Chapter 6 | ELT materials as a publishing product

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6.1 Introduction

In Chapters 4 and 5, I was able to identify the extent to which the five sets of materials selected for analysis reflected, on the one hand, ideas current in the field of Applied Linguistics and, on the other hand, the personal perceptions of the authors involved. Influences from Applied Linguistics, it will be recalled, were found to be weak, whilst the investigation of author perceptions enabled us to more fully understand and explain much of the nature of the materials. In considering the materials from the perspective of publishing, however, my focus moves from the examination of an assumed relationship of reflection between materials and applied linguistic ideas or personal perceptions, towards a more dynamic one in which materials are considered in terms of their shaping through the conditions of their production.

Publication of a set of teaching materials, particularly those produced by 'commercial' publishers, involves the work of numerous individuals engaged in various stages of production. In addition to the authors, these may include, for example, publishing directors, commissioning editors, copy and

content editors, designers, artists, studio engineers, actors, and marketing people, to name but a few. Together, their work comprises a complex set of interrelationships requiring a high degree of coordination in order successfully to bring about the publication of the materials. Understanding the nature of the product which emerges will require consideration of the basis on which these interrelationships operate and the manner in which they may exert pressure on the final shape of the materials.

To aid in a conceptualization of the various factors involved in this we will thus need to think of the publishing house as an *organization* with an *organizational output*. As a starting point in understanding teaching materials as a publishing product, therefore, I will first turn, in section 6.2, to organization theory for support in identifying a framework for analysis and the key concepts involved.[1] I will then present a documentary account of textbook publishing in section 6.3, before relating this, in section 6.4, to the theoretical framework. In section 6.5, I will return, once again, to the materials under analysis in this thesis in order to discover how far their nature is explicable with reference to my findings concerning the processes of publishing. The final section, 6.6, will summarise and conclude the chapter.

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[1]In recent years, a number of different paradigms have emerged within Organizational Theory. The most established of these is a view of organizations as a *system* in which the internal and external relations of an organization are largely seen as having their own logic and nature. In reaction to this school of thought, however, a number of researchers have focussed on a phenomenological account of life within organizations and how the decision-making process is socially constructed (see, inter alia, Silverman, 1971;). More recently, organization theory has incorporated critical (Marxist) perspectives, with organizations seen as reflecting the class structure of society at large (see, inter alia, Reed, 1985;). For the purposes of this chapter, my intention is to view publishing houses from a systems perspective. Chapter 5, it will be recalled utilised a phenomenological perspective in considering the personal perceptions of authors, whilst Chapter 7 will engage critical theory in seeking to understand how the nature of the materials under analysis in this thesis may reflect macro-sociological forces.

6.2 Investigating textbook production: a theoretical context

As a relatively recent field of enquiry, organization theory owes its origins to a rejection of earlier models of 'economic man'. According to such models, decision-makers were represented as employing "comprehensive rationality" in which they chose the best solution to a problem on the basis of a consideration of all possible alternatives and their probable outcomes (Allison, 1971:71). In most situations, however, identification of all alternative courses of action is impracticable. Decision-makers, in whatever field, operate with imperfect knowledge of their environment and are limited by human capacities in processing information which is available. The requirements of "comprehensive rationality" demand, in Simon's words, "powers of prescience and capacities for computation resembling those we usually attribute to God" (Simon, 1957:3).

Focussing on the limits of human capacities, Simon, one of the main "founding fathers" of organization theory (Reed, 1985:6), developed the concept of "bounded rationality" to explain the basis on which decision-makers within organizations have to operate. For March and Simon (1958:169), the limitations in human problem-solving processes and the nature of rational human choice, have a direct influence on the basic features of organizational structure. In the face of the sheer complexity of the problems faced by organizations, decision-makers are forced to make use of simplified models of a problem, which only focus on its main features (ibid.:169). These simplifications have a number of characteristics. Problems facing organizations are first "factored" or broken down into semi-independent parts and allocated to sub-units within the organization, the overall structure of an organization thus reflecting how this factoring is done (ibid:151). In seeking solutions to problems, organizations aim at *satisficing*, that is, identifying a solution which is "good enough" or satisfactory, rather than attempting to find the optimal one.

To determine this solution, organizations undertake only a limited search for alternatives in a relatively stable, sequential manner, stopping when the first suitable solution is identified. This search, and any action which is subsequently undertaken, forms part of a 'performance program' or 'performance strategy' (ibid:141) in which behaviour is routinised into repertoires of standard procedures which are called upon in recurring situations.

The net result of these standardised procedures, in March and Simon's view, is to effectively limit choice and narrow the perception of a problem to previously identified categories. March and Simon give an example of the ways in which this may happen in their discussion of the vocabulary used within an organization. In order to facilitate ease of communication about its problems, an organization adopts a technical vocabulary to express a set of concepts. Anything which does not easily fit within these concepts is thus not easily communicated and, hence,

> the world tends to be perceived by the organization members in terms of the particular concepts that are reflected in the organization's vocabulary. The particular categories and schemes of classification it employs are reified, and become, for members of the organization, attributes of the world rather than mere conventions. (ibid:165)

In practice, the technical vocabulary adopted by an organization and the conceptual scheme it represents have the role of "absorbing" uncertainty, filtering out aspects of a problem which are not fully understood. This is particularly the case at the boundaries of an organization, the points at which it has contact with some part of the "reality" which is of concern to the organization, such as through its salespeople and marketing department. In reporting back to other parts of the organization, those at its boundaries will thus tend to reconfirm the existing view of the outside reality. As Perrow (1979:146) puts it:

> The tendency to tell the boss only what he wants to hear, so well noted in the literature, is probably not as important as the tendency to see things in terms of the concepts reflected in the organization's vocabulary.

Through the adoption of "satisficing", standardised programmes for action and a technical vocabulary which may limit perception, organizations are essentially conservative in nature, in March and Simon's view, adapting only slowly to change and attending to only "one-thing-at-a-time", with the majority of the organization's practices being seen as "givens" (ibid:169). Organizations are keen to avoid uncertainty and to this end develop procedures for short-run feedback on action, enabling corrective measures to be taken sooner rather than later (Simon, 1957:204,219ff)

Since March and Simon's original work, a number of writers have developed the model further. Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) introduce the image of a "garbage can" in which it is argued organizations have repertoires of standardised responses to problems. If a solution is found in the can which appears to be satisfactory or suitable, then it is applied to the problem. The can, however, may also contain the problem, suggesting that organizational decision-makers do not perceive that something is occurring about which a decision has to be made until the problem matches one with which they already have had some experience (Hall, 1987:172). Thus, organizations continually turn to previous decisions that have been discarded or put aside, with little in the way of new decisions entering the decision-making situation, a point confirmed by Starbuck (1983) who found that decisions are made by managers in only small increments which make sense to them.

One of the principal weaknesses in the neo-rationalist position taken by March and Simon is its failure to account for conflict within organizations as anything other than a primarily interpersonal problem (Perrow, 1979:153). Yet, the fact that inter-departmental conflict is a characteristic of many, if not most, organizations, suggests that its origins lie beyond the personal nature of the individuals involved. For Cyert and March (1963), the failure of neo-rationalist positions to explain conflict derived from the assumption that organizations are oriented towards a single specific goal. In their view, actual goals are only identified once the 'public' or 'official' goal is factored into sub-units within the organization. Such factoring generates multiple goals which may be in direct conflict with each other as various departments pursue their particular responsibilities. In addition, individual departments can pursue different goals at the same time which may, superficially at least, appear in conflict with each other. Growth, for example, may take precedence over profit in some areas whilst profit takes precedence over growth in others.

Thompson (1967) extends the discussion of conflict further by providing an analysis of the various 'control strategies' which decision-makers may use in order to cope with the uncertainties they face within the culture at large, the specific socio-technical domain in which the organization operates and the internal interdependencies between sub-units of their organization. For Thompson, organizational decision-making is a process of political bargaining and negotiation in which the exercise of power is crucial. 'Dominant coalitions' (such as management) within an organization are forced to operate in the context of political constraints. The extent of their power is dependent on the degree to which they are able to cope with external and internal uncertainties with minimum dependency on other 'organizational coalitions' (sub-units) for information, knowledge and skills. Thompson's contribution in this respect is significant since it highlights the fact that organizational outputs may depend

on bargaining between groups within the organization, each of which may be struggling to maintain control over their own -and perhaps other's - areas of activity.

The perceptual limitations and restricted bases for decision-making within organizations which March and Simon noted, has also been explored further by Perrow in the concept of *premises* for organizational action. Premises are seen as the basic 'frame' or 'taken-for-granted' with which decisions and subsequent actions within an organization must accord. For Perrow (1979:149ff) premises for decisions function as a form of unobtrusive control which 'dominant coalitions' (to borrow Thompson's terminology) may exercise over members of the organization. Control over the premises for decisions becomes especially important when the work is non-routine, where, by definition, there will be few standardised inputs, procedures and outputs. As we have seen, the premises for decisions may be shaped by (amongst other things) the vocabulary used within the organization and the information supplied to sub-units. Perrow also stresses the personal experience and background of individuals as elements which influence their "definition of the situation" and the premises which they thus adopt in making decisions. Whilst control over premises is, Perrow admits, extremely difficult to achieve, it is a form of control which is much more effective than more direct control (such as in the giving of orders) since members of an organization *voluntarily* restrict their choices for action. This may even extend to their inner emotions and feelings as Hochschild's (1983) research on airline flight attendants suggests. In that study, Hochschild found that at least some flight attendants learn to feel the friendly external demeanour that they adopt on duty. Their inner feelings, as well as their outward behaviour, have an organizational basis.

The importance of premises for action within organizations has more recently been explored by Handy (1985). According to Handy, organizations have their own particular 'cultures' which incorporate a 'pervasive way of life or set of norms'. These involve deep-set beliefs about the way work should be organised, the way authority should be exercised, people rewarded and people controlled. These beliefs may be true of the organization as a whole or there may be sub-cultures within the organization, such as might exist within the research and development laboratory or the invoicing department. In similarity with the notion of premises and a technical vocabulary, Handy's concept of 'organizational culture' suggests powerful and superordinate means for unobtrusive control over members of an organization:

> Strong pervasive cultures turn organizations into cohesive tribes with distinctly clannish feelings. The values and traditions of the tribe are reinforced by its private language, its catch-phrases and its tales of past heroes and dramas. The way of life is enshrined in rituals so that rule books and manuals are almost unnecessary; custom and tradition provide the answers. (Handy, 1985:188)

In summary, insights from organization theory suggest two key points which need to be borne in mind when considering the organizational context of textbook production. Firstly, the nature of the publishing house's prior definitions of 'problems' and 'solutions' (part of its 'culture') will clearly have a role. These will comprise the premises on which textbook publishing is based, and the associated routine, standardised, 'satisficing' procedures to minimise future uncertainty and future risk. I noted, however, that such definitions are unlikely to be consistent throughout an organization and we may thus expect both premises and solutions to be the object of internal conflict and bargaining as various sections in the publishing house compete for their positions. Secondly, the shaping of premises and solutions will crucially depend on

dependencies between sub-units of the publishing house as information passes from its external boundaries to its centre. A technical vocabulary and the prior experience of those at the boundaries of an organization, it will be recalled, have the role of "absorbing" or "filtering out" uncertainties about the external environment and thus shaping and reconfirming the perceptions of those at the centre. In each of these respects, we may expect the structure and workings of the publishing house to have a significant impact in determining the character of the materials as they finally emerge.

At this point, therefore, we are now ready to consider ELT publishing in more detail and to examine the processes by which teaching materials arrive at their final published form. In order to do this, my aim is to utilise the insights from organization theory to provide, in section 6.3, a documentary account of ELT publishing. I will describe the general context within which ELT publishing takes place, but focus in particular on the overall orientation of publishers and the various stages involved in textbook publication. As an initial step in providing this account, however, I will first outline my main sources of data.

6.3 Investigating textbook production: the publishing process

6.3.1 Sources of data

In many respects, the publishing world still bears all the hallmarks of the 'craft' industries of old, where the products which emerged crucially depended on the information, skills and personal associations of particular individuals and where decisions were often made without clearly documented records. The publishing industry of today is, in addition, a very competitive one, heavily surrounded by secrecy as individual publishers guard their publishing plans, costings, and sales figures from each other. For a researcher investigating the process of publishing, these factors present considerable obstacles. Attempting

to establish the biography of a particular published title will involve gaining access to the basis on which decisions were made. For titles already in print, this will involve uncovering matters of history - textbooks in English language teaching routinely take five or more years from conception to production. With staff changes, the absence of detailed records and the secrecy of publishing, the task is thus virtually an impossible one, as my attempts to document in detail the publication of the coursebooks analysed in this thesis revealed. Of the three publishing houses involved, two said that they were unable to provide me with the data I would need, partly because the individuals involved had left the publisher's, partly because of the number of individuals involved, and partly because they viewed such information as confidential. The third publishing house did not reply to my enquiries.

In my account of the processes of publishing, I have therefore chosen to adopt a different approach, aiming to construct a composite, documentary account of the various stages involved in publishing. To do this, I have been able to draw on a number of sources of information. These are:

1 *Accounts from authors*

I have been able to ascertain, largely through informal conversation and interviews, details of the biography of the work of a number of authors, its origination and the role and influence of the publisher from initial contact to final publication. Including my own work as a textbook writer, this totals ten authors or author teams who are collectively responsible for 18 titles, comprising 54 publishing items (teacher's books, workbooks, cassettes and so on) in association with eight publishers.

2 *Accounts from publishing personnel*

I have drawn extensively on informal conversations with individuals involved in various areas and levels of publishing, including publishing directors, senior

and desk editors, designers, sales personnel, publishers agents and publicity managers.

3 *Documents*

Documents for my account include letters, proposals, publishers questionnaires (to authors, consultants and teachers piloting materials), as well as details supplied to me of a court proceeding for breach of publishing contract.

4 *Published and public accounts*

Whilst little exists which details the process of publication, I have drawn on a number of published accounts of the organization and background of publishing as a whole and of ELT publishing, as well as relevant talks given by publishers, publishers' representatives and authors.

In order to preserve confidentiality, I have in all cases, omitted names of individuals and publishing houses, except where these have already been identified in published and public accounts and documents. In Appendix IV, I have included some of the less confidential or anonymous versions of the documents I refer to.

6.3.2 ELT publishing in context

It is important at the outset to recognise that in many respects publishing does not differ from any other form of business. Like all firms, publishing houses, whether involved in ELT materials or not, will have to face 'the bottom line', ultimately constrained by the forces of the market in which they operate to at least cover the basic costs involved. For the majority of publishers involved in ELT materials, however, the pressures are beyond those of simply covering costs. Most are limited companies or divisions within limited companies and,

as Zombory-Moldovan (1987:86-87) explains, are thus answerable to shareholders to make a profit.

> At the risk of repeating the obvious, it should be said that those engaged in the production of ELT textbooks must produce a profitable return on the capital employed and provide the owners of the enterprise with something to show for their trusting investment in so volatile an activity as the selling of ideas. This means not merely arguing persuasively but demonstrating, in cash terms and without remission, that the shareholders have been wise to invest their money in book publishing. This, in turn, means publishing books that customers can be persuaded to buy in sufficient numbers and at a high enough price to cover such costs as: the initial investment ('fixed cost'); the recurring costs of materials; printing and shipping ('variable cost'); the salaries of those involved in this endeavour; costs of running the business, including lunches for authors ('overhead'); costs of authors, royalties and costs of paying the Inland Revenue their portion, not to mention the interest cost of the money borrowed to finance all this activity in the first place. Still, after all these costs the publisher must show a sufficiently healthy profit to pay the shareholders a dividend.

In recent years, the pressures which exist on publishers oriented towards publishing for profit have increased markedly. In common with other sectors in publishing, ELT publishing suffered a period of recession in the 1970s and 1980s as various markets either contracted or, in some cases, disappeared altogether - Africa, Latin America and the Middle East being some of the main examples (See Appendix IV, item 2 for one account of the effects of recession). With the loss of earnings from these markets and with the general recession in educational spending in the UK, many publishers became the object of takeovers. As Table 6.10 shows, between 1980 and 1989, a number of smaller houses disappeared altogether as independent entities, their lists (titles in print) and imprints absorbed into larger publishing houses. The net result of these two changes in the ELT publishing world - contractions in the market and the disappearance of some of the smaller houses - was the formation of ever larger publishing conglomerates, now in competition with each other over a

diminishing slice of the cake. As we shall see, with the enormous resources which these publishing giants are able to draw upon for both the production and promotion of titles, the 'investment stakes' involved in publishing have accordingly risen dramatically as publishers continually seek an 'edge' over their competitors. Mass sales of 'publishing products' are thus not only seen as a desirable goal but as a necessary one in order to cover the outlay required.

Bell and Hyman buys **Evans Brothers** UK list, Feb 1983
Simon & Schuster buys **Prentice-Hall**, 1984.
Thomas Nelson buys **Harrap's** educational list, 1984.
Longman Group Ltd buys **Mary Glasgow ELT** April 1984.
Octopus buys **Heinemann Group**, Aug 1985
Prentice-Hall buys **Pergamon Press** ELT list, 1986
Cassell (Sturrock Consortium) buys **Cassell** from **Holt Saunders**, Aug 1986.
Bell and Hyman merges with **Allen and Unwin** to form **Unwin Hyman**,July 1986
Longman Group Ltd buys **Heinemann Malaysia** list, Feb 1987
Longman Group Ltd buys **Macdonald and Evans**, Feb 1987.
Longman Group Ltd buys **Filmscan**, March 1987.
Hodder and Stoughton buys **Edward Arnold**, March 1987.
Thomas Nelson buys **Unwin Hyman** ELT list, Nov 1988.
Thomas Nelson buys **EJ Arnold's** educational division, July 1989
Longman Group Ltd buys **Editorial Alhambra SA** (Madrid), June 1989.
Harper and Row Inc buy **Scott, Foresman**, Dec 1989.
Evans Brothers buys **Thomas Nelson's** Africa list, Dec 1989.

Table 6.1: Major changes in ownership affecting UK ELT publishing, 1980-89 (Extracted from The Bookseller*, 2 March 1990).*

Yet, even within the publishing giants, it would be untrue to suggest that the publication of *all* teaching materials is motivated by the need to maximise returns: immediate profitability need not be the main criterion when it comes to the publishing of a specific book. As Coser et al (1982:15) demonstrate in their investigation into American publishing practices, it is the final accounts, rather than the profit ratios of individual titles, which are of more significance. As one editor in chief told them:

> I don't think we ever turn something of real quality down because it is going to lose money. We know that half of our books are not going to make money. My theory is let people look at the final results. I don't want to be judged on a book-by-book basis. If we are not making enough money, or no one likes us, then I am doing a bad job. If at the end of a year enough books have made themselves felt and heard, and we have come out ahead financially, everything is fine. How I got there is my business. So far I have got away with it.

To explain the motivation behind these apparently contradictory goals in publishing - that is, publishing to make a profit and publishing in the knowledge that a title may only just cover its costs (or even make a loss) - Bourdieu (1977/1986, discussed in Apple, 1985 and Coser et al, 1982) draws a distinction between an orientation towards the accumulation of either *financial* or *symbolic* capital. Publishers for whom the maximization of financial capital is the primary goal tend to emphasize rapid turnover and the minimisation of risk in dealing with products which become obsolescent quickly. They operate within a relatively short time-scale, focussing on what they perceive as the current interests of a particular group of readers. In contrast, publishers for whom symbolic capital is more important think less of immediate profit and more of the long-term gains to be made, particularly in prestige, in publishing a particular book. They tend to accept higher risks in the belief that a title will cover its own costs and realise a profit over time as sales from back-lists continue. Such publishers are thus more willing to undertake publishing works which may be of an experimental nature.

Similar to the 'financial capital - symbolic capital' distinction, Coser et al (1982:41ff) suggest that publishing may be divided into 'core' and 'peripheral'. Core publishing is oriented towards the goals of distributors and involves "large investments, big money and fast turnover and...a hectic promotion pace", such as may accompany best-seller paperback titles. Peripheral publishing, on the

other hand, is oriented towards the goals of the producers (authors) and involves "specialized audiences, lower entry costs and a more traditional approach to marketing" (ibid:42).

In their discussion of the distinctions which exist within publishing, Bourdieu and Coser *et al* appear to suggest that publishing houses will be characterised by one type of publishing rather than the other, that is, they will tend to emphasize either core/financial goals or peripheral/symbolic goals. Yet, from the discussion of organization theory above, it is clear that publishing houses may attempt to address two conflicting sets of aims simultaneously in different aspects of their publishing. Within the field of ELT materials for classroom use, for example, this would appear to be the case in the division which exists between *main course* materials, intending to provide a 'basic' syllabus relevant to a wide variety of learners, and *supplementary* materials, intended as additional, supportive work to a main course in particular areas such 'the four skills' and English for various 'specific' purposes (business, science, academic study and so on).[2]

In general, as inspection of publishers' catalogues shows, *supplementary* titles tend to comprise only one component (most usually a student's book), are printed in one colour (black) and have a page length of between 69 and 128 pages. They normally have low volume sales, usually between 2,000 and 10,000 copies a year which continue over time - it is not uncommon to find supplementary titles being reprinted fifteen years after their first publication (Appendix IV:item 1). In publishing terms, supplementary titles are relatively inexpensive to produce, a figure of £32,000 being quoted by one publishing

[2]The distinction between core/financial publishing and peripheral/symbolic publishing is further evident in the separation between materials intended for class/student use and those intended as `background books' for teachers. The former tend to involve sales in multiple copies through educational institutions whilst the latter involves sales to individuals through bookshops.

director as a likely sum to cover origination costs (editing, design, proofs, plates and so on) and paper, printing and binding of an initial 6,000 copies (Appendix IV: item 2). With relatively low production costs involved, the risk to publishers is consequently low. It is thus not surprising that supplementary materials are frequently intended as innovative, introducing new or unusual methodology or content, as is shown by the numerous supplementary titles associated with humanistic approaches, simulations, roleplays and alternative approaches to syllabus design. In addition to the revenue which they may bring, such titles have an important role in developing the prestige or symbolic capital of the publisher, promoting an image as being 'up-to-date', in touch with professional developments and as the producer of new 'quality' books.

In contrast, *main course* materials present a publisher with a very different undertaking. As the example of the materials analysed in this thesis illustrates, a set of main course materials typically comprise fifteen or more components (student's book, teacher's book, workbooks, sets of cassettes, test packs, visual materials, video and so on, usually at three or more levels). In the student's book at least, full colour is used in photographs and artwork. Origination and production costs are thus very high indeed, with fixed costs alone running "easily into six figures" (Zombory-Moldovan, ibid:87), and a figure well in excess of half a million pounds being quoted to me by one senior editor. With start-up costs so high, economies of scale play an important part: the longer the print-run, the lower the unit cost. In contrast to supplementary materials, therefore, the "successful" main course will be one in which annual sales of the student's book reach or exceed 100,000 copies (personal communication, ELT sales manager; see also Zombory-Moldovan, ibid:87)

With the intense competition between publishing conglomerates referred to earlier, enormous promotional budgets are expended in ensuring that ministries,

administrators, teachers, students and parents hear of the publishing house and its latest titles. Much of this is of symbolic value, in cultivating the prestige of the publishing house through the sponsorship of professional conferences, non-commercial seminars and talks by visiting speakers and so on. Vast sums, however, are also spent on promotional gifts such as bags, pens, electronic items and such like, distributed freely and all carrying the name of the latest main course and the logo of the publisher. In common with other areas of mass marketing, emphasis is placed on the "product image" with design as a high priority. As one senior editor told me, his publishing house recently paid £40,000 to a design studio for the cover image on their latest main course (in sharp contrast to the £100-£150 usually paid for the cover to a supplementary title). In part consequence of this kind of sales pressure, "product life" is comparatively short, with sales for a main course usually peaking 4-5 years after publication, declining markedly after 7 years, with reprints unlikely after 10 years (personal communication, ELT editor; see also Appendix IV: items 1 and 3). It is thus not unusual to find that a publisher is beginning the initial groundwork for the replacement to a main course just as the latter is being published.

The risks posed to the publisher in the production of a main course are consequently considerable. With so much capital tied up in the production of one title, misjudging the market can bring disastrous results. Dealing with this kind of financial commitment, publishers are likely to err on the side of caution, producing material on the basis of what they feel sure *will* sell rather than what they believe *may* sell. In this, the initial premises (in Simon's sense of the term) for a main course will thus be set even before the writing begins: *the materials will need to be conservative rather than radical, and minimally evolutionary rather than revolutionary, in order to minimise the risk to capital.*

From the perspective of publishing, therefore, considerable pressures exist which will tend to make main courses converge around safe publishing, that is, those which are known to sell. But whilst this may explain why main courses may appear as relatively uniform in their nature, it does not explain the precise details of this nature. For this, we need to consider the various stages through which the production of an ELT textbook passes.

6.3.3 The development of an ELT textbook

6.3.3.1 Pre-commissioning

For many prospective authors, the first step taken towards getting into print is to send a proposal to a publisher. To assist in the evaluation of such proposals, a number of publishers require authors to complete a detailed questionnaire, an example of which is shown in Figure 6.11.

From the point of view of a consideration of the *premises* involved in publishing, the questionnaire affords confirmatory evidence of a market orientation in ELT publishing. As can be seen from the questions relevant to language teaching materials for classroom use (1-20, 25-32), the focus is primarily on matters related to the production of the material (illustrations, dates, copyright, etc) and to its place in the market (competing titles, proposed users, relevant examinations, advertising, etc.). Matters in relation to the principles, syllabus content, methodology, evaluation and overall design of the material appear to play a very minor role in this, with only one question (6) specifically asking about the intended "aim and scope", although, here again, the focus is on the commercial aspect with an instruction to provide "a short general description as you imagine your material might be described in

AUTHOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE
Your response to this questionnaire will help us to assess your proposal and, in the event of a contract being offered, to promote it effectively. Please send your replies, together with any sample chapters/units available, to (editor), at the above address.

PERSONAL DETAILS
1. NAME AND NATIONALITY Please state whether author or editor ADDRESS AND TEL/TLX Nos. (Home and work) PRESENT AFFILIATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

2. Please list relevant experience and publications separately.

PROPOSAL DETAILS (EDITORIAL)
3. Provisional title:

4. Descriptive Subtitle

5. Proposed components: (Student's book, teacher's book, workbook, audio/video cassette, software, etc)

6. Aim and scope: (Please write a short general description as you imagine your material might be described in promotional literature)

7. Special features:

8. Supplementary or main course?

9. Approximate number of words/MS pages proposed:

10. Approximate number and kind of illustrations envisaged:

11. Proposed completion date for MS:

12. Competitive publications: (Please state in which ways your proposal differs)

13. Proposed extracts requiring copyright clearance:

14. Components that could be supplied camera ready:

For completion if language practice material:
15. Proposed student user (age and linguistic level):
5-10 yrs beginner
11-15 yrs elementary
adult advanced
16. Estimated hours of study to complete the material:

17. Details of any piloting of the material:

18. Varieties of English envisaged:

19. If the proposal includes audio, video or computer software, please specify the extent and type of material:

20. Details of examinations or syllabuses for which the material may be useful preparation:

For completion only if methodology or teaching techniques material:
21. Names and affiliations of contributors (if collected articles):

22. Sections of particular importance:

23. Possible interdisciplinary applications and areas of fringe interest:

24. Names and addresses of leading specialists in the field covered:

PROPOSAL DETAILS (MARKET/SALES)
25. Target audience: (Please specify particular categories of reader/user, country/area and course, where the material would be particularly suitable)

26. Names/locations of teachers where the material might be tested or adopted:

27. List in order of importance, academic or professional journals where the material could be advertised:

28. List the journals where you would like to see the material reviewed:

29. Other suggestions for marketing:

30. Are there any particular ways in which you might be able to promote the material?

31. Can you suggest any local booksellers in your area to whom promotional material might be sent?

32. Is there any other information you would like us to have?

Fig.6.1 Publisher's questionnaire to prospective authors (Source: Prentice-Hall Int.)

promotional literature". The information which the questionnaire seeks to gain signals that, for the publishing house, proposed materials are to be viewed mainly as *products* to sell, and that it is therefore the issues of costs, the organization of production and marketability which are of central importance.

Whilst the questionnaire provides a number of useful insights into the orientation of the publisher, of more significance are the chances which unsolicited proposals have in developing into published works. In contrast to the popular image of authorship, the vast majority of ELT textbooks are written, not on the inspiration of the author, but on commission by a publisher: the unsolicited proposal or manuscript sent to an ELT publishing house is perhaps the least likely route to getting into print. As one senior editor told me: "In my ten years at [publisher], I can't think of a single title that came from a proposal just sent in." Similarly, an editor from another publishing house estimated that about "99.9%" of books were commissioned and could only think of one unsolicited proposal that resulted in a published book. That particular proposal "had arrived at precisely the right time" and, as we shall see more importantly, had carried the name of an author who had previously been published by them. The point is confirmed by the authors I talked to: of the 18 titles for which they were collectively responsible, only one had developed out of an unsolicited proposal. This suggests that publishers commission works from authors on the basis of their preconceptions about the authors, a point to which I will return shortly.

From the accounts of the publishing personnel I spoke to, the most usual route to a textbook begins with a report compiled by commissioning editors in which future publishing plans are set out. In this, a particular textbook will be indicated only by type, usually envisaged as part of the development of a wider list - a title in 'English for medicine', for example, may be accompanied by

other 'specific purpose' titles (see Appendix IV, item 1 for a description of the role of a main course as a central feature in one such list). The initial identification of these areas for development will originate in a consideration of the demands of the market, with information for this coming from two main sources.

Firstly, considerable attention is devoted to "watching the market", noting which titles, including those from competing publishers, appear to be selling well. Secondly, information is also gathered from teachers and administrators as to their requirements. For both of these, the role of the marketing and sales people is critical. Through their direct contact with the market-place (distributors, retailers and consumers), they form an impression of the demands and opportunities for future publishing and convey this information back to the editorial staff. Such information is likely to be of a very abbreviated, but nevertheless revealing nature, reflecting the categorisations of materials which the sales people may adopt. Future publishing opportunities may, for example, be described in terms of "a straight-forward adult course", something "which goes slower" than a competing publisher's title or for a text containing more "apparatus" (exercises) or more "models" (sample passages for copying). As we have seen earlier in connection with the discussion of technical vocabulary, however, the use of such categories of description will tend to have a self-fulfulling nature, filtering the way in which sales/marketing people perceive the needs of those with whom they have direct contact and thus the information conveyed back to commissioning editors.

Whilst information gathered from sales and marketing departments is seen as of central importance in determining future publishing directions in general, visits to important markets are often made by editorial staff who attempt to gather more specific information for possible publishing projects. Here again,

however, the marketing/sales perspective is also likely to figure prominently, with visits to teachers, classes, booksellers and so on being pre-arranged by the sales staff on the basis of what they believe to be "typical" of the local market. On the basis of such meetings, more detailed profiles of future publishing projects may be compiled by the editorial staff. Figure 6.21 gives an outline of one such profile for a main course, based on an example supplied to me.

COURSE PROFILE
1 Market profile

Gives details of:
- types of institutions
- geographical description of market
- size of market and local sales staff's estimates of potential sales
- the structure of target institutions, course lengths, timetables, hours of study, age range, level of English, typical interests of students and so on.
- status and uses of English

2 Profile of the book

Gives details concerning the proposed course ('the publishing formula'):
- number of levels and components
- use of colour
- page length of student's book and workbook
- extent of course in hours of study
- price of student's book and workbook
- main features:
    - syllabus : treatment of grammar and the 'four skills'
    - content: themes and taboos
    - use of mother tongue
- methodology:
    - description of 'a typical lesson'
    - points relevant to the new course

3 Marketing

Gives details of
- who buys the books (school, parents, etc)
- how books are chosen
- levels of the course needing to be published before adoption by an institution can be considered.
- means of access to the market (mailing, contacts, etc) and promotion, strategies for marketing
- timing for launch of the new product
- competition from other publishers: products currently in the market.

Figure 6.2 1 Outline example of an initial course profile

As the outline shows, the initial course profile includes details of the target market, its size, types of institutions and so on. Of more immediate interest

here, however, is the degree of specification concerning the nature of the proposed course. Indications are given not only in relation to extent (hours of study and page length) but also in relation to methodology, linguistic syllabus and other content, as the following extracts from the full version of the profile show.

> Main Syllabus. This is determined by the books on offer, and any syllabus design also has to take a few basic commercial facts into account. School owners rely on keeping their pupils for eight years up to (exam) at the very least. Super effective textbooks may well be what they want, but not if it loses them a year's income.
>
> Tests are frequently administered and should be included in the books every 4-5 units (in the TB).
>
> It is important that teachers can find their way around a unit easily and that they can see how the grammar is to be taught, and it is explicitly done so. This came out so many times in my conversations with everyone that we cannot ignore it. Some said they would like a balance of grammar and functions, but it is clear that the main concern is grammar. Grammar reviews should be set out either at the end of each unit or every 2-3 units.
>
> Teachers look at the *layout* first. If they cannot *see* how to use it immediately they will put it down. They must get an *immediate* sense of what to do (and see the grammar). Cleverly revealing teacher's notes won't do at this stage.

Of interest in these particular extracts is the manner in which certain features are made a priority for the course. Simplicity and immediate clarity are stressed as basic qualities of the materials, with the suggestion that the main concern of teachers is to know what they are supposed to do, rather than, for example understand the aims and principles behind the course. "Cleverly revealing teacher's notes" are inappropriate to the targeted teachers; direct

instructions of what to do - 'how to use the materials' - are what is required. "Commercial" considerations are also urged, as, in the context of private education, it will appear against the interests of the owners of the schools if students learn *too* quickly.

Additional aspects of the materials covered by such course profiles may include physical features related to its extent and overall design, with consideration given to both costs and marketability. Page length (in multiples of 16 for printing reasons) may be broadly set, as may the use of colour and the inclusion of the mother tongue. In relation to the latter, the importance of what are seen as 'the traditions of the market' will be of central concern. As one editor told me, "You can't sell anything containing the L1 in Greece, Turkey and probably Spain, or anything without the L1 in France or Italy". The particular profile outlined in Figure 6.2, for example, includes specific indications concerning the use of the mother tongue and its affect on marketability as indicated by a competing book:

> *Local Language and involvement*
> No [mother tongue] to be included in books. Most teachers I talked to said they would not find [mother tongue] explanations of lexis and grammar attractive - quite the opposite. However, we shall have to monitor reactions to [competing coursebook] with its [mother tongue] grammar review and word lists as it becomes more widely known....This hasn't proved to be a winning feature, but we should monitor carefully.

Further evidence of the extent to which publishers already have a clearly defined image of the book they require for their lists and of the importance of what is known to sell is provided by the account one author gave me of the origins of his supplementary text, a grammar book with accompanying exercises. At the time, the best-selling grammar was a Cambridge University Press title, *English Grammar in Use* by Raymond Murphy, which had a

double-page format throughout with grammar explanations on the left and practice exercises on the right. In contrast, the material originally developed by the author I spoke to comprised problem-solving approaches in which students were either to test out the validity of a given grammar rule or create their own rules. At his first meeting with the publisher, however, it became clear what the publisher was looking for.

> He said that what I had done was not what he had in mind. His argument was that my sort of book would be easier to publish after his sort of book. He thought that teachers were not used to teaching grammar like that [i.e. through problem-solving] and would feel insecure. What he wanted was a Murphy-type book, with the left and right explanations and exercises.

Conversations with colleagues working on similar problem-solving approaches confirmed his experience: they had encountered 'Murphy' as a very strong model in their contacts with other publishers. Reluctantly, therefore, he agreed to work first on a book reflecting the double page format. Since its publication, however, he has yet to secure a proposal for the problem-solving text.

From the above accounts, we can see that the information supplied by sales offices, inspection of competing coursebooks, visits and outline profiles by editorial staff play a key role in shaping the publisher's publishing plans. At the heart of this lie the (filtered) perceptions which both sales/marketing people and commissioning editors hold of the demands and needs of teachers and educational administrators. These perceptions in turn shape their views of how ELT materials *should* be, making characteristics such as a "straight-forward" course (however subjectively defined) appearing as natural, common-sense responses to the problem of what to publish. Through this, the basic premise for new materials is developed from the general suggestion that they will need

to be essentially conservative in nature in order to meet the financial goals of the publishing house to the precise ways in which this needs to be done. At this point, therefore, the publishing house will have a clearer indication of the type of material they believe they need for their lists and the work which they will need to commission. With this in mind, it will be the responsibility of commissioning editors to identify and contract authors to undertake the work.

6.3.3.2 Commissioning, writing and pre-production

With the pressures of financial risk and the rapid obsolescence of existing products, an additional premise for a publisher seeking authors for a new main course will be *reliability*. This will be evident in at least three ways. Firstly, the publisher needs to feel sure that the author will produce the materials according to the required schedule. Book buying in ELT has its 'seasons' as institutions determine which titles they will adopt for the next academic year. For the publisher, therefore, it is vital that a schedule is kept to, enabling sub-units within the publishing house to process the materials in time for them to reach the market at what is believed to be its most opportune moment. As one editor told me:

> You need to find someone you can work with, someone who can come up with the goods and meet the deadlines on time.

Secondly, the author needs to be reliable in the sense that he or she will maintain confidentiality during the initial stages of research for the course and during the writing, so that competitors are unaware of the materials which the publishing house is developing. Thirdly, the author must be known to produce materials which are acceptable to teachers and educational administrators - that is, materials which 'work' in some sense.

With these concerns and the potential financial risk involved, it is likely that the publisher will first approach individuals whom they have previously published or who have published course materials elsewhere to act as main or contributing author. If broad agreement can be reached on the nature of the materials and the timescale involved, the author(s) first step will be a proposal and a sample of representative materials. On receipt, these proposals may be sent to readers within and outside the publishing house. In choosing readers outside the publishing house, the premise of reliability will, once again, be an important consideration for the publisher. Secrecy at this point is likely to be one of the publisher's main concerns, as the following extracts from publishers' letters to readers shows.

> Could I please stress the importance of confidentiality...please do not reveal the contents to anyone else, or discuss this work with others. For this reason, I am asking all the reviewers to return the original proposal to me.

> Please keep it secure, and don't take it anywhere where it might be picked up casually by anyone. And please keep the contents confidential, for obvious reasons. We wouldn't want any of this background to emerge in conversations or discussions, in any form, where it might be of use to our competitors or be passed on to them.

If the publisher is committed to the production of a main course, readers who are known to be sympathetic to the approach and content of the samples may be chosen, as excessively negative reports may impose significant delays and disturb publishing plans. All the authors I spoke to said that they felt that the publisher was committed to publication of the title and seemed keen to pursue the project even in the face of damning reports. Discussion of the readers reports focussed on what changes could be made to the samples as they stood, rather than any consideration of "starting again".

For the publisher, the next significant step will be the process of calculating the costs involved in the project and the expected revenues. Individual publishing houses will have their particular formulas for the timescale over which they expect to recover their initial outlay ("within the first year" according to one editor) and the level of profit which they consider satisfactory. At this point, costings of the project may impose changes upon the materials as proposed, with certain features (such as a student's cassette or answer keys which might increase page length) found to be "too expensive". If the ratio of costs to revenue is satisfactory to senior management, a contract will then be issued.

At this point, the main development of the materials is undertaken. Once the materials are complete or nearly complete, it is common practice for them to be sent to readers once again or, in some cases, for them to be piloted before the author(s) make revisions and submit the final typescript. Of the 18 titles collectively produced by the authors I spoke to, however, only 5 were piloted. According to the authors whose materials were not piloted, the view of their publishers was that piloting was largely counter-productive since it: a) produced very uneven and often unusable reports; b) delayed the production of the book; c) increased the risk of competitors discovering new products before their launch. Reports from readers, in this case, may be seen as a 'good enough', 'satisficing' solution to the problem of market suitability and quality control.

Whether the materials go out for piloting or to readers for report, the interest of the publishing house will be in ensuring that the material is attractive and appropriate to the intended market, as it is perceived to be. In some cases, this may place the work of authors in conflict with the views of the publishing house, as the following quote from a commissioning editor shows.

> One of the things we have to do is to keep authors under control. All these roleplays and fancy tasks might work well for them but they're not for the ordinary teacher. Things need to be a lot more straight-forward for the majority of teachers who buy our books.

In the case of main course publishing, however, the fact that the investments involved make it probable that previously published authors will be commissioned to do the writing, means these kinds of conflicts would appear less likely to occur. In achieving publication, the previously published author will have *accepted* the basic premises involved and have adjusted his or her view of appropriate materials design such that it coincides with the views of the publisher. In the process of moving from "first time author" to "previously published", the author learns the criteria by which the publisher judges materials acceptable for publication. As one author of a main course told me, her and her co-author's first attempts at writing for publication involved a redefinition of the uses of materials. The samples for a supplementary text which they had produced had received a critical response from readers, something which in retrospect she could understand:

> We were really just teachers then [when we wrote the samples]. None of us had ever done any published work before. It wasn't transparent enough for others to follow. The rubrics weren't clear enough as instructions. We had to make it transparent. We did nine rewrites of one unit. We had to keep taking things out for inexperienced teachers and to fit it into 50 minute lessons.

Through these kinds of learning experiences, the previously published author thus comes to understand more fully the basic premises for writing for publication. In working on further materials, therefore, the kind of censorship or control which the commissioning editor (quoted above) referred to becomes largely unnecessary: authors themselves become self-censoring in accepting implicit guidelines for publishing.

6.3.3.3 Editing, design and production

Once a final typescript acceptable to the publisher is received, the materials then undergo desk editing. During this process, changes may be made to the text, with or without consultation with the author(s), as the varying perceptions of the authors, editors and other publishing staff conflict with each other . All of the authors I spoke to said that "major changes" had been made to some parts of their work during editing, although in most cases they were informed of these or asked to make changes themselves. In one case, however, the desk editor found that the typescript, significantly the author's first ELT text, was 30 pages over the allocated 128 pages. Since the book contained 24 units interspersed by 8 simulations each of approximately 4 pages, the easiest and most effective way to make the necessary cuts was to remove all 8 simulations. In the author's view, however, the work had been fundamentally changed in its nature since the simulations had been intended to provide, open-ended "communicative" classroom work, balancing the closed exercises in the rest of the book.

From desk editing, the work then goes "into production". It was a common experience of the authors that I spoke to that, during the process of design and production of their work, problems arose which forced further changes to the materials. Tensions were sometimes evident between various sections within the publishing house as each section processed the material according to its normal, standardised, routine practices. In the case of one author's work, for example, the conflicting priorities of the design section forced a major change to be made in the materials, with significant pedagogic implications. Each unit of the material was to open with 'pre-reading questions' followed by a text, the intention being to "give learners a purpose in reading" and to encourage more interaction with the text. Once the material was considered from the

perspective of design, however, it was found that the questions and a complete text could not be accommodated on the same page. Since a broken text was considered aesthetically unattractive, the questions were moved by the design people to a position *after* the text, such that the units now opened with the reading passage, suggesting a quite different view of reading than the author had intended. Although the author was consulted and the editor was unhappy with the changes, the pressures of deadlines and the desired launch date had prevented other solutions being considered.

6.4 Investigating textbook production: summary

From the afore-going description, we can see that the publication of a set of main course teaching materials is a highly complex affair. In the course of my account, I have suggested various ways in which aspects of the organizational process can have an impact on the shaping of the materials. Before relating this to the materials under analysis in this thesis, however, I would like first to set out what emerge as the nature of the premises, problems and solutions typically involved. Table 6.2 summaries the main points.

1 The risk to financial capital must be minimised. A return on the initial (large) investment must be made in the short term (12-18 months).

2 The materials must reflect what is *known* to sell rather than what *may* sell.

3 The nature of the materials must accord with the sales/marketing and editorial personnel's perception of the demands and needs of educational administrators.

4 This suggests that the materials need to be conservative rather than radical, minimally evolutionary rather than revolutionary. New materials will need to be broadly similar to those already in the market.

5 Publication of the materials at the right time is vital, both in terms of the time of year and in terms of what is already available in the market.

6 During the development of the materials, the secrecy and reliability of those working with the publishing house are also vital.

7 Authors are thus to be commissioned. They are chosen on the basis of their known willingness to share the criteria of the publisher and their known reliability. The basic premises for new materials is in large part already determined prior to their involvement.

8 Readers are similarly chosen on the basis of their confidentiality and their known willingness to express views sympathetic to the overall aims of the publisher. Piloting may not be carried out as it will result in production delays, risks competitors seeing what the publishing house is doing, and provides sometimes conflicting and unusable reports.

9 Production takes places through routinised procedures and problems arising during production receive routinised solutions. Materials will thus tend to converge around established patterns of design and layout. Deadlines will force decisions and likely adherence to the norm.

10 'Satisficing' or the finding of solutions which are 'good enough' will be evident in both the pedagogic aspects of the materials and in the production aspects.

Table 6.2: Main course production: Publishing related premises, problems and solutions.

At the heart of the premises adopted in the commercial publication of a main course, lies the requirement that the risk to investment should be as low as possible. As we have seen, the outlay involved in the production of a main course is considerable and this thus places the emphasis on gains from *financial* rather than *symbolic* capital (in contrast to what may happen in the production of supplementary materials). From this basic premise, an inherent conservatism in the production of main course materials follows, with publishers seeking to

publish only what (they think) they know will sell rather than what may sell.[3] In this, marketing/sales personnel play a key role in determining the nature of a new course (or, more rightly, 'a new product') by gathering information about the demands of potential purchasers (teachers, educational administrators, and so on) and how competing courses are currently selling.

Through the adoption of a 'technical' vocabulary and established categories of thinking about materials, the uncertainties posed by the external environment become 'absorbed' as the marketing/sales people convey information back to the editorial sections. There, the precise nature of the new materials is defined further. Developed from the basic premise of minimising risk to investment and from (filtered) accounts of the sales/marketing personnel, their resultant course profile will be seen as describing how materials should be, a common-sense, naturalized solution to the problem of materials production. Thus, through the process of information gathering and editorial course profiling, the basic premises for materials production may in large part be *already determined* prior to the point at which authors actually become involved.

The convergence around publishing formulae which are known to sell is, however, further strengthened by two additional premises in main course production: the reliability and security of authors and readers. Anxious to maintain the ignorance of competitors and to meet anticipated launch dates, publishers look to readers (and, possibly, piloting teachers) who will keep the project confidential, and to authors who will deliver on time and who are known to produce materials which are acceptable to the market. This suggests that the readers chosen will previously have produced reports for publishers

[3] This is not to say that they always get it right. There are numerous accounts of substantial losses being incurred by publishers who misjudged the market. Such accounts serve to heighten the inherent conservatism in ELT main course publishing, as the fear of failure apparently proves justified.

and that the authors will previously have been published, thus heightening the concentration of comment and authorship into the hands of those who share the publishers' criteria for materials production.

Once the materials are ready for production, established premises and routines for design, layout and printing will come into operation. The existence of these will, as we have seen, also tend to reinforce the conventions of main course materials, as a new set of materials is produced to look not too dissimilar to 'successful' courses (in sales terms) previously published. With the pressure of deadlines and the need to launch a new 'product' at what is judged to be the right time, 'satisficing' and internal departmental conflicts are likely to force adherence to the norm.

From the contributions of organization theory and the accounts of the processes of textbook production, we are thus now in a position to better understand the publishing-related factors which may influence the shaping of teaching materials. At this point, therefore, we may return once again to the five sets of materials described in chapter 3 and consider what further insights may be gained for an explanation of their nature.

6.5 Explanation: the publication process and the nature of the materials

In order to facilitate a discussion of the materials in the light of my account of publishing processes, I have once again set out in Table 6.3, the nature of the materials as described in Chapter 3 and placed, alongside this, my summary of the premises, problems and solutions of main course publishing presented earlier.

<table>
<tr><th>Design</th><th>Nature of the materials</th><th>Publishing related premises, problems, solutions</th></tr>
<tr><td>1. Aims</td><td>- main and probably exclusive aim: develop learner's linguistic competence
- emphasis on developing oral skills
- metalinguistic knowledge has a low priority</td><td rowspan="5">1 The risk to financial capital must be minimised. A return on the initial (large) investment must be made in the short term (12-18 months).

2 The materials must reflect what is known to sell rather than what may sell.

3 The nature of the materials must accord with the sales/marketing and editorial personnel's perception of the demands and needs of educational administrators.

4 This suggests that the materials need to be conservative rather than radical, minimally evolutionary rather than revolutionary. New materials must be broadly similar to those already in the market.

5 Publication of the materials at the right time is vital, both in terms of the time of year and in terms of what is already available in the market.

6 During the development of the materials, the secrecy and reliability of those working with the publishing house are also vital.

7 Authors are thus commissioned. They are chosen on the basis of their known willingness to share the criteria of the publisher and their known reliability. The basic premises for new materials is in large part already determined prior to their involvement.

Continued</td></tr>
<tr><td>2. Principles of selection</td><td>- types of tasks: oral output, low cognitive load, one mental operation at a time;
- content: mainly non-message bearing linguistic items (held as useful to the learner), fiction, learner's personal information/opinion (in order)
- language: common language patterns and their semantic meanings</td></tr>
<tr><td>3. Principles of sequencing</td><td>- tasks: movement from presentation through practice activities towards freer,game-like tasks; writing in final stages
- content: unclear (content mainly carries the linguistic syllabus)
- language: simple to complex in terms of surface structure</td></tr>
<tr><td>4. Subject matter and focus of subject matter</td><td>- input and output content mainly non-message bearing individual words, phrases or sentences
- half of message bearing content fictional, approximately fifth is factual
- source of content predominantly the materials themselves
- little metalinguistic comment</td></tr>
<tr><td>5. Types of learning/ teaching activities</td><td>- learners in a predominantly respond position
- classroom interaction heavily scripted for both teachers and learners
- 15% of tasks require no learner response whatsoever
- reproduction or repetition characterises the majority of remaining tasks
- limited range of operations required: repeat, retrieve, formulate, decode semantic meaning, select information
- little demand for "deeper" operations such as analysing, hypothesizing,
- mother tongue not called upon
- emphasis on textual knowledge; ideational/interpersonal knowledge 'carry' textual knowledge
- little requirement for negotiation
- group/pair work also characterised by repetition
- emphasis on learner production rather than reception; speaking rather than writing and reading rather than listening. In all cases, most commonly words, phrases or sentences</td></tr>
</table>

Table 6.3 The nature of the materials and main course publishing processes

6. Participation: who does what with whom	- four basic modes of classroom participation evident: teacher-learner(s) interacting (class observing), learners in concert together, learners individually simultaneously, and learners in pairs/groups simultaneously - focus on meaning for 'teacher-learner' and 'learners individually simultaneously' tasks; focus on form for 'learners in concert together' and 'learners in pairs/groups simultaneously' - content mainly supplied by the materials	8 Readers are similarly chosen on the basis of their confidentiality and their known willingness to express views sympathetic to the overall aims of the publisher. Piloting may not be carried out as it will result in production delays, risks competitors seeing what the publishing house is doing, and provides sometimes conflicting and unusable reports.
7. Classroom roles of teachers and learner	- unequal distribution of power between teachers and learners, in favour of the former - both teachers and learners in subordinate position in relation to the materials writer: curriculum decisions taken by the materials writer; materials are 'curriculum packages' - teacher's role: to manage a preplanned classroom event; not required to consider curriculum issues; scripting attempts to reduce the risk of unpredictability - Learners' role: to be managed, not required to consider learning or classroom issues, little recognition of the individuality of the learner	9 Production takes places through routinised procedures and problems arising during production receive routinised solutions. Materials will thus tend to converge around established patterns of design and layout. Deadlines will force decisions and likely adherence to the norm. 10 'Satisficing' or finding solutions which are 'good enough' will be evident in both the pedagogic aspects of the materials and in the production aspects.
8. Learner roles in learning	- to be taught, undertaking tasks as directed by the materials, via the teacher - not required to consider learning or classroom decisions - learning as the gradual accumulation of items accomplished mainly by repetition or reproduction of texts supplied by the materials - learning as 'work' leading to game-like 'rewards'	
9. Role of materials as a whole	- to structure the teaching and learning of English, classroom time and classroom interaction - to provide packages of predetermined curriculum decisions	***Continued***

Table 6.3 (continued) The nature of the materials and main course publishing processes

Realisation **1. Place of learner's materials in the set**	- part of a 'complete' package - access into the materials and support facilities (answer keys, tape transcript etc) provided for the teacher - learner's materials in a dependent role vis à vis teacher's materials - learner's materials form focal point for classroom work	
2. Published form of the learner's materials	- monolingual throughout - durable and consumable materials for the learners - focal point for classroom work provided by learner's durable materials - 4 colour learner's durable materials; 2 colour other components	
3. Subdivision of the learner's materials	- subdivided into 'units' or 'lessons', with standardised number of pages and estimated time to complete - patterning across units or lessons (e.g. alternating unit type, fiction/fact)	
4. Subdivision of sections into sub-sections	- patterning within units, beginning with a teacher focussed activity, then to language practice (often proceeded/ followed by language analysis), concluding with a freer task involving personal involvement/self-expression - writing towards the end of a cycle of work	
5. Continuity	- provided by patterning across and within units - story or topic overall several units - an incremental syllabus	
6. Route	- only one route through material proposed and supported: to use the material in the order presented	
7. Access	- limited means of access into materials: listing of unit/ lesson names and (for teachers) a listing of objectives.	

Table 6.3 (continued) The nature of the materials and main course publishing processes

As a review of the table shows, a number of the points listed, particularly in relation to *realisation,* are directly explicable by reference to a view of teaching materials as a 'product' to be marketed and sold for the purposes of the accumulation of financial capital and to the established publishing routines described earlier. My description of the materials notes under *place of the learner's materials in the set*, that the materials come as a 'complete package', with numerous components (student's book, teacher's book, etc.) at various levels. From a sales point of view, such packaging provides a very attractive proposition, as it makes it possible to cover the demands for English language teaching/learning materials through a single marketing plan. Similarly, the publication of both consumable and durable materials for the learners (*published form of the learner's materials*) provides the opportunity of recurring sales to schools who have made the initial investment in adopting the course.

At the same time, the provision of ancillary components such as teacher's notes, test packs, and so on, may represent an area in which a publisher may attempt to gain 'the edge' over competing publishers. Many ancillary components are, in practice, given away free of charge to schools who adopt the student's book in large enough numbers. They thus have considerable promotional value without involving the risk of the publisher being seen as an overtly commercial organization.

The provision of colour may also be seen as another area in which publishers may compete with each other, as they endeavour to make their products more appealing. Cost, however, is a major factor in this. From a cost-revenue point of view, colour is more likely to be used in those components which can be sold in high volume than in those components which are likely to be given

away. Its inclusion in the student's book and its absence in the teacher's book is thus explicable in the light of this.

The monolingual character of the materials also finds explanation in the publisher's orientation. Whilst it is often suggested that monolingual materials are published in order to serve a publisher's global ambitions, the account of the publishing processes given here would, in contrast, indicate that monolingual materials are, in fact, intended for specific markets, in keeping with sales representatives' reports of 'local traditions'. Bilingual versions of the materials would thus be produced were the publisher to consider competing in markets which they see as having such a bilingual 'tradition'.[1]

I noted earlier that some features of materials may in reality have their origin in the routinised design, layout and printing practices involved in main course publishing. With respect to the materials analysed here, the standardisation of page length, of unit structure and sequencing of unit type (*subdivision of the learner's materials*) may all potentially be the result of such factors, as may the inclusion or omission of answer keys, tapescripts and so on (*access*) be prompted by the need to adhere to printing constraints. Without the detailed history of their publication, however, it is impossible draw any firm conclusions about the impact of the processes of design, layout and printing on the coursebooks analysed here.

Turning to elements listed under '*Design'* in the table, at least two further points can be made. I noted in my analysis that the primary source of content for tasks was the materials themselves, with fictional content predominating

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[1] Since their publication, in fact, two of the course books extracted in this thesis (Books C and D) have appeared in bilingual editions for Italy. The remaining coursebooks have been promoted and have sold mostly in countries such as Canada, Greece, Spain and Turkey which, in the view of publishers I have spoken to, have a predominantly monolingual `tradition'.

(*subject matter and focus of subject matter*). From a publishing point of view, both of these features can be explained in terms of the role of the materials as a product to be sold. By combining tasks with content, the materials appear as a 'complete' book, and as a book for *learners* to purchase, with potentially high volume sales. Without the incorporation of specific content, tasks would appear as more open-ended procedures, making it difficult to promote them as distinct products and more dependent on teacher decision-making. They would thus appear as books for *teachers*, with a potential for much lower sales. There is clearly more money to be made in providing a 'total' package. At the same time, however, the inclusion of content presents a major dilemma for a publisher since it heightens the risk of the materials dating. The selection of fictional, rather than factual, content is one obvious way in which this risk may be reduced.

Still at the level of *design*, I noted in my account of publishing processes that there exist considerable pressures which make main course materials converge around 'safe' publishing formulae which repeat established models of materials production. Over time, only very small developments in the underlying approach of new materials can be expected, with the main-course materials discussed in this thesis likely to be broadly similar in their approach to the main course materials of, say, ten or more years previous to their publication. As I suggested, however, more significant change in the nature of materials may potentially be found in the area of supplementary materials. With the balance somewhat more in favour of symbolic, rather than financial, capital, supplementary materials allow the publisher the opportunity to test the market in a relatively low risk context. As publishing innovations are found to be acceptable to the market, and the risks attached consequently reduce, they may then, at a later date, find their way into main course materials. Whilst a thorough review of supplementary texts is beyond the scope of this present

thesis, it would seem reasonable to suggest that the incorporation of certain aspects of the *design* of the materials analysed here thus have their precedence in innovations proven to be acceptable through previous supplementary publishing. The inclusion of a functional syllabus specification in Books C, D and E and 'whole tasks' in Book C would seem to be two such examples.

Whilst it is possible, however, to relate specific details of the materials to the premises and processes of main course publishing, the main force of my account points towards a more wide ranging explanation. From the account, it is clear that, rather than the authors being ultimately responsible for the *design* aspects of the materials, publishers themselves exert a powerful influence over precisely those areas. Through their initial course profiling and description of the market position for which a new main course is intended, the publishers set the basic premises upon which authors will produce the materials. Authors themselves are *selected and commissioned* on the basis of their known abilities to adhere to these premises and to share the publisher's view of the criteria for materials production.

As we have seen, the extent of control which the publisher's premises exert over the underlying principles and approach of the materials is considerable. Authors, therefore, can be more correctly seen as *agents of the publisher*, whose role is to mediate the culture of ELT publishing. Their principal task is to produce materials which meet the criteria the publisher will have set out for the intended market. Viewed in this way, the coherence which was identified in Chapter 5 between the views of authors and the *design* aspects of the materials is thus of prime importance to the publisher. The materials achieve publication precisely *because of* this coherence and its compatibility with the views and aims of the publisher. From this perspective, therefore, we can see

that the *design* aspects of published materials are explained more accurately, not in terms of what authors write, but in terms of what publishers wish to publish. This, in turn, as we have seen, is dependent on the way in which they perceive the demands and needs of potential purchasers (educational administrators, teachers and so on).

There is, however, an important point to note in all this. As my account of the publishing process revealed, the main premise in the commercial production of main course materials is to safeguard the considerable investment and (hopefully) reap substantial gains. Whilst this weights materials development towards conservatism, it does not imply that publishers necessarily have a vested interest in any particular *design* characteristics. With their main concern in the accumulation of financial capital, their emphasis is on what sells, not on the particular ideas being expressed. Put simply, if sufficient sales could be achieved through selling *creative*, rather than *reproductive*, task types, and *open* rather than *scripted* interactions, then publishers would presumably publish and market them.

But the publishers cannot be entirely disinterested in the pedagogic content and processes proposed in the materials which they publish. I noted in my analysis of the materials that both teachers and learners are placed by the materials in a subordinate position in which the major curriculum decisions have been taken on their behalf and in which their interactions are scripted to a level of considerable detail. From the perspective of the teachers and learners who may come to use such materials, one may hypothesize that the net effect of this subordinacy is to foster a relationship of dependency in which they come to rely on the provision of packages of preplanned teaching-learning interactions. Viewed in this way, the *design* characteristics of the materials analysed in this thesis will play a significant role in reproducing and cultivating the

consumption of similar main-course materials. Materials which aim to foster independent decision-making by both teachers and learners could thus be viewed (perhaps rather cynically) as contrary to publishers' interests and thus unlikely to achieve widespread promotion.

6.6 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, I have been concerned to investigate the extent to which the nature of the materials analysed in this thesis may be explicable by reference to the publication process. I began first by suggesting that we need to view publishing houses as *organizations* with *organizational outputs*. To this end, I reviewed a systems approach to organizational theory and set out a framework for analysing the publication process. This suggested that publishing houses will adopt particular *premises* as a basis for decision-making, and standardised routines for 'satisficing' or solving production related problems.

In turning to an account of the publishing process, I found that the principal premise for main course publishing is reduce the risk to the considerable investments involved. This encourages a conservatism in materials design as publishers aim to reproduce the characteristics of existing market leaders. The situation is exacerbated further by their perceived need for security and reliability in authors and readers which leads to a concentration of comment and authorship in the hands of a relatively small group.

In turning to the materials themselves, I was able to identify specific features of the materials which had their likely origin in the processes of publishing, particularly in relation to their aspects of *realisation*. My main conclusion, however, was that the nature of the premises which publishers adopt in main

course publishing exerts a powerful influence not only on *realisation* but more fundamentally on the *design* characteristics of the materials. This they achieve through the selection and commissioning of authors who share their criteria for materials production. Authors, I suggested, may therefore be seen as *agents* for the publisher. The nature of materials analysed in this thesis can thus be seen as reflecting a compatibility between the aims of the publishers and the perceptions of the authors as described in Chapter 5.

In arriving at this finding from an analysis of publishing practices and the role of authors, I suggested two competing interpretations of the interests which publishers may have in the particular *design* characteristics of materials. On the one hand, the emphasis on the accumulation of financial capital would suggest that a commercial publisher's primary interest will be in achieving wide-spread sales, and not on the particular ideas and philosophies contained within materials. On the other hand, I noted that the dependency relationship fostered by reproductive task-types which script teacher-learner interaction may serve the long-term interests of publishers by reproducing and cultivating the consumption of commercially produced materials.

Whatever our interpretation of the publisher's interests in the specific nature of a set of materials, we are faced with an incontrovertible fact: main course materials, such as they are, *do* sell, and in considerable numbers. They are, thus, clearly fulfilling a need as perceived by teachers, educational administrators and other purchasers, or they would simply not be bought. This suggests that a more powerful explanation for the main course materials analysed in this thesis lies elsewhere in an examination of the forces which shape market demand. Of their nature, these forces will be predominantly social in character, reflecting the overall context of education and, beyond this,

the context of society as a whole within which the materials are produced and purchased. It is, therefore, to this perspective, *ELT materials as social products*, which I will now turn in my last chapter of explanation.