

homework notebooks to their learning textbooks. I owe my understanding of the role textbook and experience of writing textbooks to my history teacher. I owe him the belief that prescribed textbooks are basically teaching books, teacher-centered, that is. In teaching certain school subjects, for instance, English as a foreign language, they need to be supported or replaced by learning-oriented or learners' textbooks. I owe him my views on 'textbooks'.

A teacher, who liked to write 'dictations'

I do not know what the mainstream practice is now. In our primary schooling weekly schedules we had two one-hour sessions for 'dictation'. In the fourth grade our teacher had his own way of running these sessions. We were a large class of fifty some kids. He would never dictate full passage from the reading text and take them all home for correction and scoring, as the mainstream practice was, and perhaps still is, with other teachers and classes. He would rather ask students to read certain lines from the reading passage and he himself beautifully chalked them on the blackboard. He would then mop off certain words of spelling difficulty or grammar point and called students to come to the board and rewrite the erased words. To the end of the activity students could recover and rewrite the major parts of the text, any mistake made was corrected by the students.

When teaching English, I made use of this technique. To have the attention of the whole class, I would have written short sections from the reading text on the board, did all the teaching that I could and referred to the text on the board as many times as I needed to. Then I started to mop off a few words and called up students to guess the

missing words. At the end of the activity, with only a few key-words left on the board, the class could remember the whole passage, with the whole teaching done on its content: spelling, pronunciation, meaning, etc. I owe to this teacher many hours of pleasant teaching experience.

In this note I have tried to propose:

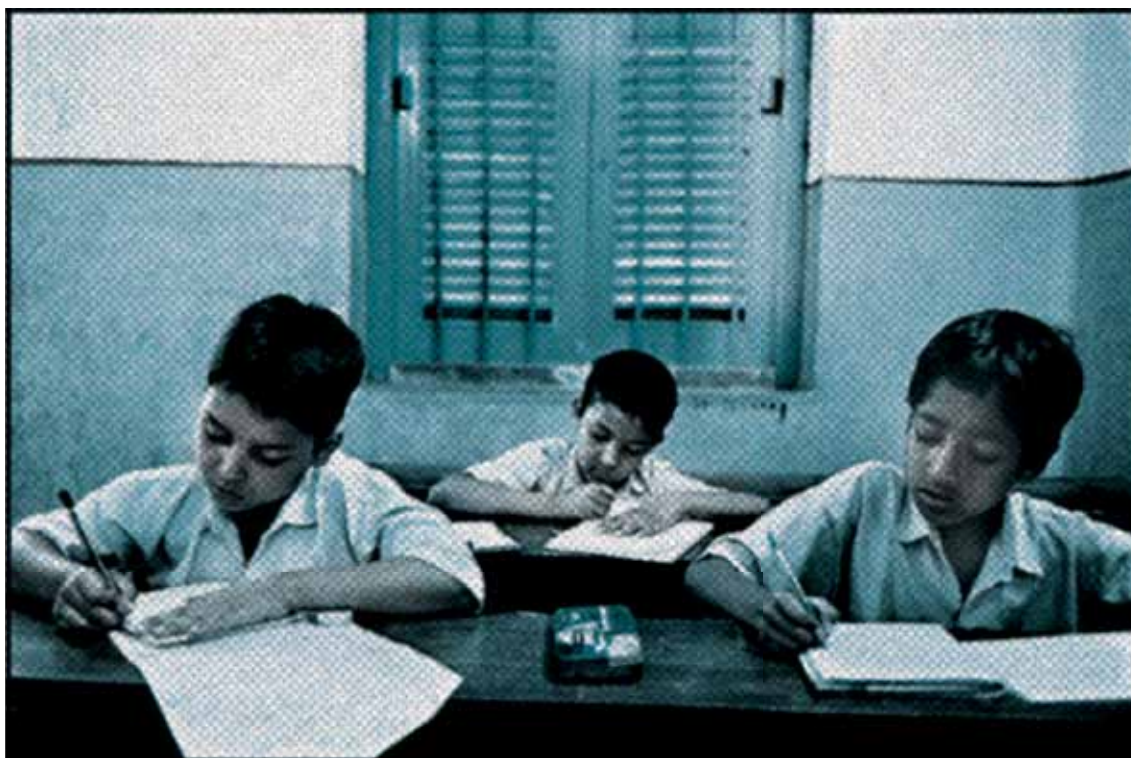
1. A teacher's mood and manner of presenting his/her materials play an important role in her/his success.
2. A textbook may be a 'wall' or a 'bridge' in a teacher's teaching.
3. An activity is useful and enjoyable that attracts and involves the attention of the whole.

Questions for thought:

1. *Where and when does a teacher's presentation of the teaching materials begin? Have you ever tried to change yours? Teachers, generally speaking, are the victim of a historical tradition. Do you think that a teacher's teaching is more often influenced by that of his/ her predecessors or the instructions in the textbooks?*
2. Could you think of 5 reasons for and 5 against teaching languages with a textbook?
3. How do you use a language textbook in the classroom? According to the instructions in it?
4. Have you ever tried to author a language teaching textbook, or rewrite an existing textbook to fit your learners' needs, level and motivation?
5. Have you ever tried to change 'teaching textbooks' to 'students' learning diaries or textbooks'?

students' names from a special attendance notebook, made a few mistakes when pronouncing some of the names. He laughed at his own mistakes. He told us that for quite some time we might not have any textbook, so we were going to write our own textbooks. He talked to us about the importance of the history. He seemed to be excited about his plans and to the end of the session he succeeded in passing it to us. Textbooks were believed to be sacred, as sacred as the Holy Book. The idea of writing a book on something we knew almost nothing about seemed as a joke and a mission impossible. However, he asked us to get a notebook with certain number of pages. In those days most of us had learned to make our own notebooks from loose sheets of paper. He taught us

in the first session how to prepare the title page of the book with our names, the date and the school name in it. In those years the contents of the school history textbooks were basically the brief biography of kings, when they inherited the throne, the wars they had with foreign kings, and when they lost their throne or died. He did not show much interest in these biographies. He, each session, would put the names and the dates on the board and asked us to copy them verbatim from the board. He showed interest in how people lived, famous people, their achievements. He never dictated them for us to copy. We were to write them down at home later in the evening as our homework. To make our textbooks complete we could check them with others. **Imagine changing students'**





The Unforgettable Three

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In the life story of any individual, in the list of the unforgettable, teachers seem to occupy an enviable position. In my own list a good number of my teachers come close to the top. This note is a token of gratitude and remembrance of what I learned and owe to them.

An older student who became a teacher substitute

It was not a rare event in the years of my primary schooling that we had no teacher for quite long periods of time. In my 5th grade, we had no teacher for two months. We were taught by assistant teachers in the morning and were left to our mischief most of the afternoons. The neighboring classes and teachers complained. The headmaster assigned a student as a teacher substitute from an upper grade with a mandate that he reports anybody who fails to behave properly. I knew the boy. He lived in the neighborhood. His father was a professional story teller and entertained people in the teahouses in the town. This boy, our teacher assistant, had gone after his father, was a born story teller. Every afternoon he would bring his father's costumes, put them on, mimic his father, and

recite stories from 'shahname,' the book of kings, a masterpiece in our epic poetry. His performance was so superb that he magnetized every student in the class. No neighboring teacher complained and no reporting to the Headmaster was made. I owe him my belief that a sure sign of a teacher's success in the classroom is his students' attention to whatever he does or says.

My history teacher, who taught us to write our own textbooks

We do well know how solidly our system of education relies on the role of the textbook: no teacher would dare walk into the classroom, and no student would be allowed into the classroom without one. Its absence or delay in its publication could lead to national crises. My history teacher in the secondary school was a remarkable exception: he showed the least possible respect to the textbook. That year we expected to be a lengthy delay in the national distribution of the new prescribed textbook.

More than half a century gone, I still remember the first session. Our history teacher walked in, like other teachers wrote his name on the board, called up