

Research article

Enhancing EFL teaching: Pre-service teachers' beliefs and attitudes about didactic resources

Cómo mejorar la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera: creencias y actitudes de los profesores en formación sobre los materiales didácticos

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Abstract:

Introduction: Teaching materials lay at the core of both effective instruction and successful learning of foreign languages (FL). This study investigates pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of teaching resources. **Methodology:** The participants were 84 students of teaching degrees enrolled in an English programme at a university in Spain. To collect the data, a survey was passed that inquired participants about their previous EFL learning experience, and both about their beliefs about teaching resources and how they would use them in the future. A mixed methods approach was used to analyse the data. **Results:** The participants had found the teaching resources of EFL inappropriate for the successful learning of this language, and were unanimous at the necessity of having criteria to select materials that meet the needs of students and teachers. **Discussion:** The participants had undergone a frustrating EFL learning experience both due to the resources that had been used, and to the way those resources had been implemented by their teachers. **Conclusions:** The design of

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innovative resources seems to be the way to make EFL learning accessible to everyone.

Keywords: EFL pre-service teachers; EFL pre-service teacher beliefs; EFL teaching materials; Effective EFL instruction; Successful EFL learning; EFL teaching materials selection; EFL teaching materials design; EFL learning motivation.

Resumen:

Introducción: Los materiales didácticos constituyen la base para una enseñanza eficaz de lenguas extranjeras. Este estudio investiga las creencias de los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera en formación sobre la eficacia de los recursos didácticos. **Metodología:** Los participantes fueron 84 estudiantes de los grados de maestro matriculados en un programa de inglés en una universidad de España. Para recoger los datos se empleó una encuesta que indagaba sobre la experiencia previa de aprendizaje de inglés de los participantes, sus creencias sobre los recursos didácticos, y cómo utilizarían éstos en el futuro. Se utilizó un enfoque de métodos mixtos para analizar los datos. **Resultados:** Los participantes habían encontrado los recursos didácticos de inglés como lengua extranjera inapropiados para el aprendizaje exitoso de esta lengua, y fueron unánimes en la pertinencia de tener criterios para seleccionar materiales que se ajusten a las necesidades de alumnos y profesores. **Discusión:** Los participantes tuvieron una experiencia de aprendizaje frustrante debido a los recursos utilizados y a la manera de utilizar esos recursos por sus profesores. **Conclusiones:** El diseño de recursos innovadores parece ser la forma de que el aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera EFL sea accesible a todos.

Palabras clave: Profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera en formación; Creencias de los futuros profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera; Materiales didácticos de inglés como lengua extranjera; Enseñanza eficaz de inglés como lengua extranjera; Aprendizaje eficaz de inglés como lengua extranjera; Selección de materiales didácticos de inglés como lengua extranjera; Diseño de materiales didácticos de inglés como lengua extranjera; Motivación en el aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera.

1. Introduction

The teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) has experienced an evolution on the methodologies and materials that have been used in classrooms throughout the years (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). One of the most time-honoured and persistent resources is the textbook. The use of coursebooks in the teaching of foreign languages (FL) and, specifically EFL, has been a topic of much debate among educators and academics. Textbooks have been a fundamental educational tool in many EFL classrooms, providing a solid framework of reference for the structuring of contents and, hence, a tool for the teacher to implement a specific methodology to face the teaching and learning processes of EFL. Nevertheless, textbooks have been, and still are, subject to debate (Hughes, 2019; Jordan & Gray, 2019; Richards, 1993; Sheldon, 1988). Coursebooks lay at the core of both effective instruction and successful learning of FL and they can either restrict teachers' creativity or foster their capacity to meet the specific circumstances of the learning process (age of learners, learners' interests and needs, pedagogical environment, and classroom context, among others) (Allwright, 1981; Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2021). Coursebooks are also crucial to boost learners' motivation and confidence towards the learning of an FL (Rahmanpanah & Mohseni, 2017) and can either enhance learning or limit it. Zohrabi et al. (2014) explained that "textbooks are one of the elements that may promote or discourage learners depending on their materials" (p. 95). Hence, teachers play an active role in selecting, adapting and implementing materials that best fit the needs and interests of both teachers themselves and learners (Harper, 2019; Johansson, 2006; Mahmudovna, 2023; McGrath, 2013; Rahmanpanah & Mohseni, 2017).

1.1. Didactic materials in English language teaching: evolution and challenges

The use of learning materials, such as coursebooks, has been closely linked to the evolution of the approaches and methods that have been implemented for FL teaching and learning over the centuries (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This is result of historical, pedagogical, social and technological developments that have been happening through time in societies. The relevance and use of the textbook has experienced a pendular movement. In the 19th century the Grammar-Translation Method emerged, and textbooks became fundamental in the instruction process, however, students played a passive role in their learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In the 1980s, the Communicative Approach to Language Teaching appeared and textbooks turned into teaching resources used in combination with other materials to promote a learner-centred process of learning (Lamie, 1999). The communicative approach to teaching languages emphasizes interaction and communication as the primary goals of learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The aim of this approach is to encourage the development of speakers' communicative competence in real-life situations (Hymes, 1992). With the advent of technology at the beginning of the 21st century and the technological advances that have followed afterwards, education has undergone a very rapid evolution thanks to which textbooks have been able to adapt to the needs of the new educational paradigm (Peachey, 2018). Similarly, training has become a necessity for teachers to be able to select, adapt and create complementary materials for an effective teaching-learning experience (Masuhara, 2022).

The benefits and limitations of teaching materials, with the specific case of textbooks, are worth of analysis at this point so that the insights of teachers and trainee teachers can be examined later. On the one hand, using a textbook helps teachers as a guidance of the teaching and learning process, as textbooks follow a coherent and graded structure (O'Neill, 1982; Tomlinson, 2011) that serves as a base for teachers to plan the lessons. On the other hand, textbooks are a great source of resources and authentic materials that consider different learning rhythms and styles (Harmer, 2007). This way, teachers find it easier both to adapt to their pupils' competence level of EFL, who feel safe at being categorised both at a specific curriculum and at a specific level (Brown, 2007). This support is even more relevant to novice teachers since they lack professional experience and need support and guidance. Moreover, pictures and graphics are often part of textbooks, which provide learners cultural, historical and social contexts that help them understand the content and, hence, facilitate the use of the language in different contexts (Damayanti et al., 2023). However, some limitations can be addressed to coursebooks. Teacher's risk being constrained to the didactic proposal that textbooks propose. Some educators have also claimed that an over-reliance on textbooks can reduce teaching creativity and innovation (Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2021; Richards, 1993), which has a negative impact on pupils' motivation (Lee, 2013). In addition, coursebooks can limit the flexibility of teachers, and they can also become obsolete quickly, both in terms of the texts, topics, cultural content, pictures or images they contain (Harwood, 2010). Besides, textbooks are blamed for giving special relevance to the form, as opposed to the actual use of the target language. Some of the disadvantages mentioned above seem to be overcome thanks to the availability, accessibility and flexibility of digital books and to the digital extensions of physical books, which allow teachers to adapt to the needs of learners by means of using those teaching materials effectively.

Therefore, it can be said that textbooks have evolved significantly over the last few decades in order to meet today's educational challenges. Current teaching materials incorporate the latest advances in Applied Linguistics and the most innovative teaching, pedagogical, educational

and technological approaches to EFL teaching. In this scenario, teachers' preparation becomes a crucial element.

1.2.1.2. Pre-service teachers' beliefs on didactic materials

Pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards the teaching and learning processes of EFL are of high relevance as they influence their teaching practices and, ultimately, their students' learning outcomes (Borg, 2003; Borg, 2004; Lortie, 1975). Pre-service teachers' previous learning experiences (apprenticeship of observation) usually condition both their acquisition of new knowledge in training programmes and their future teaching performance. Knowing what preconceived beliefs EFL pre-service teachers may hold about teaching materials seems relevant to understand what elements may condition prospective teachers' selection, use, design and creation of both coursebooks and complementary resources (Zhang et al., 2022). Since experienced teachers have the skills, background and criteria to evaluate the relevance of a given textbook, it becomes crucial for pre-service and novice teachers to evaluate and analyse new materials to develop their own professional criteria and stay updated to face the new educational challenges (Shawer, 2010).

As research has pointed out, teachers tend to perceive coursebooks as resources rather than scripts and seem to make a critical use of them (Moore et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). This current evolution towards a conception of textbooks as a guide and not as a prescriptive material could be related to the educators' preference of more active learning methodologies where students are the core element (Ho et al., 2023).

1.3. Selection, adaptation and creation of teaching materials

Nowadays, teachers are fully aware of the importance of didactic materials and are involved in their selection, adaptation and creation to promote the development of learners' communicative competence (Hughes, 2019).

The first step to a successful selection of materials is considering the context in which the teaching-learning process will take place, the curriculum, and the needs and interests of learners. For a successful learning experience in the part of pupils, materials should always be learner-centred (Johansson, 2006; Kassem, 2019). In order to be able to select adequate materials, teachers have to evaluate the textbooks both with pertinent tools and a consistent criterion (Cunningsworth, 1984; 1995; Rahimpour & Hashemi, 2011; Sheldon, 1998). For this reason, teachers must be trained to be able to choose with a criterion that takes into account the specific characteristics and needs of their students.

However, teachers' incapacity to select appropriate materials that match their pupils' needs seems to act as an obstacle to an effective teaching process (Norton & Buchanan, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022). In this regard, even though teachers must be able to select and adapt existing materials, it is especially important for them to develop their ability to design and create their own learner-centred materials with the appropriate training (Bouckaert, 2016; Mahmudovna, 2023).

Selecting, adapting, designing and creating materials are different tasks that teachers have to assume as a professional and educational challenge in order to enrich the teaching-learning process and to foster the development of learners' communicative competence. Pupils' motivation is a crucial component for effective learning, and didactic materials play a key role in its maintenance and increase (Dewi & Wilany, 2023; Peacock, 1997; Wallace & Leong, 2020).

Research in this field has mainly focused on material evaluation, selection, adaptation and development (Cunningsworth, 1995; Litz, 2005; Mc Grath, 2002; Rahimpour & Hashemi, 2011). In line with this, comparative studies on different teaching materials (Ahmadi & Derakhshan, 2016) have been of great interest to researchers. However, research on the way EFL pre-service teachers perceive both teaching materials and how experienced teachers implement those materials remains scarce. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to this area of research by investigating EFL pre-service teacher beliefs about didactic resources and the use teachers make of them in order to find weak areas that may be preventing positive outcomes in the teaching and learning of EFL. In addition to this, pre-service teacher beliefs about their own teaching practice in the future regarding the implementation of didactic resources are also investigated.

The research questions that motivated this investigation were the following:

1. What are EFL pre-service teachers' beliefs about the usefulness of coursebooks for teaching and learning English effectively?
2. Do EFL pre-service teachers think veteran teachers implement coursebooks to their full potential?
3. What are the didactic challenges that pre-service teachers are willing to take as EFL teachers regarding the use of coursebooks?

2. Metodology

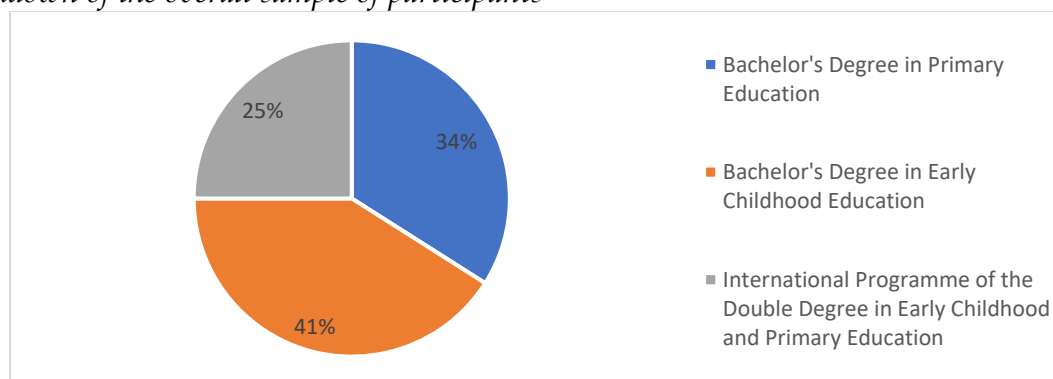
2.1. Context and participants

The context for this study was a compulsory EFL teaching programme, Foreign Language Teaching: English, that was delivered within the teaching degrees in Early Childhood and Primary Education, and the international programme of the double degree in Early Childhood and Primary Education at a university in Spain. This programme was explained in the third year of the degrees and its main aim was to promote students' reflection on the teaching and learning processes, and to acquire the necessary didactic tools so as to face the teaching of EFL successfully.

The participants were 84 pre-service teachers that participated in the study voluntarily out of a total number of 102 students that were enrolled in the teaching programme (referred to hereafter as St1-St84). Figure 1 shows the distribution of the participants within the degrees.

Figure 1

Breakdown of the overall sample of participants



Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024).

Most participants were female (79%) in the 18-23 age group (87%), whereas some were between 24 and 30 years of age (11%), and only a small number were between 31 and 40 years old (2%). A desire to work with learners from 0 to 6 years old (43%), a vocation for education (41%), and an interest to have a job that contributes positively to society (8%) were the main reasons that encouraged participants to enrol in these majors. In line with this, some participants' purposes were related to job opportunities (4%), whereas others reported to have no specific motivation (4%).

2.2. Instruments and procedure

This investigation asked participants about their beliefs regarding EFL didactic materials. A questionnaire was used to collect the data that was specifically designed for the purpose of this investigation. The questionnaire included two sections: the first section asked about the participants' background, the degree they were studying, the reasons for enrolling in that specific degree, the year, and the teaching programme they were attending. The second section included 6 questions that enquired participants about their beliefs regarding EFL teaching materials. All the questions were yes/no with some space for participants to expand their answers.

Intercoder reliability measures ICR was used by four coders to ensure reliability (Shenton, 2004). The coders used the Krippendorf's alpha measure to make sure that data was codified consistently (Krippendorf, 2004). They codified 30% of the data individually and compared the results. The interrater reliability was 90%. Then, the researchers codified the 70% remaining data.

The questionnaires were administered during class hours, and they were filled in individually and privately. All the participants consented for their anonymous data to be used for the purpose of this investigation, and they could withdraw from the study at any time.

2.3. Data analysis

Data was analysed following a mixed-methods approach (Creswell et al., 2011). Both data disposition and its analysis were mainly quantitative (Cohen et al., 2018), however, a qualitative collection and analysis of data was also done in order to support the quantitative data and to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon being investigated (Hammersley, 2013).

The yes/no questions provided the quantitative set of data, which was analysed using the percentage difference. That data was organised in graphs. The participants' comments contributed to the qualitative set of data and analysis. Those comments were given a code and grouped into two themes and into the questions (see Table 1 for themes and questions, codes, and examples of comments). Allusion to verbatim comments from the participants' answers was done to support the quantitative data shown on the graphs.

Table 1

Questions, codes, and examples of comments

Themes and questions	Code	Example of Comments
Theme 1: Pre-service teachers' beliefs about the didactic materials that were used in their EFL past learning experience.	Th1	N/A
Q1.1.: Did you like the coursebooks that were used in your EFL subjects at secondary education?	Th1Q1(Stx)	"They were boring and repetitive" (Th1Q1St5).
Q1.2.: Do you think that EFL coursebooks at secondary education were appropriate for putting the written and oral skills into practice?	Th1Q2(Stx)	"Not really because the focus on those exercises wasn't on real English that we couldn't use afterwards" (Th1Q2St80).
Q1.3.: Do you think that your EFL teachers implemented the contents of coursebooks (grammar, vocabulary, exercises, readings, writings, speakings) effectively?	Th1Q3(Stx)	"Teachers didn't really know how to use English books" (Th1Q3St32).
Q1.4.: Thinking about your EFL learning process at the teaching degree at university, do you believe that coursebooks and didactic materials are appropriate for learning English well?	Th1Q4(Stx)	"I found it easy and I enjoyed it" (Th1Q4St71).
Theme 2: Pre-service teachers' beliefs about their future teaching practice regarding coursebooks and didactic resources.	Th2	N/A
Q2.1.: As a future EFL teacher, what do you think about EFL coursebooks? Do you think that those books and their contents are appropriate for learning English well?	Th2Q1(Stx)	"They can be a good tool for teachers and pupils" (Th2Q1St23).
Q2.2.: As a future EFL teacher, will you create your own materials to support the contents on the book?	Th2Q2(Stx)	"Yes, definitely, because the exercises on books are not useful for putting the written and oral skills into practice" (Th2Q2St2).

Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024).

3. Results

Theme 1: Pre-service teachers' beliefs about the didactic materials that were used in their EFL past learning experience.

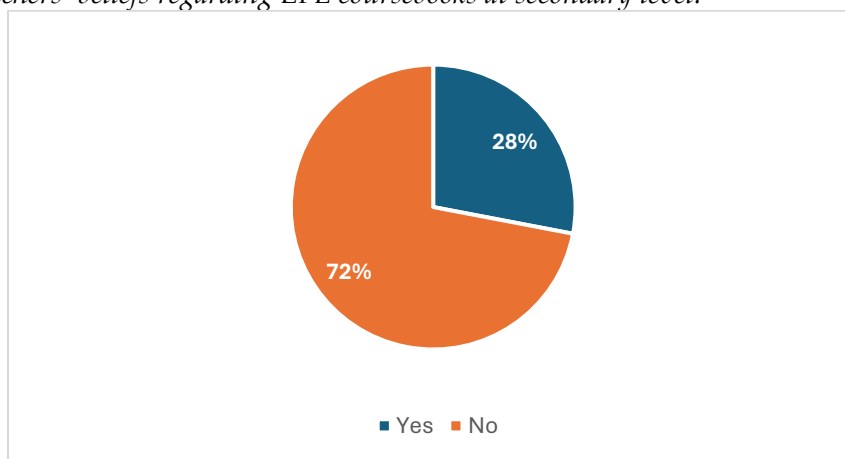
Results regarding theme 1 and the questions that were included as part of this theme are presented in this section.

Question 1.1.: Did you like the coursebooks that were used in your EFL subjects at secondary education?

Figure 2 shows results regarding pre-service teachers' beliefs about their EFL coursebooks at secondary level.

Figure 2

Pre-service teachers' beliefs regarding EFL coursebooks at secondary level.



Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024).

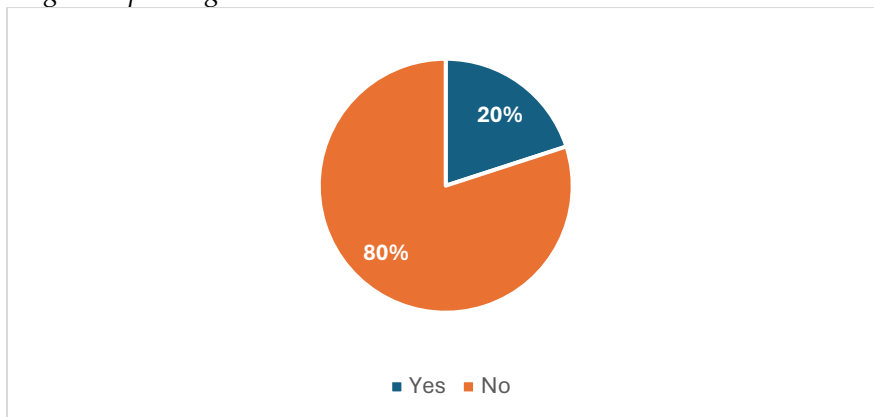
Regarding question 1.1., which asked participants about the coursebooks that were used in their EFL subjects at secondary education, results showed that 28% participants liked them, whereas 72% did not. Three trends emerged among the positive answers: (a) participants found the design and appearance of subject books attractive; (b) participants found subject books entertaining; and (c) participants found subject books were well organised and had a variety of exercises. For example, St27 commented "I liked English books because they had an attractive format with a variety of images, different activities, and theory was explained in a clear and simple way". Negative answers orbited around the inadequacy of coursebooks for pupils' effective learning of English. For example, St50 commented "I didn't like English books because they were full of units that didn't really focus on anything specific. They always started at the same grammar point and we never got to the end, so we ended up studying the same thing year after year", and St62 explained "coursebooks didn't taught English for real life because their structure was very monotonous, and exercises were repetitive and useless in the end. We really couldn't learn English for real life with those books".

Question 1.2: Do you think that EFL coursebooks at secondary education were appropriate for putting the written and oral skills into practice?

Figure 3 shows results regarding pre-service teachers' beliefs about the usefulness of their EFL coursebooks for practicing writing and speaking.

Figure 3

Pre-service teachers' beliefs regarding the usefulness of EFL coursebooks at secondary level for practicing writing and speaking



Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024).

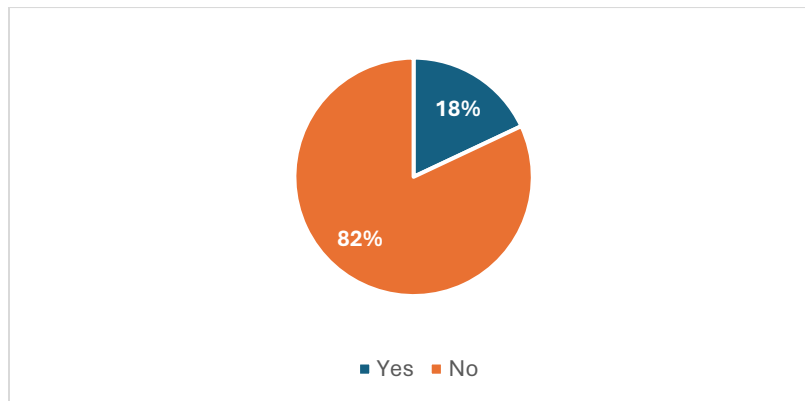
Regarding question 1.2., which enquired participants about the adequacy of EFL coursebooks for practicing the written and oral skills, results showed that 20% participants found them useful, whereas 80% believed that they were ineffective. Positive answers focused on the clear instructions and useful vocabulary that the books provided for doing a writing and a speaking. For example, St27 said “yes, books had a lot of oral activities and writings that gave us the possibility of practicing those skills. And I liked that the instructions of those exercises were so complete with a lot of guidelines to do good speakings and writings”. However, three trends emerged among the negative answers: (a) exercises on coursebooks only focused on grammar; (b) speaking and writing exercises were old-fashioned with outdated topics; and (c) those exercises were not useful to put into practice English for real purposes. For example, St43 commented “speaking and writing exercises were not really effective because they didn't really put into practice real English... we talked about things that were not really useful for us in real life”, and St2 said “the topics of those exercises lacked inspiration and were so old! We had to speak and write about walkmans, encyclopaedias... We didn't like those exercises and we found them boring and useless”.

Question 1.3: Do you think that your EFL teachers implemented the contents of coursebooks (grammar, vocabulary, exercises, readings, writings, speakings) effectively?

Figure 4 shows results regarding pre-service teachers' beliefs about their EFL teachers' effectivity at implementing the contents on coursebooks.

Figure 4

Pre-service teachers' beliefs regarding their EFL teachers' effectiveness at implementing the contents on coursebooks



Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024).

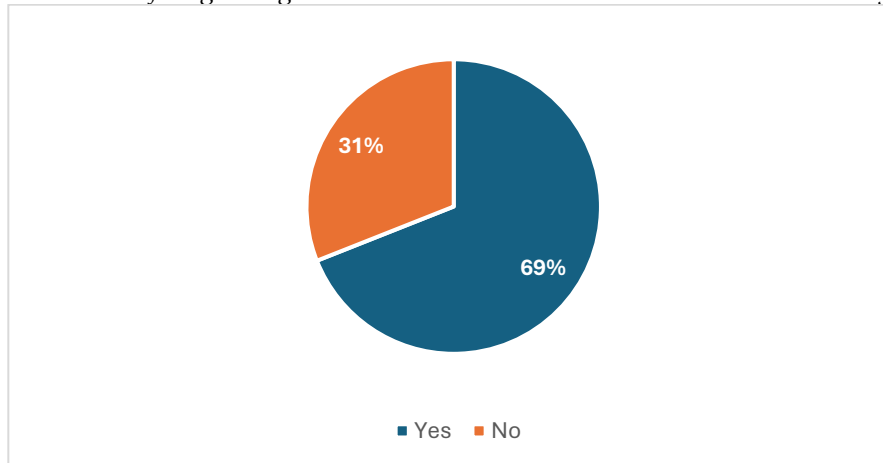
Regarding question 1.3., which delved about the effectiveness of EFL teachers at implementing the contents of coursebooks, results showed that 18% participants considered that their teachers applied the theory, activities and exercises in coursebooks adequately, whereas 82% believed that their teachers did not a good use of the contents of coursebooks. Positive answers emphasised the teachers' good pedagogies and teaching practices. For example, St9 commented "exercises in books were terribly bad, however, my teachers changed and adapted them... they really made contents jump out of the book", and St91 explained "we didn't like books a lot but our teachers gave us extra notes and handouts, and adapted the exercises, and this was really good for us to learn, yes". Negative answers, however, focused on the teachers' incapacity to implement the contents of coursebooks successfully because, according to participants, teachers lacked the ability to do it. In addition to this, participants highlighted their teachers' unwillingness to do an effort to bring extra materials to class or to change or adapt the exercises. For example, St3 commented "books were bad, yes, but teachers didn't do anything to make books useful. Teachers' dynamics with the book were always mechanical and repetitive, and explanations only consisted on reading theory from the book", and St12 explained "teachers didn't really "work" with the book because we only read it and did the activities as they appeared on it. There were no changes... and teachers didn't implement any extra activity and we sometimes felt that some activities weren't done because teachers didn't want to spend time correcting them at home".

Question 1.4: Thinking about your EFL learning process at the teaching degree at university, do you believe that coursebooks and didactic materials are appropriate for learning English well?

Figure 5 shows results regarding pre-service teachers' beliefs about EFL coursebooks and didactic materials at tertiary level.

Figure 5

Pre-service teachers' beliefs regarding EFL coursebooks and didactic materials at tertiary level



Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024).

Regarding question 1.4., which asked participants about the adequacy of EFL coursebooks and didactic materials at tertiary level, results showed that 69% participants believed that materials were appropriate, whereas 31% participants considered that they were unsuitable. Three trends emerged among the positive answers: (a) contents were varied and included areas like pronunciation, that had never been considered before in other books; (b) coursebooks and didactic materials really suited pre-service teachers' needs as practitioners and promoted English practice for real life; and (c) coursebooks and didactic materials encouraged the practice of the four skills. For example, St51 said "English materials at university are interesting and interactive, and there are plenty of exercises of all kinds to be able to practice all areas of language", and St 74 commented "coursebooks at university are really helping me to learn a lot of things that I didn't know, and they are focused to a large extent on our jobs as teachers". Negative answers emphasised that coursebooks and didactic resources at tertiary level were similar to the ones they had used at secondary education. For example, St84 explained "I think that contents are so similar to the ones at school and I find this very boring", and St35 said "these materials are good for learning, however, I feel that the distribution of contents in each unit are always the same and I don't find this motivating at all".

Theme 2: Pre-service teachers' beliefs about their future teaching practice regarding the use of coursebooks and didactic resources.

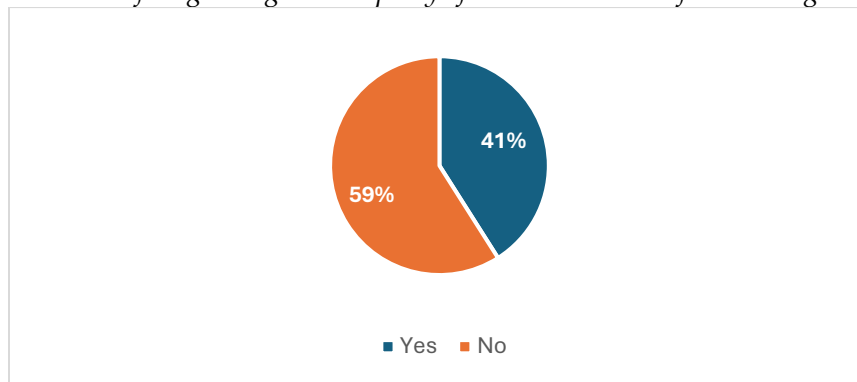
Results regarding theme 2 and the questions that were included as part of this theme are presented in this section.

Question 2.1: As a future EFL teacher, what do you think about EFL coursebooks? Do you think that those books and their contents are appropriate for learning English well?

Figure 6 shows results regarding pre-service teachers' beliefs about the adequacy of EFL coursebooks for learning.

Figure 6

Pre-service teachers' beliefs regarding the adequacy of EFL coursebooks for learning



Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024).

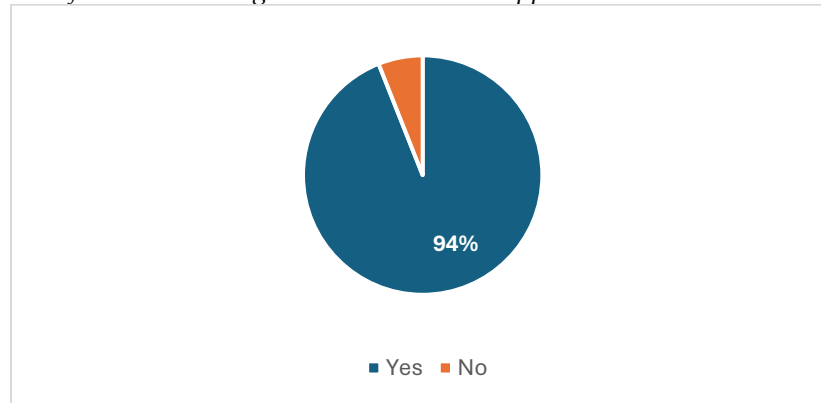
Regarding question 2.1., which enquired participants about the suitability of EFL coursebooks for learning English effectively, results showed that 41% participants found them adequate, whereas 59% found them inappropriate. Three trends emerged among the positive answers: (a) coursebooks are a good tool for the teacher; (b) coursebooks are visually attractive; and (c) exercises in coursebooks are useful to practice English. For example, St62 commented "as a teacher, I will follow the book because they are a good guide to the contents we have to teach and this makes me feel confident", and St3 explained "coursebooks are so colourful and plenty of pictures, and I find this very motivating to work with. Also, and talking about the activities, I think that they are so complete to practice English well". Three trends emerged among the negative answers: (a) coursebooks are repetitive, mechanical and monotonous; (b) coursebooks do not really focus on real English for real life; and (c) coursebooks do not facilitate oral practice. For example, St17 commented "in general, I believe that textbooks do not encourage creativity and innovation in teachers who tend to approach language as a mere set of theoretical, grammatical and vocabulary knowledge. I prefer learning by doing", and St77 explained "coursebooks do not really integrate the four skills but teach them separately, which is not real. And oral practice is rarely encouraged which is so useless for us as teachers and for learners..."

Question 2.2: As a future EFL teacher, will you create your own complementary materials to support the contents on the book?

Figure 7 shows results regarding pre-service teachers' beliefs about creating extra materials to support the EFL coursebook.

Figure 7

Pre-service teachers' beliefs about creating extra materials to support the EFL coursebook.



Source: Authors' own elaboration (2024).

Regarding question 2.2., which asked participants whether they would create extra materials to support contents on coursebooks, results showed that 94% participants would create their own resources to support the contents on books, whereas 6% participants believed that they would not create any material. Positive answers were unanimous at highlighting that creating those materials would be essential both for them as teachers to implement effective activities for pupils to be able to practice real English in real contexts, and a special emphasis was done on creating extra resources to practice the written and oral skills. For example, St44 commented "Yes, I will create my own resources because the contents on books are standard ones and not valid for all pupils... and I will only practice the written and oral skills with my own materials. Speakings and writings on books are so useless that it is impossible for pupils to get a good command on those skills". Negative answers mainly focused on the idea that those exercises on books are good on their own. For example, St31 explained "no, I won't create extra materials for those skills since exercises on books are so complete with good instructions, visually attractive and plenty of vocabulary. I think they are good enough for learning well".

4. Discussion

Regarding the first research question, which enquired about the beliefs pre-service teachers may hold about the usefulness of coursebooks for teaching and learning English effectively, results showed that most participants were unanimous at considering them useless and an obstacle for successful EFL learning, as previous research had pointed out (Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2021; Richards, 1993). Results have shown that participants felt frustrated during their previous EFL learning experiences since they were aware of the limiting effect that coursebooks represented for developing a good command of EFL. In line with this, participants considered that coursebooks did not facilitate real English practice since exercises were repetitive and mechanical tasks that generally delved about the same contents. In this regard, participants thought that coursebooks only focused on grammar and vocabulary, which did not always match the pupils' level of English, a finding in line with previous studies (Lee, 2013; Rahmanpanah & Mohseni, 2017). All in all, participants believed that coursebooks were monotonous, boring, old or obsolete, which did not motivate them into EFL learning. Only a minority of participants found coursebooks useful and a good tool for developing English skills that included a lot of practice and detailed explanations, as previous research had reported (Harmer, 2007). Those participants also found books visually attractive, well structured, coherent and logical, a finding in line with previous research (O'Neill, 1982; Tomlinson, 2011) and believed that they were a good guide to the contents one has to learn, as

previous research had pointed out (Damayanti et al., 2023; Medina, 2008; Weninger & Kiss, 2013).

Regarding the second research question, which enquired participants whether they believed experienced teachers use coursebooks to their full potential or not, results showed that most pre-service teachers were unanimous at thinking that veteran teachers fail at implementing the contents of coursebooks effectively. Participants carried out an inner process of reflection that allowed them to revisit their own teachers' teaching practices to conclude that instruction is still teacher-centred on many occasions, that active methodologies are usually neglected on the part of the teacher, and that little room is left for pupils to learn by doing, which results both in a weak development of their creativity and in lack of motivation, as previous studies had reported (Allwright, 1981; Rathert & Cabaroğlu, 2021).

In this regard, participants reported to have generally undergone a frustrating EFL learning experience since they were fully aware that their teachers' repetitive and monotonous instructional procedures were not favouring English learning. In line with this, results have further shown that despite the negative opinion that participants held about coursebooks, they believed that experienced teachers' instruction and attitudes contributed to that ineffectiveness of coursebooks. In this regard, pre-service teachers warned about their teachers' unwillingness to make an extra effort to implement activities that required autonomous individual work on the part of the teacher, such as corrections, evaluation or creation and adaptation of supplementary materials. As a result, some contents of coursebooks were discarded from being implemented in the classroom. In this regard, participants commented that teachers who did an effort into bringing new materials to the classroom, had a motivating attitude with learners, and tried to meet the learning needs of pupils were highly valued, a finding in line with previous research (Dewi & Wilany, 2023; Mohseni, 2017; Peacock, 1997; Rahmanpanah & Mohseni, 2017; Wallace & Leong, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022).

Regarding the third research question that enquired what instructional challenges are pre-service teachers willing to take as EFL teachers regarding coursebooks, results showed that most participants were unanimous at commenting that they would continue using the coursebook as a guide to know the contents they would have to teach, however, they would both create their own materials to support the contents in the coursebook, and adapt already existing resources either from the coursebook or from other sources in order to implement tasks that meet both teachers' and learners' needs. In this regard, participants also commented that they would like to develop their own criteria for conducting an effective selection and evaluation of materials, a finding in line with previous studies (Bouckaert, 2016; Mahmudovna, 2023). In line with this, participants also referred to instructional procedures as a way both to accompany the coursebook and to integrate it in the learning process. More specifically, learner-centred teaching approaches, active teacher-pupils-teacher interaction, learning by doing, and leaving some space for improvisation and spontaneous teaching performance were some of the teaching practices that participants reported to be willing to apply when they become EFL teachers themselves in order to teach successfully, as previous studies had reported (Atkinson, 2021; Grammatosi & Harwood, 2021; Ho et al., 2023; Moore et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022).

5. Conclusion

This study has explored EFL pre-service teachers' beliefs both regarding the effectiveness of coursebooks for teaching and learning, and the use experienced teachers do of coursebooks to evaluate whether limitations derive from books themselves or also depend on teachers'

performance. In addition to this, this investigation has provided insight of the challenges that prospective teachers are willing to take as regards a fruitful use of those books.

This research is very telling into what comes to be effective EFL teaching. Knowing what EFL pre-service teachers think about already existing didactic resources can provide an opportunity to stakeholders to act as agents of change to improve one of the contextual elements that may affect successful EFL teaching and learning. Students demand authentic and appropriate materials based on real life situations that include useful pieces of language and allow innovative teaching techniques in the part of the teacher. Teaching practices, in turn, seem to complement coursebooks since they can either boost their potential or limit it.

The mixed-methods approach of this study has allowed to conduct a detailed and accurate analysis of pre-service teachers' beliefs; however, the validity of these results should be tested both in a larger cohort of participants and in different contexts. Investigating pre-service teacher beliefs regarding coursebooks in other FL could also contribute to have a full perspective of the situation regarding this important teaching tool.

This investigation has just explored pre-service teacher beliefs, further research should also investigate novice in-service teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the use of those didactic resources to have a general picture of the situation regarding the use of EFL coursebooks.

Understanding what pre-service teachers think about the role of coursebooks in the teaching and learning process seems mandatory to find weak areas to be improved for successful learning to occur. Materials seem to have evolve substantially; however, further action needs to be taken for them to be really effective that should also focus on training the teachers for them to use materials effectively.

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