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UK-produced English language teaching textbooks aimed at the global market are core products in a multi-million pound TESOL industry that includes language teaching and testing, teacher education, academic publishing, and educational consultancy work and quality assurance for Ministries of Education globally. The growth of this industry coincides largely with the birth of the neoliberal era dating more or less from the late 1970s. This is a period which has been characterised not only by the deregulation of financial markets, the abolition of trade barriers, and the imposition of structural readjustment programmes on developing world countries, but also by an ideology that promotes and celebrates individualism over class-based and other collective identity inscriptions. Elsewhere in our work (Block 2010; Gray 2010a, 2010b, 2012), we have argued that UK-produced textbooks frequently reproduce and legitimise neoliberal ideology and in this chapter we turn our attention specifically to representations of the working class. The chapter begins with a short discussion of the supposed demise of the working class before moving on to a discussion of what class means in the highly complex world we live in today. This is followed by quantitative and qualitative analysis of a set of textbooks dating from the 1970s to the end of the first decade of the 21st century. The analysis reveals a largely superficial treatment of class in general and a progressive editing out of working class characters and issues relating to working class life from these textbooks. We conclude by arguing that this writing out of the working class from language learning materials can be seen as both a failure to educate students (by providing them with a very skewed view of the world) and a simultaneous betrayal of working class language learners who are denied recognition.

## Introduction

Quite apart from any methodological approach to language teaching and learning, at the heart of the ELT textbook is a regime of representation, a way of constructing the world that

suggests what it means to be a speaker of English in the world. Such regimes of representation are perforce political, in the sense that what is selected for inclusion is determined by parties with vested interests (such as publishers, authors, Ministries of Education, educational institutions, commercial language schools, etc.). They are also ideological, in the Marxist sense that the forms the representations take tend to reproduce existing power relations, particularly with regard to class, race, gender and sexual orientation (Azimova and Johnson 2012) – although overtly sexist representations of women are now largely a thing of the past, at least in materials produced for the global market (Gray 2010a). In their analysis of a wide range of textbooks for a variety of subject areas in North American schools, Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant (2011: 85) argue that representational practices merit the analyst's scrutiny for the following three reasons: (i) 'symbolic representations in books and other media often are used to confer legitimacy on the dominant status of particular social groups'; (ii) 'symbolic representations in the curriculum render socially constructed relations as natural; subjective interpretations of reality and value judgements are projected as fact'; and finally (iii) 'the curriculum screens in and out certain ideas and realms of knowledge. Students are given selective access to ideas and information'. One of several worrying consequences of such practices is that students can be deprived of a vocabulary for talking about the world and denied access to conceptual frameworks for thinking about their place in it (Sleeter and Grant 2011). Jean Anyon's (1985: 51) analysis of North American history books, which revealed the near complete writing out of the working class (as a named class formation) from US history, led her to conclude:

> Without such a label, workers are not easily called to mind as a group, and the objective fact of the working class has no subjective reality. In this way the textbooks predispose workers and others against actions on behalf of the interests that working people have in common.

We do not have to see this systematic editing out in such straightforwardly cause and effect terms to view it as problematic – although clearly the withholding of categorical labels and concepts may indeed militate against the framing of events in particular ways. Such a denial of recognition may also (perhaps more plausibly) be perceived by working class students as yet another of the myriad 'hidden injuries of class' (Sennett and Cobb 1972) and as a possible reminder that education is not for them.

It is with this kind of erasure in mind that we turn our attention in this chapter to the under-researched issue of class in ELT textbooks. We take the view that the concept of class and specifically that of the working class remains important, not only heuristically in terms of making sense of the world, but also in terms of an objective social reality. The chapter seeks to explore this issue with regard to UK-produced ELT textbooks, given that they are likely to remain, despite all the criticisms that have been levelled against them, key artefacts in language classrooms around the world. Elsewhere in our work (Block, 2010; Gray, 2010a, 2010b; 2012) we have been particularly critical of commercially produced ELT materials, arguing that their overwhelming focus on consumerism and the lifestyles of a cosmopolitan middle class amount to little more than a celebration of neoliberal ideology. Here we look at a sample of textbooks from the 1970s to the present with an eye to their treatment of issues related specifically to representation of the working class. We begin with an account of the supposed demise of the working class as a way in to a more theoretical discussion of class itself. This is followed by an account to the methodology we adopted and the resulting analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of what we see as the implications for materials development in the future.

**The supposed demise of the working class**

To mark the birth of the world's seventh billionth person in 2011, *National Geographic* magazine produced a profile of the world's 'most typical person'[i], something which was subsequently much commented on in the media. Problematic though such averaged out pictures are, the profile does serve to cast some light on class when seen from a global perspective. Thus we are told that the world's most typical person is male, he is 28 years old and he earns less than $12,000 a year. He has a mobile phone, but in common with seventy-five percent of humanity, he does not have a bank account. He is also a member of the world's largest ethnic group – Han Chinese. Some of the details of his life and that of his female counterpart have been captured more concretely and in greater detail by Ching Kwan Lee (2007) in her ethnographic study of contemporary Chinese workers. The accounts of their working conditions, which she reproduces, are a powerful reminder of the hidden realities of many workers' lives – as this Shenzhen textile worker's testimony shows:

> There is no fixed work schedule. A twelve-hour day is minimum. With rush orders, we have to work continuously for thirty hours or more. Day and night … the longest

> shift we had worked non-stop lasted forty hours … It's very exhausting because we have to stand all the time, to straighten the denim cloth by pulling. Our legs are always hurting. There is no place to sit on the shop floor. The machines do not stop during our lunch breaks. Three workers in a group will just take turns eating, one at a time … The shop floor is filled with black dust. Our bodies become black working day and night indoors. When I get off from work and spit, it's all black (Ching Kwan Lee, 2007: 235).

This worker, living in what is today known as 'the developing world', with no money in the bank and only his or her labour to sell, is someone Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels would have had no trouble in recognising. We only have to compare this account with Engels' description of textile workers' lives in mid-nineteenth century Leicester for the similarities to become clear:

> The winders, like the threaders, have no specified working time, being called upon whenever the spools on a frame are empty, and are liable, since the weavers work at night, to be required at any time in the factory or workroom …The work is very bad for the eyes … inflammations of the eye, pain, tears, and momentary uncertainty of vision during the act of threading are engendered … The work of the weavers themselves is very difficult, as the frames have constantly been made wider, until those now in use are almost all worked by three men in turn, each working eight hours, and the frame being kept in use the whole twenty-four. Hence it is that winders and threaders are so often called upon during the night, and the frame being kept in use the whole twenty-four (Engels, 1993 [1845]: 199-200)[ii].

And yet, the Chinese textile worker is a member of a class – the working class – whose obituary has been written and re-written repeatedly since (at the very least) the 1970s. In fact, the very concept of class (explored below) is one that has taken a severe battering from a number of perspectives in both lay and academic settings.

In the context of British politics in the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher (1987) famously stated in an interview for the magazine *Woman's Own* that society itself did not exist, arguing that there were 'only individual men and women and … families'. Some ten years later, then prime-minister Tony Blair argued the case for Britain becoming a meritocracy, which meant

‘opening up economy and society to merit and talent [in order to] recognise talent in all its forms … [and] allow […] people’s innate ability to shine through’ (Blair 2001, in Platt, 2011: 37). Still more recently, in 2010, prime-minister David Cameron introduced the somewhat amorphous notion of the ‘Big Society’, which seemed to mean that individuals should take responsibility for and carry out many of the activities which governments were previously responsible for, such as setting up schools and running public libraries. What all of these neoliberal assertions and policy statements have in common (apart from the fact that they are all taken from British politics) is a declaration of war against collectives and a glorification of the individual as *the* historical actor in modern society.

At the same time, a number of scholars on the left also took the view that changes brought about by technological innovation in the late twentieth century (e.g. the rise of the Internet, digital technology, etc.) meant that thinking about society in terms of class (or at least in terms of class alone) was perhaps outdated. Thus, for example, André Gorz’s (1982) *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism* argued that a society based on mass unemployment as a consequence of increased automation in the production process was coming into being, which (supposedly) presaged the end of the traditional working class. Gorz (1982: 67) argued that capitalist development was producing a ‘non-class of non-workers’ and that it was necessary to look to the feminist and ecology movements as the new collective drivers of social change. This was held to be necessary as the members of the hypothesised emerging non-class would – it was claimed – have no sense of themselves as a collective, given that they would alternate between long-term unemployment and short-term flexible contracts. Over a decade later, Manuel Castells (1996) posited the rise of the ‘network society’ in which technology was held to have produced a kind of structural change which in effect rendered previous class perspectives on society out-dated. While Castells (2000: 18) was at pains to point out that such a reconfiguration of society ‘does not preclude exploitation, social differentiation and social resistance’, he argued that this view meant that ‘production-based, social classes, as constituted, and enacted in the Industrial Age, cease to exist in the network society’. Alain Touraine (2007), in a discussion of globalization and its effects on the organisation of post-industrial societies, has argued along similar lines.

These perspectives have been critiqued as being misguided. For example, Kevin Doogan (2009) has argued persuasively that new technologies have not significantly brought about

mass unemployment; rather they have served to create different kinds of jobs. Furthermore, he points out that the concept of the network society has little to say to nursing, road sweeping and other forms of employment that do not revolve around the generation, processing and dissemination of digital information. At the same time, although Doogan argues that the extent of out-sourcing of jobs to the developing world has been exaggerated, there is no doubt that one feature of contemporary capitalism is the way in which whole swathes of the developing world *are* increasingly involved in the manufacture of goods for the global market. John Lanchester (2012: 8) provides the following example which resonates strikingly with that of Ching Kwan Lee (2007):

> Take as a case study of this process the world's most valuable company, which at the moment is Apple. Apple's last quarter was the most profitable of any company in history: it made $13 billion in profits on $46 billion in sales. Its bestselling products are made at factories owned by the Chinese company Foxconn [...] The company's starting pay is $2 an hour, the workers live in dormitories of six or eight beds for which they are charged rent of $16 a month, their factory in Chengdu, where the iPad is made, runs 24 hours a day, employs 120,000 people [...] and isn't even Foxconn's biggest plant: that's in Shenzhen and employs 230,000 people, who work 12 hours a day, six days a week.

This perspective is notably at odds with the picture of Shenzhen painted in *New Headway Pre-Intermediate* (Soars and Soars 2000), where the emphasis is firmly on change and the exciting nature of this. In a reading entitled 'Megalopolis', students are told that:

> The town of Shenzhen, just forty kilometres north of Hong Kong, is the world's biggest building site […] China is changing. It is no longer a country where absolutely everything is owned and controlled by the state. Developers are welcome. As Deng Xioping, the Chinese leader, said in 1992, 'To get rich is glorious'. The old China of bicycles and Little Red Books is disappearing. A world of mobile phones and capitalism is arriving (Soars and Soars, 2000: 75).

This is followed by the assertion that the 'Chinese people seem to welcome dramatic change' and that they 'don't worry about losing traditional ways of life' (p. 75). The piece ends with the assessment that this Chinese city of the future will be 'the greatest city on earth. It won't

be beautiful, but its power, energy, and wealth will be felt in all corners of the world' (p. 75). Despite being accompanied by two pictures of building work in which manual labourers are clearly visible, there are no references in the text to the conditions under which such workers live, nor are students invited to consider these. Instead, they are asked to answer questions which direct their attention onto the city itself ('What are some of the statistics about Shenzhen that make it a remarkable place?', p.74), and onto 'the people' as consumers, rather than as workers ('How are the people changing? Why do they want to own a car?', p. 74). The issues raised by this type of representation are precisely those we explore later in this chapter.

To recap then on the position we are outlining: we argue that the concept of the working class remains integral to capitalism and in line with Anthony Giddens (1973) we take the view that capitalist society is perforce a class society – however great the attempt has been at eliding the significance of class or ignoring its reality. Such an acknowledgement however does not imply that what class means is self-evident. For this reason, before beginning our analysis of the textbooks, we turn briefly in the next section to class itself – given that that is an inherently problematic concept to pin down.

**What is class?**

Marx is often looked to as the starting point for any discussion of class, although as has been noted by numerous authors (e.g. Wright, 1985), Marx never actually provided a clear-cut definition of class. Indeed, for more clearly articulated definitions, we must turn to Marxist scholars such as Vladimir Lenin, who in his adaptation of Marxism to Russian realities of the early 20$^{th}$ century wrote:

> Classes are large groups of people which differ from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour and, consequently, by the dimensions and method of acquiring the share of social wealth of which they dispose. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definitive system of social economy (Lenin, 1947 [1919]: 492).

It is worth noting that in this definition, and indeed in Marxist scholarship in general, class is framed not as an attribute of people or as a static position in stratified societies, but as a social relation, as emergent in the social world of interactions with others and the collective associations that people engaged with, all arising out of the economic order in societies.

A range of more recent scholars have noted that any conceptualization of the construct must be consonant with the increasing complexification of societies since Marx's death in 1883. Similar to Marx, Max Weber wrote about an economic order in industrialised societies, and how class and class position are relational. However, Weber's notion of what constituted this economic order differed sharply from Marx's: while Marx saw the economic order in terms of the relationships between capital and labour power, leading to the exploitation of the latter by the former, Weber viewed the economic order as a market in which stratification and inequality arose in the exchange of assets by individuals with unequal access to and possession of these assets. For Weber, '[c]lass situation' and 'class' refer only to the same (or similar) interests which an individual shares with others', which include 'the various controls over consumer goods, means of production, assets, resources and skills which constitute a particular class situation' (Weber 1968: 302). His view of class was therefore not just about production, but also about economic exchange occurring after production (i.e. consumption).

Writing about what class had become in the wealthy west by the end of the 20th century, Pierre Bourdieu took the following view:

> …. class or class fraction is defined not only by its position in the relations of production, as identified through indices such as occupation, income, or even educational level, but also by a certain sex-ratio, a certain distribution in geographical space (which is never socially neutral) and by a whole set of subsidiary characteristics which may function, in the form of tacit requirements, as real principles of selection or exclusion without ever being formally stated (this is the case with ethnic origin and sex). A number of official criteria: for example, the requiring of a given diploma can be a way of demanding a particular social origin (Bourdieu, 1984: 102).

In this mix, there are capitals beyond economic capital. On the one hand, there is cultural capital, in shorthand the possession of legitimised knowledge and knowhow, which might be

transformed creatively and generatively into sub-capitals or derived capitals such as 'educational capital', 'linguistic capital', 'artistic capital' and so on. On the other hand, there is social capital, seen as the use to which cultural (and economic) capital is put in the form of power derived from particular social relations which facilitate paths to success in some individuals' life trajectories. For Bourdieu (1984: 114), these capitals can be quantified and are understood 'as the set of actually usable resources and powers' people may draw on. Importantly, one sees how capital is distributed differentially across individuals engaging in practices across a variety of fields, which are domains of social practices constituted and shaped by particular ways of thinking and acting (e.g. education, football, cinema, etc.). Here class is framed as a social relation and as emergent in the day-to-day activities of human beings. It becomes embodied in the individual, forming a class *habitus*, which is an ever evolving set of internalised dispositions, formulated out of engagement in situated social practices taking place in fields, and shaped by institutions as well as larger social structures, such as global economic forces.

As has been noted elsewhere (Block, 2012a, 2012b, 2013), a perusal of relatively recent publications about class (e.g. Bennett, Savage, Silva, Warde, Gayo-Cal & Wright, 2009; Bottero, 2005; Crompton, 2008; Savage, 2000) reveals a strong (though by no means exclusive) tendency to frame the construct in a Bourdieusian manner. Drawing on these sources, David Block (2012a, 2012b, 2013) has elaborated a list of key dimensions associated with class as an identity inscription. As the reader will note, there is conflation here of the Weberian notions of class and status[iii].

**Insert table 1 here**

Several caveats are in order as regards this table. First, there is the Marxist notion outlined above that class must be understood not as an individual characteristic but as a social relation. In addition, class, however it is understood, is intertwined with other identity inscriptions, such as gender, ethnicity, race, nationality and so on. Indeed, it is one of the challenges of class-based research today to work out exactly how these different identity inscriptions interact with class (e.g. see Bradley, 1996; Burkett, 2008; Skeggs, 2004). Furthermore, no one of these dimensions ever offers an airtight means of classifying people, especially when viewed relationally, with respect to other dimensions. Thus, wealth might be associated with particular types of employment which require years of formal education leading to specific

qualifications *and* with more manual professions requiring few or no educational qualifications.

**Methodology**

In setting out to explore the issue of working class representation in ELT textbooks we decided to look at a sample of best-selling textbooks produced over four decades, beginning in the 1970s when the boom in English language teaching may be said to have begun. In this way we felt that we would be able to identify any changes that appeared to have taken place over the period. We chose two textbooks from each decade, both at the intermediate level - where publishers report that sales are highest (Gray, 2010a). In light of the success of the *Headway* series and the influence it has had on ELT publishing since the mid-1980s when it first appeared (Holliday, 2005), we made the decision to include the first edition of the first *Headway* book and subsequent new editions from the 1990s and 2000s.

Insert Table 2 here

It is also important to state that all these textbooks have their origins in commercial ELT and were designed for young adults and older teenagers. In this sector, the aim has traditionally been to provide entertainingly packaged linguistic content, with little in the way of any broader educational remit. *English in Situations* and *Kernel Lessons Intermediate*, the two oldest textbooks being analysed here, originated in Eurocentres, a commercial language teaching organisation whose website (http://www.eurocentres.com) states that it was founded on the idea that 'learning a language should be a fun enriching and personal experience and at the same time, increase awareness and understanding between cultures'.

Our approach was similar to that adopted in other textbook analysis studies (Gray, 2010b; Sleeter and Grant, 2011; Azimova and Johnston, 2012) – namely an initial quantitatively-oriented content analysis followed by a more qualitative examination of the data. Given that our earlier studies (referred to above) suggested an increasingly pervasive focus on the working lives and lifestyles of the cosmopolitan middle class, we approached the sample with an initial focus on employment, but guided by the dimensions of class listed in Table 1. Our analysis was conducted with the following questions in mind:

Are there any representations of characters who are working class in terms of their employment, or references to working class employment in these textbooks?
If so, what form do these representations/references take?
Is there any treatment of themes that can be related to working class experience in these textbooks?
If so, what form does this treatment take?

While making decisions about class based on employment is clearly problematic (as Table 1 suggests), it can be a useful starting point for analysis. A number of frameworks of varying complexity exist for the assignation of class based on occupation – for example, the UK National Readership (NRS) survey (http://www.nrs.co.uk) which is widely used in market research makes use of six broad classes: A (upper middle class, defined on the NRS website as 'higher managerial, administrative and professional'), B (middle class, defined as 'intermediate managerial, administrative and professional'), C1 (lower middle class, defined as 'supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional'), C2 (skilled working class, defined as 'skilled manual workers'), D (working class, defined as 'semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers') and E (a catch-all category, defined as 'state pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only'). In this taxonomy, groups C2 – E are considered working class. Other taxonomies, such as the UK government's National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) make use of slightly more categories. However, one of the problems with such approaches is that many forms of lower paid, highly routinized clerical occupations are categorised as falling within the broad middle class occupation grouping, despite the fact that, as Anthony Heath and Nicky Britten (1984: 481) argue, such workers (who are often women) occupy a 'fundamentally proletarian market position'. For this reason, we also categorised such clerical workers as working class, unless the representation was marked in some way as indicating a middle class lifestyle.

We began by recording all instances (including artwork) in which it was made clear that a character was working class (e.g. someone being clearly identified as a factory worker, a cleaner, a clerical worker, etc.), along with any mention of employment that could be deemed working class (e.g. true/false statements related to a reading, such as 'The tractor driver earns less than the other man does' (O'Neill, 1971: 45)). We also recorded any reading or listening activity that dealt with a theme that could be said to index working class experience (e.g.

accounts of fighting for better conditions at work, education and life chances, discrimination based on class, etc.). By way of example, the following reference was recorded as a clear representation of a working class character:

> Harry Evans is a young factory-worker. Every evening at 5 o'clock exactly the same thing happens. A bell rings at 5. The men stop work, turn off their machines, run out, put their overcoats on, and hurry home (O'Neill, 1970: 28).

However, the following reference was deemed not to suggest a working class character in such a clear manner and was not counted:

> Jane Martin is very athletic. She is a good skier and tennis-player and is also good at golf. She has a job as a typist and she is at work now.
> […]
> It is a cold winter day. Jane is in Norway and she has her skis on. (O'Neill, 1970: 2)

While the job of 'typist' could be indicative of lower paid routine employment and while any individual typist might be deemed working class in terms of the dimensions listed in Table 1, when we consider the profile in the light of these, Jane Martin is arguably not working class. Rather, the sporting activities she engages in are indexical of middle class leisure activities and consumption patterns - as all three sports require considerable disposable income, in terms of kit, probable club membership fees and the money needed for travel[iv]. Following Nigora Azimova and Bill Johnston's (2012) approach, we noted the number of pages in which such references occurred and then compared that with the total number of pages in the textbook. This was followed by the qualitative analysis in which we considered the actual nature of the representation, whether in terms of language used, authorial point of view and image composition (if artwork was included).

**Textbook analysis**

As can be seen in Table 3 there is a progressive decline in the representation of working class characters, mentions of working class employment and themes relating to working class experience in these textbooks. The two textbooks from the 1970s stand out in terms of

quantity of representations, with the percentage for *Kernel Lessons Intermediate* showing that over half the pages contained some form of reference to the working class.

Insert Table 3 here

It is perhaps no accident that this decline parallels the supposed demise of the working class in this period, as textbooks came to reflect the embourgeoisement of society proclaimed by the mainstream media and successive neoliberal governments, a process which, it must be noted, was accompanied by the concomitant stigmatization of the working class (Jones, 2011) (paradoxical though this was, given its hypothesised exit from the world stage). As has been noted elsewhere (Gray, 2010a), as textbooks moved from embedding language practice primarily in native speaker/inner circle cultures (e.g. the US, the UK) to embedding it in what might be understood to be a global culture of consumerism, the reference-point - the *society* of English speakers - shifted from nation-states with their corresponding class systems to a floating global culture in which the main players represented are middle class and wealthy people.

However, the figures from the content analysis on their own serve to shed little light on the specific nature of the representational practices being deployed in these materials. If meanings are to be drawn from these figures it is necessary to look more closely at the textbooks themselves. Marked working class characters are a recurring element in *English in Situations* and *Kernel Lessons Intermediate*. Thus, situations and events in the lives of lorry driver Bill Parks, factory workers Harry Evans, Frank Martin and Bill Rawlings and office worker Julia Frost feature repeatedly throughout as the contexts for the introduction of new language. Furthermore, incidental references to working class characters, employment or activity also feature frequently in the practice drills or grammar explanations which follow these. For example, *Kernel Lessons Intermediate* introduces 'some, any, a few, a little' as follows: in the initial 'situation stage' the students focus on a number of line drawings, one of which shows four men standing outside a closed factory gate. A clock above the gate shows that it is 4 o'clock. One of men is carrying a placard that reads 'FEWER HOURS MORE MONEY'. Three are wearing cloth caps which (given that this is 1971) can be read as signifiers of their working class status. A poster attached to the factory wall states 'Manchester United vs. Leeds Kick off 3.30' – so we can deduce that the match is currently in progress. In the foreground there are two policemen, one of whom appears to be looking at

the clock (possibly thinking about the match he is missing). Students are asked to focus on the picture and then to form questions based on the following cues:

(a) When/strike?
(b) Where/policemen and strikers?
(c) What day?
(d) What/most of the men?
(e) reporters there? (O'Neill, 1971: 26).

The answers are found in a short reading on the opposite page. In the grammar summary, several pages later, students are informed: '*a few* means a small number, and we use it with Unit words – a few policemen/ a few people/ a few strikers' (O'Neill, 1971: 31). However, it should be noted that at no stage are students told what the strike is about, nor is the word 'picket' taught (although this is clearly implied in the line drawing). In addition, the police presence at the factory is not commented on in any way[v]. This approach is typical of both textbooks in the sense that while working class characters and phenomena such as a factory workers' strike *are* represented, there is no attempt to encourage students to think or talk seriously about the issues raised – for example, why workers go on strike, why the strikers are being policed, etc. In part this can be attributed to the fact that both textbooks pre-date the communicative revolution and classroom talk, where it occurred, tended to be very controlled and focused on accurate reproduction of grammatical structures. It is also, we would suggest, related to the 'fun' imperative so central to commercial language teaching referred to above (Anderson, 2002), whereby engagement with serious content is held in check for fear of alienating fee-paying students whose entertainment needs have to be catered for. Elsewhere in both textbooks the lives of working people are frequently shown to be difficult whether in terms of poor working conditions, limited life chances or constrained by regimes of time-keeping in the workplace. But again the issues raised are ignored, as the following example shows:

> Bill Rawlings thinks he was born unlucky. He works in a factory and hates it. 'It's very boring work!' he often says. The air in the factory is very dirty. 'You've never breathed such dirty air!' he told his wife yesterday. Last year he and his wife went to the seaside and it rained every day. 'What terrible weather!' he said. 'Nobody has such terrible luck as I do!' Bill often says to himself. (O'Neill, 1970: 134).

While the assessment of the working conditions provided by the narrative voice ('The air in the factory is very dirty') coincides with that of Bill (thereby endorsing his point of view for the reader), the accompanying questions simply ask students to retrieve information from the text (e.g. 'What is the air like and what did he tell his wife about it?', p. 134). There is no invitation to students to consider what action Bill might take – such as raising the issue at a union meeting. Furthermore, the somewhat banal transition into Bill's holiday tribulations serves to undermine the very different type of problem he encounters in the workplace.

Problems associated with work also feature in the two textbooks from the 1980s. As Table 3 shows, the mention of working class characters, along with working class employment and experience decreases sharply in this decade and, as we shall see, the treatment overall is also somewhat different. The globally successful *Strategies* series, as Shelagh Rixon and Richard Smith (2012) point out, was written by a team who had begun their careers producing materials for migrants to the UK, many of whom were employed as factory workers. Although *Building Strategies* was not written for migrants, something of its authors' earlier seriousness with regard to the world of work is evident throughout the textbook – in the sense that it is based on the lives (and in particular the working lives) of a group of realistically drawn (albeit middle class) characters (Gray, 2010a). In fact none of the central characters is working class – although fifty-something Peggy Cooper works as a supermarket cashier. However, when we look at her profile in terms of the dimensions listed in Table 1, Peggy is clearly middle class. She is married to Jack, who while a member of the trade union, is also the production manger in an electrical components factory, Western Aeronautics. Photographs of dinner parties in the Coopers' house show a typical middle class interior of the period with soft lighting, a candle lit table and crystal wine glasses. We also discover from a letter written by Peggy to her friend Stella that as children they had both holidayed in the south of France – hardly a destination for working class British tourists in the immediate post-war period when Peggy would have been young[vi].

All references to the working class are in fact incidental – working class characters appear as anonymous participants in service encounters or as minor characters whose occupations are mentioned only in passing. Reference *is* made to a wage dispute at the factory where Jack and Rod (another central character) work but this is seen in terms of its impact on Jack. Peggy's letter to Stella introduces the dispute as follows:

> Unfortunately, things aren't going too well at Western. There's a lot of trouble over wage claims and Jack thinks there's probably going to be a strike. Jack has mixed feelings about the situation, but between you and me, I think he's getting tired of it all. In fact he's thinking of putting in an application to join the project which Western are setting up on the Continent (Abbs and Freebairn, 1984: 78).

Students are given no indication as to the nature of the wage claim or why Jack has mixed feelings. However, the implication is that it is the dispute rather than Western Aeronautics that he is tiring of, given his thoughts about relocating to France without leaving the company. In fact, Jack subsequently applies for the job and he and Peggy relocate to France in what is presented as a good career move (the company's rent free accommodation means an increase in real earnings). Because most of what happens in *Building Strategies* is seen though the eyes of its central characters, the world that emerges on its pages is a predominantly middle class one. For all its virtues (e.g. non-sexist representation of women), this textbook is part of a trend in which a working class point of view on the world is erased and engagement in activities like striking are seen as a nuisance, and the possibility that action taken against management in a pay dispute might be justified is not considered.

The 1986 edition of *Headway Intermediate* might be said to continue this trend in that working class characters tend to feature only in passing, rather than being the centre of attention – although an interview with a postman about why he likes his job is a notable exception. That said, there is an element in this textbook (the first of the series to be published) that makes it different from subsequent editions and indeed the series as a whole – namely a recurring seriousness of tone. In a unit on describing people and places, students are asked to discuss why different groups of people come together. The groups include a trade union, a football crowd, and freemasons, among others. Students are then asked: 'To how many of these groups can you attach a certain social class? (Soars and Soars, 1986: 35). The example answer reads: 'People who belong to trade unions are traditionally working class, but many of them are also middle class' (p. 35). The final stage of the speaking activity asks 'How much of a class system is there in your country? How does it show itself? Is there an aristocracy?' (p. 35). Given the way in which the *Headway* series would develop into a global brand and the values of consumerism and individualism it would come to celebrate (Gray, 2010a, 2010b, 2012), it is notable how different this first textbook is (written while its authors

were still classroom teachers) in explicitly raising the issue of class. In a subsequent unit the impact of computers on work is addressed and students listen to an interview with a female representative of the Low Pay Unit (http://www.lowpayunit.org.uk) which is described accurately in the rubric as 'a voluntary organisation which monitors the effects of government policy and union action on the worst-paid members of the work force' (Soars and Soars, 1986: 76). The interviewee explains that developments in new technology mean that increasingly more people will be able to work from home and that while there are positive aspects of this, there are also potential downsides in the form of lower wages, job insecurity and poorer working conditions. The following extracts are noteworthy for several reasons – in the first place there is the interviewee's obvious distrust of employers seeking to cut corners to increase profits, and the implied value for workers of trade unions; and secondly, neither the interviewer nor any of the activities the students are asked to do seek to challenge the arguments made by the speaker. The extracts are also consonant with what has been described as the 'feminization' of textbook content in the 1980s (Gray 2010a) – namely the way in which content from this period onwards sought to represent women as active members of the workforce (rather than as housewives, as was often the case in the 1970s), and in non-sexist terms (although that is not an issue here):

> […] there are three million women in Britain whose jobs involve processing information, and many employers would like to have them out of the way at home, with none of the protection they would get if they were in an office.
>
> These type of arrangements do suit a lot of women. But what we're concerned about is the question of … well … exploitation. […] it would be very easy for an employer to exploit these people further by keeping them beyond the protection of the health and safety laws, and of course beyond any possible contacts with trade unions (Soars and Soars, 1986: 118-9).

This kind of content is altogether different from that encountered in *English in Situations* and *Kernel Lessons Intermediate* – the Low Pay Unit is an actual body and issues addressed in the interview are both serious *and* seriously addressed. That said, the follow-up activity leads students away from the issues raised in the interview into a more general discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of working from home, whether or not students would like to work in this way, and the possibilities of shopping and doctor consultation by computer.

Given what is known about the way in which UK-produced textbooks developed over the following decades, it is no surprise that the discussion of class and the interview with the representative of the Low Pay Unit were removed from all subsequent editions of the book.

Employment continued to be a theme in the series as our analysis of *New Headway Intermediate* (1996 edition) shows, although the focus here shifts noticeably towards a view of work as a source of great personal satisfaction in the lives of highly agentive individuals who are driven by passion and for whom choice with regard to employment is unproblematically exercised. In a unit dedicated to the theme of work, three young people from privileged backgrounds, and against their parents' wishes, choose jobs more usually associated with the working class. Thus, a judge's daughter becomes a nanny, the son of a land owing family opts to become a cook, while an Oxford student disappoints his parents (one a surveyor, the other an interior designer) by becoming a gardener. These choices are presented favourably – photographs of all three characters show them at work, smiling at the viewer and each first-person account of their decision to pursue non-traditional employment (for them) is accompanied by a parent's perspective in which belated approval is given. These individualists are far removed from those working class characters found in *English in Situations*, many of whom are presented as constrained by their class position. The following comment resonates with what many of the informants in Sennett and Cobb's (1972) *Hidden Injuries of Class* say about their lives:

> … Bill Rawlings was feeling very sorry for himself. 'I'm never going to have any money. I'm going to be a factory worker for the rest of my life.' he said to himself (O'Neill, 1970, 144).

In fact the above mentioned *New Headway Intermediate* (1996 edition) characters can be seen as entrepreneurs, both in the original sense of 'undertaker of a project' (Holborow, 2012), in this case the project of the self (Giddens 1991), in which they pursue their individual dreams in the face of parental disapprobation, but also in a more neoliberal, innovative, risk-taking and wealth generating sense – the cook, students are informed, has already opened his own restaurant and the gardener's family entertain hopes he may become a millionaire. In the role play which follows students are encouraged to engage with these issues by assuming the roles of parents and children. Those playing the children are tasked as follows:

> A and B are your parents. They want you to become a lawyer or doctor, but you have different ideas! You want to be one of the following (or choose one of your own): a dancer a musician a poet an explorer a model a jockey an astronaut (Soars and Soars, 1996: 72).

Actual working class characters feature only in passing, and then almost invariably as unnamed participants in service encounters. This is also the case for *Lifelines Intermediate*, *New Cutting Edge Intermediate* and the 2009 edition of *New Headway Intermediate*. Where a traditionally working class job is focused on, as in *New Cutting Edge Intermediate*, agency and choice are shown to be central. Thus students listen to 26-year old Clare Davis describe how she gave up her job as a secondary school teacher to retrain as a plumber – 'I was getting really fed up […] It just wasn't the right job for me' (Cunningham and Moor, 2005: 165). As earlier analysis has shown (Gray, 2010b), this approach to work, in which agency and personal choice are foregrounded, is accompanied by an increasing focus on consumerism. As Zygmunt Bauman (2007: 61) has pointed out, '[t]he individual member of the society of consumers is defined, first and foremost, as *homo eligens*' – and choice extends not only to what to buy, but also to which job to choose freely or abandon unproblematically. As Clare says with regard to her decision to try plumbing: 'If I don't enjoy it, I'll try something else' (Cunningham and Moor, 2005: 53).

Overall the analysis of these textbooks shows the progressive decline in the representation of working class characters and the erasure of a very limited working class perspective on life. For all the recurrence of characters such as Harry Evans and Bill Rawlings in *English in Situations* and *Kernel Lessons Intermediate* there is little in the way of serious engagement of issues surrounding class. Paradoxically the most serious treatment of class is found in the first edition of *Headway Intermediate* – a textbook in which the actual number of working class characters is shown to be on the decline. But even here, although the listening on low paid home workers clearly lays out the issue in terms of exploitation, the actual activities that students are asked to do fail to confront this. Overall these findings resonate with other studies of representations of class in mainstream textbooks – namely, that class receives little in the way of serious treatment (Sleeter and Grant, 2011). In the next section we speculate on how materials might change in this respect.

**Discussion**

To begin to imagine an alternative approach to working class representation it is useful to look at how this has been done in different settings in the past and in the present. A series of textbooks entitled *English for you* produced in East Germany in the late 1960s and early 1970s provide, as might be expected, an altogether different perspective on working class experience. As with the pre-*Headway* textbooks analysed here, students are introduced to a set of characters whose lives they become increasingly familiar with. The main characters in *English for you 1* (Gräf, Hoffmann and Klein, 1968) are Peggy Miller, a secretary and part-time journalist for the *Morning Star*, the British Communist daily newspaper and her friend Tom Young, a factory worker. Much of what happens in the textbook is related to their lives as workers and committed communists. For example, in one unit, Tom in his role as shop steward threatens the boss with calling a union meeting if Peggy, who has just started working in the factory, is not paid the agreed union rate. What is interesting about this material is that students are not asked to discuss such issues or relate them to their own lives or experience of work – workplace exploitation and industrial action are represented as exclusively phenomena of the capitalist west and any problems eastern bloc workers might have are not addressed. The textbook simply provides an officially endorsed perspective on international politics and British working class life – although the focus is consistently on the working class.

A somewhat different approach is found in Elsa Auerbach and Nina Wallerstein's (2004) *Problem-Posing at Work: English for Action*. This material is aimed at immigrants in North America and draws on the Freirean notion of 'conscientização', sometimes translated as 'critical consciousness', whereby, as the promotional material for the book explains, students 'share and analyze their experiences, to acquire the language, skills, and information necessary for greater power over their circumstances, and to strategize together for changes'. Thus students read case histories of real workers and their documented battles and successes with exploitative employers, are given information about their legal rights, and are provided with materials on how concepts such as globalization have consequences in their daily lives. Unlike the East German material, students are repeatedly asked to reflect on real world social issues, as the following extract, entitled 'Language and power' shows:

> The way we communicate with people depends on our relationships with those people. In some situations, we have more power than other people. In other situations, other people have more power than we do. Most people have more power than others in some situations and less power than others in some situations.
>
> You can often tell who has power in a situation by the way people use language. Answer these questions about your workplace:
>
> - Who speaks loudly? Who speaks softly?
> - Who gives orders or tells others what to do? Who follows orders?
> - Who speaks a lot? Who is silent?
> - Who asks questions? What kinds of questions? Who answers questions?
> - Who calls people by their first names? Who uses titles like Mr. or Ms.?
> - Who apologizes?
> - Who starts conversations?
> - Who interrupts?
>
> What do your answers show about who has power?
> Now discuss the same questions about your home, your class, a medical clinic, or other places. How does language use show power relations in these situations? (Auerbach and Wallerstein, 2004: 78)

Clearly such an exclusive focus on work is not suitable for students in all situations. Auerbach and Wallerstein's book is based clearly in two nation-states (the US and Canada) and therefore can deal more directly with the ins and outs of the North American class systems than the books analysed here, which have global pretentions. However, we take the view that producers of ELT textbooks (of whatever kind) have much to learn from this kind of material. As English has become ever more globally disseminated, one feature of contemporary UK-produced textbooks for the global market is the way in which they are increasingly peopled by spectacularly successful middle class cosmopolitans (Gray 2010a) – something which, as we have seen, is accompanied by the near total erasure of the global

working class. This editing out of class is problematic in our view and cannot be seen as simply a textbook publishing phenomenon. Rather it needs to be understood as part of a more general and profoundly ideological attempt at reconfiguring reality in such a way that the concept of class is seen as being redundant. Earlier we referred in passing to the UK government's National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification taxonomy – Owen Jones (2011: 98) explains how this title was introduced (to the surprise of the sociologist John Goldthorpe on whose research it was based) to replace the existing Social Class based on Occupation classification as part of 'New Labour's dogged determination to scrub class from the country's vocabulary'. Class is a problematic term because it entails thinking about society in terms of structural inequality and economic stratification – notions which sit uneasily with the neoliberal mantra that 'we're all middle class now', an assertion which allows poverty to be explained by individual fecklessness or lack of aspiration[vii]. While textbooks of the kind under investigation here have been and continue to be consumed in the private sector globally where the global middle class receive language skills training, they are also used in many state education systems around the world partly because they emanate from 'the centre' where English is spoken as a native language, and partly because they carry the imprimatur of prestigious publishing houses. In such settings where there is an educational agenda, students surely deserve better. The erasure of the working class from ELT textbooks can be seen as both representative of a failure to educate and a betrayal of working class language learners.

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| **Dimension** | **Gloss** |
|---|---|
| Property | This refers to one's material possessions, such as land, housing, electronic goods, clothing, books, art, etc. |
| Wealth | This refers to disposable income/money and patrimony (e.g. what owned property is worth in financial terms). |
| Occupation | This refers to the kind of work done across a range of job types, such as blue-collar manual labour vs. white-collar knowledge-based labour, or service sector jobs vs. manual jobs, etc. |
| Place of residence | This can refer either to the type of neighbourhood one lives in (is it identified as poor, working class, middle class, an area in the process of gentrification, or upper class?) or the type of dwelling (individual house, flat, caravan, etc.). |
| Education | This refers to the level of schooling attained and the acquired cultural capital one has at any point in time. There is close link here to Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital. |
| Social networking | This refers to the often unspoken reality whereby middle class |

| | |
|---|---|
| | people tend to socialise with middle class people, working class people with working class people, and so on. There is a close link here to Bourdieu's notion of social capital. |
| Consumption patterns | This might refer to behaviour patterns like buying food at a supermarket that positions itself as 'cost-cutting' vs. buying food at one that sells 'healthy', organic and expensive products. Or it might refer to buying particular goods (e.g. food, clothing, gadgets) in terms of type and brand. |
| Symbolic behaviour | This includes how one moves one's body, the clothes one wears, the way one speaks, how one eats, the kinds of pastimes one engages in, etc. |
| Spatial relations | This refers to living conditions such as physical mobility (does the person frequently travel abroad?) or the spatial conditions in which one lives (size of bedroom, size of dwelling, proximity to other people during a range of day-to-day activities) |

**Table 1: Key dimensions of class (Block, 2012: 194)**

| Textbook | Author(s) | Year of publication/publisher |
|---|---|---|
| English in Situations | O'Neill, R. | 1970/ Oxford University Press |
| Kernel Lessons Intermediate | O'Neill, R. | 1971/ Longman |
| Building Strategies | Abbs, B. & I. Freebairn | 1984/ Longman |
| Headway Intermediate | Soars, J & L. Soars | 1986/ Oxford University Press |
| New Headway Intermediate | Soars, L. & J. Soars | 1996/ Oxford University Press |
| Lifelines Intermediate | Hutchinson, T. | 1997/ Oxford University Press |
| New Cutting Edge Intermediate | Cunningham, S. & P. Moor | 2005/ Pearson Longman |
| New Headway Intermediate | Soars, L. & J. Soars | 2009/ Oxford University Press |

**Table 2: Textbook sample**

| Textbook | Number of pages | Number of pages with representations of/references to working class characters/employment; themes relating to working class | Number of pages with representations as percentage of the total number of pages |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | experience | |
|---|---|---|---|
| English in Situations | 200 | 83 | 41.5% |
| Kernel Lessons Intermediate | 151 | 87 | 57.6% |
| Building Strategies | 144 | 29 | 20.1% |
| Headway Intermediate | 120 | 27 | 22.5% |
| New Headway Intermediate | 159 | 29 | 18.2% |
| Lifelines Intermediate | 144 | 18 | 12.5% |
| New Cutting Edge Intermediate | 175 | 24 | 13.7% |
| New Headway Intermediate | 159 | 23 | 14.4% |

**Table 3: Occurrences of working class representation**

[i] This is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4B2xOvKFFz4

[ii] Similar points are made by Ching Kwan Lee (2007) and Hunt (2009).

[iii] There is obviously a debate to be had about this conflation. However, space does not allow us to explore this here. See Block (2013).

[iv] And, as Bourdieu noted, the economic barriers to the practice of sports like skiing and tennis are just part of the story. There are also social barriers, 'such as family tradition and early training, or obligatory manner (of dress and behaviour), and socializing techniques, which keep these sports closed to the working class…' (Bourdieu (1984: 217).

[v] It should be noted that textbook writers can suggest alternative approaches to the exploitation of materials in the teachers' book which generally accompanies the students' book. However, none of the teachers' books to which we've had access suggests alternatives of the kind mentioned here.

[vi] It is possible that the authors were trying to convey something of the complexity of class in the UK in the wake of the significant, though by no means overwhelming, social mobility which occurred in post World War 2 Britain.

[vii] Indeed, those who attempt to introduce class into discussions of contemporary societies are all too often accused of 'practising class warfare', usually framed as an old fashioned and out-dated way of viewing the world. This is an interesting reversal of logic when one considers how over the past 30 years we have seen the emergence of a new 'transnational capitalist class' (Carroll, 2010), composed of individuals who both think and act globally, and who, in effect, have won the latest round of class warfare, Thus, these individuals have increased their income far more than ordinary middle and working class individuals while claiming that the very opposite has been going on, that the past 30 years have been a bonanza for everyone. By 2006, how many people in Ireland and the southern European countries thought that they had finally managed to lift themselves to *quasi* northern European standards of living, only for 2007 to arrive, with the effects and consequences that we have all witnessed?