum may focus on speaking and listening outcomes, therefore a teacher may choose to omit the reading and writing sections. Another teacher in the same institute, may adapt the same sections to use them as springboards to discussion.

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

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

Expanding on details given in question 10, *World Link* was designed to appeal to a variety of markets and users. As such the publishers sought to create materials that have clear outcomes designed around a core structure. *World Link* was also designed to allow flexibility within that structure to enable teachers to fit the materials to their programs, to match an instructor's teaching style and/or students' learning styles.

This is not to say World Link is designed to be all things to all people. The approach of the author team is retained as well as the flavor of the materials and the outcomes of the scope and sequence. A structured but flexible approach was the aim. In lower levels of series, this is more difficult to attain, especially given a clear grammar and vocabulary syllabus. However, at all levels, each unit of World Link is designed to be self-contained, so a teacher may skip a unit or move around the book easily if it is understood that the most basic of grammar and vocabulary (be –verb, personal pronouns, etc.) have been taught first and skipping these will not cause difficulty for students.

A publisher may take a different approach depending on the market for the materials. Some state school markets, for example, allow for little flexibility in terms of both language items covered and its teaching. Some authors have a very set way of covering material (e.g. ‘gurus’ of the field) and should market appeal be wide enough, a publisher would certainly produce it.

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

Please see attached author guidelines for submission. This may be useful. There are no hard and fast ‘requirements’ as such, other than a coursebook needs to be appealing enough to a potential market for it to be produced in a large enough quantity to keep costs affordable for students and allow a publisher to reinvest returns into the company. There are, however, certain ‘preferences’ (that change!) from markets and ‘current practice’ that facilitate the development of materials.

Do they include any of the following?

- standardized organization of unit content?

This is a ‘preference’ from many markets from both teachers and students. Standard organization allows both to become quickly familiar with how the coursebook is organized.

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

Not sure what this refers to exactly, but referring to questions 10 and 11 for World Link, a clear outcome was defined as important, as well as the ability of inexperienced teachers to use the materials. As such, a linear structure was deemed necessary, though with enough flexibility to be used in a variety of teaching situations. Other types of texts, with different desired outcomes, may be different.

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

See above. Not entirely sure of meaning here.

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

Structure with flexibility is once again the approach. The authors of *World Link*, for example, designed units based around universal topics that could appeal to a variety of learners. At the same time, another goal was to expose students to variety of cultures. As a 'requirement' for any coursebook, the answer is 'It depends'. For example, a text designed for a state curriculum that listed a desired outcome as 'students are able to talk about their own culture in English' would need very specific cultural examples from the target markets. A course like *World Link*, for example, is designed to be culturally inclusive enough to provide students with clear examples of NS and NNS speaker cultures, but also universal enough to allow an instructor to extend those situations to students' own culture.

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

The *World Link* series (4 levels in total) is one of Cengage Learning's best selling title in both Japan and worldwide.

b) What percentage of sales of *World Link 1* are to colleges and universities?

The large majority of sales of the *World Link* series in Japan are to universities. Globally, the majority is still to colleges and universities with a number of significant language school customers.

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

Approximately 600,000 new students enter university each year, all of which study English for at least two semesters and some for three or more.

## Coursebook Interview Guide: *English Firsthand 1*

- 1.) Given that spoken communication is the main emphasis of the coursebook does it contain a key unit stage (or stages) where students are fully engaged in using language to communicate in a meaningful way, or is it the case that they are simply practicing the target language?

- (To clarify:) Is there a genuine desire or need to communicate something for a purpose (task), or are students basically verbalizing a series of language patterns?

- 2.) If there are opportunities for communicative exchanges in the coursebook are they integrated into a meaningful continuity that keeps students engaged (and makes sense to them), or do the different stages of a unit seem somewhat separate and disengaged, resulting in motivational 'highs' and 'lows'?

('meaningful continuity' relies on, for example, preparatory 'set up' stages, and consolidatory, follow-up stages before and after a communicative exchange)

- Is meaningful continuity something that the teacher needs to bring about through adaptation or is it the job of coursebooks to try to achieve?

- 3.) Does the coursebook enable students to involve aspects of their own personal lives, experiences, knowledge and creativity?

- Does it enable them to apply their own personal frames of reference (through situational/contextual features) - and to generate relevant language, or are they expected or required (mainly) to relate to pre-determined contexts, situations, and language?

- Does it employ elements of free association, topic expansion, and imaginative exploration, or is this precluded and pre-empted by having all particulars supplied?

- 4.) (How far) do you think it is necessary to adapt coursebooks for use in the classroom?

- In general why is this so?

- 5.) What features of the coursebook have you found it necessary to adapt?  
What additional features have you found it necessary to introduce?

- How typical of coursebooks in general are the kinds of features that seem to need adapting or introducing?

- 6.) In what ways have you adapted the features mentioned or introduced additional features?
- 7.) Do you mainly adapt the coursebook content by making basic adjustments to, for example, the target language, the situational setting, the type of activity/process, or do you make significant changes such as omitting, re-ordering, reformulating, introducing, or replacing important stages?
- What are the main reasons you have chosen to make these adaptations and additions?
- 8.) How easy or difficult was it to make adaptations to the coursebook the first time you used it? - Did you have to discover how best to adapt it? - Did the coursebook lend itself to such adaptation or did you have to (think it through and) do some serious re-jigging?
- 9.) Do you think adaptation is up to the teacher - according to preferred teaching style and to the teaching context, or could the coursebook content and design more actively facilitate it?
- (To clarify:) Do you think a set unit format with pre-determined stages and methods for handling them is helpful, or would you prefer a degree of open-ended, option-based content?
  - (- What might such a less pre-determined format look like?)
- 10.) Do the unit organization and the guidelines for handling each stage of a unit in the coursebook seem to be effective for classroom use? - Have you had any difficulties with these features?
- Do you take them more or less as they are or do you make selective, flexible use of unit content?
  - How much of each unit do you find usable without making any changes?

\*Overall how satisfactory do you find *English Firsthand 1*?



**Interview Transcript:** Assessment of *English Firsthand 1* with reference to the ‘global’, ‘communicative’ coursebook genre

*Interviewer: I / Respondent: R      Interview duration: approx. 35 minutes*

*(Key questions appear in bold; key answer points appear in italic bold)*

**I:** OK, so the first question I have is, given that spoken communication is really the main emphasis of the CB **does it contain a key unit stage or stages where students are fully engaged in using language to communicate in a meaningful way** – in other words there is a task or a purpose that engages them – or on the other hand is it the case that they are really, simply practicing the target language?

**R:** Mm, that’s a hard call ... I guess a lot of it is exercises in which they are practicing ... at the beginning they have a conversation which they practice and then they have a pairwork exercise ... I would say those are the main avenues of practice ... some of the other things ... they have an *Interaction* part, it’s more open-ended ... they can more or less set their own information more than adhering to a more structured dialogue

**I:** OK ... How much are they guided, is there a stage in the unit where they can become somewhat free of guiding structures ... where they need to exchange information in some kind of more developed way ... where they have to make decisions as they’re exchanging that information. I guess what I’m really asking is ... **is there a genuine desire or need to communicate something for a purpose – in other words a task – or are students just conforming to the requirements of particular guidelines of the staging in the textbook?**

**R:** A lot of times they are trying to find information ... I don’t know how meaningful it is though ... defined in the context of whatever the exercise is ... But, something that’s based on their own needs, interests – *not sure about that, whether it accomplishes that – that’s a mixed item for me ... um, more oriented to practice than what you have in mind*: having decision points where ... they probably provide more input than what’s given in the book without adhering to some particular structure – structured exercise. There’s not enough leeway where they’re making more of the decisions for what’s being conversed about

**I:** Yeah – and the kind of information that they’re exchanging, is it basically information that’s provided by the CB itself?

**R:** Yeah – I’d say the beginning sections ... the dialogue, they’re trying to fill-in blanks with information that’s already given to them – in those choices ... and ... the same with the *Pairwork*, or the gapfill ... they’re trying to exchange information that the other one doesn’t have ... so from that standpoint *that’s very structured* I mean they can’t ... there’s no space for decision-making points to add their own information. Although in the gapfill ... I take that back, usually the last question, is ‘make your own’ – *so to some small extent there is that ... mostly it’s pretty structured*

**I:** OK, right. On to a related point: **How well do the various phases of each unit fit together into a meaningful continuity?**

**R:** That's really subjective ... um ...

**I:** I mean ... the CB has a set format for each unit which is repeated all the way through ... so, in a sense ... you could call that a 'methodology' or a design. As it stands, **does it seem to make sense if you use it in the way it appears intended to be used or do you find that you need to make changes?**

**R:** *I sometimes make changes.* I might come across units – Why are we doing this? *There's no logical progression. I mean, sometimes there is but sometimes there isn't ...* Why did they make this choice – What's this doing here? – If they had chosen something else ... *And so sometimes I may throw units out*

**I:** OK, so that ... unit organization – it's kind of incidental to how well the sequence works – depending on the particular topic it's dealing with

**R:** Um, yeah.

**I:** ... So are you suggesting that different topics actually may need possibly a different organizational approach?

**R:** Maybe a different – yeah, a different approach or ... I think ... or throw it out completely and use something else that in my judgement ... that maybe they need more

**I:** OK, then in that case ...

**R:** That could be structure – not just topic ...

**I:** So then it's **not necessarily a strength of the CB that it has a set format of unit organization?**

**R:** That's right

**I:** Because there's a range of different topics and from what you're saying they can't all necessarily be fitted to one kind of schemata

**R:** *Yeah, I don't think it's unique for this textbook I think all textbooks have that problem ... you know what I mean, a common link.* You run across the same judgement: if I could pull the best from this textbook and the best from that one I might have a real good ...

**I:** when you say the best – are you thinking about entire units or just parts of units?

**R:** Well, could be both ... sometimes the whole unit works, sometimes just part of one works. Sometimes it's the topic, why is this topic here? ... And structures, why are they this? Is that appropriate here or maybe in the second book?

**I:** OK, so it seems like **a key issue you're talking about really is about the appropriacy of the relationship between the unit organization and the topic (?)**

**R:** Yes, I'd say so

**I:** I see. Well, given that, it would seem then that you need to adapt the materials in some degree ... **How often or how necessary do you think it is to adapt CB materials?**

**R:** How often? Um, in this case maybe less than for other books I've used. *I'd say this is better than average*— that's why I've stayed with it ... teachers may disagree with me: What are you talking about? — You can't find that much in there — *I find enough, at least half of it I can use or more and then the rest I would supplement*

**I:** Yes, I see, so then **you imply that it's a tendency for most CB's to be maybe less than satisfactory?**

**R:** Yeah, yeah, I find this one to be *a little more satisfactory* than many — maybe I haven't found a better one yet

**I:** What is it about it that *is* satisfactory?

**R:** Um, they do — well *I like the structured part to some extent* — I mean I'm not down on that — some of them (students) are not equipped to go off and make a lot of decisions about what to do ... If it was Osaka *Gaidai* (University of Foreign Languages) or some place like that — this would be totally inappropriate to make the decisions and talk this way or that way about it ... but I like it for the students we have here. It has enough structure ...

**I:** When you say structure, I just want to clarify — you mean the guidance in each stage of the unit?

**R:** Yeah, I think they need some of that as a take-off ... if they get nothing else out of it ...

**I:** So that means for example the language that is supplied and the procedures for how to use it?

**R:** Yeah, that's right

**I:** OK

**R:** And the *Interaction* section in some of the units gives them (students) ***more leeway for making the type of decisions you were referring to***. I left that out – the *Interaction* – that’s the third part of the (unit) ... and there is a little more in some of the units, there’s more leeway for them making more decisions

**I:** OK, and does that leeway for decision-making ... **is it really an opportunity for personalization – is it an opportunity for students to draw on their own experiences and lives and even creativity?**

**R:** Yeah, I think so, they do allow for some ... ***It may be just enough for the lower levels – for the higher-level students I’m not sure it is really that appropriate*** – for the Pharmacy students

**I:** Oh you mean that it doesn’t allow enough personalization?

**R:** ***It may not – yeah*** ... however not all of those students are that great ... I’m kind of in the middle with that ... so I’ve got some really good students in there – a few, but the rest are ... not that great. ***Maybe something like this might be a little more appropriate*** ... but the ones that could do better, I really feel like, oh man – ***I could get something better than this thing ... allow them to have more voice drawing on their interests and experiences to carry on a real conversation***

**I:** Right, I see ... getting back to the point about adapting the CB, if we think about adapting in terms of relatively minor adaptation, which might mean modifying the language or adjusting the nature of the exercises that the students have to do on the one hand, and, on the other hand radically revamping a particular unit stage or even cutting one out and replacing it with another one – **What kind of adaptation do you tend to do with this book?**

**R:** I try to get something to ***get them to do more decision-making*** where it isn’t all spelt out – maybe ***they have to explain something or draw on their experiences to answer it – or say more*** – try to get them to say more than just a one-line answer. ***That’s the hard part with a lot of the stuff in the book – you get the answer that’s essentially multiple choice*** – choose one of them and ... OK, that’s the end – can’t you add a couple more sentences to keep it more realistic? – You know – you don’t just say something and shut-up – ***try to get them to keep talking more about it – um, strategies that help them do that***

**I:** So, you’re using basically what is there in terms of the structure or the guidelines for a particular unit stage but you are expanding it

**R:** “Expanding” – yeah giving them another exercise that will allow them to, say, draw on more ...

**I:** As a supplementary exercise?

R: Yeah, a supplementary exercise

I: So you might give that as a copy or on the board?

R: I print it out for them. Something like, for example, Unit 6, it's about past tense or past life, and ***there really isn't much in it – the static choices that are available***, so I get them to do something where they have to, for example, write out a timeline of big events in their lives and then they exchange papers and they have to ask questions about them ... or ask more questions about what's on the paper

I: I see, yeah. So you are allowing them to personalize it, to draw on their own experience – and so create curiosity about that as a motivating factor ... and that is somewhat in contrast to the guided unit stages in the CB

R: And I think maybe that might be ***a good starting point*** but it needs to be supplemented

I: In that case do you think that it is really up to the teacher to go that step or **do you think CB's should try to incorporate that kind of thing?**

R: I think it has to be the teacher because, ***from what I've seen all the textbooks are working within the limitations of designing a book that fits everybody ... so I think the teacher has to kind of size up the situation based on how the class deals with the book and then go from there***. If it's a really low-level class where they have very little interest, ***something like this – where you are spoon-feeding them essentially is probably very suitable. But for the best students, the teacher has to intervene***

I: OK. How far is it possible for a CB to try to aim at the kind of students that you mentioned – a higher level of students with more ability and initiative-taking – Do you think there is a niche for CB's to aim at those kind of students – for CB's to better accommodate?

R: I don't know, ***I think the textbook can only generalize – they don't know the exact group you are dealing with*** – and look at our belt-levels: some at the bottom, some in the middle, some at the top – supposedly – ***the book is only an approximation*** of any of those groups and for some it will be very appropriate, others – either at the lower end or the higher end – totally inappropriate. So, from that standpoint ***the teacher has to get involved, adjusting it so that everybody's getting something out of it – if you can – I mean, it's not always obtainable I don't think***

I: OK. So it would seem that in order to allow for the fact that lower-level students need to get something out of CB's like this **they need to be structured and they need to have all the kind of key particulars of language supplied(?)**

R: Yeah, I think there has to be more of that

**I:** Perhaps at the expense of expanding in terms of, for example, personalizing(?)

**R:** *A lot of times the problem is motivation* – the ones at the very bottom are not very interested

**I:** Yeah, I understand exactly what you are saying. I'm wondering, though, it does seem to me ... it's ironic that those low-level students tend to lack interest or motivation, but, on the other hand, if teachers can find ways of personalizing material it's a very galvanizing thing for, even low-level students – they *do* become involved, and so, although those low-level students – it might be manageable or operable to have them dealing with language in a guided way – it may well be very limited if they can never have opportunities to personalize it and move beyond static control

**R:** Oh, *for all levels I try to personalize*, whether they like it or not – sometimes I get a positive response from it other times I don't – they don't want to deal with anything – that's usually at the very lowest levels – that's a challenge ... *but if they have an ounce of interest, yes you can do some personalization because they will make an effort*

**I:** OK, I see. Well ... I think that just about wraps up all the key issues I had wanted to cover. Thanks very much for your time.

**END**

“If the method of analysis will involve categorizing the answers, then clarify continually during the interview the meanings of the answers with respect to the categories to be used later” (Kvale, 1996: 130)

## Interview Question Responses

*The questions in the recorded interview were based on an extrapolation of the following 9 core questions (which were in turn based on the 6 cited original research questions), serving as the basis for both the Interview Guide and the subsequent questionnaire survey*

- 1.) To what extent does *EFI* facilitate communicative interaction?
- 2.) How effective and usable are the unit design and procedures?
- 3.) How logically progressive and integrated is the unit design?
- 4.) How well do the coursebook component features work together?
- 5.) Are there enough opportunities for student personalization?
- 6.) What kind of elements mostly need adapting – How? – Why?
- 7.) What are the priorities of a coursebook for spoken communication?
- 8.) How much of the coursebook do you find usable?
- 9.) How satisfactory do you find it?

*Interviewee answers to the Interview Guide questions have been appended to the above core questions, abridged and paraphrased for purposes of concision, with relevant quotation, and clarifying comments in parentheses*

### **1.) To what extent does *EFI* facilitate communicative interaction?**

“A lot of it is exercises in which they are practicing.”

“Not sure ... whether it accomplishes (communicative interaction) ... more oriented to practice.”

However, the *Interaction* section in some of the units “is more open-ended ... they can more or less set their own information”, allowing “more leeway for making decisions on what’s being conversed about.”

## **2.) How coherent and usable are the unit design and procedures?**

“Sometimes there is ... no logical progression.”

Having a set format is a feature of all CB's that is often problematic (as with *EFI*) as it imposes structural/design limitations that can produce ineffective or redundant elements. (Not all topics are suited to the same organizational design).

## **3.) How effective are the component features: topics, functions, language?**

The inclusion of certain topics and language elements at certain given points seems not to be based on any discernible logic or reasoning: “Why did they make this choice – What's this doing here?”

## **4.) How well do the component features complement each other?**

The relationship between unit organization and topic is problematic because in certain cases it doesn't seem to work.

“Sometimes the whole unit works, sometimes just part of one works. Sometimes it's the topic, why is this topic here? ... And structures, why are they this? Is that appropriate here?”

## **5.) Are there enough opportunities for student personalization?**

There is “just enough (personalization) for the lower-levels” but not for the upper-levels (within the broad level band for which *EFI* is an option).

“For all levels I try to personalize ... if they have an ounce of interest ... you can do some personalization because they will make an effort.” (Personalization is always worth attempting – and thus clearly important).

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

“I try to ... get them to do more decision-making where it isn't all spelt out – maybe they have to explain something or draw on their experiences to answer ... try to get them to say more than just a one-line answer. That's the hard part with a lot of the stuff in the book – you get the answer that's essentially multiple choice ... try to get them to keep talking more about (it) ... strategies that help them do that.”



Supplementary ‘exercises’ in the form of printed copies are used to expand on and develop the CB unit content into something more extensive and personalized.

### **7.) What are the priorities of a CB for spoken communication?**

“I think they need some (structure) as a take-off ... if they get nothing else out of it”  
– controlled practice is “a good starting point.”

However, for students with slightly more ability communicative interaction is needed:  
“Allow them to have more voice drawing on their interests and experiences to carry on a real conversation.”

On the one hand it is necessary for the teacher to intervene (prompted, it seems by a sense of low expectation that the CB will provide adequate communicative activities), while on the other the CB needs to allow a greater degree of personalization, especially in production activities, “I could get something better than this thing.”

The importance of personalization is stressed, “for all levels I try to personalize ... if they have an ounce of interest, yes you can do some personalization because they will make an effort.”

### **8.) How much of the CB do you find usable?**

“I’d say this is better than average ... I find enough, at least half of it I can use or more and then the rest I would supplement.”

### **9.) How satisfactory do you find it?**

“I find this one to be a little more satisfactory than many – maybe I haven’t found a better one yet”

## **ELT Coursebook Questionnaire: *English Firsthand 1***

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 1.) Given that spoken communication is the main emphasis of *English Firsthand 1*, does it actually contain a key unit stage where students are seriously engaged in using language to communicate for a (specified) purpose in a relatively extended and personally involving way, or are they basically 'practicing' the target language in a pre-determined way?  
– Are they mainly "learning to use English" or are there opportunities for "using English to learn it"? (Howatt, 1984, cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 155)
- 2.) Do the unit organization, the separate unit 'stages', and the built-in procedures for handling them seem to be effective for classroom use? – Have you had any difficulties with these features?

- 3.) Are the stages of each unit fully integrated into a **logical continuity** that keeps students engaged (and makes sense as a teaching-learning sequence/cycle), allowing a lesson to take shape and build progressively, or do they seem somewhat separate and inter-changeable (a series of ‘exercises’) perhaps resulting in motivational ‘highs’ and ‘lows’, unless adapted/adjusted in some way?  
(**logical continuity** relies on, for example, preparatory ‘set up’ stages and consolidatory follow-up stages, before and after a communicative/productive stage)
- 4.) How appropriate is the ‘fit’ between the topic content, the target language and functions, and the unit organization, stages and procedures, considering the uniformity of unit design and the possible variety of ways to handle different topics and functions?
- 5.) Does the coursebook adequately enable students to involve aspects of their own personal lives, experiences, knowledge, and creativity?  
(Does it allow them to apply their own frames of reference through situational/contextual features – and to generate any relevant language, or are they expected or required to relate to pre-determined contexts, situations, and language?)
- 6.) How much of each unit in *English Firsthand 1* do you find usable without making any changes?  
  
(a) a little   (b) less than half   (c) about half   (d) over half   (e) most
- 7.) What features of the coursebook have you found it necessary to adapt?  
What additional features have you found it necessary to introduce?  
– How typical of coursebooks in general are the kinds of features that seem to need adapting or introducing?
- 8.) How have you adapted the features mentioned or introduced additional features – and what are the main reasons you have chosen to do so?  
(Do you mainly adapt the coursebook content by making **basic adjustments** to, for example, the target language, the situational setting, the type of unit stage/procedure, or do you make more **significant changes** such as omitting, reformulating, introducing, or replacing important stages?)

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

10.) How far should coursebooks go and what should the balance be among the following:

- (a.) pre-determining situational/contextual, language, and procedural features within a set, repetitive unit format with all the relevant particulars supplied;
  - (b.) providing a degree of option-based content, open-ended choices/jumping-off points, and opportunities for contextual/situational and topic variation, and possible student input in generating language and content;
  - (c.) providing logical continuity and integration of coursebook unit sequences of a few essential, clearly designated stages, allowing more depth of engagement, with possible additional, non-essential ones specified as optional extras or supplements.
- Which of (a), (b), (c) most closely approximates *English Firsthand 1*?

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

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

Overall how satisfactory do you find it?

- (a) unsatisfactory (b) mostly unsatisfactory (c) partly satisfactory  
(d) mostly satisfactory (e) completely satisfactory

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

## ***Open-ended Question Responses***

***The following seven core open-ended questions were used as the basis for both the Interview Guide and the Questionnaire Survey and based on the six cited original research questions.***

***(\*Question 10 functions both as a ‘closed-’ and ‘open-ended’ question)***

***The answers below, from the completed questionnaires, have been appended, unedited, to each of the core questions as itemized. Coloured-font indicates separate respondents:***

- 1.) To what extent does *EFI* facilitate communicative interaction?**
- 2.) How effective and usable are the unit design and procedures?**
- 3.) How logically progressive and integrated is the unit design?**
- 4.) How well do the coursebook component features work together?**
- 5.) Are there enough opportunities for student personalization?**
- 6.) What kind of elements mostly need adapting – How? – Why?**
- 7.) What are the priorities of a coursebook for spoken communication?**

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

Because of the low level of my students I suppose `they are mainly learning to use English` as opposed to the other. However, the `about you` section can be extended as can the *pairwork* section, depending, of course on the level of one`s students. The conversation can also be extended either in an open-ended way or by simply adding 2 or more lines to the dialogue.

I would say, more or less, that they are “practicing the target language in a fairly pre-determined way.” However, the opportunity is there for students to use the target language in a more extended way, although this requires a lot of input from the teacher and is difficult to apply in a class of 30+ students.

They are asked to use language in a relatively extended and personally involving way. However this relies on the pre-determined target language that restricts them to basically ‘practicing’ limited language presented. This occurs only in the Interaction Stage of each unit.

The students are mainly guided to tasks and activities that enable them to practice in a controlled fashion. From a textual presentation to controlled practice with a comic style dialogue in the conversation section, followed by A and B pair work, a grammar target box then short gap fill exercises. Following that, there is an ‘interaction page’ and the unit finishes with a reading/gap fill exercise. Each page includes a small insert in the corner asking students to do something as an extension of what was practiced in the unit. The blurb states that the unit stages are consistent with Task Based Learning. Many of the tasks and pair work in particular are nothing more than disguised drills. There is nothing wrong with using drills in the learning process as long as one knows the purpose for doing them. As the book stands, it takes students through a series of exercises where they see and practice vocabulary and structure in a confined and safe bubble. There is little room for ‘taking risks’ and as is stated, it offers tasks and pair work to build confidence. The extension inserts are often not helpful, they assume that the target language has been ‘learned’ or call for language the students haven’t practiced or are weak in, leading to breakdown.

I cannot see a key unit or unit stage where students use English to learn it. There is no exercise that gets students using language they know to talk about shared knowledge of their world, or would lead them that into the ‘Gap’ where by the teacher can rescue them by introducing new language and exercises where students can learn.

The Challenge mini-task at the end of the Duet task usually try to take the student “outside the book! There are also “options and variations” suggested in the Teacher’s Manuel. Lastly, the website, [efcafe.com](http://efcafe.com), has a lot of material. That said, Conversation and Duet require only that the student regurgitate what is on the page and even when students are encouraged to venture beyond the language in the text, they rarely do so, choosing instead to use what is written on the page with small details changed.

Not in “a relatively extended and personally involving way”. I doubt my students using the text are capable of that. So they are “basically ‘practicing’ the target language in a pre-determined way.” Students at the better universities I teach at are “using English to learn it” and these do *not* use English Firsthand but a more advanced or intermediate level text.

It does not contain a key unit stage where students are seriously engaged in using language to communicate for a specified purpose in a relatively extended and personally involving way

I believe EFH1 does contain a specific stage for students to engage in real communication. The Pair Work stage always follows vocabulary, listening, and form practice through fixed dialogues. A situation is presented which flows from the previous pages, requiring the student to elaborate, not just repeat. The quality and effectiveness of this section varies rather greatly, from extremely clever to obscure and confusing to be sure, and the amount of structured language vs. self-generated language varies as well. Still, overall, I find this stage of each unit to be THE most useful of all when trying to teach communication in the classroom, a true aid to the teacher.

In theory yes, but in practice (in my experience), no. The ‘Interaction’ segment is supposedly for students to use language to communicate more extensively and in a personally involving way, but students rarely seem to find it useful or be able to talk for long using it. Often the students do not have enough language to actually talk about what they are supposed to be talking about. For example, in unit 1 the students are instructed to draw and then talk about three or four important things in their lives, and then answer questions from their partner about the picture. The partner is instructed to ask at least 3 questions, and to use *who, when, where, why, what, how* to ask these questions. However, my students find WH questions very difficult (I have low level classes) and no models are provided.

Generally speaking, the language needed for the ‘Interaction’ activity seems to be not necessarily the language that has been presented in each unit, except very superficially.

Also, and this is true for textbooks in general, when there is a book the students expect all the information they need to be in there, and if it isn’t they do not (in my experience) resort to using the language they already know. This is not a particular textbook problem, but more, I suspect, a result of students having been taught ‘textbook English’ and also taught to tests in which there is only one right way to say any given thing. If the textbook is there, students expect it to have all the language in it they will need for any particular activity.

Again, this is not necessarily a textbook problem. My own way of getting around it is to use the textbook for primarily grammar-based activities, and setting up a ‘conversation’ time in class during which students do NOT use the text, but have timed conversations with each other. (I use a kitchen timer, which I find far more useful than any textbook.) Sometimes students use language that was in the textbook, but more often they don’t



seem to connect 'conversation' with 'textbook' unless I point out specific examples where some language could be useful.

I only got through five units of this text last year, using it both semesters.

I think there is a fundamental contradiction in the idea of a 'conversation textbook.' Learners using a textbook have, by definition, their faces in the book, reading and thinking, and as long as they are using the textbook they CANNOT focus on communicating with another person. Reading dialogs is not 'communication'. The dialogs give models, but unfortunately our students seem to treat them as the only possible models for the given situation. In order to communicate, students need to close the book and look at each other and have something to say. Personally, I would prefer to use a grammar text with lots and lots of grammar practice and a couple of dialogs to give context, and use that for half the class and use my own activities for the other half.

The activities always give "target language" in the forms of sample dialogues (Preview) or "pronunciation practice" (Pairwork activities) which is a thinly disguised attempt to practice yet more target language, so while they appear to be communicative activities, actually the language is pre specified. True spoken communicative activities would have the students using the language they already have to communicate even it were not completely accurate. What I mean is that students are not engaged in creating language. They are just reading what sounds like communicative language from the textbook. Saying that there are some activities which potentially allow for this type of communication. (For example, Part 3 of the conversation page.). However it seems to me that students will try to make up the conversation using the target language.

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

I sometimes wonder if the language check and real stories section shouldn't be introduced first. I've never tried giving these for homework the week before doing the lesson but that might be something worth trying. Will students do homework? Maybe better to begin the lesson with these 2 sections?

The book is organized in a fairly concise way that is easy to use. My biggest complaint, as with most textbooks is that every chapter follows the exact same format which can be boring. Some of the exercises are a bit too complicated for certain levels and require too much explanation from the instructor.

They are effective for use in classrooms where students have limited ability and/or motivation and need to be spoon-fed or pushed/pulled/dragged along. Due to this and the built in culture of student dependence on textbooks I have no difficulty with these features at this university. In fact, in the context in which this book is used they are welcomed as they provide variety within a unit at no extra time/energy wasting expense (making other materials) to the teacher.

The teachers book gives ideas and procedures to follow, with short explanations into the method and relevant theory behind the procedures, but any trained and experienced teacher should be able to analyze and use the units without the need for 'how to' approach each unit or part of a unit. In using the book, I have had to separate unit stages in a mixed order, and even only parts of a unit. As the book is for a type of class and level in the writer's mind, it is not for a particular class, I might have on a Monday morning at university, or at a conversation school on Saturday mornings. Much depends on the level, needs and motivations of the particular group you are working with. The biggest problem I have is with the 'Interaction stage'. I have tried it their way and various other ways but it looks and feels like an afterthought. It needs to be scrapped or the page given over to something that is useful for both students and teachers. A blank page at this stage might be a better idea. The teacher could then use that for exercises where the students try creating something as an extension and reinforcement, or even just to take notes on the language and skills in the unit. The pair work sections as stated are confined and restricted.

My classes are not planned based on the text. I use it for sequencing, vocabulary, speaking tasks, reading and homework. I have had no problems with the stages because I do not rely on them.

They seemed to go OK. I didn't have any real difficulties.

The unit organization, the separate unit 'stages', and the built-in procedures for handling them are mainly ineffective for classroom use. Yes, I have had difficulties with these features.

Yes, definite difficulties, but not in a way that causes problems for the teacher in my opinion. The coursebook's saving grace (or biggest shortcoming) is that it provides for the teaching of students individually, in small groups, in full-class activity, all at varying levels. Some have said "too much of everything, not enough of anything," a conscious effort I am sure to attract teachers and school situations of all kinds. The only difficulty is not being aware of this when the teacher approaches the book: there is no possible way to cover everything presented for the students, but if the teacher has a clear idea from the start as to what he/she wishes to use to address the needs of a particular class, this is a definite plus. Just use what is appropriate and move on.

I do not generally use the units in the way they are set out. I do not use the listening at all (partly because I always have problems with equipment, partly because students tend to fall asleep, partly because they can listen to CDs at home if they are motivated), and I do the conversation as a dictation/pronunciation exercise and then have students repeating after each other instead of doing it as a dialog, to practice pronunciation and listening/speaking skills, then I do the pairwork if not too many students have forgotten the textbook. The grammar section is often too difficult for my students, who are very low level, and they need a lot of help with it. The grammar explanation at the back of the book is not always helpful, because it is all in English and the students cannot understand the metalanguage. (*frequency adverb, preposition, etc*). Firsthand is better than most

textbooks with the grammar section, but still, it seems to me that there is not enough grammar practice. Also, students do not seem to make the connection with the rest of the unit unless it is explicitly pointed out to them. They treat each section of the unit as discrete and unconnected.

I like the ‘real stories’ section because the two activities (reading and writing) are closely connected and the students have a model (the reading) for their writing, although again I find I usually have to point this out to them. Even then they often check with me carefully before they will follow the format of the reading for their own writing - they seem to think that following a model is somehow ‘cheating’ and I won’t like it. Personally I think following models is a very useful way to learn, and slotting in their own information to make the model relevant to themselves teaches them that ‘cheating’ is exactly how they CAN use the language as a language and not just as an academic exercise.

The blunt instruction at the bottom of the ‘real stories’ section of unit 3 is hilarious. *Discuss*, it says, and there are two questions. I tried it with one of the two classes I use this book with. The students answered the two questions with one-word answers (‘No.’ ‘Nothing.’). Well, of course they did! They didn’t know where to start!

I skipped that bit in the other class...

Also, I supplement a lot.

I don’t use the prescribed procedures in the teacher’s handbook. I find that I sometimes have to rewrite the activities into a student handout to use them effectively. Students often cannot understand what to do just by reading the directions in the book.

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

It seems the authors have worked hard to create continuity within the lessons. Unfortunately, I seldom complete a full lesson in one class period time; 90 minutes is not long enough. Do the students remember what they did in your class one week earlier?

In my opinion the units are logically organized although at times, as previously stated they require too much explanation and input from the instructor.

The stages of each unit are integrated into a *logical continuity* (and make sense as a teaching-learning sequence/cycle), allowing a lesson to take shape and build progressively within a limited and restricted structure and context. Whether this keeps students engaged in a communicative classroom is not determined by the textbook but by the classroom facilitator/teacher.

Each unit takes the same approach and procedure. This can give students the feeling of familiarity and make students feel comfortable. On the other hand it can induce boredom and laziness as they become familiar with the walk through process of each unit. The units aim for logical continuity but in my experience particular units or exercises have weak points that need adapting for lead in and pre-productive stages and for the post productive/consolidation stages.

If one refers to the Teacher's Manual (TM) and the way the authors suggest the text be used, there is a sensible learning cycle... Using material in the back of the book and the TM, the design takes students into and out of each particular unit. One need not, nor is it suggested, that a teacher strictly follow the material of each unit as it is set out.

More “somewhat separate and inter-changeable (a series of ‘exercises’) perhaps resulting in motivational ‘highs’ and ‘lows’, unless adapted/ adjusted in some way?”

The stages of each unit are not fully integrated into a logical continuity that keeps students engaged allowing a lesson to take shape and build progressively. Unless adapted or adjusted in some way, they are simply a somewhat separate and inter-changeable series of exercises resulting in motivational highs and lows.

No, logical continuity is not evident in this book. Most or all units can be interchanged at will, or deleted entirely, with almost no effect whatsoever (*almost* because I notice some continuity in the presentation of vocabulary and expressions from one unit to the next. **SOME...**) \*[The question appears misconstrued as ‘inter’ unit rather than ‘intra’ unit]

‘Engaged’? HA HA HA HA HA

As mentioned before, the students don't seem to notice any ‘logical continuity’ in the text, but I'm not sure if that's the text's problem or the students'. The students certainly respond to each section as if it's unconnected with the one before, and some they enjoy and others they find boring, difficult, or just plain baffling. They don't seem to understand WHY they are doing any of this.

I adapt and adjust almost everything, depending on the class. The classes in which I am using this text are very low level, and ‘communicative’ activities are almost impossible without modeling or explicit guidelines. The grammar sections are very difficult for them, so if I am going to use them I need to set them up and give a lot of other practice before they can even try. A part of the problem is that because the classes are low level and quite large we can't do much in any one class, and by the next week everybody has forgotten what we did the week before.

To some extent yes. The language check though often seems unrelated to the rest of the unit, or related in a small way.

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

For the most part, I would say the fit is appropriate. There are always things that seem to have very little meaning to our college age students in Japan. I supposed that is part of a college education, broadening one's knowledge to include other parts of the world, ways of thinking, etc.

For the most part the students seem to enjoy the pair work in the textbook. However, at times the exercises leading up to the pair work can seem disjointed.

\*[This seems to refer more specifically to Question 3]

The fit between the topic content, the target language and functions, and the unit organization, stages and procedures is appropriate inside the limited and restricted structure and context that the textbook introduces.

The uniformity of each unit and the textbook as a whole does what it sets out to do

Appropriate

Not bad

There is not much appropriate fit between the topic content, the target language and functions, and the unit organization, stages and procedures

I find the book patchy in this regard. A few units cleverly tied together, one or two others obscure to the point of almost being unusable

It's hard to say - I have only used parts of five units.

I think that most of the features of each unit fit together reasonably well

### 5.) Are there enough opportunities for student personalization?

I would say the text does give students plenty of opportunity to express themselves. The problem is most students' lack of willingness to open up and share. 'hazukashi', the word most translate as 'shy'. They're trained(?) not to brag on themselves. Furthermore, they'll seldom talk freely with a classmate they don't know(well) or like. On the other hand, many won't speak English with friends; I guess it doesn't feel right, the old 'hazukashi' excuse.

I think the textbook does allow students the opportunity to involve aspects of their own personal experiences. However, the issue is actually getting the students to give this information. Students are often willing to use the information given to them in the pair work but when they need to actually volunteer information pertaining to their own life experience or preferences they often have a hard time with this.

The coursebook does enable students to involve aspects of their own personal lives, experiences, knowledge, and creativity in the Interaction stage of each unit. Adequacy is determined by the restricted and limited structure and language that the textbook introduces and the limited activities that this stage of the unit presents measured against the students' lives, their language ability and motivation they have to communicate in English and what the teacher expects them to be able to do above and beyond that.

I can't answer this question adequately.

No. The textbook is to guide students through a set of structured exercises that are restricted to the topic and language presented.

Much of the language is already laid out so there is little motivation to complete the tasks successfully. The students just go through the motions.

Adequately? Too difficult to qualify that without talking with all students. It does give room for *some* personal involvement.

The coursebook does not adequately enable students to involve aspects of their own personal lives, experiences, knowledge, and creativity. It does not allow them to apply their own frames of reference through situational/contextual features. They are simply expected or required to relate to pre-determined contexts, situations, and language.

Yes, I think so. I find students often getting genuinely engaged with the content through good balance of layout, visuals and color, as well as content and open questions that students seem genuinely willing to talk about. This is no easy feat to achieve with the maturity level and caliber of many of my students!

In the units I have used, not much. At least I have very rarely heard the students using any of their own experience or generate new language. This may be because they are very low level, or because they are not used to using English communicatively.

It depends on the level of the students. The dialogues are difficult for some of them to relate to their personal lives. Some of the readings have good content, which can be exploited on a more personalized level. (My bedroom, Kinki University e cube etc)

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

### *Conversation and Pairwork*

I always lengthen the conversation to 5 or 6 utterances for each speaker; I've that 4 lines is each is too short, almost meaningless. I suggested this to the publisher when I reviewed the new edition.

In pairwork or interview situations I always suggest and insist on follow-up questions, also called the plus-one technique, I think.

It is very easy to adapt. Isn't that the best thing about this text? It's not too easy but not too difficult. It is not hard to find supplemental worksheets to support or even replace activities as it covers common EFL functions, like giving directions, describing people and taking a trip.

Sometimes students are asked direct questions about their own preferences. For example, in the music unit they listen to music and are asked how it makes them feel. This exercise in a large class of lower level students is very difficult to do.

I found myself spending a lot of time on the pair work, explaining and going through each question with the students.

Often the pair work and group work needs adapting. Again, as previously stated this is more problematic with larger, lower level classes

I find myself omitting certain sections of each unit. If it takes a long time to explain the students lose interest.

Adapting the coursebook really meant omitting certain sections as well as focusing on specific units.

The coursebook provides units that are integrated into a *logical continuity* (and makes sense as a teaching-learning sequence/cycle), allowing a lesson to take shape and build progressively within a limited and restricted structure and context. In a classroom of 20 - 30 students largely disinterested in learning English because they don't see a need for it in their futures teachers have the choice of spending time and effort designing activities that might interest the students for 15-20 minutes, producing materials and ordering photocopies a week in advance, or trying to manage the class through the textbook activities.

Occasionally communicative activities are introduced but this tends to be on the spur of the moment depending on the flow of the class and students motivation on that day rather than any preplanned notions.

With other classes, other textbooks and sometimes more motivated, interested and engaging students communicative tasks are often features that are adapted or introduced around the language structure and topics of the day.



Yes, communicative tasks have been adapted. How depends on the language that needs to be used to give the instructions, whether the students will understand the instructions, how long it will take to set the activity in motion, how long the activity is expected to engage the students for, how the extra activity will fit into the textbook unit and tasks, the extra language that needs to be pre-taught in order to complete the task and the students' mood and interest of the day to name just a few of the influencing factors.

Adapting the coursebook (and communicative activities), how to adapt it and whether to adapt it or not depends on the factors mentioned above. Often it is adapted differently in different classes depending on the factors above. If teachers aren't thinking adaptations through based on these factors every time then they are not taking into consideration the influencing classroom factors.

I have had to adapt and extend most of what is in the textbook based on the particular group I am teaching. The introduction/presentation of vocabulary needs adapting. Although the book has introduced verb phrasing instead of isolated verbs, the 'grammar of vocabulary' is not clear to the students. Adjectives, adjective noun combinations, compounds and basic type one phrasal verbs are just 'there' or are missing completely. The textbook does list the key unit vocabulary at the back of the book, but it is up to the teacher to introduce and give further practice with these items. The listening section page can be done as is or can be done using the gap fill transcripts at the back. Both are for different purposes, but the transcripts contain language items in dialogues that need analyzing and practice in a variety of ways for students to learn about the language and gain control in using it. One important element for learners is the ability to create questions and extend friendly and informal conversation. Information questions 'Wh' are well covered but little time is given to the importance of Yes/No questions. Even the lowest level students can probably come up with 'Do you like or Do you have' type questions but for most of them, they are unable to use, 'do, can, have, are, you etc and is he/she/it etc, in conversation. They fall back on Wh questions without understanding what this implies. Extending conversation, showing interest, or changing topic is most often not introduced or presented in a way that students can understand the importance of this. With the dialogue segment, I have to extend it by giving pairs the first line of a dialogue which they then have to create a 6 to 8 line conversation between two people. The spend time working on it/shaping it with help from me on my walk rounds, and they then have time to practice both parts before hamming it up in front of class. Each pair will have a different introductory line.

I do both (*basic adjustments* and *significant changes*). Much depends on the curriculum imposed, the time constraints, and the students levels and needs. Sometimes it might depend on student tiredness, season and weather, which might call for a different approach and type of exercises. Also, it may depend on my own experience or knowledge of what any particular group need at that time.

I found it quite easy to adapt the course book but needed to think through each component and continually explain to my students why we are doing this particular section this way or using my own materials and exercises even though parts of it appear in the book. I make sure my students understand why I omit or add certain sections. I



explain and continually remind them that the (expensive) textbook they bought is good and helpful but that I and them will be the key to successful and enjoyable outcomes. The book acts as a guide, a useful reference, and a notebook of some examples.

I don't teach the text. I fit texts into what I want to do.

I use what the text offers to do what I want to do. I haven't adapted the text in any way.

If it works for me I use it, if it doesn't work I don't.

Listening sections.

1. My own grading and marking criteria for some exercises.
2. Extending or slightly modifying some of the conversation exercises.

I have found it necessary to adapt most if not all features of the coursebook, and have found it necessary to introduce contextual meaningful example conversations.

This is not typical of course books that are written in clear topic based units.

I have adapted the coursebook content by making basic adjustments in the situational setting as well as other more significant changes such as omitting minor parts, or replacing important parts.

It was difficult to adapt the coursebook the first time I used it. I had to discover how best to adapt the coursebook as it did not lend itself to adaptation. I had to think it through and do some serious re-jigging.

I find both the vocabulary and listening stages need regular adapting to keep a proper pace and motivation in the classroom. I teach classes of generally 25 to 35 students so I find this problem typical to almost all texts I have used.

Changes in procedure generally, a list of words becomes a timed memory drill. Listening can be focused by a simple competition between groups working as teams, etc.

DIFFICULT! (adapting first time). This new edition in particular, changes from previous editions were subtle, and sometimes easily missed. Some changes were definitely not for the best, in my estimation. A more useful discovery overall has been the Teacher's Manual, more detailed than ever, and will often reveal the threads of logic from stage to stage which may not be obvious in the student's book (nor need they be that obvious to the learners, to be fair). Ideas for adaptation abound here, bound to be of use to almost any teacher and any class if they but look.

I think pretty typical of most textbooks. The effort to make the textbook look attractive and 'cute' and not bore students, and the effort to fit some idea of 'communicative' English, means that while grammar is included, it is insufficient if that is really what the students need or what the teacher wants to teach, and yet the communicative aspects don't work either, because the conversations are unnaturally fitted around the grammar pattern and are anyway... unnatural. NO NORMAL PERSON SPEAKS LIKE THAT. (I generally use the conversations as dictation exercises.)

'How to have a conversation' is necessary if learners are to use English in any meaningful way, and also if they are to use English for longer than a few seconds at a time, or use it NOT with their heads down in the book (or up but hiding behind the book), so I introduce a 'two-minute conversation' activity at the beginning of semester, which I use every week, in which the students are given a framework for having a short conversation. For this I explain to learners that every conversation has three stages, 'greeting', 'free talking,' and 'ending.' I give (or elicit) examples for them to use for the first and third stages, and I also give them ways to move from one stage to another (especially how to end), and while they can choose their own topics I help them with vocabulary, and as the semester goes on I listen to their conversations (they have five per class, with different partners) and give mini-lessons on points they seem to be needing. (How to keep a conversation going, how to listen and give feedback, how to respond to good news/bad news, how to use 'um,' 'er' a few grammar points, and so on.) I tell students they can use topics from the textbook if they wish, but it is very rare for any to do so.

(Two minutes is a big task for the students I have had this year. They have had real trouble with it, but are enormously satisfied when they find they can. I have been giving extra help by providing topics and writing lists of questions on the board for them to use in their conversations. That would be a helpful thing in a textbook – lists of questions about a topic.)

The textbook does not give models for the students to learn from. Or rather, it gives models, but not particularly useful or natural models.

Mostly I omit. The students seem to find the textbook boring, on the whole. I select activities from the book that I think they might enjoy and learn from. Which these are depends on the class. I find the text very difficult to use as a coursebook, so I don't, instead using my own methods and bits of the book when it seems it might be useful. But the responses I get from the students from textbook study are generally boredom and/or puzzlement. Basically I want students to speak English in my classes, and using a textbook they tend not to, so I use my own activities instead. I only have a text at all because I am required to.

I have never found a textbook that enabled students to use English in any meaningful way, so did not really expect this one to. It is difficult to make it work in class, and I only use it enough so that students won't complain about having to buy it. I fit the text to my lessons rather than fitting my lessons to the text. On days when I am not prepared/feeling lazy or tired, and simply follow the text, it is hard to keep the students on task, as they tend to get bored or confused. Also, the activities are quite short, so students tend to finish and then just chat in Japanese if I don't keep giving instructions.

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

I would have to select choice (a) due to time constraints and the fact that 99% of my students are very low level. It is always nice to have options and some open-ended choices but they have to be clear, quickly accessible and not too difficult. Ultimately the teacher must decide how to conduct class using the textbook lesson as a template or guide, introducing his own ideas or approach best suited to the students, or the needs of his students

I think option “b” is the best choice. Option “A” is typical of coursebooks but every unit with the exact same format is boring. Option “C” is suited for smaller level classes in which the teacher can give more attention to individual students who are having difficulty.

If you can tell me everything that I might want to know about a student’s English education background, ability, and future aspirations with the language then consider that against the same factors for each student in the class that they are going to be put into then I can answer this question.

(b.) providing a degree of option-based content, open-ended choices/jumping-off points, and opportunities for contextual/situational and topic variation, and possible student input in generating language and content

Seems like a loaded question

Depends on the students. For those who just can’t practice speaking and want or need more of that this is unavoidable and good practice. What is too much, enough, or too little will depend on each student or class. What is a good balance will therefore depend on the student level and ability. Where I use the text I think the balance is reasonable.

Most of my students require telling what to do and they lack the student initiative for much open-ended choices and jumping-off due to taking the initiative having not been a part of or encouraged in any form during their general education. Almost all my students have no idea what it is they would like to study and therefore have no ideas for input. Until one meets the class or students it is just not possible to access what a good balance is going to be.

(c.) Sounds good

Coursebooks must provide situational/contextual language and procedural features within a set repetitive unit format with all the relevant particulars supplied, but must also provide a degree of option-based content, open-ended choices and jumping-off points. They must also provide opportunities for contextual/situational discussion and topic variation as well as possible student input in developing language ability and providing logical continuity and integration of course book unit sequences of essential, clearly designated stages that allow for more depth of engagement with additional extras or supplements.

I prefer a textbook that takes a stand, sets the stages and then consistently presents a structure from unit to unit. Whatever structures and determinations have been made, it benefits both students and teachers if the book remains true to those procedural features. Hence I am a firm believer in point (a) being fundamental to any good classroom textbook. Point (b), when it shows up in a text, is the difference between craftsmanship and, well, a glorified shopping list. I don't have strong feelings about (c): whether many stages are presented versus a few basics, followed by optional supplements. It is not a debate that interests me. In the end it is the teacher, especially when faced with university-level false starters in L2, that must design and control for each and every section of students they must face. In that context, a good textbook is one that facilitates the teacher, makes the job easier, not more difficult.

I would like a text that offered something more like (a) with features from (c) provided in the teachers' manual. I think there is a point where texts are NOT useful. I do not think real engagement with the language can be provided in any textbook, and only happens after the book is closed. With a 'boring' book like (a) the students can use it as a reference. The texts I have learned from the most as a language learner have been grammar books with lots of repetitive, 'boring' exercises. I have never found a 'conversation' text helpful. What helps for communication is communicating. I think learning a language is like learning piano – you can learn everything from a book except how to play. The only way to learn to play the piano is to play the piano, badly at first, but getting better with practice. The only way to learn to speak a language is to speak the language – badly at first but getting better with practice.

It depends what your aims are as a teacher. If you believe that PPP methodology works with a functional structural syllabus and you want students to memorize specific forms to be tested on, then a textbook which gives students these forms to be learned, and a way of testing them is a good idea. A repetitive format can be helpful to students because they will be gradually "trained" in classroom procedures the teacher wants to use.

On the other hand for experienced teachers who have developed their own preferred ways of dealing with these things such a textbook can be obstructive to classroom goals and confusing to students.

On the other hand again, if you don't mind the students buying a text but not using it completely, it can be useful to have such a text to dip into when appropriate.

(b.) Yes, textbooks could go much further in this respect.

A textbook is confined in scope to the expected methodology behind it. It is quite clear that a typical unit sequence in English Firsthand follows a PPP methodology.

Presentation of vocabulary and target forms via Preview, Listening and Conversation, moving into “controlled” practice of target forms in Pairwork A&B and so called “free practice” in the Interaction. The Language Check and Real Stories seem to fall into the category of optional extras. The sequencing in EF1 suits the methodology it uses.

How far should texts go as far as “c” is concerned? As far as their methodology demands. EF1 does this.

***Further remarks regarding English Firsthand 1 and/or issues in common with ELT coursebooks for spoken communication:***

As stated, this textbook is meant for a mass market. Although this edition contains ideas and procedures for teaching which are an improvement over previous editions, and a long time coming.

It however falls short of a highly usable and adaptable textbook. I’m sure in some situations it may be regarded highly, but being done as it is contains dangers both for students and teachers if one solely relies on this book to teach/learn English.

The layout of certain sections needs to be changed so that it is visually attractive to the student. Many textbooks have either large white spaces or are too busy. The book is attractive enough but often looks too busy, or has bits that just seem to hang.

Another negative is the Teacher’s resource CD-rom which is for ‘windows’ only. I and many of my colleagues use Apple computers so that resource is not available to us.

Furthermore, the online resources for students and the suggestion that they copy the CD listening component on to their iPods/mobile phones to listen to on the train are wonderful, but in reality, only the most motivated students will do. One can hope for the day that lessons can be recorded and made available to students iPods and iPads as reinforcement, but until then teachers and students in different situations need text books that gives them good mileage from the journey they set out on.

It is a text with a huge target audience. It tries to be all things to all people and fails. It is as good as most of its kind.

I think a huge problem with the textbooks offered for use in Japanese classrooms for spoken communication is that for some reason the publishers seem to think that students will be inspired by pretty pictures and colour. The texts give an overwhelming impression of being intended for fun, not for learning, and are often almost insultingly childish with their resemblance to children’s picture books.

The physical size of the texts is a particular problem. I do not understand why they are always so large. Besides being inconvenient and heavy to lug around they are also a physical barrier to communication. To communicate effectively students should be able to face each other, but with these big books if a student holds the book up, the book is in the face of their partner, and if the book is on the desk they are always having to look down.

I once used a text called 'In English' (Oxford, I think) which was in a smaller format. The content was pretty much like other coursebooks I have used (perhaps it was a bit better, but I can't remember much and don't have a copy anymore), but I remember finding it much more conducive to communication simply because students could hold it up without blocking their partner from view. I cannot think of any valid pedagogical reason for most coursebooks to be always SO [CENSORED] HUGE and it irritates me enormously. I think practically any coursebook could be improved by making it smaller.

English Firsthand may not be very successful, but it is a step in the right direction when you consider the alternatives. I have used texts that are far more inappropriate for college students. I don't have a big problem with the repetitive format – especially in the first term where students seriously need training and some familiarity with types of tasks they may be given.

Saying that, I will be using it next year as well, but I will probably ignore a lot of the stuff that does not work well. I may use the readings as the main part to jump off on to those topics. I may not use the built in tests either. I am considering an alternative method of assessment for a final "exam." (i.e. not a paper and pencil test; probably some kind of presentation activity).

#### A comment about all textbooks

My opinion is that textbooks should not be used at all. Publishing companies should instead produce resource materials and activities which the teacher can use and adapt to suit the needs of the students and the teaching situation he or she is engaged in. I think a textbook can encourage some teachers to be lazy and not actually to do anything except go through it from start to finish without preparing or catering to the abilities and needs of the students. I think the fact that textbooks like EF1 and most of the others exist at all is a sign that there are too many teachers (especially at university level, and regardless of age) who are either too inexperienced or too lazy to make their own syllabus and plan their classes properly. Unfortunately, a lot of the time, even experienced teachers who want to use their teaching skills in this way are unable to do so because an administration, usually ignorant of English language education, has forced a textbook on them. This is partly for administrative convenience (i.e. a ready made syllabus which applies to all classes of a certain level) and partly for the reason above (i.e. because, left to their own devices, some teachers will not, or cannot, plan classes or teach the students well).

## Questionnaire Response Transcriptions (grouped by respondent)

*The following transcriptions and selective quotation summarize responses to the questions, in the thematic order in which they appear on the questionnaire, with some concluding comments from the final, optional 'further comments' section*

### RESPONDENT 1:

- “Because of the low level of my students I suppose `they are mainly learning to use English` (rather than ‘using English to learn it’)” However, the *pairwork* and *about you* sections can be extended
- Uncertain about effectiveness of unit organization (might try alternatives)
- “It seems the authors have worked hard to create continuity within the lessons”
- “For the most part, I would say the fit (between CB features) is appropriate”
- Personalization of content problematic because of cultural predisposition of students: ‘reluctance’/ hesitation
- Need for extending ‘practice sections’ with follow-up questions / lengthening dialogues
- ‘Ready-to-go’ aspect of CB important: options would need to be easy, undemanding for teacher
- “Ultimately the teacher must decide how to conduct class using the textbook lesson as a template or guide, introducing his own ideas or approach best suited to ... the needs of his students”
- “To me, the ideal text would be a data base refreshed at least once a year with current news, the popular artists and musicians of the day, people in the news, etc. with a focus on the interests of the students”

RESPONDENT 2:

- “I would say, more or less, that they are “practicing the target language in a fairly pre-determined way.” However, the opportunity is there for students to use the target language in a more extended way, although this requires a lot of input from the teacher and is difficult to apply in a class of 30+ students”
- Repetitive unit format “boring”
- Too much procedural explanation required at times
- “Preparatory exercises” can seem “disjointed”
- Expressing reactions to direct (set) questions – “difficult”
- “I think the textbook does allow students the opportunity to involve aspects of their own personal experiences. However, the issue is actually getting the students to give this information”
- Common CB problem: group-work / pair-work needs adapting especially for large, low-level classes
- Omission of stages requiring over-long set-up
- Adaptation: mainly omission
- More CB options would be a plus

RESPONDENT 3:

- Communication “restricted”, limited to *Interaction* stage
- “They are effective for use in classrooms where students have limited ability and/or motivation and need to be spoon-fed or pushed/pulled/dragged along. Due to this and the built in culture of student dependence on textbooks I have no difficulty with these features at this university. In fact, in the context in which this book is used they are welcomed as they provide variety within a unit at no extra time/energy wasting expense (making other materials) to the teacher”
- Student engagement / communication (should be) determined more by teacher than CB
- The CB component features are “appropriate inside the limited and restricted structure and context that the textbook introduces”



- Personalization evident in the *Interaction* stage
- Communicative activities need to be introduced “varyingly” depending on a number of variable contextual factors “Often (the CB) is adapted differently in different classes”
- Adaptation mainly necessary to introduce communicative activities
- Primacy of student profile / teaching context in determining appropriate materials and pedagogy

#### RESPONDENT 4:

- “Many of the tasks and pair-work ... are nothing more than disguised drills”
- “As the book stands, it takes students through a series of exercises where they see and practice vocabulary and structure in a confined and safe bubble”
- Confidence building dominates over risk-taking
- “The extension inserts are often not helpful, they assume that the target language has been ‘learned’ or call for language the students haven’t practiced or are weak in, leading to breakdown”
- No “key unit or unit stage where students ‘use English to learn it’. There is no exercise that gets students using language they know to talk about shared knowledge of their world, or would lead them that into the ‘Gap’ whereby the teacher can rescue them by introducing new language and exercises where students can learn.”
- “The teachers book gives ideas and procedures to follow, with short explanations into the method and relevant theory behind the procedures, but any trained and experienced teacher should be able to analyze and use the units without the need for ‘how to’ approach each unit or part of a unit”
- Necessary to re-order and omit unit stages: problem of ‘one-size-fits-all’ – CB “not for a particular class” – context key factor
- “The biggest problem I have is with the *Interaction* stage. I have tried it their way and various other ways but it looks and feels like an afterthought”
- Pair-work sections are “confined and restricted”
- Logical continuity on the surface only – not substantive

- Lack of sufficient lead-in / pre-productive stages and post-productive / consolidation stages
- “The uniformity of each unit and the textbook as a whole does what it sets out to do”
- Lack of adequate personalization
- Need to adapt and extend most unit content, depending on class
- Variables of context, conditions, affect, time, changing needs, all determine type / extent of adaptation
- “I found it quite easy to adapt the course book but needed to think through each component”
- The CB acts as a guide, a useful reference, and a notebook of some examples
- CB’s should (provide a degree of option-based content, open-ended choices/ jumping-off points, and opportunities for contextual/situational and topic variation, and possible student input in generating language and content)
- “As stated, this textbook is meant for a mass market ... It however falls short of a highly usable and adaptable textbook. I’m sure in some situations it may be regarded highly, but being done as it is contains dangers both for students and teachers if one solely relies on this book to teach/learn English”
- “The book is attractive enough but often looks too busy, or has bits that just seem to hang”

#### RESPONDENT 5:

- “The *EF1* ‘package’ (including Teacher’s Manual) offers a lot of potential material, but regarding key stages such as *Conversation* and *Duet* – which has an ‘extension insert’ they “require only that the student regurgitate what is on the page and even when students are encouraged to venture beyond the language in the text, they rarely do so, choosing instead to use what is written on the page with small details changed.”
- Selective and flexible use of unit stages made: actual organization irrelevant / ignored

- “If one refers to the Teacher’s Manual (TM) and the way the authors suggest the text be used, there is a sensible learning cycle ... Using material in the back of the book and the TM, the design takes students into and out of each particular unit. One need not, nor is it suggested, that a teacher strictly follow the material of each unit as it is set out.”
- “Much of the language is already laid out so there is little motivation to complete the tasks successfully. The students just go through the motions.”
- CB component features “appropriate” ‘fit’
- CB is a resource and reference to be exploited in whatever way appropriate (in accordance with pre-existing lesson plans) “I don’t teach the text. I fit texts into what I want to do”
- “It is a text with a huge target audience. It tries to be all things to all people and fails. It is as good as most of its kind”

#### RESPONDENT 6:

- “They are ‘basically ‘practicing’ the target language in a pre-determined way’ ” as constrained by their level
- The unit stages are “more ‘somewhat separate and inter-changeable (a series of ‘exercises’) perhaps resulting in motivational ‘highs’ and ‘lows’, unless adapted/adjusted in some way’ ”
- ‘Fit’ between CB component features “not bad”
- The CB “does give room for *some* personal involvement”
- Adaptation: “Extending or slightly modifying some of the conversation exercises” as is typical for most CB’s
- “Basic adjustments only (made), but I do omit some listening sections and read those, rather than use CDs”
- *EFL* (taken as representative of the question 10: ‘a’ profile) seems suited to low-level students requiring much controlled practice
- Low-level students, especially, are not ‘acculturated’ to much ‘choice-making’ or “taking the initiative”
- Difficult to predetermine degree of choice for a CB

- (Providing logical continuity and integration of coursebook unit sequences of a few essential, clearly designated stages, allowing more depth of engagement, with possible additional, non-essential ones specified as optional extras or supplements) – “sounds good”

#### RESPONDENT 7:

- No key communicative stage
- Unit organization / stages mainly ineffective
- No ‘logical continuity’ – ‘separate and interchangeable’ unit stages
- “There is not much appropriate fit between the topic content, the target language and functions, and the unit organization, stages and procedures”
- Lack of adequate personalization
- Need to adapt almost all features
- “I have found it necessary to adapt most if not all features of the coursebook, and have found it necessary to introduce contextual meaningful example conversations – this is not typical of coursebooks that are written in clear topic based units”
- “I have adapted the coursebook content by making basic adjustments in the situational setting as well as other more significant changes such as omitting minor parts, or replacing important parts”
- CB difficult to adapt first time
- “Coursebooks must provide ‘situational/contextual language and procedural features within a set repetitive unit format with all the relevant particulars supplied,’ but must also provide ‘a degree of option-based content, open-ended choices and jumping-off points.’ They must also provide ‘opportunities for contextual/situational discussion and topic variation’ as well as ‘possible student input in’ developing language ability and providing ‘logical continuity and integration of coursebook unit sequences of essential, clearly designated stages that allow for more depth of engagement with additional extras or supplements”

#### RESPONDENT 8:

- *EF1* does contain an opportunity for real communication: the *Pairwork* section: “A situation is presented which flows from the previous pages, requiring the student to elaborate, not just repeat. The quality and effectiveness of this section varies rather greatly, from extremely clever to obscure and confusing to be sure, and the amount of structured language vs. self-generated language varies as well”
- Difficulties lie in the all-encompassing (‘global’) market-appeal of the CB:  
  
“The coursebook’s saving grace (or biggest shortcoming) is that it provides for the teaching of students individually, in small groups, in full-class activity, all at varying levels. Some have said “too much of everything, not enough of anything,” a conscious effort I am sure to attract teachers and school situations of all kinds. The only difficulty is not being aware of this when the teacher approaches the book”
- Re: the ‘fit’ between CB unit features, “I find the book patchy in this regard. A few units cleverly tied together, one or two others obscure to the point of almost being unusable”
- The CB seems to achieve adequate personalization
- “I find both the vocabulary and listening stages need regular adapting to keep a proper pace and motivation in the classroom. I teach classes of generally 25 to 35 students so I find this problem typical to almost all texts I have used”
- Type of adaptation: “Changes in procedure generally, a list of words becomes a timed memory drill. Listening can be focused by a simple competition between groups working as teams, etc.”
- First time adaptation “difficult” – however, TM very useful – reveals logical continuities
- “I prefer a textbook that ... sets the stages and then consistently presents a structure from unit to unit. Whatever structures and determinations have been made, it benefits both students and teachers if the book remains true to those procedural features. Hence I am a firm believer in point (a) being fundamental to any good classroom textbook”
- CB’s that are ‘ready-to-go’ lessen potential demands on teachers – but they need to be adapted / used according to the teaching context

RESPONDENT 9:

- “In theory ... the *Interaction* segment is supposedly for students to use language to communicate more ‘extensively and in a personally involving way,’ but students rarely seem to find it useful or be able to talk for long using it”
  - Lack of scaffolding / models (elsewhere also: *Real Stories*)
- “Generally speaking, the language needed for the *Interaction* activity seems to be not necessarily the language that has been presented in each unit, except very superficially”
- “I think there is a fundamental contradiction in the idea of a ‘conversation textbook.’ Learners using a textbook have, by definition, their faces in the book, reading and thinking, and as long as they are using the textbook they CANNOT focus on communicating with another person. Reading dialogs is not ‘communication’. The dialogs give models, but unfortunately our students seem to treat them as the only possible models for the given situation. In order to communicate, students need to close the book and look at each other and have something to say”
- “I do not generally use the units in the way they are set out”
- More “grammar practice” needed for low-level students
- Students “treat each section of the unit as discrete and unconnected...they don’t seem to understand WHY they are doing any of (it)”
  - No awareness of thematic language
- “I adapt and adjust almost everything, depending on the class”
- “‘Communicative’ activities are almost impossible without modeling or explicit guidelines”
- “Not much” personalization (low-level students)
- “The 3-minute conversation task after the conversation is unusable, in my experience. ‘Have a conversation’ is an impossible instruction. There is no (suitable) framework for the students to refer to” > need for adaptation
- Communicative activities / scaffolded conversations need introducing because “many of the activities (in *EFI*) are not sustained enough for students to get any benefit from them. They finish and forget”
- Re what needs adapting: “I think (*EFI*) is pretty typical of most textbooks. The effort to make the textbook look attractive and ‘cute’ and not bore

students, and the effort to fit some idea of ‘communicative’ English, means that while grammar is included, it is insufficient if that is really what the students need or what the teacher wants to teach, and yet the communicative aspects don’t work either, because the conversations are unnaturally fitted around the grammar pattern and are anyway ... unnatural”

- Use own format for introducing scaffolded conversations
- “The textbook does not give models for the students to learn from. Or rather, it gives models, but not particularly useful or natural models”
- “Mostly I omit (unit stages) ... I select activities ... (depending) on the class. ... Basically I want students to speak English in my classes, and using a textbook they tend not to, so I use my own activities instead. I only have a text at all because I am required to”
- “I have never found a textbook that enabled students to use English in any meaningful way, so did not really expect (*EFI*) to”
- “I would like a text that offered something more like [10] (a) with features from (c) provided in the teachers’ manual”
- “I do not think real engagement with the language can be provided in any textbook, and only happens after the book is closed”
- “I have never found any coursebook that provided suitable ‘open-ended’ activities”
- “I think a huge problem with (CB’s is that they) give an overwhelming impression of being intended for fun, not for learning, and are often almost insultingly childish with their resemblance to children’s picture books”
- The physical size of the texts is a particular problem ... they are also a physical barrier to communication ... I think practically any coursebook could be improved by making it smaller

RESPONDENT 10:

- “While (the activities) appear to be communicative, actually the language is pre specified ... They are just reading what sounds like communicative language from the textbook. (However), there are some activities which potentially allow for this type of communication. (For example, Part 3 of the conversation page.)”
- “I don’t use the prescribed procedures in the teacher’s handbook. I find that I sometimes have to rewrite the activities into a student handout to use them effectively”
- ‘Logical continuity’ exists “to some extent”
- “I think that most of the features of each unit fit together reasonably well”
- Degree of personalization “depends on the level of the students. The dialogues are difficult for some of them to relate to their personal lives. Some of the readings ... can be exploited on a more personalized level”
- “The *Conversation* section often needs to be adapted”
- “In coursebooks in general, pairwork activities are often not developed enough, and need to be expanded”
- “Communicative activities that do not require target language often need to be (introduced)”
- “I mostly adapt the textbook when I want to use it. This often means making a worksheet that includes the activities presented in the way I want and my extra tasks”
- “The problem (with first time adaptation) is how much time it takes to produce something that you want your students to have and work from”
- “A repetitive format can be helpful to students because they will be gradually ‘trained’ in classroom procedures the teacher wants to use ...
- – On the other hand for experienced teachers who have developed their own preferred ways of dealing with these things such a textbook can be obstructive to classroom goals and confusing to students”
- CB’s are useful as a reference and selective resource



- CB's "could go much further in respect (to)" "(b.) providing a degree of option-based content, open-ended choices/jumping-off points, and opportunities for contextual/situational and topic variation, and possible student input in generating language and content'
- "It is quite clear that a typical unit sequence in English Firsthand follows a PPP methodology"
- "My opinion is that textbooks should not be used at all. Publishing companies should instead produce resource materials and activities which the teacher can use and adapt to suit the needs of the students and the teaching situation"

**Table 1:** Showing each ‘closed response’ for each separate respondent

| <p><b>1</b>    Numbering of respondents</p> <p><b>2</b>    <b>Question (6.) How much of each unit in <i>English Firsthand 1</i> do you find usable without making any changes?</b><br/> (a) a little   (b) less than half   (c) about half   (d) over half   (e) most</p> <p><b>3</b>    <b>Question (10.) How far should coursebooks go and what should the balance be among the following:</b><br/> (a) set format with all particulars   (b) options/ variation/ student input   (c) key integrated stages + extras</p> <p><b>4</b>    <b>Question (10.) – Which of (a), (b), (c) most closely approximates <i>English Firsthand 1</i>?</b></p> <p><b>5</b>    <b>How suitable do you find this coursebook for use in a Japanese university?</b><br/> (a) unsuitable   (b) not very suitable   (c) somewhat suitable   (d) mostly suitable   (e) suitable</p> <p><b>6</b>    <b>Overall how satisfactory do you find it?</b><br/> (a) unsatisfactory   (b) mostly unsatisfactory   (c) partly satisfactory   (d) mostly satisfactory   (e) completely satisfactory</p> |                    |          |               |                       |                           |
|---|--------------------|----------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| <u>1</u>  | <u>2</u>           | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u>      | <u>5</u>              | <u>6</u>                  |
| 1   | (e) most           | (a)      | (a) [b and c] | (d) mostly suitable   | (d) mostly satisfactory   |
| 2   | (e) most           | (b)      | (a)           | (d) mostly suitable   | (d) mostly satisfactory   |
| 3   | (e) most           | (/)      | (a)           | (c) somewhat suitable | (d) mostly satisfactory   |
| 4   | (b) less than half | (b)      | (a)           | (c) somewhat suitable | (c) partly satisfactory   |
| 5   | (c) about half     | (/)      | (a)           | (c) somewhat suitable | (c) partly satisfactory   |
| 6   | (c) about half     | (c)      | (a)           | c or d                | between (c) and (d)       |
| 7   | (c) about half     | (a b c)  | (a)           | (b) not very suitable | (b) mostly unsatisfactory |
| 8   | (c) about half     | (a)      | (a)?          | (e) suitable          | (d) mostly satisfactory   |
| 9   | (c) about half     | (a)      | (b?)          | (b) not very suitable | (b) mostly unsatisfactory |
| 10  | (c) about half     | (b)      | (a)           | (c) somewhat suitable | (c) partly satisfactory   |

**Table 2:** Showing comparative variation of responses

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

## **‘Closed-Question’ Response Results and Comments**

### Overall evaluation of *EFI* by respondents:

- 4 consider it ‘mostly satisfactory’
- 3 consider it ‘partly satisfactory’
- 2 consider it ‘mostly unsatisfactory’
- 1 considers it ‘partly’ to ‘mostly’ satisfactory

*Producing a slightly unfavourable overall assessment*

### Suitability of *EFI* for use in a tertiary setting:

- 4 express serious reservation (‘somewhat suitable’)
- 2 express clear doubt (‘not very suitable’)
- 2 opt for ‘mostly suitable’
- 1 opts for a combination ‘somewhat’/‘mostly’ suitable
- 1 opts for ‘suitable’

*Producing a somewhat unfavourable assessment (slightly more so than the overall evaluation)*

### Question 6: How much of each unit in *English Firsthand 1* do you find usable without making any changes?

- 6 opt for ‘about half’
- 3 opt for ‘most’
- 1 opts for ‘less than half’

*7 respondents find ‘half’ (or ‘less’ in one case) of a CB unit usable, raising serious doubts about the effectiveness and validity of EF1 which, both despite and because of its evident popularity, might be taken as an implicit judgement on all such ‘global’ ELT CB’s and their collective inability to provide more than partial and qualified satisfaction*

Categorical designation of EF1 in terms of the three design rationales in Question 10:

8 found ‘a’ to be the closest depiction (though one also stated that the CB included elements of ‘b’ and ‘c’)

1 did not select an option but implied that ‘a’ characterized EF1 in their main answer (hence the use of parentheses in the table)

1 uncertainly posited ‘b’

*EF1 can largely be characterized as (a.) ‘pre-determining situational/contextual, language, and procedural features within a set, repetitive unit format with all the relevant particulars supplied’ (given that designations are necessarily reductive for the sake of the questionnaire)*

*[A number of respondents discussed the lack of needed elements of scaffolding, meaning that though there may have been a serious attempt to ‘supply all the relevant particulars’ it has not been possible to do so – and may indeed be a considerable and always imperfectly realized challenge for any CB due to limited space]*

Question 10 [main part]: breakdown of category selections: (discussed more fully in the open response section)

3 opted for ‘a’

3 opted for ‘b’

2 did not choose to answer the question (one objecting to its appearing to be “a loaded question”, although no explanation or justification is given)

1 opted for all three design rationales (based on an assumed appropriate synthesis)

1 opted for design ‘c’

*Shows evidence of a tension throughout the responses between the need for a dependable staple of controlled practice activities (especially for lower levels), and the need to avoid “restricted and constrained” overly determined activities of a potentially more communicative (and to some degree personalized) nature*

## ELT Coursebook Questionnaire: *English Firsthand 1*

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 1.) Given that spoken communication is the main emphasis of *English Firsthand 1*, does it actually contain a key unit stage where students are seriously engaged in using language to communicate for a (specified) purpose in a relatively extended and personally involving way, or are they basically 'practicing' the target language in a pre-determined way?
  - Are they mainly "learning to use English" or are there opportunities for "using English to learn it"? (Howatt 1984: 279)

The students are mainly guided to tasks and activities that enable them to practice in a controlled fashion. From a textual presentation to controlled practice with a comic style dialogue in the conversation section, followed by A and B pair work, a grammar target box then short gap fill exercises. Following that, there is an 'interaction page' and the unit finishes with a reading/gap fill exercise. Each page includes a small insert in the corner asking students to do something as an extension of what was practiced in the unit. The blurb states that the unit stages are consistent with Task Based Learning. Many of the tasks and pair work in particular are nothing more than disguised drills. There is nothing wrong with using drills in the learning process as long as one knows the purpose for doing them. As the book stands, it takes students through a series of exercises where they see and practice vocabulary and structure in a confined and safe bubble. There is little

room for ‘taking risks’ and as is stated, it offers tasks and pair work to build confidence. The extension inserts are often not helpful, they assume that the target language has been ‘learned’ or calls for language the students haven’t practiced or are weak in, leading to breakdown.

I cannot see a key unit or unit stage where students use English to learn it. There is no exercise that gets students using language they know to talk about shared knowledge of their world, or would lead them that into the ‘Gap’ whereby the teacher can rescue them by introducing new language and exercises where students can learn.

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

The teachers book gives ideas and procedures to follow, with short explanations into the method and relevant theory behind the procedures, but any trained and experienced teacher should be able to analyze and use the units without the need for ‘how to’ approach each unit or part of a unit. In using the book, I have had to separate unit stages in a mixed order, and even only parts of a unit. As the book is for a type of class and level in the writer’s mind, it is not for a particular class, I might have on a Monday morning at university, or at a conversation school on Saturday mornings. Much depends on the level, needs and motivations of the particular group you are working with. The biggest problem I have is with the ‘Interaction stage’. I have tried it their way and various other ways but it looks and feels like an afterthought. it needs to be scrapped or the page given over to something that is useful for both students and teachers. A blank page at this stage might be a better idea. The teacher could then use that for exercises where the students try creating something as an extension and reinforcement, or even just to take notes on the language and skills in the unit. The pair work sections as stated are confined and restricted.

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

Each unit takes the same approach and procedure. This can give students the feeling of familiarity and make students feel comfortable. On the other hand it can induce boredom and laziness as they become familiar with the walk through process of each unit. The units aim for logical continuity but in my experience particular units or exercises have weak points that need adapting for lead in and pre-productive stages and for the post productive/consolidation stages.



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

The uniformity of each unit and the textbook as a whole does what it sets out to do.

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

No. The textbook is to guide students through a set of structured exercises that are restricted to the topic and language presented.

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

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

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

I have had to adapt and extend most of what is in the textbook based on the particular group I am teaching. The introduction/presentation of vocabulary needs adapting. Although the book has introduced verb phrasing instead of isolated verbs, the ‘grammar of vocabulary’ is not clear to the students. Adjectives, adjective noun combinations, compounds and basic type one phrasal verbs are just ‘there’ or are missing completely. The textbook does list the key unit vocabulary at the back of the book, but it is up to the teacher to introduce and give further practice with these items. The listening section page can be done as is or can be done using the gap fill transcripts at the back. Both are for different purposes, but the transcripts contain language items in dialogues that need analyzing and practice in a variety of ways for students to learn about the language and gain control in using it. One important element for learners is the ability to create questions and extend friendly and informal conversation. Information questions ‘Wh’ are well covered but little time is given to the importance of Yes/No questions. Even the lowest level students can probably come up with ‘Do you like or Do you have’ type questions but for most of them, they are unable to use, ‘do, can, have, are, you etc and is he/she/it etc, in conversation. They fall back on Wh questions without understanding what this implies. Extending conversation, showing interest, or changing

topic is most often not introduced or presented in a way that students can understand the importance of this. With the dialogue segment, I have to extend it by giving pairs the first line of a dialogue which they then have to create a 6 to 8 line conversation between two people. They spend time working on it/shaping it with help from me on my walk rounds, and they then have time to practice both parts before hamming it up in front of class. Each pair will have a different introductory line.

8.) How have you adapted the features mentioned or introduced additional features – and what are the main reasons you have chosen to do so?

(Do you mainly adapt the coursebook content by making *basic adjustments* to, for example the target language, the situational setting, the type of unit stage/procedure, or do you make more *significant changes* such as omitting, reformulating, introducing, or replacing important stages?)

I do both. Much depends on the curriculum imposed, the time constraints, and the students' levels and needs. Sometimes it might depend on student tiredness, season and weather, which might call for a different approach and type of exercises. Also, it may depend on my own experience or knowledge of what any particular group needs at that time.

9.) How easy or difficult was it to adapt the coursebook the first time you used it?

– Did you have to discover how best to adapt it? – Did the coursebook lend itself to such adaptation or did you have to ‘think it through’ and do some serious re-jigging?

I found it quite easy to adapt the course book but needed to think through each component and continually explain to my students why we are doing this particular section this way or using my own materials and exercises even though parts of it appear in the book. I make sure my students understand why I omit or add certain sections. I explain and continually remind them that the (expensive) textbook they bought is good and helpful but that I and them will be the key to successful and enjoyable outcomes. The book acts as a guide, a useful reference, and a notebook of some examples.

10.) How far should coursebooks go and what should the balance be among the following:

- (a.) pre-determining situational/contextual, language, and procedural features within a set, repetitive unit format with all the relevant particulars supplied;
- (b.) providing a degree of option-based content, open-ended choices/jumping-off points, and opportunities for contextual/situational and topic variation, and possible student input in generating language and content;

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

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

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

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

Overall how satisfactory do you find it?

- (a) unsatisfactory (b) mostly unsatisfactory (c) partly satisfactory  
(d) mostly satisfactory (e) completely satisfactory

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

As stated, this textbook is meant for a mass market. Although this edition contains ideas and procedures for teaching which are an improvement over previous editions, and a long time coming.

It however falls short of a highly usable and adaptable textbook. I'm sure in some situations it may be regarded highly, but being done as it is contains dangers both for students and teachers if one solely relies on this book to teach/learn English.

The layout of certain sections needs to be changed so that it is visually attractive to the student. Many textbooks have either large white spaces or are too busy. The book is attractive enough but often looks too busy, or has bits that just seem to hang.

Another negative is the Teacher's resource CD-rom which is for 'windows' only. I and many of my colleagues use Apple computers so that resource is not available to us. Furthermore, the online resources for students and the suggestion that they copy the CD listening component on to their iPods/mobile phones to listen to on the train are wonderful, but in reality, only the most motivated students will do. One can hope for the day that lessons can be recorded and made available to students iPods and iPads as reinforcement, but until then teachers and students in different situations need text books that gives them good mileage from the journey they set out on.

## ELT Coursebook Questionnaire: *English Firsthand 1*

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 1.) Given that spoken communication is the main emphasis of *English Firsthand 1*, does it actually contain a key unit stage where students are seriously engaged in using language to communicate for a (specified) purpose in a relatively extended and personally involving way, or are they basically 'practicing' the target language in a pre-determined way?
  - Are they mainly "learning to use English" or are there opportunities for "using English to learn it"? (Howatt 1984: 279)

The activities always give "target language" in the forms of sample dialogues (Preview) or "pronunciation practice" (Pairwork activities) which is a thinly disguised attempt to practice yet more target language, so while they appear to be communicative activities, actually the language is pre specified. True spoken communicative activities would have the students using the language they already have to communicate even it were not completely accurate. What I mean is that students are not engaged in creating language. They are just reading what sounds like communicative language from the textbook. Saying that there are some activities which potentially allow for this type of communication. (For example, Part 3 of the conversation page.). However it seems to me that students will try to make up the conversation using the target language.

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

I don’t use the prescribed procedures in the teacher’s handbook. I find that I sometimes have to rewrite the activities into a student handout to use them effectively. Students often cannot understand what to do just by reading the directions in the book.

- 3.) Are the stages of each unit fully integrated into a **logical continuity** that keeps students engaged (and makes sense as a teaching-learning sequence/cycle), allowing a lesson to take shape and build progressively, or do they seem somewhat separate and inter-changeable (a series of ‘exercises’) perhaps resulting in motivational ‘highs’ and ‘lows’, unless adapted/adjusted in some way?

(**logical continuity** relies on, for example, preparatory ‘set up’ stages, and consolidatory, follow-up stages before and after a communicative/productive stage)

To some extent yes. The language check though often seems unrelated to the rest of the unit, or related in a small way.

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

I think that most of the features of each unit fit together reasonably well.

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

It depends on the level of the students. The dialogues are difficult for some of them to relate to their personal lives. Some of the readings have good content, which can be exploited on a more personalized level. (My bedroom, Kinki University e cube etc)

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

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

About half, but this really depends on the students. Some first year students at Kindai may not be able to manage the material directly from the book especially during the first term.

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

The conversation often needs to be adapted. I sometimes dictate it. It makes students focus more on the meaning. I have also had students dictate it to the class. I have had students act the dialogue in front of class. The dialogue is also a chance to work on pronunciation.

In coursebooks in general, pairwork activities are often not developed enough, and need to be expanded. Also a way needs to be found to introduce activities in a way that students can follow.

Communicative activities that do not require target language often need to be included.

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

I mostly adapt the textbook when I want to use it. This often means making a worksheet that includes the activities presented in the way I want and my extra tasks. Sometimes the worksheet is for administrative convenience. As well as monitoring the students in class, I can collect it (unlike the text) and see what students have done with the tasks I set.

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

The problem is not really difficulty. The problem is how much time it takes to produce something that you want your students to have and work from. I adapted the text reasonably successfully, but I will probably do it very differently second time around.

10.) How far should coursebooks go and what should the balance be among the following:

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

It depends what your aims are as a teacher. If you believe that PPP methodology works with a functional structural syllabus and you want students to memorize specific forms to be tested on, then a textbook which gives students these forms to be learned, and a way of testing them is a good idea. A repetitive format can be helpful to students because they will be gradually “trained” in classroom procedures the teacher wants to use.

On the other hand for experienced teachers who have developed their own preferred ways of dealing with these things such a textbook can be obstructive to classroom goals and confusing to students.

On the other hand again, if you don’t mind the students buying a text but not using it completely, it can be useful to have such a text to dip into when appropriate.

- (b.) providing a degree of option-based content, open-ended choices/jumping-off points, and opportunities for contextual/situational and topic variation, and possible student input in generating language and content;

Yes, textbooks could go much further in this respect.

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

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

How far should texts go as far as “c” is concerned? As far as their methodology demands. EF1 does this.

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

Choice “a”

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

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

Comparing it with other texts, for example *Interchange Book 1*, I would have to choose  
“c”

Overall how satisfactory do you find it?

- (a) unsatisfactory (b) mostly unsatisfactory (c) partly satisfactory  
(d) mostly satisfactory (e) completely satisfactory

“c”

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

English Firsthand may not be very successful, but it is a step in the right direction when you consider the alternatives. I have used texts that are far more inappropriate for college students. I don't have a big problem with the repetitive format – especially in the first term where students seriously need training and some familiarity with types of tasks they may be given.

Saying that, I will be using it next year as well, but I will probably ignore a lot of the stuff that does not work well. I may use the readings as the main part to jump off on to those topics. I may not use the built in tests either. I am considering an alternative method of assessment for a final “exam.” (i.e. not a paper and pencil test; probably some kind of presentation activity).

#### A comment about all textbooks

My opinion is that textbooks should not be used at all. Publishing companies should instead produce resource materials and activities which the teacher can use and adapt to suit the needs of the students and the teaching situation he or she is engaged in. I think a textbook can encourage some teachers to be lazy and not actually to do anything except go through it from start to finish without preparing or catering to the abilities and needs of the students. I think the fact that textbooks like EF1 and most of the others exist at all is a sign that there are too many teachers (especially at university level, and regardless of age) who are either too inexperienced or too lazy to make their own syllabus and plan their classes properly. Unfortunately, a lot of the time, even experienced teachers who want to use their teaching skills in this way are unable to do so because an administration, usually ignorant of English language education, has forced a textbook on them. This is partly for administrative convenience (i.e. a ready made syllabus which applies to all classes of a certain level) and partly for the reason above (i.e. because, left to their own devices, some teachers will not, or cannot, plan classes or teach the students well).



## Key Principles of Communicative Language Teaching

*Brown (2001: 43), in assessing the various interpretations, offers a concise summary of key tenets as follows:*

1. Classroom goals are focused on all of the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence. Goals therefore must intertwine the organizational aspects of language with the pragmatic.
2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
4. Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.
5. Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.
6. The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others.