

A contextual analysis of EFL textbook text types in Spanish upper secondary education

by

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Abstract

Textbooks play a crucial part in EFL classrooms all around the world. It is well established that most Spanish and Catalan classrooms use textbooks for their English instruction. Therefore, the textbook rests at the centerfold of the overall learning process. As a result, the primary source of context is the textbook itself for grammar use, vocabulary, genres, and overall text. However, most of the reading material that appears in Spanish or Catalan EFL schoolbooks is fabricated by a team of professionals who work for the editorial. Therefore, the sole intent of a text is to be a learning tool for a specific exercise or as means to include the specific grammar instruction of a unit. Thus, the contextual element of real content is lost. The texts that appear in most schoolbooks aim to mimic those texts found in realistic contexts. The texts found in textbooks lack a contextual source and are built to include the wanted grammar material. This formula often results in a plain and unnatural language that would not be seen in a real-life context. This project aims to analyze and explore a selection of texts found in three chosen textbooks of secondary education in Spain. The analysis, study, and third-party feedback will determine if the texts found in EFL textbooks provide the context, entertainment, and information suited for secondary students learners of English.

Key words: text, reading material, genres, context, unnatural language, dull themes, lack of motivation, low interest, grammar-based teaching, form-focused, communicative language teaching (CLT), disconnect.

1. Introduction and Justification

Contextualized content is an essential component in second language acquisition. Immersing oneself into context-based situations aids in the overall development of the target language, which in this case is English. Garten, J., Kennedy, B., Sagae, K., & Dehghani, M. (2019). It is in this contextualized realm that one hears the various phonetic differences, use of phrases and vocabulary, as well as cultural aspects. This dive into a contextualized pool of content happens either: in a natural way by living in an English-speaking country, by oneself through extensive reading (news articles, novels, poetry, or research papers), viewing audiovisual content such as films, news media coverage of the latest events, films, TV series, podcasts and lastly, through social media (Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram or Twitch) and the internet as a whole. Combining at least two of the previously mentioned factors, one obtains a larger picture of the language at hand: one that includes both the grammar aspects as well as a realistic example of its use.

This paper puts reading in the spotlight. Extensive reading and text composition/analysis are key factors in second language acquisition and overall fluency: ‘Extensive reading is believed to have considerable benefits for learners both in terms of learning gains and motivation and seems to be becoming ever more popular in the ELT world. So far, however, there seems to be almost no integration of extensive reading and textbooks’ Brown, D. (2009). Generally, essay composition and textual analysis are often overlooked and supplemented with traditional grammar instruction. Therefore, by analyzing the different types of texts and writing tasks found in today’s textbooks, one answers the questions and hypothesis proposed in this document. I have chosen this topic particularly as I am fond of reading and writing myself, and I have seen highly positive benefits regarding my language acquiring process. Therefore, I want to state if the proposed texts

found in schoolbooks should be updated or improved to better fit the needs of students nowadays in the current Spanish/Catalan educational system. Or even if they should be included at all.

Regarding the background inspiration behind the chosen topic, it stems from numerous personal experiences. I have been attending Spanish /Catalan schools my entire life, and I have been noticing some patterns when it comes to EFL textbooks; there seems to be a tendency to rely solely on the content provided in the books themselves: texts, pictures, videos, and audios provided in the textbooks. The textbook has been and still is the center of Spanish/Catalan classrooms. Vila Tañà, Í. (2019) states exactly that ‘Textbooks are still predominant in the English Language Teaching context in Catalonia.’

Therefore, heavily neglecting raw or real content put in context. There is so much one can fit into a regular textbook, resulting in a limited selection of materials per book. Not only that but the selected material is specifically fabricated for each book. Most of the texts, articles, dialogues, pictures, videos, or audio are manufactured by using hypothetical made-up situations, scripted videos, and audio using actors to deliver the content. It has to be noted that some texts do use real-life events as inspiration for some texts, yet they can still be categorized as manufactured as their existence can only be found in a specific textbook.

By using this methodology, an airtight seal-like situation is achieved, meaning the content itself lacks real-life resemblance, therefore, alienating the students from the real world. After being exposed to the manufactured content, many students acquire an unnatural way of speaking or writing. As a result, students also struggle with the spontaneity of a real raw situation.

The lack of context, manufactured texts, and dull themes that do not cater to the targeted subjects (in this case, teenagers) is most likely due to: the limitations of printed material regarding durability, copyright infringement, and a disconnect with current trends and interests.

As the first reason suggests, physical textbooks have an expiration date: both in content and instruction. Language remains in constant change. Therefore, vocabulary, phrases, expressions, and themes adjust to current trends and historical events. Textbooks, therefore, must be changed every 2-3 years as they do not stand the test of time. This occurrence has its benefits and drawbacks: the frequent change in textbooks allows for the inclusion of newly updated content as well as room for improvement. But at the same time, this rapid change takes a financial toll on the schools and even more on the students.

Most of the time, the focus is strictly put on grammar structures and the direct instruction of said forms. The function of these structures is often studied by doing numerous exercises composed of individual short sentences. While these repetitive exercises are extremely helpful, they lack overall context. Students do not get many chances to see the presented structures in context or use them themselves in original compositions. The mixture of the fabricated content and the grammar-based teaching often results in a robotic-like proficiency that has a limited vocabulary and lacks overall fluency.

Grammar-based teaching is the learning methodology used in the three classes where the books are used. This paper does not aim to crown the ‘best’ teaching methodology as that is a subjective matter. Each group, individual, setting, and context is vastly different; therefore, the ‘best’ methodology is the one that caters to the targeted group and fits their

needs (Prabhu, 1990; Duffy & Hoffman, 1999). However, this paper does favor communicative language teaching (CLT) and its preference for seeing content in context.

1.2 Literature review

A significant number of professionals have done extensive research on textbooks: the content that should be included in said textbooks as well as what textbook is suited for a specific group or even if a textbook is needed at all.

The researched articles go over various important issues regarding the texts and tasks found in EFL textbooks. Each article or paper focuses on a different aspect of the overall text representation; types, genres, context, writing activities, and more. Nevertheless, they all share a similar goal; dissecting and analyzing the overall content printed on textbooks. Current papers and views on EFL teaching highlight the importance of implementing contextualized content for a natural and successful language acquisition process. The presented articles analyze in detail the different kinds of reading and writing material inside textbooks worldwide. They analyze the content and underline the importance of topic selection and overall material selection when choosing or even creating a textbook.

Other topics of interest from the articles are related to teaching methodologies as a whole. Just as it is stated in *Teaching Grammar in Context* (Nunan, D. 1998), ‘many foreign language programs and teaching materials are based on a linear model of language acquisition. This model operates on the premise that learners acquire one target language item at a time in a sequential, step-by-step fashion. However, such a model is inconsistent with what is observed as learners go about the process of acquiring another language.’ Nunan, D.)1998), points out that many foreign language teaching programs out there follow an unnatural and stiff structure. The same issue is seen in reading and writing

exercises, given the fact that the textbooks and instructions have an unnatural undertone. Native speakers of English practice language by: consequently reading, writing, and speaking skills by doing argumentative essays, creative writing, reading pieces of classic literature, debates or different kinds of public speaking. This organic approach would have better results in the achievement of a successful English acquisition as one learns language through a contextualized lens. Thus, achieving fluency at a natural pace. Pilán, I., Alfter, D., & Volodina, E. (2016) explain the different factors at play when using regular textbooks for overall fluency in composition in their paper titled Coursebook Texts as a Helping Hand for Classifying Linguistic Complexity in Language Learners' Writings. Other authors and articles used are; Arikan, A. (2008) when highlighting topic selection for text types in textbooks. Brown, D. (2009). is quoted to give insight into extensive reading and its characteristics inside the classroom context/textbook. The used authors and papers are varied and range from classics to up-to-date educated thoughts on language teaching methodologies that have context and meaning as a base.

1.3. Hypothesis and Research Questions

As established, most of the pieces of texts found in Spanish/Catalan coursebooks are manufactured by a team of professionals to fit the needs of a specific age group or proficiency level. This practice creates issues such as lack of context, unnatural language, and low interest. Therefore, the hypothesis proposed in this paper is the following:

Spanish/Catalan high school students do not get enough exposure to contextualized pieces of text through their EFL textbooks.

This paper has selected a string of texts found in different textbooks currently used in Spanish classrooms. The main research questions will be answered by conducting a detailed analysis of the texts found in the chosen textbooks as well as the exercises adjacent to said exercises. The findings will be compared to articles and papers that specialize in teaching methodologies, the use of context-based content, and extensive reading.

One predicts that the reading material shown in the chosen EFL textbooks fail to capture the attention of the students, that they do not show a realistic view of texts found outside of the classroom/textbook, and that they shape and distort the written expression of students into a robotic and unnatural ability.

This paper aims to answer the following proposed question by analyzing the textbooks, questionnaire, interview with teachers, and the present literature research on the topic at hand.

1. Are all the texts shown in EFL textbooks manufactured?
2. Are there real pieces of media in EFL textbooks?
3. Is there a varied selection of text types and genres in EFL textbooks?
4. What text-based teaching methodology best fulfills the needs of Spanish learners of English present in current secondary classrooms?
5. Does the proposed reading material cater to its targeted group and age range?

Most classrooms worldwide use the traditional method of using a textbook as the primary source of context in their EFL classrooms. Therefore, becoming a powerful tool in the classroom providing the content and activities (Brown, D. 2009). Many of these textbooks contain a selection of texts that have been manufactured for the sole purpose of being in

a specific textbook. Therefore, they are created with grammar instruction and overall wanted instruction in mind. Thus, the texts lack real-life context and instead provide a bubble-like situation where the language used would seem unnatural in a real-life context. This issue is not only reserved for the reading material but also for the video and audio content. The textbooks rarely use real-life contextualized material; instead, they rely on text, audio, and video manufactured by the editorial. As the material is created for a book, it is only expected that the overall content seems outdated with the pass of time, therefore said books have to be changed every couple of years.

The topic of discussion of this project is EFL textbooks in secondary education; therefore, books aimed at teenagers between the ages of 16-18 years old. Textbooks try to include a modernized view into their EFL instruction, yet they seem to have a distorted understanding of what is of interest for the age range they target. Most of the topics taught in each unit are related to something culturally relevant in our modern society, but this 'modern' approach falls flat and monotonous because there is a lack of real-life context. When the books do include topics from real-life situations, the overall insight seems outdated and heavily biased.

2. Methodology

2.1. Overview and design

The methodology chosen for this project is of the non-experimental kind. As is stated above, the study will mainly use the content take out from a selection of Spanish/Catalan textbooks. The research questions aim to determine if the content at hand is an aid at reaching the needs of students in providing a contextualized experience. Excerpts of different types of texts and exercises will be extracted, presented, and described in great detail. Then they will be compared to the material of other textbooks, therefore highlighting the differences, main objectives, and topics of discussion.

Not only that, but a general assessment of the textbooks as a whole will also be provided, regarding its; structure, layout, methodologies, type of instruction, or content, among other topics. The overall arguments and descriptions will be done with the appropriate literature in mind.

2.2. Data collection

A qualitative and descriptive method is implemented in the form of short texts done by students. Interviews with students and teachers will also be conducted on their thoughts on the subject matter, and the use of a simple questionnaire provided to the students to precisely document said feedback. The material used in this project is specifically taken out of different textbooks from secondary education in Tarragona, Spain. The textbooks are ones that are currently being taught to students in their EFL classrooms.

2.3. Subjects

The subjects taken into the equation for this project are high school students that are between 15-18 years of age. The students are currently enrolled at the school Joan XXIII, Bonavista, located in Tarragona, Spain. Teachers have also been interviewed and asked their opinion on the reading material shown in the textbook and their general thoughts on the use of said textbooks.

The students come from two upper secondary classes, with 30 individuals in each class (A and B). Out of the 60 enrolled students, 56 took part in the questioner, discussion, and debate. The teachers interviewed for the paper teach in upper secondary education as well as regular secondary education. This project will not name any of the subjects that took part in the research inquiry in order to respect their privacy.

3. Analysis

3.3. Textbooks

The following three textbooks were chosen for this project:

1. *Prospects 1* published by the editorial Macmillan Education in the year 2019. This textbook is the newest of the three textbooks used as an object of study in this project. *Prospects 1* comes in two physical versions; a ‘students’ book’ that contains explanations and examples of the topics of study and a ‘workbook’ that serves as a practice notebook where students can fill in exercises. The book also comes with an access code to an online portal of the book that contains extra material. *Prospects 1* is the textbook that now is

currently (2021) used in the secondary classes of the school Joan XXIII in Bonavista, Tarragona. The students using this textbook are between the ages of 16-17.

2. ***Advantage 2*** published by the editorial Burlington Books in the year 2018. This textbook is the second newest out of the three textbooks used in this study. *Advantage 2* is the textbook that now is currently (2021) used in the secondary classes of the school Antoni de Martí Franquès in Tarragona city. This textbook also comes in two versions: a students' book' that contains explanations and examples of the topics of study and a 'workbook' that serves as a practice notebook where students can fill in exercises. However, the school has opted not to order/buy the workbook version to save money. *Advantage 2* also comes with an access code to an online portal that contains extra material. The students using this textbook are between the ages of 17-18.

3. ***Get it right*** published by the editorial Oxford University Press (OUP), in the year 2013. This third and last textbook is the oldest object of study of this project. *Get it right* is the textbook that I personally used back in the year 2015 in my English classroom at the school INS Campclar, Rambla de Ponent, Tarragona. This last textbook was also sold in two complementary versions; a students' book' that contains explanations and examples of the topics of study and a 'workbook' that serves as a practice notebook where students can fill in exercises. *Get it Right* is the only exception in this list that does not come with an access code to an online portal of the book; instead, the books provide a general website that anyone can access without the need for an access code.

The last particular textbook is no longer in use but serves as a point of comparison and overall view into the evolution of Secondary English textbooks in Spanish/Catalan high schools.

As mentioned previously, the three textbooks come from renowned editorials: Oxford University Press (OUP), Macmillan Education, and Burlington Books. They are all carefully curated and selected for high school Spanish/Catalan students of English. The three of them provide similar topic instruction, as there is a list of what is expected of students of said ages to acquire knowledge on, yet there are differences in the layout, content, and explanations.

They are all grammar-heavy-based as that is the teaching methodology that generally dominates classrooms located in Tarragona. All three books primarily use British English (BrE) as their selected variety of English.

3.2.First impressions

The first main difference is length-wise; the two currently used books (*Prospects 1* and *Advantage 2*) stand at 150+ pages, whereas *Get it right*, the oldest of them all, has 95 pages, barely scratching the 100-page mark.

A second first sight distinction is the amount of content plastered on a single page. *Get it right*, published in 2013, portrays a lax and minimalistic layout with little use of images and texts. This layout is pleasant on the eyesight as it is easy to focus on the content being displayed on each page. *Advantage 2* and *Prospects 1* make heavy use of images and text in their overall layout. This extensive inclusion of content leaves a layout that seems

crowded. This issue is mainly present in the 2018 textbook *Advantage 2*, where an array of text fonts and sizes are stacked along with pictures and other content on one single page. This is, of course, a general view and does not apply to every single page of each book.

The reasoning behind said layout distribution might have been done to attract the attention of young students. It is a fact that teenagers may be distracted (talking with friends, joking around, playing with their smartphones) more than an adult would in a classroom; therefore, the many pictures and texts are there to captivate their attention. This can be explained through the overall carefully handpicked content shown in the book, for example, including texts and pictures of recent popular tv shows, movies, internet stars, and overall social media-related content.

A second reason would entail the price of said books. As stated previously, these books are expensive, so to give the impression that one is getting their money's worth, manufacturers could be filling the pages with enticing content for that sole purpose.

3.3 Structure

All in all, the three books contain a unit-based structure, each one beginning with a piece of text that contains the theme and content relevant to that unit. *Prospects 1* has eight units, *Get it Right* contains seven units, and lastly, *Advantage 2* has six units. The two most recent books (*Prospects 1* and *Advantage 2*) deal with modern and socially aware content in each unit, ranging from: social media, current technology, climate change, cultural differences, healthy lifestyle and more. *Get it right*, published in 2013, contains

much more general and simpler units, such as music, work, shopping, society, or happiness. All these terms serve as simple and general titles for each unit.

Each unit presents a new aspect of grammar.

3.3.Texts

The majority of reading material shown in each textbook is written and created by professionals. The string of texts is manufactured in order to contain the topics, vocabulary, and grammar structures that the targeted students need to learn. These manufactured texts come in many different genres, text types, and varieties: personal journals, historical accounts, letters, news articles, emails, scientific journals, exciting facts, and more.

These texts also range in formality, presenting different hypothetical situations involving made-up subjects that make use of a range of styles and formality in written form. For example, a formal email directed towards a professor or a slice of a personal journal of a teenager.

All the texts found in the three books use the British English (BrE) variety. Therefore, the style, wording, spelling, vocabulary, expressions, or overall themes use the standard version of British English as well as being based on general British culture.

Themes, topics, and genres found in reading material are a key factor as most times, textbooks are the only source of context for students: ‘coursebooks are not instructional materials only, but they are sources of knowledge and information on various aspects of individual and societal phenomena. With the help of such knowledge, English language teachers build onto the speaking activities in the classroom, assign writing assignments,

prepare additional questions or activities, present icebreakers, and develop any classroom discourse, written or oral. In short, topics are fundamentally important for various discourses energizing and making up the ELT classrooms.’ (Arikan, A. 2008)

The text types found in EFL textbooks play a key role in overall fluency just as many authors have pointed out: ‘since a shared linguistic content exists between what L2 learners are exposed to (L2 input texts, e.g. reading passages from coursebooks) and what they produce (L2 output texts, e.g. essays), transferring knowledge from one text type may improve the classification of linguistic complexity levels in the other’ (Pilán, I., Alfter, D., & Volodina, E. 2016).

3.4.Genres and Types of Text

The three books offer a distinctive variety of genres and text types in each unit of the main textbook, complimentary workbook, and online portal. This project mainly considers the texts found in the leading textbook as the latter is the central source of material and the most used book in general.

A general binary distinction could be made to separate the text into two categories: primary texts and small texts. The main texts are what one would call a ‘proper piece of text, therefore abiding by a specific genre or style, significantly longer in size and almost taking up an entire page. Small texts are tiny pieces of text plastered all around the textbook that are sometimes related to the main theme and serve as additional material or fun factors. All texts are tied somehow or another to an exercise, either being the source of information for another exercise or being the exercise itself.

The textbook Prospects 1 offers an array of reading material per unit. A new topic is presented in every unit as the theme for most of the texts, exercises, and grammar instruction. As mentioned previously, both Prospects 1 and Advantage 2 aim to provide a current and modern lens into their textbooks, including socially relevant topics to the society of today.

Since the current most used method of reading and writing is done through personal electronic devices and consequently social media, content overall located on the internet realm, Prospects 1 mainly provides types of text such as: online articles, reviews, emails, or blog posts.

The book also provides pieces of texts such as an array of essays that could be found on any online website. There is no precise specification on what platform these essays could be found on; therefore, they remain as an addition to the theme at hand—a significant number of the presented essays put at the forefront a social matter. Therefore, evoking critical thinking on the part of the students. Others have an educational purpose, so they present an objective view on a scientific topic. Lastly, some of the essays describe a historical event, again providing an educational tool. Most of the mentioned texts are fabricated, meaning that they do not come from a contextual ‘real world’ source. Many texts serve as a manufactured sample of what its contextual real-world version would look like. However, Prospects 1 does provide some instances of real-world pieces of media: most of these materials come in the form of news reports in the form of audio, video, images, and in some instances, text. Nevertheless, this material is not frequent in the text format, but rather in the audiovisual realm. Apart from actual news material, the leading textbook also provides one textual excerpt extracted from the collection of short stories *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by Arthur Conan Doyle (see appendix A).

Therefore, including the first and only piece of fiction that the students get to experience through the textbook. This text is rather extensive, occupying one entire page.

Prospects 1 does provide a section at the end of the book dedicated to text composition and instruction on how to craft one. The instruction comes attached with a model text that serves as an example for the wanted genre. Thus, providing eight model texts: narrative, article, formal email, note, opinion essay, review, report, for and against essay.

Each page provides the instruction as well as useful phrases, vocabulary, and tips.

These texts are just a fabricated model but are heavily loaded with information and step-by-step instruction serving as an excellent starting point for students.

The textbook *Advantage 2* takes a similar route as *Prospects 1*: there is a large number of texts and a different theme for each unit. Most of the texts are tied to an exercise or are the exercise themselves. Following a similar pattern, *Advantage 2* also includes themes that cater to the society of today, almost always having social awareness in mind, therefore, inducing critical thinking. At the same time, to keep up with modern society, most of the reading material comes in the form of online texts that mimic the ones one could easily find on any website. Therefore, one finds texts such as blogs, online magazines, instant messages, reviews, and more. Again, most of the mentioned types of texts are fabricated to be included explicitly in this textbook and not taken from contextual sources.

Wonder Woman

If you've ever wondered when an action film about a female superhero would be made, Wonder Woman is what you've been waiting for. This film, directed by Patty Jenkins, tells the story of Diana (Gal Gadot), a half-goddess whose mission is to save the world. Diana grows up on an isolated island that is inhabited by Amazon warriors. It's World War 1, and American pilot Steve Trevor (Chris Pine) crashes near the island. When Diana learns about the terrible suffering in the outside world, she knows she must leave the island and use her awesome superpowers to bring all war to an end. This film has got plenty of action and special effects, but the violence isn't overdone and leaves room for philosophy, humour and even romance. Gadot has been perfectly cast in the role of a powerful yet innocent heroine. On the downside, the plot is illogical in places and leaves you with a lot of questions. However, the film is such fun that it isn't ruined by this drawback. Wonder Woman is a really enjoyable film which will appeal to all ages, so it's not surprising that it's been a huge box-office hit. Not to be missed! (Advantage 2, page 46).

The example provided above is a short review printed on page number 46 of the textbook *Advantage 2*. This review of the popular action film Wonder Woman (2017. Directed by Patty Jenkins) serves as a model of a formal movie review. The content of the text has a base in real life, yet the review is fabricated precisely to fit the theme of the unit (3. That's Entertainment) and does not exist anywhere else on the internet. Though formal, it fits the required language use proper of a professional 'movie critic'.

Advantage 2 is the textbook that has the most significant number of texts out of the three presented textbooks. Its pages are filled with both primary and small texts. This frequent use of pieces of reading material gives the overall layout a crowded visual experience that may disorient the students. The abundance of texts may detour students from the main educational purpose of each unit or even each page.

Advantages 2 does not provide as many ‘real’ contextual sources; instead, the textbook relies on manufactured texts as well as a large audiovisual media explicitly created for both the textbook and its online portal. *Advantages 2* does provide one page dedicated to an excerpt from the short story *Forty-Five a Month* by Indian author R.K. Narayan (see appendix B).

The presented text is of significant size and is the first piece of narrative as well as the real-life contextual piece seen in the textbook.

The oldest of the three textbooks follows a similar organization, but there are some notable differences that set it apart from its two newer counterparts. Both the small and primary texts found in *Get it right* are also strapped to an exercise or are serve as the very exercise.

The types of texts found in this textbook are more of the general type than the ones seen in the previous books. The book remains neutral, objective, and overall fundamental such as: reviews, news articles, diary entries, letters, essays, timetables, and more. Its texts could be ones either found online or in physically printed material. All the texts are of the manufactured kind. Thus, *Get it right* is the only textbook out of the three proposed ones

that does not include sourced real-life texts. As for the layout, *Get it right* is the textbook that has the lowest amount of texts (either main or small ones), restricting about one or two pieces of reading material per page. This proportionate number of texts fits in with the overall minimalist layout.

layout.

Politics is not important.' Do you agree?

A lot of people think that politics is unimportant. hat although politics can be boring, it is very important to us. Personally, I think Firstly it is clear that politics affects our everyday lives. It is a tact that politicians are responsible for education, housing and health. These issues concern everybody, so politics is important to us all, even if we do not realize it. Secondly, politicians have the power to change our society. Therefore we all need to vote so as to express our opinions. If we do not vote, then we cannot complain when politicians do something that we do not like. To sum up, politics is very important in our lives. In my view, we should all pay attention to what is happening in politics, and we should vote in order to make our society a better place. (Get it Right, page 28).

The presented example is taken out from the textbook *Get it Right*, printed on the page number 28. The text is an opinion essay created by a hypothetical student. The text is part an exercise and has explanations as well as instructions marked on it. The topic of discussion is 'politics', a very brad and general topic. The views in said essay are also objective and general. The objectives factor is a current theme in the textbook *Get it Right*: it provides examples but never dives into specific matters or controversial issues.

This cannot be said for the other coursebooks. Both *Advantage 2* and *Prospects 1* have texts that highlight specific issues as well as somewhat controversial points. This practice may come across as biased and inappropriate.

How China is Changing Hollywood

‘For decades, most of Hollywood's profits (provide) by ticket sales in the United States. But in recent years, other markets (become) even more important. Take China, for example, where in 2015, an average of 22 new screens (open) each day! With a population of around 1.4 billion, this huge market (can / not ignore). China (believe) to be so important that a change 6 (now take place) in the way Hollywood films (make). For example, nowadays more and more Asian actors (cast) in films in order to appeal to Chinese audiences. Sometimes, extra scenes with Chinese characters (add), to be shown only in Chinese cinemas. In one case, an action film was going to include Chinese villains. When producers realised that China (would offend) by this, they " them digitally (remove), and replaced with North Koreans!’ (*Advantage 2*, page 43)

The example provided above is a text extracted from the textbook *Advantage 2* shown in the page 43. The text is a fill in the gaps type of exercise as well as the source for a series of questions proposed in the following exercise. The exercise provides a thought-provoking view yet not crossing the line of subjectivity. However, the contrast between the texts on ‘politics’ from *Get it right* and the one presented above (*How China is Changing Hollywood*) is drastically significant. Numerous examples specific vies on social issues can be seen in *Prospects 1* and specially in *Advantage 2*.

Time for a Change

‘Think of the last film you saw and ask yourself: are there two or more named women in it? Do they talk to each other? If so, do they talk about anything other than men? These three questions make up the Bechdel Test, and you may be surprised to learn that nearly half of the films made in the past two decades don't pass it. 5 The Bechdel Test is what I use to check for the active presence of women in films, and I try to watch only films that pass it. 1 But this test has raised my awareness of the fact that in films, women are greatly outnumbered by men. So I did some reading up on the subject, and found some pretty shocking figures [...]

The example presented above is an excerpt of a larger text printed on page 41 of *Advantage 2*. Again, showing a heavily subjective review on a currently relevant topic.

There are many genres that are left out or are underrepresented. This is expected as the main focus and goal of the textbooks is grammar instruction. The focal point of the three textbooks is non-fiction and some narrative texts.

3.5. Formality

All three chosen books are aimed at a young audience with a B1-B2 proficiency. The level of formality ranges from text to text as there are different requirements depending on the type or genre of any text. However, the level of formality remains on the higher end of the spectrum. As most of the presented reading material is carefully constructed by a team of professionals, students do not get the full picture when it comes to the vast field that is style and formality.

The textbooks provide an array of reading material that falls under the category of standard register. Even though the textbook varied texts, its level of formality stays virtually similar. This practice is seen throughout the reading material of the three main textbooks. Despite the books having genres or types of texts where an informal tone could be used, the level of formality remains on the higher end of the spectrum. Again, even the texts that use a 'casual' tone (reviews, diary entries, or text messages) are manufactured and not taken from real-life sources. The fabrication aspect negatively impacts those texts that try to portray an informal scene. Therefore, achieving a sterile and unnatural tone that is not truly present in a realistic context.

An amazing date

Two weeks ago, I met an amazing girl called Victoria at a party, and I asked her out. For our first date, we arranged to meet at a really cool café. I wore my new jeans. I was late, and when I arrived, she looked quite angry. However, I took her dancing and she seemed to cheer up. The music was brilliant. It was really loud, so we had to shout! First, she bought me a drink because I had forgotten my wallet, and then I told her all about myself. Afterwards, we danced - she must have enjoyed it because she couldn't stop laughing. At the end of the night, I took the bus home, but she wanted to walk. I asked for her phone number and called her the next day. Unfortunately, it was the wrong number. I don't know how that happened! (*Get it Right*, page 10)

The text presented above is a small text extracted from the textbook *Get it Right*. The composition is supposed to be a casual diary entry of a teenage male. The overly formal language and use of 'trendy' phrases create an awkward atmosphere. This example serves

as the idealized view and use of language that does not match real-life occurrences. The example presented above is dated in the year 2013 or even older; therefore, the disconnection in the language used seems even significant today, in 2021. However, it has to be pointed out that even back in 2015, this very text seemed odd to my own self, as I owned this book in my EFL classroom.

Students do not have the opportunity to witness the spectrum of formality that exists in texts and the overall characteristics of written form. The use of a constant tone all throughout the many texts results in a monotonous atmosphere that makes all text types look the same.

‘If there were 100 people in the world, around 80 people (1). (2). much more. However, if you think about the way we use mobile phones, you (3). people have. For example, if you (4). you the worst thing is that some people don't silence their phones during a film. If you spoke to people at a concert, they (5). you they dislike it when all they can see are mobile phones instead of the band. Bringing a mobile to a meal is another big 'no' for many of us. You may be thinking, 'But I (6) | (7). However, by far the most dangerous offence is texting while driving. My brother learnt this the hard way. If he (8) while driving, he (9) (own) a mobile phone. If you own a mobile phone, you (know) that it's an essential form of communication and (agree) that there are lots of annoying habits (ask) a regular cinema-goer, they'd tell (tell) (miss) my friends' video chat if (not bring) my mobile to lunch yesterday!' So disrespectful! (not use) his phone (not had) an accident last month.’

(Prospects 1, page 63).

The example presented above is a text extracted from the textbook *Prospects I* printed in the page number 63. There is no specific definition as to what the type or genre the text is. However, the theme and exercises on the same page indicate that the theme is casual conversations, text messages, or short written opinions using conditionals. The text aims to portray a casual tone yet includes formal phrases and terms mixed with casual language. The text fails to portray a natural portrayal of a real-life matter because its focus is the grammar instruction at hand.

When it comes to proper use of language in formal contexts such as a formal email or letter, the textbooks excel in said field. Both the examples and information on formal language provide exceptional examples to students.

‘Dear Sir/Madam, I am writing to enquire about the use of coltan in components of your mobile phones. Recently, I read an article in International Geographic about coltan mines, which concerned me. According to the article, not only do these mines destroy the local ecosystems, which are home to a huge variety of species, but the working conditions for the miners are often inhumane. Having used mobile phones made by your company for the last three years, I would like to know whether the company uses coltan in its components and, if so, which countries this mineral is sourced from. I would be grateful if you could also provide me with information about the mining operations that your suppliers use. Please inform me of your company's policy on the mining of coltan and other minerals and metals used in the manufacture of your mobile phones.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

María Fernández'

(Prospects 1, page 42).

The example presented above is a text extracted from the textbook *Prospects 1* shown in the page number 42. The text presents a hypothetical example of a formal email. Both useful phrases and step-by-step instructions are provided along with the text. The issue relies upon the fact that its formality could be too high for EFL students that are 15-16 years old and have a B1-B2 proficiency level. Therefore, the textbooks do provide proper use and models of formal language. However, the three textbooks do not provide 'bad' examples of language such as: colloquial writings, slang, pragmatic situations, incorrect use of terms/phrases, or overall inappropriate use of a specific register in the erroneous genre. Instances of false friends and spelling mistakes are frequently showcased, but the issues mentioned previously do not make an appearance in the overall main textbooks.

Both *Prospects 1* and *Advantage 2* provide a few examples of casual or colloquial writings in the form of text messages via phone devices. However, the few models showcase a tone way too formal for a colloquial exchange between friends.

3.6.English Variety

All three textbooks use the standard British English variety (BrE), which is the case for most Spanish English textbooks. Two highly renowned British-born editorials publish two of the textbooks chosen for this project: Macmillan Education for *Prospects 1* and Oxford University Press (OUP) for *Get it right*. The third editorial, Burlington Books, is a Spanish company that mainly operates in Spain. Nevertheless, the content of its product, *Advantage 2*, primarily uses standard British English (BrE) in its texts and audiovisual material.

The British English variety is used as the source of contextual language, using its accent, lexical characteristics, and overall cultural elements. Therefore, the texts shown in the books use the variety at hand. As a result, the vocabulary, spelling, themes, and wording fall under the standard British English variety (BrE). It must be noted that *Advantage 2* uses Standard American English variety (AmE) in some instances, as well as audiovisual material that showcases individuals that are not native speakers of English. Thus, it provides a globalized view on both native speakers of English and those who have acquired it as an L2.

The use of British English is not as visible in the texts as the use of the written form is indeed similar to all the other varieties of English. However, there is very little information or description dedicated to showcasing the differences between English varieties.

Students get to see various contextualized instances in their free time: through social media or streaming platforms, to name a few. It is no secret that American English has an enormous presence in news media, social platforms, and the world of entertainment. Both

spoken and written slang, phrases, and vocabulary flow rampant in a natural contextualized setting. This is true for any English variety. Therefore, by just portraying one mere sealed variety of English, students may get disoriented as the content they read in the textbooks, and real-life instances are vastly different in pronunciation, vocabulary and general use of language.

3.7.Themes

All three books present a significant variety of themes. *Get it Right*, published 2013, presents fairly general topics in its few texts. Such as: fashion, what it means to be happy, fame, general politics, and numerous hypothetical descriptive texts, ads, and short articles. All in all, the theme selection is overly simple, general, and subjective. Though-provoking material is not truly present in *Get it Right*. This approach has positive and negative results. On the one hand, students get a simple objective base from where they can start weaving in their own subjective opinion on a particular matter, even filling the simple view with personal experiences or researched facts. By not specifying a certain current social issue or event (therefore remaining in a constant objective state), the textbook could last longer regarding the test of time, as views and public opinion changes constantly. On the other hand, students do not get enough context or material to create a substantial thought on said view by providing such plain views. At the same time, motivation and interest may be lost as the overly objective theme of the text comes across as dull. For this exact reason, textbooks *Prospects 1* and *Advantage 2* include numerous texts with varied themes. However, most of the themes do not fall in the interests of the current teenage population. *Advantage 2* aims to provide a globalized view that includes different cultures, traditions, and historical events. Therefore, including texts dedicated to topics such as: law and justice-related issues such as ‘The one-child policy or jury statements,

the return of the Mammoth, climate change, the Australian gold rush, folk legend *The Story of Tutanekai and Hinemoa*, The Sugar Tax, Medical miracles or a description of the Santorini Island located in Greece to name a few titles shown in the schoolbook. Many of these topics could seem interesting for a group of adults but not so much for teenage students. The selected topics are not in tune with the interests of young students of today. In the age of social media, cultural awareness, and rapidly changing trends, the topics seen above may look dull and uninteresting to many young students. Consequently lowering motivation. Arikan, A. (2008) highlights Murdoch (2000) study which ‘reveals that although coursebook writers often claim that the topics in ELT coursebooks are chosen under the light of some surveys targeted to collect students’ views on the most interesting topics, there is a wide gap between the information on who those surveyors were and to whom the coursebook is taught’.

Prospects 1 is the only coursebook out of the three presented ones that better aims to cater to its young audience. Therefore, it includes texts on topics such as: generation z, recent technology-related topics (driverless electric cars, microchips, AI’s, vegan diet, popular film and tv such as Game of Thrones, Stranger Things, or Riverdale, YouTube personalities, videogames or a mission to Mars. It also includes many essays or articles on events such as marathon runner Katherine Switzer or how to detect fake news, to name a few topics. The topic selection better represents the interests of young students today. It has to be noted that *Prospects 1* is the latest published book out of the three textbooks: dated 2019, only a year later than *Advantage 2*). Nevertheless, the overall texts and atmosphere remain in a contextless state as the reading material is created for this specific book and not taken from realistic sources

3.8.Context

It has been now established multiple times that the three presented schoolbooks lack real-life context and that most of the reading material is fabricated for the books at hand. Context is considered a critical factor in language teaching as it is crucial to witness the learned grammatical structures, phrases, vocabulary, and overall use of the language in a specific context. The three textbooks and schools where these books are (or were) used exercise grammar-based teaching as the main language learning methodology. Grammar forms and structures cannot be taught in isolation as it is impossible to assimilate their meaning and use without context. The specific forms, vocabulary, and phrases are all instructed, practiced in multiple exercises, and seen in the presented text found scattered in each unit. Many authors highlight the benefits of seeing those structures in a meaningful context: ‘Recent SLA research recognizes the necessity of attention to grammar and demonstrates that form-focused instruction is especially effective when it is incorporated into a meaningful communicative context’ (Nassaji, Hossein; Fotos, Sandra. 2011). As the reading material in the three coursebooks does not primarily come from a real-life source, a significant part of the context factor is lost.

A contextual real-life text such as a recent news article from The New York Times, a text post written on the popular website Twitter and a current best-selling novel are three different pieces of text that need a contextual background to be understood. Textbook replicas of real-life compositions, such as the ones proposed previously fail to fit in a larger context. As the grammar structures are usually taught in a step-by-step fashion (Nunan, D. 1998), most texts will focus on a few grammar forms at a time which is not a realistic view of regular language use.

The ideal manner to teach grammar formal in a meaningful real-life context must include excerpts of realistic situations both in written form as well as audiovisual examples such as: the latest news reports, daily articles, subtitled films and TV series and general use of English in an online context. News articles, news reports, subtitled media (films, TV series, interviews) serve as interesting, relevant current information, a learning tool, and a contextual example of the use of grammar structures, vocabulary, phrases, structure, and more. Text examples found through social media serve as an example of how to use language in platforms that students frequently use. One predicts that current teenage students of English do not truly read English compositions in their free time.

Almost all contextual English input these students get is through streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, or Disney+, to name a few; through popular applications such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, or Twitch. Most of the input is audiovisual; therefore, oral speech prevails. As for the reading material the students see in their free time, primarily online, it does not quite resemble the one found in their own textbooks. This disconnect creates an atmosphere of cognitive dissonance: where the real information presented in the books somewhat contradicts the content seen in a real-life context; Regarding this notion Sheldon, L. E. (Ed.). (1987) states that ‘quite simply, even with the best intentions no single textbook can possibly work in all situations.’

4. Questionnaire and Debate

A questionnaire and debate were conducted as means to collect qualitative data and valuable opinions on the topic at hand. A simple questionnaire was done to fulfill the said purpose. This questionnaire was crafted through the website *Google Forms*. The questionnaire has five simple questions that have the purpose of getting insight into the thoughts and opinions of secondary high school students regarding the reading material found in their own textbooks. The questionnaire also aims to gain insight into the sources of reading material students use in their free time; therefore, this questionnaire aims to identify said sources, if any at all. The proposed questions are the following:

- Do you understand the texts that appear in your English books without problems?
- Is it difficult for you to write your opinion about something in written form in English?
- Do you read in English in your free time? (ex; twitter, subtitles, YouTube, TikTok, novels, books, news etc.) Specify which one you read.
- What would you like to change about your textbooks?
- Would you like to try another method that does not include traditional English books? (ex: novels, tweets, news, lyrics, etc.)

The questionnaire was written in Spanish so that students perfectly understand and answer the questions in their L1. The students have to possibility to answer a simple 'yes' or 'no' to some questions. For other questions there is a writing option for a more detailed feedback.

The questionnaire has five questions in total and was crafted having the short attention span of the subjects at hand as well as the brief class time that was given to in order to conduct said questionnaire.

4.1. Participants

The questionnaire was directed towards two classes of secondary students at the school Joan XXIII, Bonavista, Tarragona. The questionnaire was upload to the student's online portal and was carried out in class. This way I could provide feedback and answer questions at that exact moment. Not only that, but carrying it out in class with myself present, I could also get extra commentary and detailed opinions on the overall matter from the students.

The questionnaire, discussion, and overall debate were held in two different classes: A and B. Each class has about 30 students enrolled, yet not all of them were present. At the same time, even though all students were encouraged to take the simple questionnaire, some refused to cooperate. The questioner has received 55 responses in total. As mentioned, some students did not bother to answer the questionnaire physically, but they did engage in the class debate held and guided by myself.

4.2. Findings

The in-class debate was my first choice of overall simple qualitative data collection and to get a first-hand glimpse of the opinions regarding the textbooks from the teenagers themselves; the ones who use said textbooks every single day.

I was given a window of about 30 minutes to hold out the debate and to conduct the questioner. First, the students were asked to fill out the test on their personal smartphones,

tablets, or laptops. As they did so, I provided aid if it was needed. The students were given 7-8 minutes to complete the questions. Once it was all finished, the debate stage took place. As a warmup, I asked the students what they thought about the questions and their responses in general. The feedback was positive and engaging. I then started to give out more detailed questions about their textbook *Prospects 1* and the texts that plaster its pages. The first debate in the first class had significantly more students present than the second session in class B. Therefore, I used a 'raise a hand up if...' method to get a visual opinion on the matter as verbal responses were a challenge as the class was so big and hard to manage all at once. When asked if they liked the texts, a small number of hands rose up. When asked the opposite, a sea of hands went up in the air; it remained obvious that the majority of students disliked the reading material found in their textbooks. This was the case in both groups: A and B. I then walked around the classroom to get a more detailed response from the participants. Many students view the texts as 'boring', 'out of date' and sometimes 'too easy. Students in both classes state that the overall reading material is undeniably dull and uninteresting; the material does not cater to their interests.

This notion is clearly seen in the questionnaire as 43 students, 78.2%, of students, say that they understand the texts without an issue. Furthermore, 90.9%, 50 students, state that the vocabulary is really easy to understand, in-class opinions highlighted that sometimes the vocabulary seemed as 'for little kids. This notion makes the textbook reading material not appealing to students, which creates a state of distaste for the texts in general.

When asked if the students read physical English books, novels, or articles in their free time, almost all students answer that they do not read at all in English. When asked to specify what is the source of reading or audiovisual input, most students name popular

internet platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, podcasts, or videogames. Many students highlight that they read and write many commentaries and opinion texts on the social media platform mentioned before. Those types of texts cater to their interests and are seen in a realistic context. At the same time, students get to view how language is written by each individual on each platform, countless styles, characteristics, genres, types of texts, and more. Students also recreate the seen text and creating a personal style with a growing plethora of vocabulary phrases and structures. Their language adapts naturally to the change of language as time passes.

One student mentioned that she has no real issue with the reading material seen in class, but when she attends afterschool English classes and reads pieces of novels presented to her as well as other grammar aspects, she has a hard time understanding said material as it does not seem to resemble the one she reads on her main textbook *Prospects 1*.

When asked what the students would like to change from their textbook *Prospects 1* and textbooks in general, the answers are varied and mostly negative towards the textbook. A section of students would like to change the grammar and its explanations. Many students consider that the grammar explanations shown in the book are confusing and badly organized. A student writes, 'It (the textbook) is only focused on theory, there could be more practical things and when it comes to expressing yourself in English, that (the textbook material) is not enough. Another student explains that 'sometimes there is vocabulary that is not necessary to learn since it is rarely used. Many students also think that many of the topics and explanations shown in textbooks is repetitive and lacks overall material in each aspect of language such as: writing, speaking, reading, and listening.

Another section of students would like to change the book's organization and layout. Many students point out that there is too much text plastered on the pages of their textbook *Prospects I*. One student writes that he/she thinks that 'there should not be that much text, but something more visual'. Other students state that they would like for textbook authors to 'make them (the textbooks) more thoughtful, so that everything is easier to read and view.' Many students point out that both the textbooks and their reading material are too long and that often due to scheduling issues, textbooks are never finished. So, in order to go through most of the book, many texts, information and exercises are sacrificed.

A large number of students would desperately like to change the topics and themes of the reading material in their textbooks. A student writes 'Modernization, being up to date...'. Many students point out that the topics of most of the text do not capture their attention. A student states that he/she would like to change 'That more current up to date texts would show up (in the textbook) and ones that are of our interest and that it (the textbook) provides us with more links or web pages to study or write'. Another student states the following 'In my opinion, I think that it would be more interesting to change the texts because they are too boring, and I also think that it would be more useful for use in the future to have a more complicated or cool vocabulary. Because the ones that we have now is too easy.'

Lastly, there are a few number of students who are entirely content with the textbook and would not want to change it. A student writes the book is 'okay as it is. Other students simply state that they would change 'nothing' from the book.

Lastly, when asked if they would like to try a methodology that does not include their traditional coursebook, 92.7%, 51 students, answered with an emphatic 'yes'.

As the previous responses suggest, many students do not find the reading material interesting, nor the audiovisual content due to their dual nature. Students favored the inclusion of excerpts of novels, current new articles, overall text analysis, and the inclusion of current trends and events.

After the questionnaire session was done, a debate was held in both class A and B. It must be noted that class B was of a smaller size; therefore, the debate had a smoother result compared to class A which had almost 30 students in a significantly large space which made communication quite hard. Nevertheless, the debates had similar results. Most of the students were against the selection of texts shown in the books as well as its 'confusing' exaptation on grammar forms just as the questionnaire reflects. A small number of students were completely content with their current textbook, yet they did express their distaste for the types of texts shown in said book. Most of the students that were content with the textbook stated that it provided a point of reference and an organized structure which is a practice they are accustomed to and is seen in almost all subjects.

I then proposed for students to describe the 'perfect' textbook or methodology that would better fit their needs. The solution came to be a short, simple, and organized physical textbook that contains the grammar forms, explanation, and theory. An online portal where students fill in multiple exercises can fill in and later have an instant correction. And lastly, for context purposes, a variety of real pieces of content should be included in the sessions: each week or a couple of weeks, the professor and students would select a variety of current relevant news articles, interviews, excerpts of novels, and more.

This way each layer of the learning process is seen together in a harmonious manner that has context and the interest/motivation of students at its core.

5. Teacher interviews

5.1. Interview 1

Highschool teacher, female, in her 50s. (secondary education, 13-15 years old).

When asked about the effectiveness of the texts found in her current textbooks, she explained that the content is way too formal; types of text that usually the kids do not have a use for in their daily lives. She also highlights that the texts do not really have an influence on the student's overall writing skills as mentioned before, they do not have a use for them.

She states that the 'real deal' will occur when the students get online and see the use of said types of texts in context as well as use them on their own. The teacher's motive behind the statement relies on the fact that almost all the students spend most of their time online. Therefore, they would surely be exposed to texts in a real-life content.

When asked if the 'manufactured' text are the right answer, as opposed to showing a movie scene, news clips or an extract of a novel (contextualized content) in order to teach theory and grammar, the teacher states that it would not work in her own classes. The reasoning behind such opinion, relies on the fact of the limited attention of the students. Showing or presenting 'foreign' material in the otherwise plain and structured ways that the book offers would result in 'chaos'. The teacher concludes her statement saying that as for now, the textbooks work enough to please the order of the classroom, as well as the fulfillment of the basic needs of the student's language acquisition.

Therefore, in her case, the textbook is a tool that helps keep everything organized and the students at bay.

5.2.Interview 2

Highschool teacher, female, in her 40s. (secondary education, 13-15 years old; and upper secondary education 16–18-year-old).

When asked about the effectiveness of the texts found in her current textbooks, she explains that these are a little difficult for students to understand. She mentions that students rarely read the texts presented in the textbook exercises given as homework. The general reading time is done in class through reading exercises that later have questions to answer. Each student reads a section of the text out loud for the class. After that they all together correct the questions related to said text. Even though this is a regular practice in the classroom, test result regarding reading comprehension is quite low. The teacher shows and explains the recent test that was given to her high school students. The given tests are taken out of a list of already made templates available to teachers through an online application associated with the textbook. Thus, even the tests come from the textbooks used in the classroom. Therefore, the book and its overall content becomes the main source of textual content for her students.

She explains that the selection is limited but there's the option of selecting proficiency level. In the presented case, the students underperformed in the reading and writing task even though the texts selected for the exam was of the lowest possible difficulty available. She concludes her statement stating that even though she chose the lowest and easiest text, many students for the most part did not perform well.

When asked the reasoning behind the poor reading comprehension she blames; not having enough time/sessions per week, scheduling issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic and overall low level of interest.

When asked about the influence of the textual material in the overall written skills of the students she states the following: she tries to give out essay tasks, but the students don't seem to be interested enough; sometimes not even bothering to submit the writing. She also explains that they usually don't go in depth into text types, genres or written expression as there is little time and grammar is the overall focus.

The teacher expresses her dread for essay writing and writing in general. She states that she prefers to stay in the realm of grammar instruction. Although the teacher expressed her resentment towards writing and essay composition; she highlights the importance of extensive reading, contextualized content, and constant writing practice as key factors to achieve good essay composition.

6. Essay composition exercise

Students were asked by their teacher to do a writing exercise provided in the textbook. I politely asked if I could have and correct the compositions as they would be of value for my paper. The teacher agreed and provided the writings of two secondary classes, which are the same group of students that took part in the debates and questionnaire.

The specific task was given out in February, before my internship. The deadline for this task was May 1st. I then received about 60 compositions. Students were not aware that I would be the one correcting and giving feedback on their essays. This was done in order to not alternate the student's usual manner of composition and use of language. Thus, the writings provide a realistic vision of their natural composition and style. It must be mentioned that this very writing exercise is the only writing composition that the students have had to hand in this school year in their English class.

The questionnaire and debate revealed that students do not read English compositions often out of the classroom setting. It has now been established that the textbook is the main source of context in the classroom. Therefore, all the text type examples and tools that the students use come from the textbook itself, which in this case is *Prospects 1*. The proposed writing exercise appears on page 67 of *Prospects 1*. The task reads as follows:

‘Write an essay expressing your opinion on the topic 'Should people be allowed to use their mobile phones to record and take photos at concerts?' Write 140-190 words.’ (Prospects 1, page 67).

Below the task instruction, the textbook provides information useful in essay composition. As there isn't a full opinion essay text example in that unit, many students used the

selection of text type examples found at the end of the book. The students used examples from pages 138 and 139 where opinion essay and review texts are showcased along with complementary information. The tone of the opinion essay was stated to be casual yet one that abides by the general rules of writing. This task was assigned as homework therefore students were allowed to use any source of their liking to answer the question proposed in the text.

It must be noted that once I corrected the compositions, I had the opportunity to give a class on basic essay writing to the students who formulated said essays (class A and B). The session was delivered using examples and feedback from those same essays. Therefore, I was able to get firsthand insight in their writing process, used sources and contextual inspiration.

When correcting the 60 essays, a few significant patterns became clear. Students followed similar structures, exact words and phrases mirroring the content shown in the book.

Almost all students used the term ‘mobile phone’ each time they referred to said item. Not one individual used another term out of the multiple ones used to name this device. The exercise clearly asks for a personal opinion, yet when asked if they use the term ‘mobile phone’ in their usual spoken or written compositions most students stated they do not use it. Others stated that ‘mobile phone’ was the only term they knew for said device as it is the only one mentioned in their textbook. Students said they use terms such as ‘phone’ or ‘smartphone’ which indeed are usual terms that most individuals use nowadays.

In order to conclude their essay most, if not all, students used the phrase ‘to sum up’. When asked why there was an abundant use of the term, students reasoned that ‘it was the one they used in the book’.

However, the most recurrent issue happened to be the use of spoken language in their written compositions. Many students wrote their compositions using characteristics proper of oral dialogue. The following are examples of said practice extracted from the various essay compositions:

- ‘This is the issue we will talk about today,’
- ‘And this is my opinion, I hope you liked it’
- ‘Now I’m going to explain why’
- ‘On this subject I have arguments for and against and now I will write them’
- ‘And now I am going to write the disadvantages’

These expressions are proper of spoken language. As it has been established, these students have the internet as their main source of English input. Students are exposed to a myriad of audiovisual content, therefore unconsciously incorporating the heard phrases in their vocabulary. Consequently, as extensive reading is not truly present in their routine, students use the learned audiovisual phrases in their own written compositions. Therefore, the essay compositions result in faulty writing instances that do not adhere to basic written expression. It has to be noted that not all students used orally written expressions in their writings. Some students composed a coherent and precise essay. Nevertheless, the overall style remained similar to the one modeled in the books, as well as the use of the proposed terminology.

7. Discussion

This paper proposed the following hypothesis: Spanish/Catalan high school students do not get enough exposure to contextualized pieces of text through their EFL textbooks.

And the following research questions:

1. Are all the texts shown in EFL textbooks manufactured?
2. Are there real pieces of media in EFL textbooks?
3. Is there a varied selection of text types and genres in EFL textbooks?
4. What text-based teaching methodology fulfills best the needs of Spanish learners of English present in current secondary classrooms?
5. Does the proposed reading material cater to its targeted group and age range?

The analysis of the text types extracted from three EFL textbooks, (*Prospects 1*, *Advantage 2* and *Get it right*); the questionnaire, debate, interviews, and written exercise determined that: students do not get realistic contextual pieces of text in their EFL textbooks. Furthermore, to answer each research question respectively: Most texts in EFL textbooks are manufactured, there are a few texts extracted from a realistic source, there is a great variety of text types and genres. The best methodology includes the use of textbook instruction and a natural source of reading material. Lastly, the reading material found in the presented EFL books does not appeal to young readers.

The textual analysis of the types, genres, and themes revealed that the language used in the reading material is not a realistic representation of how a realistic composition looks like in a real-life context. The tone remains similar in many text types regardless of the theme or genre. This may have been done so that students could understand each text without an issue.

The students revealed that, just as predicted, the reading material is uninteresting and does not cater to their interests. This presented fact paired up with the repetitive terminology creates an arid atmosphere that incites students to dread reading in English as a whole. As a result, the low motivation and unrealistic contextual examples achieve an unnatural writing ability that lacks originality and personal style. This is supported by the fact that more than half of the students who answered the questionnaire stated that they have a great struggle when expressing their opinions in written form. The class discussion and debate further established that many students have difficulty expressing themselves both in written and spoken form. Some students stated that they do not have an issue with class writings or textbook reading material. However, they did struggle with overall expression outside of the classroom context. Further proving that students are not provided with realistic contextual expression (written or spoken); therefore, once confronted with real-life situations, students fail to convey their thoughts smoothly.

The teacher interviews revealed that the textbook is their preferred method of language teaching. They hold it in high regard as it is their main tool of instruction and organization. The teachers also highlight that from their point of view, the structure and content of the textbook seem to be the ideal manner to make students keep up with the pace of the class. This view is popular amongst language teachers around the world as it is pointed in a poll conducted by BBC, stating that ‘only 6% of the 310 voters claim that they never use coursebooks in their classrooms although those claim that they use coursebooks more than half of the classroom time makes up 79% of the teachers’ (Arikan, A. 2008). The views of teachers and the ones held by students seem to differ in this regard. Almost all students expressed their distaste for the reading material shown in the book, as well as the audiovisual content.

Students feel as though their interests are not being considered when textbooks are created. This notion incites low motivation towards reading and consequently towards writing. At the same time, the textbook information on text types or genres is ignored as the content remains unappealing.

Many of the proposed issues could be solved by reshaping exercises or supplementing them, yet as it is shown in the interviews, teachers opt to follow the textbooks religiously. It remains clear that many EFL teachers of upper secondary education are generally not trained and prepared for a methodology based on communication, context, or pragmatic meaning besides an array of essential factors. Teachers seem to lack ability in numerous aspects of language acquisition, opting thus for the traditional grammar instruction.

The questionnaire reveals that students are unquestionably open to the introduction of context-based teaching methodologies and the inclusion of authentic, up-to-date pieces of content (text types, novels, comics, news articles, interviews, or social media posts). Therefore 92.9% (52 out of 56) of students answered yes when asked if they would trade their current textbook (and its reading material) for the content mentioned previously.

8. Conclusion

Motivation and technology are praised as standard factors of current teaching methodologies. However, behind the forged positivity towards said factors lays the all-powerful textbook forged with traditional grammar at its core. Many authors and interviewed teachers acclaim extensive varied reading as the key to master essay composition. However, in-class practices and textbooks fail to portray said notion. The reading material provided in the books is extensive, repetitive, and is not taken from an authentic source. Furthermore, the class dynamic is heavily focused on grammar and isolated vocabulary exercises. The lack of context in the presented forms and vocabulary has a negative impact on the students as they do not witness a bigger picture but rather the limited window view of the textbook. This notion generates uninterest toward the reading material (as well as audiovisual content) seen in schoolbooks. Therefore, students get their primary contextual input from outside sources, mainly from the internet. Even though both the textbook and internet content are in English, students note the significant contrast. As established, this happens because the content is fabricated and is an ideal replica of what exists in a real-life context. The end result is a writing style that is both unnatural (textbook fabricated text types) and includes spoken language pieces (seen in internet audiovisual content).

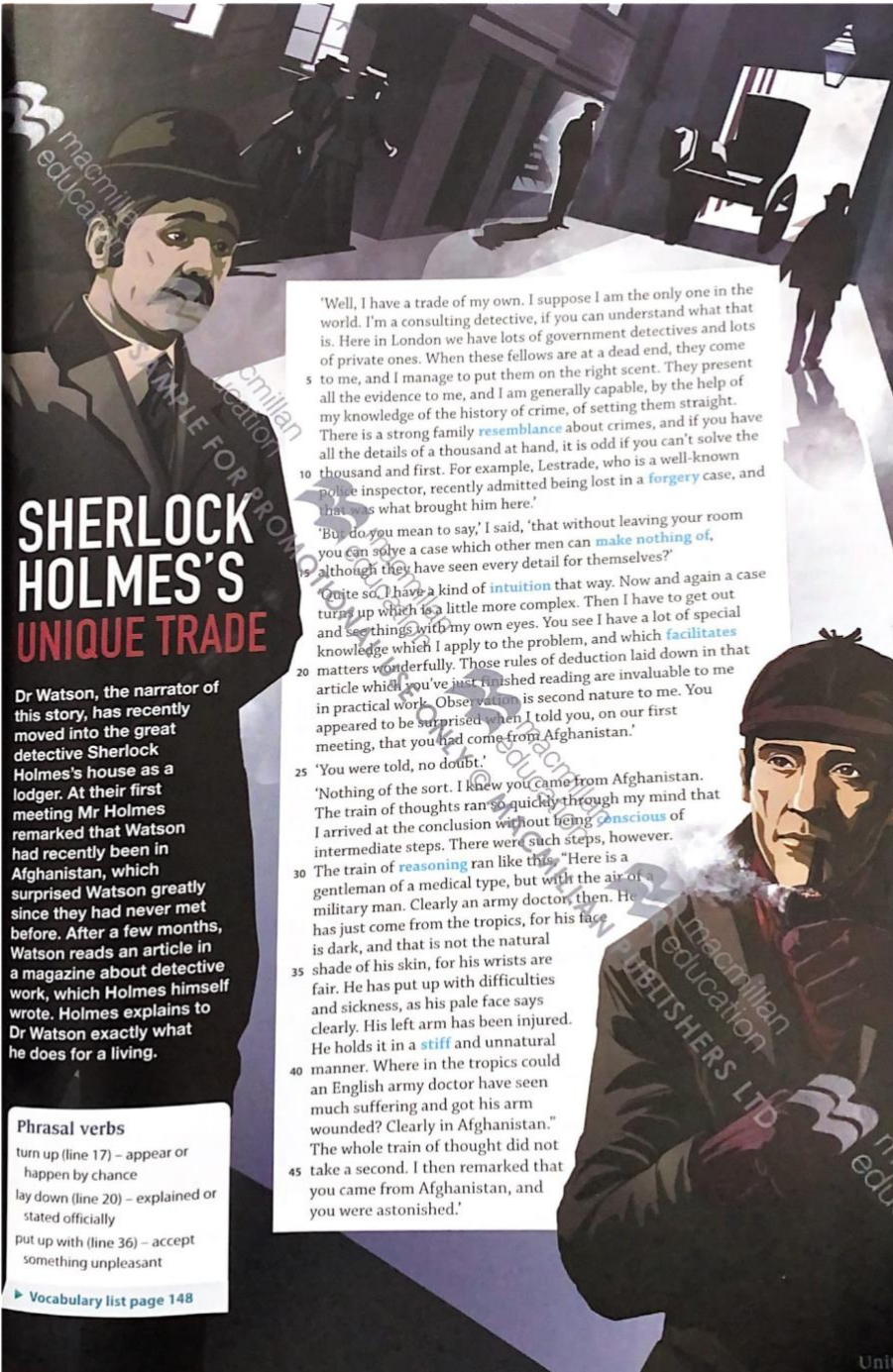
In conclusion, a plausible solution to this problem entails the remodel of current textbooks, improved EFL teacher training, and lastly, the inclusion of up-to-date contextual pieces of texts. Ultimately, the best fitting language teaching methodology is the one that better fits the interests of students, which keeps them motivated and consequently flourishes into optimal fluency and overall English Language harmoniously.

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10. Annex

Appendix A



SHERLOCK HOLMES'S UNIQUE TRADE

Dr Watson, the narrator of this story, has recently moved into the great detective Sherlock Holmes's house as a lodger. At their first meeting Mr Holmes remarked that Watson had recently been in Afghanistan, which surprised Watson greatly since they had never met before. After a few months, Watson reads an article in a magazine about detective work, which Holmes himself wrote. Holmes explains to Dr Watson exactly what he does for a living.

Phrasal verbs

- turn up (line 17) – appear or happen by chance
- lay down (line 20) – explained or stated officially
- put up with (line 36) – accept something unpleasant

► Vocabulary list page 148

‘Well, I have a trade of my own. I suppose I am the only one in the world. I’m a consulting detective, if you can understand what that is. Here in London we have lots of government detectives and lots of private ones. When these fellows are at a dead end, they come to me, and I manage to put them on the right scent. They present all the evidence to me, and I am generally capable, by the help of my knowledge of the history of crime, of setting them straight. There is a strong family **resemblance** about crimes, and if you have all the details of a thousand at hand, it is odd if you can’t solve the thousand and first. For example, Lestrade, who is a well-known police inspector, recently admitted being lost in a **forgery** case, and that was what brought him here.’

‘But do you mean to say,’ I said, ‘that without leaving your room you can solve a case which other men can **make nothing of**, although they have seen every detail for themselves?’

‘Quite so, I have a kind of **intuition** that way. Now and again a case turns up which is a little more complex. Then I have to get out and see things with my own eyes. You see I have a lot of special knowledge which I apply to the problem, and which **facilitates** matters wonderfully. Those rules of deduction laid down in that article which you’ve just finished reading are invaluable to me in practical work. Observation is second nature to me. You appeared to be surprised when I told you, on our first meeting, that you had come from Afghanistan.’

‘You were told, no doubt.’

‘Nothing of the sort. I knew you came from Afghanistan. The train of thoughts ran so quickly through my mind that I arrived at the conclusion without being **conscious** of intermediate steps. There were such steps, however.’

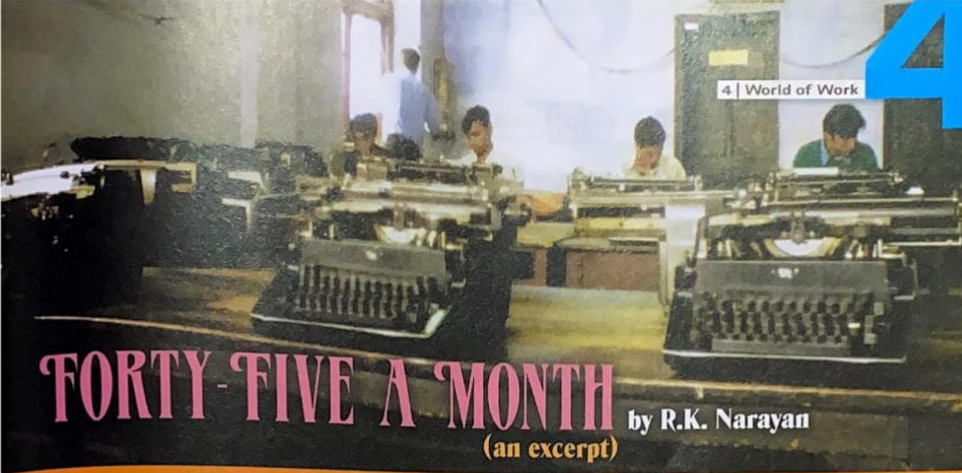
The train of **reasoning** ran like this: ‘Here is a gentleman of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural shade of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He has put up with difficulties and sickness, as his pale face says clearly. His left arm has been injured. He holds it in a **stiff** and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much suffering and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan.’

The whole train of thought did not take a second. I then remarked that you came from Afghanistan, and you were astonished.’

Appendix B

4

4 | World of Work



FORTY-FIVE A MONTH

by R.K. Narayan
(an excerpt)

Forty-Five a Month is a story that takes place in India in the 1940s. Venkat Rao, the main character, is an office worker whose company pays him only forty rupees a month. They demand that he stay late at the office every evening as well as Sundays, when most people have a day off. When his daughter Shanta asks him to take her to the cinema, he is overcome with guilt at neglecting her. Angry and resentful, he decides to take action.

He said with resolve, "I will take you to the cinema this evening. Be ready at five."

"Really! Mother?" Shanta shouted. Mother came out of the kitchen.

10 "Father is taking me to a cinema in the evening."
Shanta's mother smiled cynically. "Don't make false promises to the child –" Venkat Rao glared at her. "Don't talk nonsense. You think you are the only person who keeps promises –"

15 He told Shanta, "Be ready at five, and I will come and take you positively. If you are not ready, I will be very angry with you."
He walked to his office full of resolve. He would do his normal work and get out at five. If they started any old tricks of theirs, he was going to tell the boss, "Here is my resignation. My child's happiness is more important to me than these horrible papers of yours."

20 All day the usual stream of papers flowed onto his table and off it. He scrutinized, signed and drafted. He was corrected, admonished and insulted. He had a break of only five minutes in the afternoon for his coffee.
When the office clock struck five and the other clerks were leaving, he went up to the manager and said, "May I go, sir?" The manager looked up from his paper, "You!"

30 It was unthinkable that the cash and account section should be closing at five. "How can you go?"
"I have some urgent private business, sir," he said, smothering the lines he had been rehearsing since the morning: "Herewith my resignation." He visualized Shanta standing at the door, dressed and palpitating with eagerness.

35 "There shouldn't be anything more urgent than the office work; go back to your seat. You know how many hours I work?" asked the manager. The manager came to the office three hours before opening time and stayed nearly three hours after closing, even on Sundays. The clerks commented among themselves, "His wife must be whipping him whenever he is seen at home; that is why the old owl seems so fond of his office."

40 "Did you trace the source of that ten-eight difference?" asked the manager.
"I shall have to examine two hundred vouchers. I thought we might do it tomorrow."
"No, no, this won't do. You must rectify it immediately."


50 Venkat Rao mumbled, "Yes, sir," and slunk back to his seat. The clock showed 5:30. Now it meant two hours of excruciating search among vouchers. All the rest of the office had gone. Only he and another clerk in his section were working, and of course, the manager was there.

55 Venkat Rao was furious. His mind was made up. He wasn't a slave who had sold himself for forty rupees outright. He could make that money easily; and if he couldn't, it would be more honourable to die of starvation.
He took a sheet of paper and wrote: "Herewith my resignation. If you people think you have bought me body and soul for forty rupees, you are mistaken. I think it would be far better for me and my family to die of starvation than slave for this petty forty rupees on which you have kept me for years and years. I suppose you have not the slightest notion of giving me an increment. You give yourselves heavy slices frequently, and I don't see why you shouldn't think of us occasionally. In any case it doesn't interest me now, since this is my resignation. If I and my family perish of starvation, may our ghosts come and haunt you all your life."

60
65
70

PRONUNCIATION Listen and repeat the words. Match the bolded sound in each word to the correct phonetic symbol /x/ or /w/. 02/05

1 tour	3 urgent	5 search
2 work	4 brochure	6 sure



IC BODY AND SOUL

Watch the video and answer the question.

How does parkour help Kasturi deal with her stressful job?

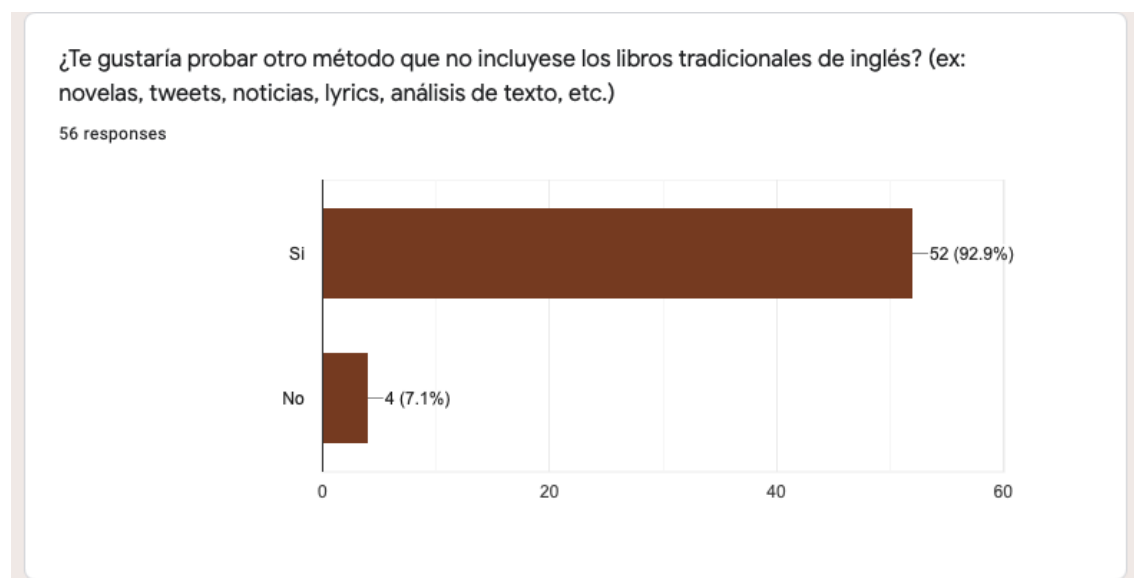
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Questionnaire

Link

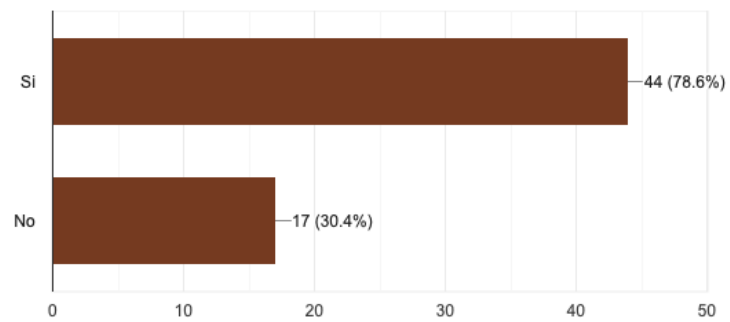
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSetbqikrH19EFE4BC-KqBpmCU0yjnWtea5OHaf25bO_gE_snA/viewform

Results



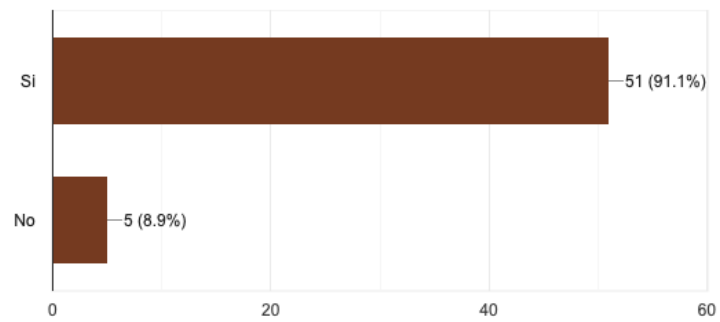
¿Entiendes sin problemas los textos que salen en tus libros de inglés?

56 responses



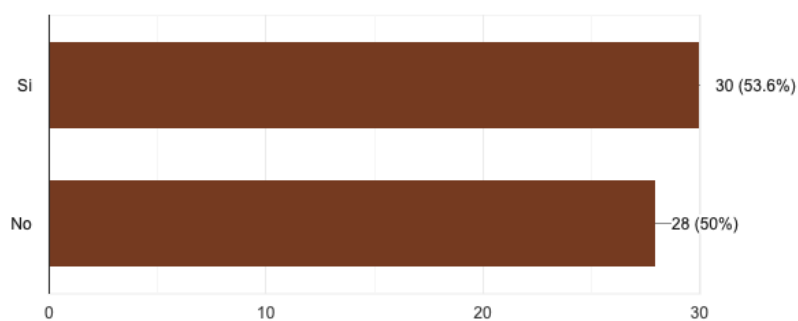
¿Te parece fácil el vocabulario que ves en tu libro de inglés?

56 responses



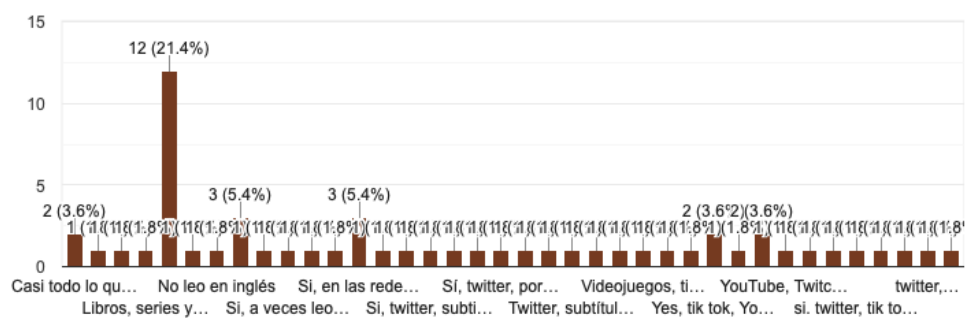
¿Te cuesta escribir tu opinión sobre algo de forma escrita en inglés?

56 responses



¿Lees en inglés en tu tiempo libre? (ex; twitter, subtítulos, subtítulos, videojuegos, youtube, tiktok, novelas, libros, noticias etc.) Especifica cuál lees.

56 responses



¿Qué te gustaría cambiar de tus libros de texto?

56 responses

Nada

Los listennings que sean más dinámicos

Modernizar, actualidad...

Gramática

Nada

Los temas de los textos

nada

No se

Que salieran textos más actuales y de nuestro interés y que nos proporcione más enlaces o páginas web para estudiar o hacer writings.

Student essay composition

THE CONCERTS

"Should I allow people to use their mobile phones to record and take photos at concerts?". This is the issue we will talk about today, in which there are people who are against or others who are in favor, in my case it is neither one nor the other, it is an intermediate point.

From my point of view, it doesn't seem right or wrong that it is recorded at concerts, because? Well, for example, if you go to the concert of a singer that you love and who is not a regular person to see, then by recording and taking photos you will have a beautiful memory that you can always see.

But on the other hand, if you record it and publish it on social networks, which is usual today, people who make this concert possible may not be amused since others are watching that performance without having to pay the entrance fee (even though it may be free) and they don't get any rewards.

And this is my opinion, I hope you liked it.

By, Jennifer!

WRITING

On this subject I have arguments for and against and now I will write them.

First of all, I'm going to write the advantages.

One of the advantages is that if you make a video of the concert and then you show it to someone or upload it to your social networks, it is a way to publicize the place and the singer or group.

I am also in favour because if you record it, when you see the video in the future, you will remember that moment.

And now I am going to write the disadvantages.

I am against it because in the video will appear people that you have not asked their permission to appear in the video, including minors.

I am also against because the flash of the mobile can deconcentrate the singer.

To sum the things up, I think that the disadvantages are more important than the advantages.

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