

A study case in southern Chile: perceptions of EFL teachers towards textbooks to develop macro-skills

Estudio de caso en el sur de Chile: percepciones de profesores de inglés hacia libros de texto para el desarrollo de macrohabilidades

Estudo de caso no sul do Chile: percepções de professores de inglês sobre livros de texto para o desenvolvimento de habilidades linguísticas

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Abstract

This research project aims to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers regarding the efficacy of textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to support the development of macro skills among students from public high schools in the *Los Lagos* region of Chile. This study was carried out by implementing a mixed qualitative and quantitative survey-based approach, including both close-ended and open-ended questions. The survey encouraged participants to focus on effective English language pedagogical practices they believed to be either integrated or missing in the textbooks. Findings from this research indicate that participants perceive the textbooks as effective overall for teaching receptive skills (reading and listening) and highly ineffective for supporting students in developing speaking skills. More specifically, the perceived weakness of the materials is the lack of meaningful speaking activities contextualized to the reality of the target student population. Another result reveals that respondents find the textbooks to include level-appropriate activities and ample exercises to guide students in practising vocabulary and grammar. A key conclusion suggests that the presentation and drilling of linguistic structures and lexicon is heavily favored over oral practice grounded in real-life scenarios and relevant use of the language, which seems to contradict contemporary pedagogical theories that emphasize communication.

Resumen

El objetivo de este proyecto de investigación es obtener un mejor entendimiento de las percepciones de los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE o EFL, por sus siglas en inglés), con respecto a la eficacia de los libros de texto proporcionados por el Ministerio de Educación para apoyar el desarrollo de macrohabilidades de los estudiantes de escuelas secundarias públicas en la región de Los Lagos de Chile. Este estudio se llevó a cabo mediante la implementación de un enfoque mixto cualitativo y cuantitativo basado en encuestas, que incluye preguntas cerradas y abiertas. La encuesta invitó a los participantes a centrarse en prácticas pedagógicas efectivas que, según ellos creían, estaban integradas o faltaban en los libros de texto. Los hallazgos de esta investigación indican que los participantes perciben los libros de texto como efectivos en general para enseñar habilidades receptivas (comprensión lectora y auditiva) y altamente ineficaces para apoyar a los estudiantes a desarrollar habilidades de expresión oral. Más específicamente, la debilidad percibida de los materiales es la falta de actividades orales significativas que estén contextualizadas a la realidad de la población estudiantil objetivo. Otro resultado revela que los encuestados consideran que los libros de texto incluyen actividades apropiadas para su nivel y amplios ejercicios para guiar a los estudiantes en la práctica tanto de vocabulario como de gramática. Una conclusión clave sugiere que la presentación y profundización de las estructuras lingüísticas y el léxico se favorece en gran medida sobre la práctica oral basada en escenarios de la vida real y el uso relevante del idioma, lo que parece contradecir las teorías pedagógicas contemporáneas que enfatizan la comunicación.

Keywords:

teacher perceptions, EFL textbooks, macro skills, language development, pedagogical practices.

Palabras clave:

percepciones docentes, libros de texto ILE, macrohabilidades, desarrollo lingüístico, prácticas pedagógicas.

Resumo

O objetivo deste projeto de pesquisa é compreender melhor as percepções dos professores de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira em torno da eficácia dos livros de texto fornecidos pelo Ministério da Educação para apoiar o desenvolvimento de habilidades linguísticas dos estudantes de escolas públicas no ensino médio na região de Los Lagos do Chile. Este estudo foi realizado implementando um método de enfoque misto qualitativo e quantitativo com entrevistas que incluíam perguntas fechadas e abertas. As entrevistas encorajavam os participantes a focarem em práticas pedagógicas efetivas que acreditavam que estavam integradas ou excluídas dos livros de texto. Os resultados desta pesquisa mostram que os participantes julgaram que os livros de texto são em geral eficazes para ensinar habilidades receptivas (compreensão de leitura e auditiva), e altamente ineficazes para ajudar os estudantes a desenvolverem habilidades de expressão oral. Mais especificamente, a visível debilidade dos materiais é a falta de atividades orais significativas contextualizadas à realidade dos estudantes. Outro resultado revela que os entrevistados consideraram que os livros didáticos incluem atividades adequadas para seu nível e amplos exercícios para guiar os estudantes na sua prática de vocabulário e gramática. Uma conclusão fundamental sugere que a apresentação e o aprofundamento das estruturas linguísticas e o léxico são profundamente favorecidos com a prática oral fundada em cenários de vida real e no uso relevante da língua, o que parece contradizer as teorias pedagógicas contemporâneas que enfatizam a comunicação.

Palavras-chave:

percepções docentes, livros de texto ILE (inglês como língua estrangeira), habilidades linguísticas, desenvolvimento da linguagem, práticas pedagógicas.

Introduction

Textbooks are both a staple and a controversial component of language programs at large. They can be compulsory or optional, support or shape the curriculum, offer the primary source of student input, or merely reinforce practice. These and other contextual factors vary considerably in their connection with learning and teaching. In the past few decades, there has been an increasing interest in examining the effectiveness of and attitudes towards ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) textbooks, including those created by local governmental institutions. In Chile, a substantial number of public education language teachers rely on non-mandatory textbooks provided by the national Ministry of Education.

This research project aims to understand better the perceptions that English language teachers from the *Los Lagos* region in Chile at the high school level hold in regard to these materials, and particularly the extent to which they are conducive to developing the four main language macro skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Gaining these insights is an essential step in allowing other teachers, stakeholders, and authorities from the Ministry of Education to have a clearer picture of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the textbooks.

Theoretical Background

The Role of English Language Teaching Textbooks

Textbooks are ubiquitous in EFL programs worldwide and often become an important source of the language input students are exposed to in and out of the classroom (Richards, 2001). In some situations, textbooks are tools that accompany teachers in their everyday classwork; in others, they are a materialization of the content, pacing, and structure of lessons. Even if they influence how learning unfolds to different degrees, scholars argue that we live in a textbook culture that supersedes reflective and evidence-based pedagogy (Akbari, 2008). As such, in the past 30 years, researchers have turned their attention to the study of textbooks and their impact on the field of education. Thornbury (2015, p. 100) explains that the interest in textbook research may be “an overdue response, perhaps, to the fact that so many teachers’ professional lives are, if not dominated, at least mediated, by published textbooks”.

The pervasive presence of language textbooks in the classroom makes it not only adequate but necessary to understand how educators perceive them. The goal in this regard is twofold: first, it can help institutions make more informed decisions around the choice of the textbook teachers have access to, based on what they consider works in the classroom (McGrath, 2013). Secondly, it can help stakeholders understand what teachers expect from support material and what they understand as ‘effective teaching practices’. The literature suggests that educators’ beliefs, practices, and perspectives are crucial factors in how successfully a textbook is integrated into the classroom and how conducive it is to effective student learning (Graves & Garton, 2014; Majjala, 2020).

The body of research indicates that teachers in different places around the globe tend to have mixed views about EFL textbooks by local ministries of education. Perceived weaknesses include a lack of contextualization and relevance, a mismatch of language level expected from students, and a priority of theory over practice (Alvarez & Guevara, 2021; Ebrahimi & Sahragard, 2017; Mustafa & Cullingford, 2008; Naqvi, 2022). Little focus has been placed specifically on how effectively these textbooks mediate the learning of the four core skills, which is what this research project addresses.

Pros and Cons of English Language Teaching Textbooks

EFL textbooks are an important part of the learning process due to their advantages. First, they are used as the curriculum and main material in contexts where teachers do not have time to carry out these tasks. Therefore, they are seen as convenient and determining materials for the EFL teaching community (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; O'Neill, 1982). Secondly, they provide a guide for learners to use independently. Textbooks help learners lower their anxiety levels since they can consult the contents they will cover and the contents they have already been taught (O'Neill, 1982; Ur, 2021). Thirdly, they can provide the EFL classroom with challenging and appealing activities for students (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

The disadvantages of EFL textbooks center around text quality and their disconnection from learners. More specifically, materials that are Anglocentric (Cunningsworth, 1984) and not authentic enough (Cheng & Warren, 2007) can hinder the opportunity to learn English in a meaningful way if their activities do not provide a physical, cognitive, and emotional experience (Tomlinson, 2003). Similarly, most EFL textbooks fail to meet the students' needs and interests (McGrath, 2002; Richards, 2021; Tomlinson, 2001). From a less critical perspective, textbooks may have cultural issues, but it is the lack of language authenticity that causes trouble (Brazil, 1980; Levis, 1999).

English Language Teaching Textbooks in Chile

Chilean EFL teachers and students of subsidized and public schools are provided every year with free physical textbooks and accompanying digital resources by the national Ministry of Education under the *Textos Escolares de la Unidad de Curriculum y Evaluación* program. The textbooks' design, editing, and approval take approximately a year and depend upon revision by the ministerial and external departments. The textbooks are acquired then through public bidding (Olivera, 2016). Each EFL textbook is divided into four units: listening, reading, speaking, and writing activities. Moreover, CLIL-based activities, projects, and extra reading materials are also available. In 2024, the textbooks prescribed by the Ministry of Education were High School English 1 and 2 for 9th and 10th grade correspondingly, which were adapted from the course *Achievers* by Richmond Publishing Department of Education (Hidalgo, 2021), and *Get Real English 3 y 4 Medio* for 11th and 12th grades (Dominguez & Olate, 2020).

The Ministry of Education selects these materials. Previous textbooks have been questioned for their articulation problems with the national curriculum and among themselves (Cárcamo-Morales, 2018; Venegas, 2017). It has been argued that the

selection criterion has been merely economic, without considering pedagogical dimensions or the sociocultural context of students (Pavié et al., 2019). A study about the quality of government-delivered textbooks in the past showed that these materials did not respond to students' needs (Fontaine & Eyzaguirre, 1997). Recently, it was reported that teachers in the public system perceived that these textbooks do not favor the learning process of English as a second language, mainly because they are not adaptable to the public classroom diversity and they are mismatched with the national curriculum (Lizasoain & Vargas, 2023).

English Language Macro Skills

One aspect that can help teachers evaluate a textbook is how appropriate its content is for the target population of students, considering aspects such as their level of proficiency, topics of interest, and cultural relevance, among others (Crawford, 2002). Despite how subjective this might appear, several authors defend the view that effective textbooks should comply with core features, including all four macro skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Even when a skill is at the forefront of the lesson or module objective(s), classwork should strive to include multiple abilities, as it naturally occurs when people use and decode language (Hadley, 2018; Oxford, 2001).

In order to effectively create opportunities for students to develop each one of the macro skills, authors recommend a series of core effective practices and pedagogical strategies (Brown & Lee, 2015; Nation & Macalister, 2020; Newton & Nation, 2020). Some examples of these are:

Speaking

- Curriculum design focused on communicative approaches
- Scaffolded pre-task activities (from simpler to more complex activities)
- Useful practice activities (move from controlled to freer practice)
- Engaging speaking prompts and tasks

Listening

- Preparation activities before listening (relevant vocabulary, prior knowledge, etc.)
- Meaningful context of audios/videos for the age and level of students
- Engaging tasks while listening to audios/videos
- Appropriate listening comprehension strategies (listening for main ideas, listening for details, making inferences, etc.)

Reading

- Preparation activities before reading (relevant vocabulary, prior knowledge, etc.)
- Meaningful context of reading texts for the age and level of students
- Engaging tasks and visual support while reading texts
- Appropriate reading comprehension strategies (skimming, scanning, finding details, summarizing, etc.)

Writing

- Focus on process writing (brainstorming, drafting, editing, publishing)
- Focus on creative writing activities (in non-academic writing, such as brochures, ads, social media, poems, songs, etc.)
- Engaging, real world-based-writing prompts and tasks
- Modeling of writing tasks (providing samples of expected writing tasks)

The authors did not find any study in the Chilean context that surveyed educators about textbooks using a systematic group of effective language-skill teaching and development practices.

Methodology

The purpose of this exploratory research is to identify the perceptions and opinions of public EFL high school teachers in the Los Lagos region in Chile towards the effectiveness of the textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to develop the four macro skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) of the English language. Based on this intention, non-experimental research has been carried out following a quantitative and qualitative approach with a descriptive design (Cohen et al., 2018). All ethical considerations were taken into account and every participant signed a consent form for the survey implemented.

Context and participants

This study took place in the region of Los Lagos in southern Chile, which has four provinces (Chiloé, Llanquihue, Osorno, and Palena) and a total population of 828,708 people, according to Gobierno de Los Lagos (2017). Based on the most updated statistical data from the Centro de Estudios of the Ministry of Education in Chile (2019),

there were 514 English language teachers from across the region working in public high schools ("educación media" in Chile) recognized by the government. This number includes teachers from both rural and urban areas of Los Lagos.

For the purposes of this study, only teachers from public high schools from the Los Lagos region who have experience working with EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education were considered. The teachers who participated in this research project have a range of one to thirty years of experience teaching EFL in public high schools in the Los Lagos region. The EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education in Chile are based on curriculum guides that include core learning objectives for each of the four grades of high school (Ministerio de Educación, 2023).

A total of 100 EFL high school teachers from the Los Lagos region in Chile were invited to participate in a questionnaire focused on their perceptions and opinions towards the effectiveness of the textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to develop the four macro skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) of the English language. By the end of the data collection process, a total of forty teachers had submitted a response to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was completed anonymously using Google Forms. No personal details like name, sex, age, phone number or emails were collected through the questionnaire.

Instrument and data collection

The details and procedures in this research project are based on the work previously created by Ramirez and Cardenas (2023). A cross-sectional online questionnaire was designed and administered to gather general and detailed information regarding the perceptions and opinions of public EFL high school teachers towards the effectiveness of the textbooks provided by the Chilean government. In order to obtain this information, the questionnaire included ten Likert scale questions (Muthén & Kaplan, 1985). The Likert-type responses included two scaling scores for different questions: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree and always, most of the time, sometimes, rarely, and never. In addition to these items, participants were asked to answer ten multiple-choice questions, where they could select more than one answer. Five of these questions were included to ensure the validity of the questionnaire since these items addressed information previously encountered in the Likert scale questions; the remaining five questions aimed at collecting data regarding overall perceptions towards the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education. Through these, responders were asked to choose what skill-specific effective practices and features they deemed were present in the materials. Finally, the questionnaire included three open-ended questions for responders to expand and offer more details on their perception of the overall value of the EFL textbooks.

Two external experts on English language teaching and curriculum design reviewed the questionnaire to confirm its relevance and clarity. Afterwards, it was piloted virtually with a group of twenty EFL teachers from Chile. These are teachers who were not from the Los Lagos Region. It was carried out through the Microsoft Teams platform with volunteer teachers over a period of sixty minutes. The pilot consisted of participants completing the virtual questionnaire in fifteen to twenty minutes, followed by a thirty-

minute focus group on their reactions and feedback towards the research instrument. These participants made specific observations on the number of open-ended questions included in the questionnaire. All twenty participants agreed that one of the three open-ended questions felt redundant since they found themselves writing the same answers they had already selected in the previous Likert and multiple-choice questions. Participants from the pilot also suggested adding descriptions for some of the terms (e.g. scaffolding, visual aids, practice activities) used throughout the questionnaire to ensure clarity and understanding of the concepts among the responders. Participants also mentioned that the questionnaire felt concise and straightforward. They confirmed that it could be completed within fifteen minutes, especially if one of the open-ended questions were to be removed.

Based on the pilot and focus group results, a new version of the questionnaire was constructed, with only two open-ended questions at the end for participants to share further opinions and thoughts on the EFL textbooks. The questionnaire was also modified to include specific pedagogical terms as descriptions or examples throughout the instrument. Finally, when applicable, a line was added to some survey questions, clarifying that more than one answer could be selected.

Population

The population for this research was composed of English language teachers from the Los Lagos Region of Chile, one of the country's southern regions. All teachers included in this research project work in public high schools of the aforementioned region. The total population of EFL teachers in the Los Lagos Region reaches 514 (Ministerio de Educación, 2019). For the purposes of this study, a convenience sampling technique was used (Griffiee, 2018; Rea & Parker, 2014; Warner, 2013). The sample consisted of 40 EFL teachers from the region, including Puerto Montt, Osorno, Puerto Varas, Castro, and Quellón.

Procedure

The design of the Procedure section of this project is grounded in the work previously published by Ramirez and Cardenas (2023). The questionnaire was sent virtually to 100 EFL teachers from the Los Lagos Region. After the first 40 responses were received, the survey was closed. Even though participation in answering the questionnaire was highly encouraged, it was completely voluntary. Responders were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participants who agreed to participate in the study signed an informed consent included at the beginning of the questionnaire.

Data analysis

The data and results received through the questionnaire were analyzed based on descriptive and inferential statistics (Gordon, 2023). The distribution of responses across scale points and categories was conducted to analyze data received through the research instrument. T-tests and cross-tabulation were conducted to measure significant differences in the respondents' perceptions of the questionnaire. Content and thematic analyses were carried out to categorize and study the responses to the qualitative open-ended questions.

Results and Discussion

Use of EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education

EFL teachers from the Los Lagos region were asked how commonly they used the textbooks provided and encouraged for classroom use by the Ministry of Education in Chile. This first section of the survey serves as a basis for understanding to what extent the Ministry of Education textbooks are being implemented in the Los Lagos region's EFL classrooms.

The survey results indicate that EFL teachers from the Los Lagos region are much more inclined to use the textbooks from the Ministry of Education during the first few years of high school and significantly less during the last year of high school (*cuarto medio*). Figure 1 illustrates how, during the 1st year of high school (*primero medio*), 62.5% of the surveyed teachers use the textbook either always or most of the time. For the 2nd year of high school (*segundo medio*), teachers continue using the textbook, with 57.5% indicating they always use it or most of the time. The numbers continue to decrease for the 3rd year of high school (*tercero medio*), with 52.5% of teachers expressing that they use textbooks most of the time. Finally, for the 4th and last year of high school (*cuarto medio*), numbers completely inverted since 62.5% of the teachers indicate that they rarely or never use the textbooks (Figure 2).

Figure 1

Use of EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education during 1st year of high school

When teaching 1st year of high school (Primero Medio), I use the EFL textbook provided by the Ministry of Education.

40 responses

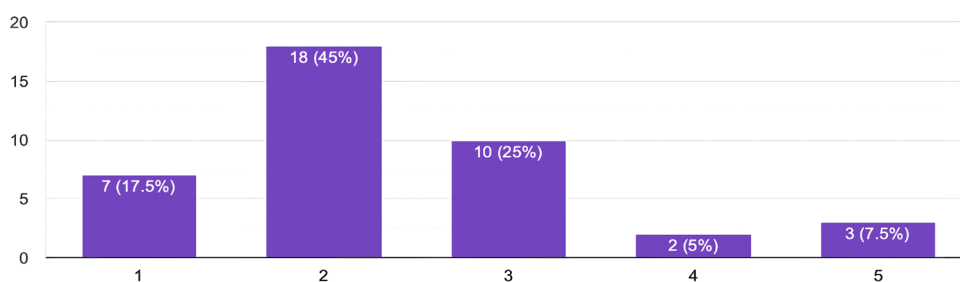
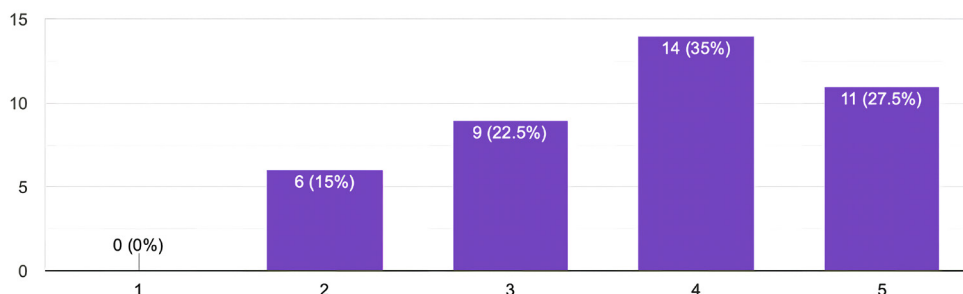


Figure 2

Use of EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education during 4th year of high school

When teaching 4th year of high school (Cuarto Medio), I use the EFL textbook provided by the Ministry of Education.

40 responses



These results clearly show that most EFL teachers from the Los Lagos region begin using textbooks from the Ministry of Education and progressively stop using them as the high school grades advance until senior year. This incremental behavior may be due to teachers sensing that the textbooks are not as effective for older teenagers or for more complex language instruction that comes with higher high school grades and a more advanced English language curriculum.

In the final open-ended questions of the survey, in which teachers were given an opportunity to share more in-depth opinions, several teachers expressed that the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education for the last two years of high school were not interactive, interesting, and aligned with national standards for teaching EFL. Other teachers mention that the textbook for the last year of high school is not relevant enough for high school students since it does not cater to the correct level of students from the region. These comments shed some light on potential reasons for the high percentage of teachers who do not use textbooks during their senior year of high school.

Overall pedagogical perceptions of EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education

Survey respondents were asked about the general pedagogical effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education regarding three concrete areas relevant to developing linguistic macro skills. These areas are student learning, student engagement, and the overall development of macro skills. Understanding of teachers' perceptions of these pedagogical areas allows for a closer and more complex exploration of the effectiveness of the textbooks for developing macro skills in the classroom.

Figure 3 shows how teachers perceive the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education as mostly effective regarding the impact on student learning. Nearly half (55%) of the respondents indicate that the textbooks are moderately effective, and 37.5% slightly effective. These numbers express an overall approval when it comes to overall student learning. However, it is worth noting that only 5% of the respondents

believe textbooks are very effective for student learning. Since these textbooks are provided by the Ministry of Education and are used by a considerable number of teachers, it would be important to edit or redesign these to meet levels of acceptance closer to being very effective for overall student learning.

Figure 3

Overall effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education for student learning

Overall, how would you classify the effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education for student learning?

40 responses

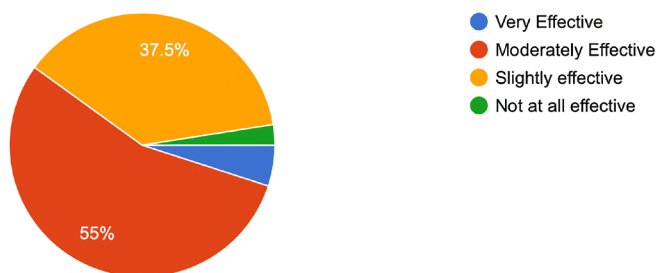


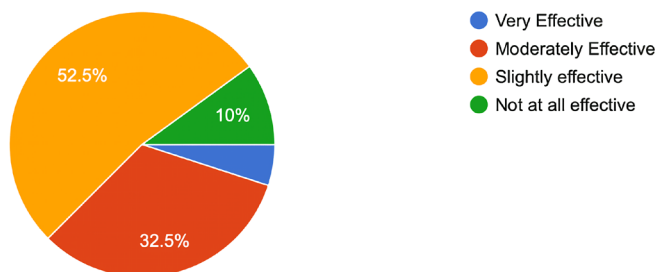
Figure 4 reveals that teachers find the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to be slightly effective in the area of student engagement. Of all answers, 52.5% of the respondents mentioned that the textbooks are slightly effective and 32.5% moderately effective. Most teachers seem to believe that the textbooks have areas that need to be improved in order for them to become more effective. In the open-ended questions, teachers indicated that the textbooks do not have sufficient meaningful and engaging practice for students. They also expressed that the textbooks could provide more contextualized and relevant activities for students to engage in as they practice English as a foreign language.

Figure 4

Overall effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education for student engagement

Overall, how would you classify the effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to keep students engaged and interested in the class?

40 responses



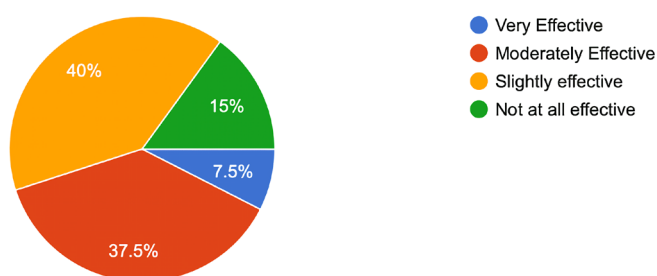
Teachers were also asked about their perception of the overall effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to develop macro skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Figure 5 shows that 40% of the respondents find the textbooks to be slightly effective, while 37.5% find them moderately effective. It is also important to notice that 15% believe the textbooks are not at all effective. These results express mixed reactions and acceptance rates among teachers. Even though 37.5% of the teachers find the textbooks moderately effective, there is a larger number of teachers (55%) who find the textbooks to be only slightly effective or not effective at all regarding working with macro skills in the EFL classroom. These are concerning numbers since most teachers mentioned that they mostly use these textbooks for 1st to 3rd year of high school, yet they do not find them highly or even moderately effective. This behavior might be explained by the challenge of finding and distributing more effective textbooks among students when teacher and school resources are limited.

Figure 5

Overall effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to develop macro skills

Overall, how would you classify the effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to develop the four macro skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing).

40 responses



General Effectiveness of EFL Textbooks for Developing Macro Skills

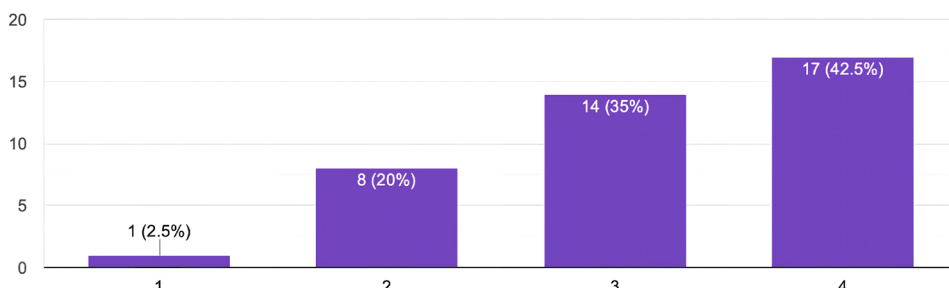
Teachers who responded to the survey were also asked to rate the effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to work with and develop each particular macro skill with their public high school students. Figure 6 reveals that 42.5% of teachers strongly disagree, and 35% disagree with the statement indicating that the textbooks are conducive to the effective development of speaking skills. This result sheds some clarity on the previous numbers expressing the lack of teachers who think the textbooks are highly effective for student learning and engagement. The EFL textbooks from the Ministry of Education seem to be underwhelming when it comes to activities, strategies, and overall resources to support students in developing their speaking skills in English.

Figure 6

Overall effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to develop speaking skills

The EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education are conducive to effective development of speaking skills among students in public high schools.

40 responses



When survey participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of the EFL textbooks the Ministry of Education provided to work with and develop other macro skills with their public high school students, the results were inverted. The development of listening, reading and writing skills seemed to be more effectively supported by the textbooks. An astounding 65%, 75%, and 70% of the teachers who completed the survey indicated agreement towards the textbooks being conducive to effective listening, reading and writing development (Figures 7, 8 and 9). Only 27.5%, 15%, and 20% of the teachers disagreed that "textbooks are conducive to the effective development of listening, reading and writing correspondingly".

The survey results clearly reflect that the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education are strongly perceived by teachers as much more appropriate for teaching and supporting students as they develop listening, reading, and writing skills. The substandard perception of teachers towards the usefulness of the textbooks for guiding students as they develop speaking skills may be due to a lack of meaningful and realistic speaking tasks, as indicated by some respondents in the open-ended questions. It is also worth mentioning that in order to develop speaking skills, much more class and practice time is required for students, and most public high schools do not offer more than three or four hours of English lessons per week.

Figure 7

Overall effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to develop listening skills

The EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education are conducive to effective development of listening skills among students in public high schools.

40 responses

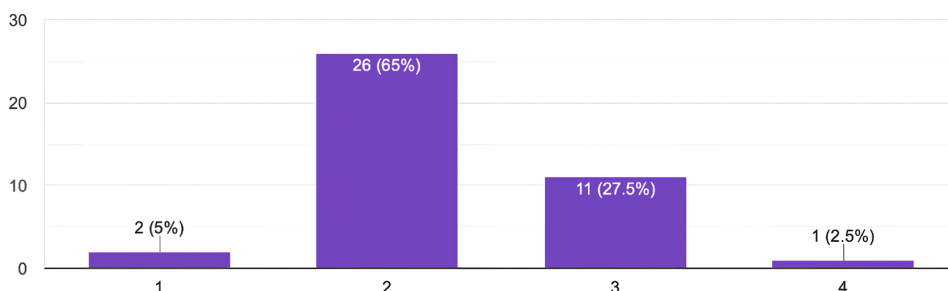


Figure 8

Overall effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to develop reading skills

The EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education are conducive to effective development of reading skills among students in public high schools.

40 responses

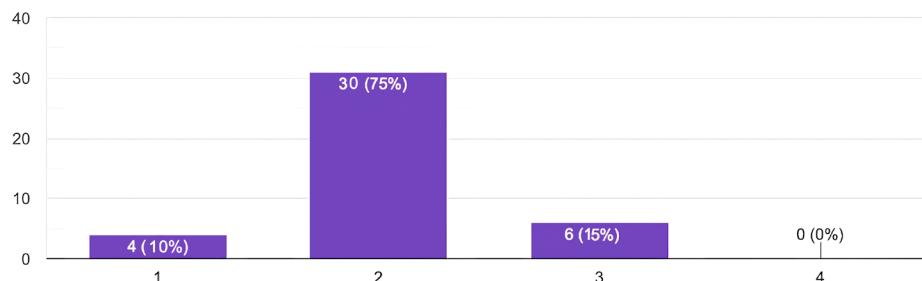
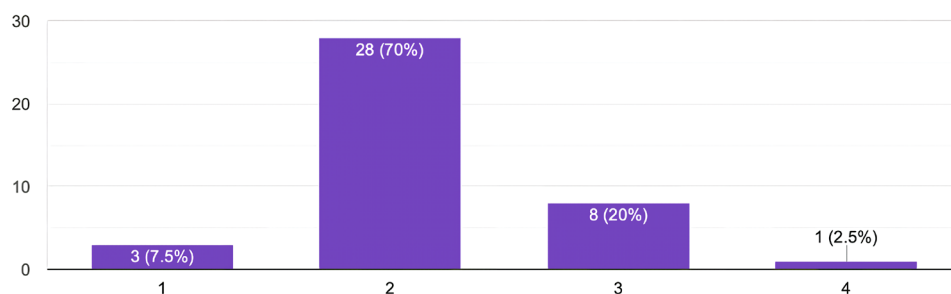


Figure 9

Overall effectiveness of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to develop writing skills

The EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education are conducive to effective development of writing skills among students in public high schools.

40 responses



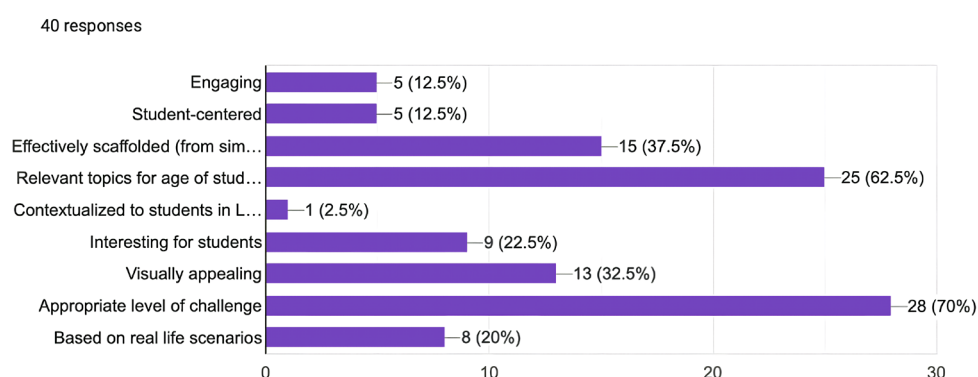
Detailed Pedagogical Perceptions on Effectiveness of EFL Textbooks for Developing Macro Skills

The final section of the survey invited participants to select pedagogical terms they associated with the nature and design of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education. This section is intended to gain a more detailed understanding of teachers' perceptions and opinions of the textbooks from their perspective as EFL teachers. Figure 10 presents the pedagogical terms or characteristics teachers believe are reflected in the textbooks. The pedagogical characteristic that most teachers (70%) associated with the textbooks is the appropriateness of the level of challenge of the student activities and exercises, which seems to indicate that the design of the textbooks is well scaffolded and has a good understanding of what students are capable of doing in each of the four years of high school. The survey also revealed that 62.5% of respondents revealed that textbooks often have topics relevant to teenagers in high schools. Besides these two aforementioned pedagogical traits, only two other ones were selected by teachers with an acceptance rate of over 30%: visually appealing (32.5%) and effectively scaffolded (37.5%).

Figure 10 also demonstrates that teachers find the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to be deficient regarding several essential methodological principles for effective English language learning. Student-centeredness and engagement are the two lowest-rated pedagogical concepts by respondents of the survey, with a 12.5% selection rate each. These concepts are key to any effective English language classroom, and even though these are aspects that the teacher can plan for and implement independently of the textbook, having materials that consider and reflect these principles would make for a much more meaningful and successful learning experience. Two other principles educators identify as not integral to the textbooks are local contextualization and activities based on real-life tasks. Only one teacher (2.5%) indicated that the textbooks are designed in a way to contextualize the realities of students from the region. Being that the textbooks are meant for students from all over Chile, it makes sense that they are not contextualized for students from the Los Lagos region. However, it may be possible to offer variations of the same activities in order to reach a greater contextualized resource. Likewise, only 20% of the respondents mentioned that the tasks and activities in the textbooks had been created based on real-life scenarios. This curriculum design principle is essential to offering language practice that is relevant and meaningful for students, leading to more effective language development.

Figure 10

Pedagogical terms associated with EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education



The remaining questions in the survey asked respondents to identify pedagogical principles, terms, or practices that are associated with the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education focused specifically on each of the four macro skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Focus on Speaking

The results from the survey reveal that teachers find the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to be conducive to the effective development of speaking in two areas: grammar preparation and vocabulary preparation. A noteworthy 90% and 75% of the respondents selected these practices correspondingly as strengths in the

design of the textbooks. These results may not be surprising for many EFL educators since grammar and vocabulary are the most predominant sub-skills that have been traditionally emphasized in the language learning classroom.

Teachers who completed the survey also identified four areas as the weakest ones from the textbooks for teaching speaking: communicative approach (10%), scaffolded pre-activities (12.5%), meaningful context (15%), and engaging speaking prompts (15%). These results surface a worrying reality in many language-learning educational settings: the lack of a strong communicative focus. Consequently, students might not be exposed to well-sequenced presentation and preparation activities, as well as meaningful and realistic speaking tasks.

Focus on Listening

The results from the survey show that teachers think the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education are conducive to the effective development of listening in two areas: vocabulary preparation and level-appropriate audios/videos. These practices were selected as strengths in the design of the textbooks with 82.5% and 75%, respectively. These results again demonstrate that the textbooks seem to have a proper understanding of what can be expected from high school students in each school year. Vocabulary preparation appears again as a major strength.

Teachers who submitted the survey also identified four areas as the weakest ones from the textbooks for teaching listening: engaging listening audios/videos (15%), engaging listening tasks (15%), scaffolded pre-listening activities (20%), and meaningful context of audios/videos (15%). Based on these results, the textbooks seem to need improvements in pre-listening and while-listening activities. The design of the textbooks may benefit from applying principles and practices from the Pre-While-Post framework for teaching listening.

Focus on Reading

The survey results demonstrate that teachers find the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education conducive to the effective development of reading in two areas: vocabulary preparation, with 87.5% of respondents considering it a strength, and level-appropriate reading texts, with 62.5%. These results reflect perceptions similar to those of the respondents compared to the survey's listening and speaking sections.

Teachers who completed the survey also identified four areas as the weakest ones from the textbooks for teaching reading: engaging reading tasks (7.5%), meaningful context (15%), scaffolded pre-reading activities (17.5%), and engaging reading texts (20%). This data supports the same findings from the other receptive skill section, listening. Once again, teachers notice and point out that the textbooks could benefit from implementing a design in which more meaningful reading tasks and texts are used.

Focus on Writing

Based on the results from the survey, teachers believe the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education are conducive to the effective development of writing in two areas: grammar preparation and vocabulary preparation. An important 85% and 77.5% of the respondents selected these practices as strengths in the design of the textbooks. This section of the survey revealed the same findings as the previous macro skill sections - the design of the textbooks includes effective strategies and activities for guiding students in practicing and developing their writing skills.

Teachers who submitted the survey also identified four areas as the weakest ones from the textbooks for teaching writing: scaffolded pre-writing activities (10%), meaningful context (10%), engaging writing prompts (15%), and creative writing activities (20%). An important aspect to highlight from these results is that teachers seem to find more creative writing activities and tasks in the textbooks in contrast to more traditional academic writing prompts.

Conclusion

The aim of this research study was to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions and opinions of EFL public high school teachers from the Los Lagos region in Chile regarding the effectiveness of the textbooks provided by the national Ministry of Education in teaching the four main macro skills of the English language.

The evidence suggests that, even though not obligatory, a considerable number of high school teachers from the region surveyed do use the EFL textbook and resources provided by the Ministry of Education in their weekly lessons. The tendency reflects the convenience of the materials, although more research is needed to elucidate better how educators adapt these resources when they do not fit with their style, beliefs, practices or perceptions. The frequent use of the textbooks also confirms the urgency and importance of reviewing and editing both the content and context of the units in the materials based on teacher feedback.

Additionally, a balance in teacher perspectives between present and absent core traits for effective lessons was found across skills, except speaking, particularly for the last two years of secondary school ("3ero" and "4to medio"). Teachers seem to incorporate the textbook offered in these grades much less often in their classes, with a lack of contextualization and scenarios based on real life as the aspects with the lowest scores. A revision may be needed to bridge the perceived gap between topics and tasks that connect better with the students' lives and prior experiences, which, in turn, might lead to higher motivation. Similarly, these are the grades that teachers reported as having the biggest mismatch between the textbooks and the official curriculum put forth by the Ministry of Education. Poor alignment, then, rises as a key factor in avoiding the materials.

It is also noteworthy that the better-regarded textbooks from the first two years of secondary school were adapted from an international publication, while the lowest-scoring materials have been locally produced. This might reflect the advantages of a publication with potentially more iterations of trial, feedback, and improvement.

The assessed inefficacy of the EFL textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education to support the development of speaking skills, especially at the level of 11th and 12th grades, could be fueled by the nature of these. Students are expected to move towards an intermediate level of English at this point, where learners at large enter a stage of the plateau that is characterized by slower progress and a latent lack of drive. Another layer is that these grades contain the most advanced language students will be expected to produce orally in their school life, making participating harder than before for those who carry deficiencies and lacunae from prior years.

For all skills, the integration of grammar and vocabulary was deemed as a strong area of the textbooks. While this could hint at a beneficial trend that does not place the theory of language learning in isolation (for example, through loose sentences), it does indicate that the materials support form- rather than meaning-based instruction. At the bare minimum, the appraisal teachers give of these materials is that the choice in content is not engaging enough for the target student population. The opposite happens in terms of expected language level: the texts and audios do seem to be at a level students can work with, pointing, then, at challenges with how relevant the content is rather than how difficult.

The authors acknowledge the limitations of the research instrument and the results obtained in this study. First, the EFL teachers who participated in this research are all from the Los Lagos region. Further research could include teachers from other regions of the country in order to compare perceptions and opinions based on geographical contexts and particular learning needs of different parts of the country.

Additionally, the research instrument was reworked to consist of mostly Likert scale and linear items, with little room for participants to expand on their choices. Even though the survey included a final open-ended question for participants to elaborate on their opinions, more open-ended prompts and individual interviews with volunteer participants may yield a richer pool of perceptions and recommendations to make these textbooks more effective.

Finally, as Harwood (2016) suggested, this synchronic study could become diachronic and focus on classroom observations of teachers over an extended period of time. The goal would be to better understand deeper dimensions, such as the evolution of practices around textbook integration, the influence of materials on teacher beliefs, and the interplay between the ESL/EFL textbook and other factors that affect learning within the public education system.

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Authorship contribution:

Roger Martín Ramírez Draughn: conceptualization, research, data curation, formal analysis, Methodology, writing of the draft, administration and supervision.

Nicolás Ignacio Cárdenas Tamburini: conceptualization, research, formal analysis, visualization, writing of the draft and review of the manuscript.

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Availability of data:

The dataset supporting the findings of this study is not publicly available. The research data will be made available to reviewers upon request.

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