

Chapter 7 | ELT materials as social products

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7.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters I have been able to investigate the extent to which various influences impress upon the *design* and *realisation* of teaching materials. Moving from the analysis of five sets of materials presented in Chapters 2 and 3, Chapter 4 explored the impact of contemporary Applied Linguistic thinking on the design of the materials and found evidence for only a relatively weak link between the two. In turning to a consideration of the authors' professional 'world view', however, the subsequent chapter, Chapter 5, identified the existence of more direct links, principally in the manner in which the authors' concern for control in the classroom and the security of the teacher were reflected in the particular task types and coursebook organisation selected for the materials. Chapter 6 took a wider view of the context within which authors make design choices by viewing authors as 'agents' for the publishing house. The dictates of main-course publishing, it was found, make likely the definition of *premises* for publication which emphasise conservatism in materials design as publishers adopt a *financial*, rather than *symbolic*, orientation. Their aim in publishing, it was argued, is largely to replicate the

design characteristics of existing market leaders and they thus commission authors upon that basis.

Whilst the combined analyses of authors' perceptions and publishing priorities give us considerable insight into the various factors shaping the nature of published teaching materials, we are, however, still left with questions of why the materials have a *particular* nature, why authors select *particular* types of tasks, and why publishers marketing *particular* types of coursebooks achieve commercial success. For answers to these questions, I will argue that we need to look beyond the individual author and the individual publishing house and consider the wider, social, context in which main-course design, publishing and purchasing takes place. Main-course production and consumption thus needs to be seen as *socially located*, rooted in the conditions prevailing in a particular society at a particular point in time. As Gottschalk (1947) explains, this view is based upon the assumption that:

values and ideas change with periods of history, that what is a justifiable principle of aesthetics, morality and politics at one time may be less so at another, that thought patterns are relative to contemporary conditions arising out of the cultural and historical climate of a given area and time. (Gottschalk, 1947:9)

The gap, however, between the individual textbook and the society at large is a considerable one. As my discussions in Chapters 3-6 have shown, the intervening variables of professional debate, authors' perceptions and the logic of publishing may each have their own impact in shaping the materials. In exploring a societal explanation for the materials, therefore, it will be important to locate these factors within a coherent theoretical framework which allows one to identify what may be the overall influence of the wider society. To this end, I first propose to draw on the work of a number of writers who adopt a largely Marxist perspective in a critical sociology of knowledge and cultural

practices (section 7.2.1). My aim in doing this is to establish the theoretical basis for my investigation and to identify the manner in which the more immediate, situational factors of materials production can be viewed coherently with the overall societal context. I have chosen to focus on a critical perspective since, to my knowledge, it currently constitutes the most developed basis for analyzing culture related issues.

Following my description of a framework for analysis, I will then examine explanations offered by researchers investigating other forms of cultural products, where I hope to identify the general manner in which such explanations can be formulated (section 7.2.2). From the vantage point of a theoretical framework and a review of accounts by other researchers, I will then offer a description of some of the defining characteristics of the overall societal context for materials production (section 7.2.3). Drawing on my review of work by other researchers and my description of the societal context, I will then turn once again to the materials under consideration in this thesis. My first step in this will be to offer a reassessment of the nature of ELT publishing from a critical perspective (section 7.3.1) before finally turning to the materials themselves (section 7.3.2). The last section (section 7.4) will summarise and conclude the chapter.

7.2 Understanding textbooks: formulating a macro-sociological explanation

7.2.1 The perspective of critical theory

As a means of investigating and understanding the complex relationship between social conditions and social action, critical theory has its origins in the base/superstructure distinction voiced by Marx and Engels. According to their

analysis, it is the basic nature of the economic mode of production and the consequent class structure (the base structure) which determine the ideas and values which evolve in a society (the superstructure). Consciousness, according to Marx, is inextricably *socially* determined, despite the illusion of individuality:

Upon different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existences, rises an entire superstructure of distinct and peculiarly formed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life. The entire class creates and forms them out of its material foundation and out of the corresponding social relations. The single individual, who derives them through tradition and upbringing, may imagine that they form the real motives and starting point of his activity. (Marx, 1969:421).

The values and ideas which achieve dominance in any particular society will thus reflect the class structure of that society, as the much-quoted description of ruling class ideology explains:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force in society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it (Marx and Engels, 1970:64)

In the study of educational practices, this analysis of the relationship between the economic organization of society and prevailing ideas has been explored by a number of writers. Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that there exists a direct correspondence between the needs of the workplace and the structure of schooling. The relationship is not, however, in their view, an automatic one; the economic and social relationships necessary for the capitalist division of labour need to be reproduced. This is a task which schooling undertakes on behalf of the dominant elites by fostering "the development of certain

capacities and the expression of certain needs, while thwarting and penalizing others" thereby tailoring "the self-concepts, aspirations and social class identifications of individuals to the requirements of the social division of labour"(ibid.:129). In school, young people are prepared for the outside world of work through the subservient role in which they are placed in regard to teachers, the lack of control which they themselves have over their own curriculum and the satisfaction which they are encouraged to derive from a system of extrinsic rewards in the shape of grades. The nature of schooling, from this viewpoint, directly corresponds to the world of work; it is, in the view of Bowles and Gintis, an apprenticeship in alienated labour so necessary for the functioning of capitalist modes of production.

For Bowles and Gintis, social practice, such as that involved in educational relationships, has no autonomy. Its nature is economically determined, intimately linked with the class structure. A somewhat different version of this position, however, is taken by Althusser (1971). For Althusser, the practices of education *do* have a relative independence. They do not simply mirror productive relations but have their own forms of hierarchy, specialisation and control. They function not in direct correspondence to the organization of work but as means for the dissemination of ruling-class ideology, taught through a hidden curriculum of particular values and dispositions. Ideology, however, in Althusser's view, is not simply the verbal expression of ideas. It always has a material existence and is inscribed within social apparatuses such as schools and within their practices. Ideology forms the medium or filter through which all people meet with the world, the unconscious categories through which social conditions are represented and experienced. As instruments for the ruling-class, educational institutions have the purpose of socialising workers into submission to ruling-class ideology, thereby reproducing the social

conditions necessary for the maintenance of capitalism through a form of social control far more effective than force. As Althusser explains:

...it is by an apprenticeship in a variety of know-how wrapped up in the massive inculcation of the ideology of the ruling-class that the relations of production in a capitalist social formation, i.e. the relations of exploited to exploiters and exploiters to exploited, are largely reproduced (ibid.:148).

One of the main problems in the structuralist position taken by Althusser is the assumption concerning the process of socialisation into ruling-class ideology. The basic model proposed is essentially a highly mechanical one. Whilst the organization and practices of education are seen as having some relative autonomy, the ideology which they convey will ultimately, according to Althusser, reflect the broader economic structure of society. The ruling-class ideology is seen as entering directly into the worker's brain through its representation and encoding in social practices, suggesting an unproblematic sequence of input (ideology), process (the experience of schooling) and output (compliant workers). As Sumner (1979:42) notes, such a model leaves no conceivable explanation for class conflict. Contestation on the part of individuals or social groups and diversity in the range of educational institutions and educational practices is overlooked as the shaping and implementation of ideologies is seen as largely a one-way process. The individual is seen as entirely powerless, unable even to resist domination from above (Wrexler, 1982:275-277).

In contrast to structuralist views of ideology as, in the last instance, economically determined and, in the case of ruling-class ideology, ultimately dominating, a number of writers have stressed the existence of a dialectical relationship between social practice and social consciousness. Drawing on the

work of Gramsci (1971), writers such as Williams (1977), Hall (1977), Apple (1985,1987) and Fairclough (1989) see ideologies as elaborated through social action, with the ideologies of the ruling classes continually fought for in an attempt to win people over and create unity. From a Gramscian perspective, ideologies are seen as (largely unconscious) categorisations and understandings of the social world, but their full force lies in the extent to which they are capable of making a particular view of things appear as 'common sense', as a natural way of thinking and behaving. Class domination is characterised by a continual struggle for 'hegemony' on the part of the ruling classes in an effort to bring the subordinate classes into sharing their view of social reality. In this, intellectuals and individuals within social institutions such as schools, the church and the legal system undertake work on behalf of the dominant classes, spreading and making legitimate their ideologies. But the process is not seen as one of deliberate or even conscious manipulation of the masses in order to achieve consensus. It is, rather, a collaborative one, embracing the social system as a whole, as Burawoy (1979:17-18, cited by Gitlin, 1982: 205-206) explains:

Ideology is...not something manipulated at will by agencies of socialization - schools, family, church and so on - in the interests of a dominant class. On the contrary, these institutions elaborate and systematize lived experience and only in this way become centres of ideological dissemination...it is lived experience that produces ideology, not the other way round. Ideology is rooted in and expresses the activities out of which it emerges.

By stressing the importance of lived experience as a formative element in the ideology of particular groups, the notion of a merely (economically) reflective role for social practices is rejected. Ideology is no longer seen as *external* to society, as some kind of thought-mirror of social conditions, but as an ingredient *in* social practice. It is elaborated through social practice, but once

elaborated becomes an active element in it, both determining and determined by social organization. The experience of engagement in social practices ('lived experience') is thus also an engagement with previously elaborated ideologies, which, in use, become recreated and/or transformed. Those engaged in particular instances of social practice can therefore be seen as mediators or interpreters of something already existing, as Giroux (1983:156) suggests:

human agents always mediate through their own histories and class or gender related subjectivities the representations and material practices that constitute the parameters of lived experience.

These 'parameters of lived experience' mould what Fairclough (1989) has termed 'members' resources', that is, the language knowledge, representations of the world, values, beliefs and so on inside the head of each individual which shape his/her contribution to social practice. Their origination lies, according to Fairclough (ibid:24-25), at three levels of social organization: the *situational* or immediate social environment in which social action takes place; the *institutional* or wider matrix for the *type* of activity; and the *societal*, referring to the level of society as a whole. Explanation and understanding of the nature of social practice thus needs to take account of influences at each of these three levels, since, at each level, members' resources are determined or transformed. In practice, what this suggests is that the emergence of the "phenomenal forms" of an ideology (such as books, newspaper, social conventions, etc.) need to be viewed in terms of the process of their creation from societal influences through to situational realisation, a point stressed by Sumner (ibid:23)

An ideology-in-itself is one thing, discrete and real, and its phenomenal form, equally real and much more discrete, is another. The phenomenal form, that which presents itself to the sense, has to be produced before it can exist and, therefore, the conditions, context and structure of that production will be the immediate determination of the phenomenal form.

For Sumner, an explanation of the emergence and nature of phenomenal forms should thus be approached in terms of both their *conditions of existence*, corresponding to Fairclough's societal level, and their *conditions of appearance*, corresponding to Fairclough's institutional and situational levels. Only by taking account of the wider social context, as well as the more immediate institutional and situational factors, can a comprehensive explanation be arrived at.

From the above brief review of the various positions within critical theory, we can see that social practices are viewed as containing 'ideological coding'. Since the stand-point of early, 'classical' Marxism, there has been a shift, through correspondence and reflectionist theories, towards seeing ideology as intimately linked with the society as a whole, not something external and imposed, but inherent and collaboratively produced. Through social practice, ideology is both recreated - drawing on existing social practices and ideologies - and transformed, mediated by individuals as they engage in social action. Social practices, therefore, are to be understood in terms of the conditions under which they *exist* (their societal context) and the conditions under which they *appear* (their situational and institutional context).

In relating this analysis to the emergence of teaching materials, we can view the explanations offered in Chapters 5 and 6 as explanations in terms of their 'conditions of appearance', with considerations at the situational level (the author's engagement in writing) and at the institutional level (the internal organisation of publishing houses). From the point of view of their 'conditions of existence', however, the above discussion has shown that we may additionally seek explanations of the nature of the materials in terms of how far

they incorporate "representations and material practices" operating at the level of society as a whole. Yet, as I acknowledged earlier, the gap between an individual textbook and the society as a whole is a considerable one and we will thus need to approach with some caution any explanation which attempts to relate characteristics of a society to their realisation in a text designed as a "tool" for pedagogy. Before turning to the materials analysed in thesis, therefore, I would like first to consider two recent analyses of societal influences offered by researchers working in the related fields of media production and, more appropriately for my purposes, educational materials. My aim in reviewing these analyses is to establish in broad terms the direction in which a macro-sociological explanation of ELT materials may proceed and the kind of characteristics which are held to be explicable in terms of the wider social world. The particular analyses which I will consider are Gitlin's account of the structure of prime time American television broadcasting (Gitlin, 1982) and Apple's account of the design of curricular materials (Apple, 1985; 1988).

7.2.2 Investigating conditions of existence

In their separate ways, the studies by Gitlin and Apple seek to reveal the logic inherent in the organisation of cultural objects and to suggest thereby the manner in which those objects relate to the wider social context. Both researchers work from a critical, Marxist, analysis of society, drawing heavily on the Gramscian notion of ruling-class hegemony and the attempts to represent particular ways of thinking and behaving as 'natural'.

Gitlin's study attempts to show how the structure of television schedules in the United States encourages viewers to see themselves as consumers and as apolitical members of a social order which is entirely commonsensical in its organization. Through an analysis of the nature of the widespread 'soap opera'

format in broadcasting, Gitlin shows how television provides "performances that rehearse social fixity", expressing and cementing "the obduracy of a social world impervious to substantial change". Such programmes, Gitlin suggests, are most frequently built around a "standard curve of narrative action" in which standard characters propose and resolve a standard plot over a twenty-two or fifty minute period. They present a view of social reality as timeless, in which the key characters remain static in their development, with only devotees of the programme being able to tell the first from the last in a series of repeat broadcasts. Against this apparent timelessness, broadcasting calls upon the metaphor of nature as one set of standardized programmes gives way to another for "seasonal" changes. Through such devices, Gitlin suggests, audiences are positioned into a world that seems entirely natural, one which, at root, reflects the internal logic of capitalism:

Standardization and the likelihood of evanescence are curiously linked: they match the intertwined processes of commodity production, predictability, and obsolescence in a high-consumption capitalist society. ...they help confirm audiences in their sense of the rightness and naturalness of a world that, in apparent paradox, regularly requires an irregularity, an unreliability which it calls progress. In this way, the regular model changes in TV programs, like regular changes in auto design and the regular elections of public officials, seem to affirm the sovereignty of the audience while keeping deep alternatives off the agenda. Elite authority and the illusion of consumer choice are affirmed at once - this is one of the central operations of the hegemonic liberal capitalist ideology. (1982:216)

For Gitlin, however, the devices of standardized programming and seasonal changes are not isolated phenomena. They need to be seen in the overall context of the structure of television broadcasting and the manner in which it "industrialises" leisure time and reinforces the process of commercialization:

...by organizing the 'free time' of persons into end-to-end interchangeable units, broadcasting extends, and harmonizes

with, the industrialisation of time. Media time and school time, with their equivalent units and curves of action, mirror the time of clocked labour and reinforce the seeming naturalness of clock time...Leisure is industrialized, duration is homogenized, even excitement is routinised, and the standard repeated TV format is an important component of the process.(ibid.)

In addition to this, and as an integral part of the process, television commercials have important indirect consequences "on the contours of consciousness overall". They accustom viewers to seeing themselves as a "market rather than a public, as consumers rather than producers or citizens" and "acculturate us to interruption through the rest of our lives" with corporations advertising "their own dominion along with their products" (ibid:217).

Gitlin's account is a very provocative but highly speculative one. Its focus lies with the logic inherent in television programming rather than the effects which it may have on viewers, such effects that Gitlin does claim being largely immeasurable since they involve subconscious ways of thinking and of reacting to commercial pressures. ("By watching", Gitlin writes of television advertising, "the audience one by one acquiesces. Regardless of the commercial's effect on our behaviour, we consent to its domination of the public space" (ibid:217)). One may or may not agree with the details of Gitlin's analysis but the force of his argument lies in his suggestion that it is not only the *content* of television programming but also - perhaps principally - its *form* which carries ideological coding. Through the various devices of standardization, seasonal changes and the management of time, television contributes to lived experience whilst at the same time reflecting already existing material practices and representations within society, principally in relation to the pre-eminent social activities of work and the consumption of mass-marketed products.

Apple's account of curricular materials, and the patterns of teacher-pupil interaction which they propose, builds on the work of Gitlin (Apple, 1985:32) but offers a more substantiated account of the influences of societal context. For Apple, one of the most significant trends within capitalist society as a whole is the process of *deskilling*, which, he suggests, is the principal basis upon which control over labour is currently exerted. This is largely accomplished by the utilisation of technology and the subdivision of production tasks to remove decision-making from those who actually do the work. Deskilling, however, involves not only the removal of control from workers but the transference of that control to management, enabling the latter to plan and specify work processes away from the actual point of production (the separation, as Apple terms it, of *conception* from *execution* (ibid:142)). Through new forms of technical control, deskilling is also accompanied by *reskilling*, as new skills are required to run new machines and new occupations are created by the redivision of labour. Fewer skilled craftspersons are needed as they become replaced by a smaller number of technicians with different skills to oversee the workings of machinery.

For Apple, this long term trend within capitalist society finds its direct equivalent in the form of relatively recent innovations in curricular materials - principally the emergence of prepackaged curricular "systems" such as boxed materials for the teaching and learning of Mathematics, Science, Reading and so on. In describing the contents of one particular curriculum package for Science, Apple suggests that a process of technical control is represented in the manner in which it provides detailed instructions to the teacher, specifies the actual words to be used and anticipated pupil responses, and includes all the material resources required (ibid.:143-148). In utilising the package as indicated, teachers are *deskilled* in relation to curriculum issues (in relation, for

example, to decisions over what is to be learnt, how, with whom, when and so on) and *reskilled* in terms of techniques for managing pupils and shaping their behaviour to fulfil the goals set out by the materials. Control over curriculum matters thus passes, via the publishing house, to educational administrators and the state who can demand accountability and a more efficient "production process" in schools (ibid.:151).

The impact of the curriculum package is not, however, limited to the manner in which it deskills and reskills teachers and controls their interaction with pupils. Much of the classroom work proposed by these types of materials is 'individualized' in the sense that it involves pupils working alone through the various levels or stages within the package. Knowledge and abilities are specified in the materials as discrete targets or 'skills' which pupils are to master or, more accurately, accumulate. Drawing on a Gramscian formulation of the relationship between social practice, ideological encoding and the subjectivities they produce, Apple sees this process of knowledge accumulation as reproducing a psychology at the heart of corporate economies: the possessive individual (ibid.:153). In capitalist societies, Apple suggests, each person is recognised as being an individual, but their worth is largely determined by their possession of material goods or their possession of the 'cultural capital' of technical competencies. In the curriculum packages which he describes, Apple sees this ideology reflected in the manner in which knowledge and abilities are subdivided into atomistic 'bits' which are transformed into commodities for the pupil to amass:

The notion of reducing the curriculum to a set of skills is not unimportant in this regard [i.e. creating the possessive individual] since it is part of the larger process by which the logic of capital helps build identities and transforms cultural meanings and practices into commodities. That is, if knowledge in all its aspects....is broken down and

commodified, like economic capital it can be accumulated.
(Apple, 1985:154)

Working alone, for their own individual advancement, pupils engaged with the materials are required to follow a narrow, standardized path towards accumulating predetermined knowledge (rather than, for example, personal understandings). In this, 'the good pupil' is one who has travelled furthest along the standardized path, amassing particular skills "in the service of technical interests". Accumulation, measured through frequent pre- and post-tests, and the development of "careerist individualism", is thus the underlying nature of the activity of the pupil. "It is", writes Apple (ibid.), somewhat alarmingly, "the message of the new petty bourgeoisie writ large on the ideological terrain of the school".

The accounts of both Gitlin and Apple signal ways in which it is possible to relate the broader social context to the details of particular cultural practices. Each account proposes how ideologies may be encoded, thereby reproducing the interests of dominant classes as they attempt to represent their viewpoints as commonsensical and natural. These viewpoints, however, are not created anew with each instance of social practice but draw upon practices and ideological representations already existing in society. At a macro-sociological level of analysis, therefore, an explanation of cultural objects must begin with an analysis of the social context itself. In my review of the accounts offered by Gitlin and Apple, I have already described some of the generalised structural and ideological features of society which they touch upon. Before proceeding to my own account of the materials analysed in this thesis, however, I would like first, in Section 7.2.3, to draw together these features and indicate some of the long term trends within our society so that we may be better placed to consider, in Section 7.3, the relationship between the materials and the wider social context.

7.2.3 *The societal context*

In common with the writers discussed above, we may conceive of our society as class-based. In classical Marxist terms, class structure centres around ownership of the means of production with society basically divided between non-producing owners (the capitalist class) and non-owning producers (the working class). For Marx, the relationship between these two classes is an antagonistic one, as the working class is forced to sell its labour for wages, thereby suffering alienation and exploitation for the gain of the capitalist class. Recognising, however, that there exist many in society who fall between these two extreme categories, and acknowledging that it is not only *ownership* but also *control* which is important, recent sociologists have refined Marx's original analysis to suggest the presence of a number of intermediate class positions.

For Wright (1985), society consists of two parallel class structures, one within the private, capitalist sector, and the other within the state sector, as shown in Figure 7.1. In common with Marx, Wright sees the basic mode of relations in society as one of exploitation. In his analysis, Wright proposes five classes within the capitalist sector, with the 'traditional' capitalist and working classes lying at its extremes. Between them, however, are an upper-middle (executive) class with sufficient assets and control to be, on balance, exploiters and a lower-middle (clerical) class, with some assets and autonomy, but, on balance, exploited, an 'exploitation threshold' thus running between the two classes. Parallel to these classes and straddling the exploitation threshold lie the petty bourgeoisie, engaged in simple commodity production. A similar arrangement exists, in Wright's analysis, within the state sector, with top decision-makers and professional managers lying above the exploitation threshold and middle

managers, clerical and manual workers below it. At the base of the state class structure lie those on welfare benefits.

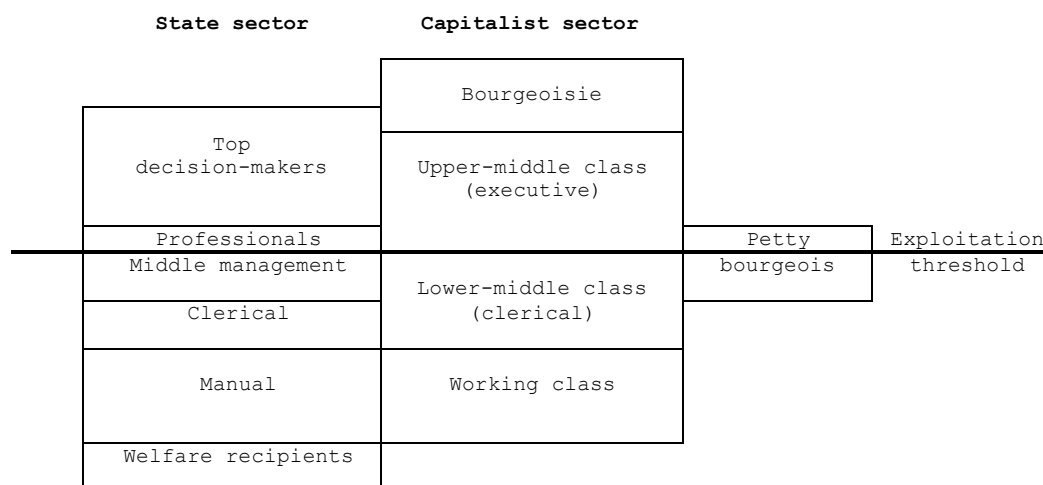


Figure 7.1 Class structure in a capitalist society (from Hamnett et al, 1989).

With the advent of what Kellner (1989:211ff) terms "Techno Capitalism", significant developments have taken place at the lower ends of the social structure through the "deskilling" of many occupations, as noted by Apple above. As a response to falling rates of profit, and as a direct attempt to replace relatively well-paid and organized workers with more compliant machines, numerous occupations have been stripped of their skilled element or, in many cases, rendered entirely superfluous. In recent years, this process has gathered momentum with the introduction of advanced technologies capable of undertaking complex tasks previously requiring human abilities. In addition to the immediate consequences which these developments have had for employment prospects, particularly in the heavy industries, one direct result has been the increasing "proletarianization" of the lower-middle classes, in which previously skilled tasks have progressively been rendered unskilled. As evidence of this, Compton and Jones (1984), for example, found in their investigation into the tasks required of clerks in three large offices, that no

particular skills were involved at all, leading them to unhesitatingly conclude that they were dealing with a "white collar proletariat". Significantly, however, these processes of deskilling have a gender bias. They are most evident amongst women workers, the majority of whom are employed at lower levels of industry and who thus now find work highly routinised or, indeed, impossible to obtain.

As both Kellner and Apple suggest, the processes of deskilling and proletarianization have had profound implications for social control. With the standardization of the requirements placed upon labour at the point of production, control over work processes has progressively passed to management, where new skills in design and information handling are now required - the separation, which Apple noted, of conception from execution. Through such shifts in control, the basis of accountability to above has thus been strengthened, efficiency in the production process being pursued for the purposes of cost minimization and profit maximization. At the same time as centralisation of control within the private sector has been taking place, however, parallel developments have emerged within the state sector. As Fairclough (1989) notes, through increased forms of bureaucratic control, individuals are now more directly and obviously accountable to state institutions (legal authorities, local councils, government departments and so on). Identifying with the aims of corporate capitalism, the state has, in addition, taken on an increasingly interventionist role to facilitate control of labour organizations, wage constraints, the financing of mergers and takeovers and so on.

As the larger businesses have become still larger, the net result of these developments has been the concentration of power and control in the hands of a

relatively small number of massive multi-national corporations (Fairclough, *ibid.*:35). Thus, as their standardized commodities, the fruits of deskilled labour, now reach further, life in contemporary capitalist societies has more and more taken on a uniform character. Kellner's (*ibid.*:164) portrayal of the United States, for example, could be true of any major British town or city:

...drive down Anystreet, USA, and you will see generic America in the form of filling stations selling the same brands of gas, fast-food chains selling the same junk food, video stores renting the same (quite small) selection of films and chain stores selling the same goods everywhere. As a result of the triumph of corporate capitalism, there are thus fewer products that originate locally, less crafts and artisan production, and thus less variety and diversity of goods accessible to most individuals.

From the perspective of critical theories, commodity exchange has always formed one of the defining characteristics of capitalist societies. In recent years, however, the definition of a commodity has expanded considerably, entering into domains such as education, knowledge, and entertainment - areas previously seen as free from these influences. In each of these areas, processes of commodification have transformed an ever larger range of goods and services into products which are marketed and sold as discrete entities. The processes of commodification are thus now apparent in virtually every aspect of life, embracing everything from tangible products to intangible services, from central heating systems to educational courses, from standardized luxury motor cars to the packaged experience of history in a theme park.

As has long been recognised, central to an economy based on such commodity exchange is a requirement for obsolescence as a built-in feature of those goods and services offered for sale (see, for example, Marcuse, 1964). For the continual maximization of profits, a capitalist economy requires a public which

continues to consume, absorbing the latest products or latest designs. In this, the role of advertising can be viewed as crucial in developing the dependence of the public *as consumers*, on the giant corporations *as providers* (the development of the 'possessive individual', noted earlier). For Marcuse, this dependence, created and nurtured for the interests of the capitalist classes, has deep psychological implications for the creation of frustration and aggression, a view which he expresses with some force:

The naked class interest builds the unsafe and obsolescent automobiles, and through them promotes destructive energy; the class interest employs the mass media for the advertising of violence and stupidity, for the creation of captive audiences. In doing so, the masters only obey the demand of the public, of the masses; the famous law of supply and demand establishes the harmony between the rulers and the ruled. This harmony is indeed pre-established to the degree to which the masters have created the public which asks for their wares, and asks for them more insistently if it can release, in and through the wares, its frustrations and aggressiveness resulting from this frustration. (Marcuse, 1972,21-22).

The significant point to note about Marcuse's analysis is that, in his view, it is the persuasive efforts of the corporate giants which, through advertising, have shaped demand, fostering in the public the desire to consume and possess and frustration if this desire is not met. As we have seen earlier, in Gramscian terms, we may view advertising of this kind as part of the struggle for the hegemony of the capitalist classes as they endeavour to win over the population and represent their ways of thinking and behaving as "natural". To the extent to which, as Marcuse notes, the desire to consume has entered into our personal psychology and the structure of social relations has become part of the world "taken for granted", hegemony has thus been achieved.

With the achievement of hegemony, and the movement towards standardization and centralization of control, the situation, in the immediate future at least, does not seem likely to change. Despite Marx's original prediction that socialist and communist forms of social organisation would eventually predominate, capitalist modes of relation show no signs of withering away. Reacting to the suggestion that, with recent developments in society, we have somehow moved beyond capitalism, Kellner (ibid.:177) points to the enduring nature of the class structure as it now stands:

...capitalist relations of production and the imperative to maximize capital accumulation continue to be central constitutive forces. For, despite changes that have taken place in the economy and the state, in class structure, culture and so on, commodity production and wage labour for capital still exist as fundamental organizing principles, as does the control of the economic surplus by a corporate elite, the exploitation and alienation of labour, production for profit rather than use, and the capitalist market exchange relations.

Consequently, contemporary societies in the West continue to be organised around commodity production and capital accumulation, and capitalist imperatives continue to dominate production, distribution and consumption, as well as other cultural, social and political domains. Workers continue to be dominated and exploited, and the entire social system continues to exist and reproduce itself as a capitalist society.

7.2.4 Summary

From my brief review of critical theory, analyses of cultural products, and an analysis of the societal context, we are able to set out a number of basic points which can guide us in a critical account of ELT materials. These points are summarised in Table 7.1

Table 7.1: A critical perspective on ELT textbooks: summary of propositions, relations of encoding and the societal context

- 1 Basic proposition: ELT textbooks are cultural products whose production is socially located. As such, they contain within them 'ideological coding' or representations and materials practices operating at the level of society as a whole.
- 2 Textbooks constitute part of a struggle for hegemony in which (ruling class) ideologies are represented as 'natural' and 'commonsensical'.
- 3 In the production of cultural objects, ideological coding can be seen in various ways: through the *content* of cultural objects and (more importantly) their *form* which will contain representations of the societal context.
- 4 The societal context is characterised by:
 - a social structure based on class divisions in a relationship of exploitation
 - a division between work and leisure
 - clocked labour, in which time is bought and sold
 - a division of labour, in which production tasks are broken down into simple repetitive operations
 - deskilling, in which skilled work is rendered unskilled by new technologies
 - reskilling, in which the management of machines and people is emphasised
 - a separation of conception from execution in which decision making is centralised
 - a strengthening of accountability to higher levels in the social hierarchy
 - standardisation in which social life develops a uniform character everywhere
 - a process of commodification in which tangible goods and intangible services are promoted as a commodity to be bought and sold.
 - planned obsolescence which necessitates repeat purchasing of commodities.
 - the development of a psychology of 'possessive individualism' in which the public come to see themselves as consumers and accumulators
 - 'colonization' in which patterns of consumerism, commodification, work and authority relations are reproduced and confirmed in other areas of social life.

As the table shows, at the basis of a critical account lies the assumption that the nature of cultural objects, such as textbooks, will be inextricably linked to the social location of their production. Cultural objects will contain within them 'ideological coding' and representations of the wider society. As the accounts offered by both Gitlin and Apple argue, this makes it possible to identify features specific to capitalist modes of organization not only in the *content* of cultural objects such as television programmes and curricular materials but, more importantly, in their *form*, as social classes compete to represent their ideologies as 'natural' and 'commonsensical'.

In my review of the societal context, I identified a number of features (shown in the table) which characterise the nature of present-day capitalist society. These suggest the importance of relationships of exploitation, capital accumulation, commodity exchange and a consumerist psychology and the significance of technological developments for the deskilling of workers and the centralisation of decision-making. As such aspects become evident outside the arena of work and product consumption (as Gitlin and Apple have shown), however, capitalist modes of organization can be said to have "colonized" other areas of social life. Consumerism, commodification, work relations, patterns of authority and control and other features of modern capitalism may all find expression in the form and content of a wide range of cultural objects, thereby reproducing and confirming themselves in the process.

With regard to the teaching materials analysed in this thesis, it is useful to think of this colonization as potentially operating on two levels: firstly, in relation to the *type* of text which the materials constitute, and, secondly, in relation to the *specific details* of individual coursebooks. In the discussion which follows, therefore, my aim is first to offer, in Section 7.3.1, a reassessment of the nature of ELT publishing and the role of main coursebooks and then to examine, in Section 7.3.2, the particular nature of the five sets of materials analysed in this thesis.

7.3 Explanation: the nature of the materials and the wider social context

7.3.1 ELT publishing: a reassessment

In my description of the processes of publishing in Chapter 6, I noted the manner in which main course materials are promoted and packaged. Typically, it will be recalled, main course materials come in packages or sets, comprising five or more components, some of which are durable, and some of which are consumable and thus require repeat purchasing. As part of the strategies adopted by the publishing houses, the launch of a new course is frequently accompanied by high-pressure advertising, the distribution of promotional items and considerable sums spent on the "visual identity" (particularly cover design, logos, and so on) of the materials. I also noted the short life-span of main course materials - typically seven or so years, a figure probably decreasing.

In the context of a critical analysis of society, the commercial publication of main course teaching materials provides a clear example of the processes of commodification at work. Containing, as they do, packaged prescriptions for classroom interaction, the published coursebook functions as a product to be traded for the interests of private profit and capital accumulation. Thus, from the early days of materials production, textbooks have moved away from the use of plain, descriptive titles such as Ogden's (1930) *Basic English* and are now regularly marketed under brand names which strengthen their image as a commodity to be bought, sold and promoted. Short, snappy, titles such *Hotline, Impact, Breakaway* and *Fast Forward*, proliferate, appealing to the images of the consumer society in much the same way as the latest soft drink might. At the same time, competing titles draw upon the resources of symbolic capital (see 6.3.2) in an effort to distinguish themselves, by their name, from

the mass production of other publishers. Titles such as *The Cambridge First Certificate Course* (published incidentally by Nelson), *The New Cambridge English Course*, and *Oxford Supplementary Skills* trade on the prestige accorded to particular institutions, making such prestige a commodity in the process.

As the motivations of profit maximization drive forward the publishing of teaching materials, hundreds of new titles pour on to the market each year, each title asserting "an edge" over its competitors, each presenting itself as the embodiment of latest advances in research as yet another claim to symbolic capital (a claim, incidentally, which Chapter 3 showed as unsustainable). In the process, current titles are rendered obsolete and replacement purchasing is required. Through their advertising, promotional tours, sponsored conferences and seminars, the publishing houses nurture in the educational professions the need to acquire their latest products, appealing to the desire to remain up-to-date with developments within the profession and capitalising on the insecurity of teachers in search of guidance in their work. Thus, as the latest titles become adopted into schools throughout the world, we see a situation emerging reminiscent of Kellner's description of Anystreet, USA. Classrooms everywhere, from Tokyo to Rio, from Sydney to Stockholm work through the same selection of materials from the same few multi-national publishers. Through the scripting evident within the materials (such as those analysed in this thesis) and the prior blending of aims, methodology, content and evaluation, standardised procedures for the classroom are proposed and the uniqueness and individuality of local situations, like the local artisan production, is inhibited. In the process, the potential producers of unique classroom interactions (teachers and learners) are transformed into consumers of packaged, standardized ones.

Yet it would be wrong (and here I would depart from Marcuse's analysis) to claim that the publishing houses have created, single-handedly, the demand for main course materials. As packaged "solutions" to the dilemmas facing teachers as they confront their classes and attempt to cope with the enormous demands placed upon them, main course materials do offer support and guidance where it is understandably sought. From a macro-sociological point of view, therefore, it is in the structure and nature of schools themselves and in the practice of education as a whole where explanations of the demands expressed by teachers may be found. As a wealth of analyses have shown, the educational system is a major participant in the processes of cultural reproduction (see, inter alia, Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Althusser, 1971; Apple, 1982,1985). Schools embody structures of authority and control which are evident in the society at large, asserting the roles of experts and decision-makers and the legitimacy of particular forms of knowledge.

Within the field of English language teaching, in particular, the authority of 'the expert' and of 'expert knowledge' has long since played a major role. As the analysis by Richards (1991: 14-18) suggests, teacher preparation programmes, for example, typically emphasise 'theory' courses in linguistics and in teaching procedures, most frequently taught through an 'information transmission' mode of instruction. The objective for the teaching practice or practicum, where it occurs, is seen as 'to apply instruction from theory courses', although, as Richards notes, this application is frequently left entirely to chance. What such evidence suggests is that, through initial training courses, teachers learn to defer to the authority of expert knowledge, rather than reflect on their own emerging personal understanding of the teaching-learning relationship. In the process of their training, they thus learn to become dependent on 'outside' sources of guidance. It is, therefore, within this relationship between expert knowledge

and teacher dependency that the publication of main-course materials - as packaged sources of classroom guidance - continues to flourish.

In recent years, this dependency relationship has, however, been strengthened even further through increased pressures on the teaching profession. As the requirements of private enterprise have placed more direct demands on the realm of education, teachers have been made more accountable to their employers and, in turn, to higher levels in the political hierarchy. The centralisation of control and power, which I noted earlier, and the drive towards standardization, thus lead teachers to seek an external basis for the legitimacy of their classroom work. The adoption of a published main course - particularly one which has already achieved substantial sales - can therefore be seen as a means of achieving such legitimacy.

In my description of the overall societal context for main-course publishing, I noted (as Apple had done) a process of deskilling as one of the more significant features of contemporary capitalist societies. As I will show in more detail below, we can identify a similar process in the materials discussed in this thesis through the degree of specification which they contain for classroom interaction and the manner in which they attempt to embody all of the resources necessary for language learning and teaching (that is, statements of aims, methodology, content and evaluation). With the demands for accountability, mentioned above, such specifications offer a basis for control over the work of teachers and learners. Educational administrators, for example, can choose textbooks and insist on coverage of a certain number of units over a specified period of time. At the same time, detailed specifications and precise instructions for use of the materials lessen the requirements for personal expertise of teachers in relation to the planning of the curriculum and thus form

a basis for the employment of cheaper sources of labour. As complete "ready-made" lessons, the materials offer the possibility of calling upon virtually anyone to act as a teacher, a point which the materials themselves sometimes explicitly claim.¹

I noted earlier that a gender bias is evident in the processes of deskilling in the wider society, and here, too, through the publication of main course materials, one finds this gender bias reproduced in language teaching. With teaching predominantly a female occupation, it is women who are most affected by the design of materials which facilitate control and accountability. Deskilling of teachers leads to the transfer of curriculum planning to the higher levels of the social hierarchy, to the work of materials writers, publishers and educational administrators, professions overwhelmingly dominated by men². Thus, as the work of predominantly female teachers is subjected to planning and control at a distance, carried out mainly by men, the male dominance in society as a whole is reproduced and reconfirmed in the process.

7.3.2 The nature of the materials

In the preceding section, I suggested how aspects of the wider society, particularly in relation to commodity exchanges, teacher dependency and the purposes of social control, are reproduced in the provision and consumption of main course materials as a *type* of publication. At this point, however, I would like to return once again to a consideration of the materials which have formed

¹ One of my own coursebooks being a case in point. The "blurb" on the back cover reads: "The Teacher's Book provides answers and detailed guidance for all the exercises and activities. Company to Company can therefore easily be used by teachers unfamiliar with business correspondence in English." It is a salutary experience to reflect on whose interests are actually being served by this.

²As evidence for this, one can cite the authorship of the titles published by one of the largest ELT publishers, Oxford University Press. Of the titles listed in their 1991 catalogue, 62% of the authors of classroom texts are males, compared to 38 % females. The disproportionately high figure for men is even more significant when one takes into account their underrepresentation in the teaching profession itself.

the focus of this thesis. In doing this, I hope to explore the precise ways in which aspects of the wider society are evident *within* the materials and how processes, such as those of deskilling and the naturalization of modes of social action, are accomplished. In order to facilitate my discussion, and for ease of reference, I have again reproduced here the description of the materials and my summary of insights from a critical perspective. These are shown in Table 7.2

As inspection of Table 7.2 reminds us, a number of key features emerged in my analysis of the materials. The materials, I found, are characterised by an emphasis on the development of oral abilities and "item" approaches to learning, with activities leading from teacher-centred presentation through to freer, game-like tasks. Learners are placed in a predominantly reactive position, with reproduction or repetition forming the main operations which they are called upon to perform. There is little requirement for "deeper" thinking or for the sharing and discussion of ideas. On balance, my analysis of the materials suggested that both teachers and learners are placed in subordinate positions in relation to the materials writer, with the teacher mainly being called upon to manage a pre-planned event and the learners mainly required to follow the detailed prescriptions provided (see aspects of *design* in the table).

From the insights afforded by a critical perspective, it is possible to see within these aspects of the materials evidence of their overall societal context. As the table also records, one of the more significant features of this societal context is the process of deskilling and the centralisation of control. In terms of the classroom work proposed by the materials, one can point to this process in the manner in which the tasks specify in some detail what is to be done, leaving little room for the exercise of curriculum decisions by teachers

Design	Nature of the materials	Critical propositions and the societal context
1. Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - main and probably exclusive aim: develop learner's linguistic competence - emphasis on developing oral skills - metalinguistic knowledge has a low priority 	<p>1 Basic proposition: ELT textbooks are cultural products whose production is socially located. As such, they contain within them 'ideological coding' or representations and materials practices operating at the level of society as a whole.</p> <p>2 Textbooks constitute part of a struggle for hegemony in which (ruling class) ideologies are represented as 'natural' and 'commonsensical'.</p> <p>3 In the production of cultural objects, ideological coding can be seen in various ways: through the <i>content</i> of cultural objects and (more importantly) their <i>form</i> which will contain representations of the societal context.</p> <p>4 The societal context is characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a social structure based on class divisions in a relationship of exploitation - a division between work and leisure - clocked labour, in which time is bought and sold- a division of labour, in which production tasks are broken down into simple repetitive operations - deskilling, in which skilled work is rendered unskilled by new technologies - reskilling, in which the management of machines and people is emphasised - a separation of conception from execution in which decision making is centralised
2. Principles of selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	
3. Principles of sequencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	
4. Subject matter and focus of subject matter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	
5. Types of learning/teaching activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	

Table 7.2 : The nature of the materials and a critical perspective

<p>6. Participa- tion: who does what with whom</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a strengthening of accountability to higher levels in the social hierarchy - standardisation in which social life develops a uniform character everywhere - a process of commodification in which tangible goods and intangible services are promoted as a commodity to be bought and sold. - planned obsolescence which necessitates repeat purchasing of commodities. - the development of a psychology of 'possessive individualism' in which the public come to see themselves as consumers and accumulators
<p>7. Classroom roles of teachers and learner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'colonization' in which patterns of consumerism, commodification, work and authority relations are reproduced and confirmed in other areas of social life.
<p>8. Learner roles in learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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' 	
<p>9. Role of materials as a whole</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to structure the teaching and learning of English, classroom time and classroom interaction - to provide packages of predetermined curriculum decisions 	

Table 7.2 (continued): The nature of the materials and a critical perspective

<p>Realisation</p> <p>1. Place of learner's materials in the set</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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
<p>2. Published form of the learner's materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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
<p>3. Subdivision of the learner's materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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)
<p>4. Subdivision of sections into sub-sections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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
<p>5. Continuity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provided by patterning across and within units - story or topic overall several units - an incremental syllabus
<p>6. Route</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - only one route through material proposed and supported: to use the material in the order presented
<p>7. Access</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited means of access into materials: listing of unit/ lesson names and (for teachers) a listing of objectives.

Table 7.2 (continued): The nature of the materials and a critical perspective

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and learners themselves. In doing this, control from above is not only exercised but, in addition steps are taken which reduce the *risk* of unpredictability in the classroom (through, for example, the prevalence of "low level" mental operations). This therefore places fewer demands upon the personal expertise of teachers to make decisions "on the spot".

This apparent simplicity in use, and its associated consequence for the deskilling of teachers (and learners), is further strengthened by the standardization in route through the materials, the repetitive unit structures and the centrality of the learner's text as a basis for classroom work. The net effect of these features is that, once a set series of classroom management procedures are learnt, the task for the teacher (as proposed by the materials) is a relatively straight-forward one. We are, then, faced with a situation which, theoretically at least, requires little training or professional experience, and thus offers ease of control over the teaching force and the promise of employing cheaper, probably unorganized, labour.

At the same time as control over the work of teachers is exercised and facilitated by the materials, it is evident in the materials that hierarchies of power and authority from the wider society are reproduced in the manner in which teachers and learners are to interact. Learners, as the table reminds us, are placed by the materials in a disempowered position vis vis the teacher, aided (as I showed in Chapter 5) by the emphasis on oral interaction in the foreign language and the distribution of means of access and guidance in favour of the teacher (see aspects of *realisation*). The learner's main role is to follow the instructions as given, literally to do as they are told, with little personal involvement in the planning and process of their learning. As the analysis of Bowles and Gintis, discussed earlier, suggested, we can see here the patterns of

authority and the prerogatives of management from the world of work and the wider society. From the theoretical perspective of Bowles and Gintis, at least, one could indeed suggest that the learners are alienated. In a manner reminiscent of the standardised, routinised operations of factory work, the learning of the foreign language is broken down into a series of low-level, repetitive operations with little deeper levels of thinking and decision-making required of those actually doing the learning.

It is useful at this point to reflect on the conceptualization of language knowledge which is reflected in the materials. I noted in my description that the content present in the materials mainly consists of fiction and non-message bearing linguistic items, such as items of vocabulary, exponents of speech acts, and so on (*design* areas 2 and 4). At the same time, the learners' previous knowledge and experience, such as knowledge of their first language, experience of other learning and aspects of their personal life, are called upon very little by the materials (*design* areas 2, 4 and 5). Learning, in this case, becomes a matter of "filling" oneself with the language items offered in the materials. As writers such as Freire (1972), Popper (1972), and others have noted, knowledge is therefore viewed as "thing-like entities" which are to be poured into the mind, just as one would fill an empty vessel (as Popper (*ibid.*:61-62) terms it, "the bucket theory").

It is hard to resist the message which such approaches to teaching and learning imply. Through a focus on the knowledge which is "out there", rather than, for example, a refinement and development of what the learner already knows, the authority of the expert (in this case, the textbook via the teacher) is emphasised. Simultaneously, through the extensive use of fictional content, the authority of the expert in other areas of knowledge is preserved. As both a consequence

and reinforcement of the division of knowledge implicit in the subject boundaries of the curriculum, the materials confirm the boundaries of legitimate study, in a manner similar to the demarcation of legitimate responsibilities at work by the division of labour.

If, however, we accept for one moment the implications of the accounts offered by Gitlin and Apple, the ideology reproduced in the materials in the form of language learning as item accumulation has a greater significance. Through an emphasis on the "factual" aspects of the language and on reproductive classroom work, the status of the social world "as is" is reconfirmed. Gitlin found "social fixity" reproduced in the standard plots of television soaps. Apple found the "possessive individual" represented in packaged, individualized learning. If one looks at the materials in these terms, it is not difficult to draw similar conclusions. By emphasizing the acquisition of *predetermined* meanings (of speech acts, grammatical forms and vocabulary items), the role of the learner as a potential creator and interpreter of language is displaced by a role as a reproducer, decoder and, ultimately, accumulator of *what is already there*. Critical, interpretative abilities are thus held in abeyance while classroom work focuses on the learning of predetermined items, lists and patterns. As the main defining characteristic of classroom work, accumulation becomes the order of the day and the good pupil, as Apple noted, one who has accumulated the most.

In a focus on accumulation, language knowledge thus, I am suggesting, becomes represented as "things" which can be possessed. I noted earlier how the repetitive unit structures adopted by the materials are significant in terms of the deskilling of teachers and control over their work. Here, too, however, the division into units reflects and strengthens a "thing-like" view of knowledge.

The terminology itself is of significance here. In the past, subdivisions within language teaching materials have consisted of a variety of means, such as "lessons", "chapters", roman numerals and so on - witness earlier texts, such as those by Hornby and Eckersley. In the materials analysed here, however, we have discrete *units* of classroom work (content and methodology) which offer similarly self-contained *units* of language knowledge. These units are to be "done", ticked off on a prescribed linear route through the materials. In the process, language knowledge is represented as something to be possessed, the result of the widening processes of commodification.

Looking into the internal structure of the units in the materials, we can see the manner in which this commodification of language knowledge is represented as "natural" and commonsensical. As the table recalls, my analysis of the materials found that the units typically offer a sequence of classroom activity which begins with a teacher-focussed stage, moves through language analysis and/or practice, and concludes with a freer task: the traditional presentation-practice-transfer format. We can see represented in this format, much as Gitlin saw in the plot of television serials, a "standard curve of action" which suggests a naturalness in the sequence of activity and a natural closure to the exploration of a language topic at the point at which the materials writer has *chosen* to offer it. As controlled, clearly defined tasks give way to freer, more open-ended, game like tasks, the progression from *work* to *play* is suggested, mirroring the manner in which, in the wider society, the constraints, alienation and imposition of work (appear to) earn the rewards of personal freedom and leisure. It is, as Apple would suggest, the message of the petty bourgeoisie: hard work earns its just rewards.

7.4 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, my aim has been first to establish the broad theoretical basis for a societal explanation of teaching materials. Through a review of the contributions of various writers working from a critical perspective on cultural practices, I suggested a framework which sees the processes of materials design as reflecting both the more immediate situational and institutional 'conditions of appearance' and the overall societal 'conditions of existence'. Conditions of existence, I suggested, relate not only to the economic and social structure of our society but also to the prevailing forms of organization in social practices (such as work, commodity consumption and so on) and to the meanings which have become "common sense" or "natural". In reviewing the accounts of Gitlin and Apple, I outlined the manner in which a societal explanation can be formulated and identified some of the aspects of society which may be seen as reflected in the form of cultural products. I then presented a descriptive summary of some of the key features of contemporary, capitalist society.

Drawing on my analysis of the key features of contemporary society and the insights gained through my review of critical theorists and researchers, I then presented a reassessment of the publishing of main course materials. This suggested how materials have become subjected to the processes of commodification and how they may function as agents for the deskilling of teachers and centralisation of control. In turning to the materials under analysis in this thesis, I was then able to point to clear examples of these processes at work and suggest how their organization reflects the organization of social practices in the wider society (such as the prevalence of accumulation as a dominant social activity, the distribution of power and authority and the work/leisure dichotomy).

In offering this analysis of the materials and ELT main course publishing, the emerging picture may seem a rather gloomy one. By finding evidence of the social location within particular sets of materials, the suggestion may appear that there is relatively little which the individual publisher or author (particularly as an agent for a publisher - see Chapter 6) may do to depart from the imperatives of the societal context. As I will show in my next and final chapter, I believe, in fact, that this is far from being the case. Before doing that, however, I would first like to review the findings of this thesis and consider some conclusions which we may come to.