

## The constraints of writing TESOL textbooks for a global audience

### What this research was about and why it is important

Most of the English language teaching to L2 speakers throughout the world today is conducted through the use of textbooks, being used as the main source of linguistic and content knowledge in many classrooms around the world. Research on English Language Teaching materials includes studies focusing on textbook content (e.g., grammar, cultural representation, authenticity), consumption (use/adaptation of materials by learners and teachers), and production (design and publication) of materials. Of these three areas, materials production has remained the most neglected, although it is considered vital to understand how materials are produced and shaped into textbooks. We conducted interviews with six authors working for different international publishing houses to inquire about the constraints associated with authoring textbooks for the global market which will be sold around the world. Authors described several factors that seem to hinder attempts to create more carefully-crafted products. These constraints are mainly associated with publishers' preference for international rather than regional or local materials, tight deadlines, publisher-led rather than author-led models of production, the constraining influence of teacher and market representative feedback on draft materials, and constraints associated with taboo topics.

### What the researchers did

- We developed a semi-structured interview guide as part of a larger textbook research project to determine why global and locally-produced textbooks are the way they are.
- We gathered accounts from authors for (i) local or (ii) global contexts.
- The interviews in this research were conducted in two phases. Firstly, textbook authors writing for a local, Middle Eastern market were interviewed. Secondly, authors working for different publishers that produce materials for the international market were interviewed.
- Due to space limitations, we only report our findings about the international context in the present paper.
- Nine participants were interviewed, and here we focus on the views of a subset of the six most experienced textbook authors.
- The interviews were coded using NVivo by the leading author and a second coder for interrater reliability.

### What the researchers found

- We found that production of materials for the international market is constrained by a variety of factors.
- These constraints include i) the commercially driven approach by publishers, ii) time, iii) the intervention of publishers regarding content, iv) the quality of feedback received, v) diversity of the target audience, and vi) taboo topics that authors need to avoid.
- Because of the growing market for textbooks, many publishers have been taken over or merged with companies with a much more commercially-driven approach.

### Things to consider

- Production of materials for the international market is constrained in various ways and for a variety of reasons.
- The constraints, conditions under which authors and editors work, priorities and concerns in textbook production need to be better understood for the development of a robust theory of materials development.
- Textbooks are the main source of content and progress in most language learning classes around the world; understanding the production of textbooks is vital in ensuring efficient language learning.
- This article describes the constraints associated with global textbook production, but a useful point of comparison would be to examine production constraints associated with the authoring of locally produced textbooks.

**Material, data, open access article:** N/A

**How to cite this summary:** Yildiz, F., & Harwood, N., (2023). The constraints of writing TESOL textbooks for a global audience. OASIS summary of Yildiz & Harwood (2023) in *TESOL Quarterly*. <https://oasis-database.org>

*This summary has a [CC BY-NC-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) license.*