

**Sub theme:**

**The speaking and listening challenge**

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# **Your Guide but Not Your Master** **by Anya Shaw and Shamali Jayarathne**

## **Abstract**

In ‘Your Guide but Not Your Master’, Anya Shaw and Shamali Jayarathne show how to analyse the textbook in order to increase learning and motivation in students in the area of speaking and listening skills.

Textbooks are a key resource that all teachers have access to and are provided to all learners, island-wide in Sri Lanka. They warn against blindly following any textbook because it prevents teachers from responding to individual or group needs. They argue that the textbook becomes the master. Instead it should be seen as a collection of activities or resources that can be exploited by the teacher to enhance learning and help learners to achieve the learning outcomes of competency levels in the syllabus. They ask how can teachers exploit textbooks with realistic, achievable adaptations that will have maximum impact on learning and motivation? How can teachers ensure a balance of skills? If we want our learners to succeed in today’s world of work, education and communication, they will need to be competent speakers and listeners so how can teachers integrate more speaking and listening practice into their classes and help learners to develop these skills? The numerous texts contained within school textbooks can be used for comprehension and to carry meaning, to present language in context and also to get learners responding on a given topic so the tasks may need to be adapted depending on the aim of the activity. Some activities in textbooks simply assess learners whereas the focus should be on learning and skills development.

This paper explores different approaches to exploiting textbook materials, in particular texts, to support learners’ understanding, production and engagement with tasks that are transferable to any grade.