

## **An Evaluation of Grammar Lessons in Selected Moroccan ELT Textbooks**

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper is built on the assumption that there are no perfect language teaching textbooks; therefore, it hopes to draw the attention of Moroccan ELT practitioners to the viability of using textbook evaluation to improve the quality of these teaching-learning materials. It aims to investigate ways in which grammar lessons are presented in three Moroccan second year Baccalaureate ELT textbooks currently used in public high schools. It examines the extent to which these lessons help both teachers and students meet the teaching-learning objectives. The study adopts a mixed methods approach and uses content analysis that combines both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. Findings reveal that, although the three textbooks present their grammatical content in different ways, they succeeded in providing challenging grammar contents that suit the needs and interests of the learners. On the other hand, they demonstrate that these textbooks contain problems related to relevance of visual aids, gradation of grammar lessons and authenticity of grammatical examples. Finally, the study concludes with a number of implications that inform future EFL textbook design in Morocco.*

**Keywords:** *ELT, textbook evaluation, grammar, content analysis, Morocco*

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

Unaware of the ongoing debate among ELT practitioners over the most adequate and effective method to use in teaching grammar, English language learners consider it a central component of English language learning and view it as the most important element of a language course according to the Ministry of National Education [henceforth MNE] (2007). Admittedly, not all practitioners agree on the centrality of grammar in a language course. Some believe that it is high time languages are taught without central focus on grammar, while others maintain that teaching grammar is a key to developing learners' communicative competence. Amidst this heated debate arise questions related to ways in which grammar should be incorporated and taught through the curriculum. Decisions related to the adoption of a certain methodological framework for teaching grammar are largely apparent in the way grammar is presented in textbooks.

Textbooks are to a language teaching classroom the same as grammar is to a language teaching curriculum: they are both essential and problematic. Although textbooks remain at the heart of every teaching learning context (Richards, 2001) providing resources for both learners and teachers and serving to mold the official guidelines into concrete activities, many researchers (Ait Bouzid, Erguig & Yeou, 2016; Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; Jibreel 2015; Litz, 2005; McDonough & Shaw, 2003; Sheldon, 1988; Tomlinson, 2010) stress that textbooks are highly susceptible to containing problems related to various social, cultural, pedagogical and linguistic issues. These researchers point out that such weaknesses can affect learners' attitudes towards their immediate environments and their attitudes towards the teaching learning process as well. Therefore, the content of textbooks must be continuously assessed in order to identify possible strengths and weaknesses and examine the extent to which this content agrees with learners' needs and interests on the one hand, and with the objectives of the curriculum and the demands of the job market on the other. Unavoidably, textbook evaluation is a key practice that contributes not only to the promotion of the quality of textbooks, but also to the refinement of the teaching learning process. However, research indicates that this practice is still in its initial stages in Morocco (Adaskou, Britten, & Fahsi, 1990; Ait Bouzid, 2017; Ait Bouzid & Tamer, 2012; Benatabou, 2010; Elboubekri, 2013; Laabidi, 2014).

### **1.2 Previous Studies**

To a great extent, Cunningsworth (1995) succeeded in establishing the basics of the analysis of grammar content in EFL textbooks when he stated that they should be examined in terms of the items that are included and the extent to which these items satisfy the needs of the learners. Also, textbooks should be examined in terms of whether they focus on form or on meaning since EFL textbooks are supposed to exhibit a balance between fluency and accuracy through teaching both form and use inseparably to boost the learners' communicative competence. Other aspects of the evaluation of the grammatical content are concerned with whether newly introduced items are

broken down into units smaller enough to facilitate learning and whether these new items are compared and contrasted with previously learned ones. Finally, in case a grammar item has more than one meaning, it is necessary to examine whether all relevant meanings were discussed.

Similarly, Azarnoosh and Ganji (2014), Baleghizadeh and Gordani (2012) and Sabzalipoor and Koosha (2014) examined the quality of several Iranian ELT textbooks. The findings indicated that grammar items were presented gradually from simple to complex and from easy to difficult followed by good practice exercises. Also, the presentation of the items was clear and comprehensible. Nevertheless, several problems related to recycling newly introduced grammar items were identified.

Recycling a newly introduced grammar item seems to be a common problem among even 'good' textbooks. Textbooks are supposed not only to provide enough practice for the new vocabulary item during the grammar lessons, but also to provide opportunities where learners could retrieve and use these words in subsequent reading, listening and grammar lessons so that learners would not forget the words soon. The repetition serves as an indirect way of reinforcing the learners' retention, understanding and use of the words even when the focus is on other language items.

Javanmehr (2013) and Maleki et al. (2014) explored the effectiveness of grammar lessons included in various ELT textbook used in Iranian high schools. The findings demonstrated that grammar and vocabulary were not presented in meaningful authentic situations since the activities lacked any logical order in presenting grammatical points as the sequencing and gradation of lessons did not flow from simple to complex or from easy to difficult. Also, the study showed that there was no logical sequencing of grammatical items. Also, textbooks did not provide activities that allowed for students' creativity in grammar practice. These activities were mainly designed according to traditional structural approaches that did not cater for developing the learners' communicative competence. In general, the researchers concluded that these textbooks presented language in a way that was inauthentic and ineffective.

In similar terms, Tok (2014), Zohrabi et al. (2014) and Adelifar and Arjmandi (2014) investigated the authenticity and appropriateness of grammar content in Iranian and Turkish EFL textbooks. In general, the findings revealed that, first, the language they presented was not authentic; it was mainly mechanical and artificial. Also, the language level seemed below the learners' current ability. In addition, there was no logic in the presentation and gradation of grammar and the practice activities and exercises seemed very easy and not challenging to the learners. They were mainly mechanical and did not enhance the learners' communicative competence. The researcher also identified that these textbooks did not give sufficient detailed explanations of grammar structures.

The present study hopes to draw the attention of English language practitioners in Morocco to the viability of using textbook evaluation for improving the content of ELT textbooks with

particular focus on their grammar content. It aims to examine the extent to which select Moroccan ELT textbooks present grammatical contents that have the potential of gearing learners' communicative competence. It also aims to investigate the extent to which these textbooks succeed in providing grammar contents that align with the pedagogical requirements of MNE (2007) with regard to selection, presentation, gradation, sequencing and recycling. The study eventually aims to draw implications for educational policy makers, textbooks designers and English language teachers to enable them to overcome any inconveniences related to teaching and learning grammar in current and future ELT textbooks.

The study is informed by the theoretical framework of the Standards-Based Approach [SBA] (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [ACTFL], 1996) which guides the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language in Morocco (MNE, 2007). This approach adopts a moderate view towards the teaching of grammar through using it as a means to develop learners' communicative competence. Grammar is therefore an effective language tool that enables learners to develop the competencies and standards included with the five main goal areas of Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities. SBA encourages an eclectic pedagogy that allows teachers to be flexible in teaching grammar implicitly or explicitly, communicatively or analytically through systematic teaching-learning processes that allow for observation, identification, analysis, practice and production of various grammatical rules. SBA highly values the role textbook evaluation plays in refining not only the quality of the contents of language teaching textbooks, but also the virtue of teachers' professional development (Ait Bouzid, Erguig & Yeou, 2016). It also entices the investigation of the grammatical contents in these textbooks and provides several guidelines that stress the importance of examining the selection, gradation, sequencing and recycling schemes adopted by these textbooks and the extent to which the grammar content enables learners to develop their communicative competence effectively (see Cisar, 2000; Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2006).

Three main research questions guide the present study:

1. To what extent do the textbooks present grammar contents that boost learners' communicative competence?
2. To what extent do they present grammar contents that align with the official guidelines issued by MNE (2007)?
3. How do these textbooks present grammar lessons with regard to gradation, sequencing and recycling schemes?

## **2. Research Methodology**

The study adopted a mixed-methods design using content analysis as a mixed method that combines both quantitative and qualitative techniques (Krippendorff, 2013). The objective is to evaluate the content of three Moroccan ELT textbook currently used in teaching second year Baccalaureate students in public schools, namely *Gateway to English 2* (Hassim, Blibil & Rasmy,

2007), *Insights into English 2* (Najbi & El Haddad, 2007) and *Ticket to English 2* (Hammani, Ahssen & Tansaoui, 2007).

The three textbooks were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively to examine the extent to which they presented grammar lessons that can boost learners' communicative competence. The purpose of the quantitative analysis is to identify whether the number of grammar activities is sufficient for promoting learners' communicative competence. The purpose of the qualitative analysis is to identify whether the selection, gradation, sequencing and recycling schemes align with the official guidelines of SBA (ACTFL, 1996) and MNE (2007).

The quantitative analysis consists of making frequency counts of grammar activities to identify the number of activities that promote the three stages of the learning process: presentation, practice and production. The qualitative analysis consists of analyzing the gradation, sequencing and recycling schemes to identify whether the three textbooks present grammar lessons from simple to complex and from easy to difficult and whether they present them in ways that allow learners to review and re-encounter newly learned items in subsequent lessons within and outside their respective units. The interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data is fused with the qualitative description that follows each table since it is impossible to separate qualitative analysis from interpretation according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007).

### 3. Findings and Discussion

The three textbooks present grammar lessons differently. These lessons are placed under different headings. *Gateway to English 2* uses the label 'Grammar', *Insights into English 2* uses the label 'Brush your grammar', while *Ticket to English 2* uses the title 'Study grammar'. In *Gateway to English 2* and *Ticket to English 2*, the grammar lesson is usually placed between reading and writing lessons. In *Insights into English 2*, the grammar lesson is usually placed at the end of the unit, after the writing lesson except for Unit 5, where the lesson of linking words is actually placed before the writing lesson. It is noticed that *Gateway to English 2* and *Ticket to English 2* respect the order of the grammar lessons which they present in their respective tables of content. *Insights into English 2*, however, respects neither the order nor the content of its table of contents. For instance, the table of content entitled 'Course Overview' indicates that linking words, modals and prefixes and suffixes are grammar lessons included in units 6 and 7; however, these lessons are actually presented under the headings 'Use English communicatively' and 'Learn how to learn' reserved for lessons of functions and learning skills, respectively. A similar problem is encountered in the same textbook as the table of content presents the lesson of expressing purpose as a grammar lesson while it is actually presented as a pre-reading activity in Unit 3. In addition, the grammar lessons are presented at an average rate of one lesson per unit, except in *Insights into English 2* and *Ticket to English 2*, which include two grammar lessons in unit 1 and unit 9, respectively. This problem could have been avoided especially in *Insights into English 2* because Units 6 and 7 do not contain any grammar lesson, as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Taxonomy of grammar lessons and exercises**

	<i>Gateway to English 2</i>		<i>Insights to English 2</i>		<i>Ticket to English 2</i>	
	Title of Lessons	N° of Exercises	Title of Lessons	N° of Exercises	Title of Lessons	N° of Exercises
<b>Unit 1</b>	Gerund & infinitive	5	Past perfect	5	Gerund & infinitive	3
<b>Unit 2</b>	Past perfect	6	Phrasal verbs	1	Modals	5
<b>Unit 3</b>	Phrasal verbs	5	Future perfect	4	Past perfect	5
<b>Unit 4</b>	Passive voice	6	Phrasal verb	5	Future perfect	7
<b>Unit 5</b>	Future perfect	4	Reported speech	7	Passive voice	6
<b>Unit 6</b>	Conditional 3	4	Linking words	2	Phrasal verbs	7
<b>Unit 7</b>	Reported speech	6		0	Reported speech	5
<b>Unit 8</b>	Relative clauses	6	Gerund & infinitive	8	Linking words	4
<b>Unit 9</b>	Modal verbs	6	Relative clauses	4	Conditional 3	5
<b>Unit 10</b>	Phrasal verbs	4	Passive voice	10	Wishes	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>46</b>	Relative clauses	6
					<b>11</b>	<b>56</b>

Table 1 shows that the three textbooks present approximately the same lessons in a different order and that they contain an average of one grammar lesson per unit. Gerund and infinitive, past perfect, modal verbs, future perfect, phrasal verbs, relative clauses and reported speech are grammar lessons that are commonly identified in the grammar section in each one of the three textbooks. In fact, 31 grammar lessons are included in these textbooks: 11 in *Gateway to English 2*, 10 in *Insights into English 2* and another 10 in *Ticket to English 2*. It is observed that *Ticket to English 2* contains the highest number of grammar practice exercises featuring 56 exercises, *Gateway to English 2* contains 52 exercises, while only 29 grammar practice exercise are identified in *Insights into English 2*. The grammar lessons are presented with a number of practice exercises that varies between 1 exercise for a phrasal verbs lesson in *Insights into English 2* and 10 exercises for the passive voice lesson in the same textbook. Thus, the average rate for grammar practice exercises per lesson is 5 exercises in *Gateway to English 2*, 3 exercises in *Insights into English 2* and 5 exercises in *Ticket to English 2*.

The selection of new lessons like past perfect, future perfect, conditional type three and gerund and infinitive establishes a linear progression of the content of the curriculum as it continues to build on lessons that have been taught in the first year Baccalaureate. Other lessons like modal verbs, passive voice, reported speech and relative clauses are intended to improve students' mastery of the notions and rules that govern these lessons, taking into account that these lessons were introduced insufficiently in the first-year baccalaureate. For instance, the three textbooks include the lesson of phrasal verbs among grammar lessons despite the fact that it is mainly concerned with understanding the meaning of various phrasal verbs and using them in the appropriate context. Therefore, it more appropriate if these verbs, are introduced within vocabulary lessons since there are no strict rules that underlie their use. In addition, *Insights into*

*English 2* and *Ticket to English 2* include the lesson of linking words within grammar lessons while they should actually be included within writing lessons as indicated in the guidelines of the MNE (2007). Some linking words expressing purpose, concession, cause-effect and contrast are not included within the lessons of functions, as stated by the MNE (2007). Furthermore, *Ticket to English 2* presents the lesson of expressing wishes as a grammar lesson, while *Gateway to English 2* and *Insights into English 2* present it as a lesson of functions. The latter is more appropriate according to the guidelines of MNE (2007).

The gradation of grammar lessons is conflictual among the three textbooks. *Gateway to English 2* and *Ticket to English 2* choose Gerund and infinitive as the first grammar lesson, while *Insights into English 2* starts by the lesson of the Past perfect. Practically, the second Baccalaureate school year usually starts with a diagnostic test that is followed by a global review week where teachers help students refresh their memories about lessons that they covered the previous year. During this review, focus is usually laid on simple past, present perfect and past continuous tenses. Therefore, starting the first unit with the past perfect would allow learners to compare and contrast the previously learned forms with the new one. Another reason why using past perfect as an initial grammar lesson is that it requires mastering the simple past and past participle forms of both regular and irregular verbs. Starting with the lesson of gerund and infinitive may lead to a break in the sequence that follows the initial general review since the students would not feel that there is a link between what they studied the previous year and what they are studying the current year. Also, teachers will have to review simple past and past participle form of verbs at some point when the past perfect lesson is encountered. *Gateway to English 2* introduces the passive voice in Unit 4 before introducing the future perfect and the modal verbs in Units 5 and 9, respectively. Thus, students are not provided with rules concerning the passive forms of the future perfect and modal verbs. This problem is successfully avoided by *Insights into English 2* and *Ticket to English 2* by delaying the presentation of passive voice till all the tenses, including past perfect, future perfect and modal verbs, are taught. In addition, some lessons such as gerund and infinitive and phrasal verbs require the use of memorization of long lists of verbs, their uses and their meanings. Consequently, with reference to the intrinsic difficulty of the items they present (Richards, 2001), these lessons should not be taught first.

The third issue is related to recycling grammar items in the three textbooks. In fact, not many newly introduced grammar items are exploited in readings, listening and dialogues throughout these textbooks; the presentation of new items is often confined to the grammar lessons and the review section that follows each two units. For instance, placing grammar lessons at the last page of the unit in *Insights into English 2* does not allow for recycling the newly introduced grammar structures in reading texts and recognizing them in listening and writing lessons. Also, placing grammar right before the writing lesson in *Gateway to English 2* and *Ticket to English 2* gives room for students to practice the newly introduced grammar item only in their writing productions, but it denies them the opportunity to encounter and recognize these items in reading and listening lessons. On a particular level, it is observed that in *Insights into English 2*

and *Ticket to English 2* placing passive voice after past perfect, future perfect and modal verbs provides learners with a chance of practicing these three structures under different focus in the passive voice lesson. This opportunity is not well grasped in *Gateway to English 2* because the passive voice lesson precedes those of modal verbs and past perfect. It is also noticed in *Ticket to English 2* that the lesson of conditional type 3 provides a good opportunity for recycling past perfect and modals; unfortunately however, *Insights into English 2* does not include this lesson among grammar lessons, while *Gateway to English 2* presents the lesson before presenting modal verbs, missing thus the opportunity to recycle modal verbs.

**Table 2: Typology of grammar exercises**

	<i>Gateway 2</i>	<i>Insights 2</i>	<i>Ticket 2</i>	Total
1. Read & notice	9	9	14	32
2. Multiple choice gap filling	1	1	6	8
3. Fill in a chart	4	0	4	8
4. Choosing from a list	5	5	4	14
5. Changing verb form	5	1	8	14
6. Read & replace (substitution)	1	2	0	3
7. Read & classify	0	0	1	1
8. Read & understand meaning	2	1	0	3
9. Read and evaluate	5	0	0	5
10. Read the rules	4	1	2	7
11. Complete the rule	2	3	3	8
12. Answer questions about rules	0	2	0	2
13. Support rules with examples	0	2	1	3
14. Modeling	0	0	1	1
15. Transform text into dialogue	1	2	0	3
16. Use situation to form sentences	0	0	1	1
17. Rewriting sentences	7	4	8	19
18. Completing sentences	0	1	0	1
19. Completing a dialogue	0	2	0	2
20. Matching	6	4	3	13
21. Discussing a topic (dialogue)	0	3	0	3
22. Make sentences from pictures	0	2	0	2
23. Role playing	0	1	0	1
Total	52	46	56	154

Table 2 presents the number and types of grammar practice exercises identified in the three textbooks being analyzed. It shows that 154 grammar practice exercises are identified in these textbooks: *Gateway to English 2* contains 52; *Insights into English 2* contains 46 and *Ticket to English 2* contains 56. It also shows that 23 different types of exercises are identified although no textbook features them all. In fact, 13 types of exercises are identified in *Gateway to English 2* and *Ticket to English 2* and 18 exercise types in *Insights into English 2*. It is noticed that ‘read and notice’ exercises dominate the three textbook with a total number of 33 exercises, ‘rewriting sentences’ is mentioned 19 times, ‘choosing from a list’ and ‘changing the verb form’ are



identified 14 times, while 'matching' exercises are used 13 times. 7 types of exercises including 'completing sentences', 'completing a dialogue', 'completing the rule, answering questions about the rule', 'giving examples to support the rule', 'using pictures to make sentences', 'role-playing' and 'discussing a topic in a dialogue' are exclusively identified in *Insights into English 2*. Exercises asking students to read and evaluate sentences are only included in *Gateway to English 2*, while exercises enticing students to read and classify sentences as well as those asking them to write sentences according to a model are exclusive to *Ticket to English 2*.

In *Gateway to English 2*, reading and noticing, rewriting sentences and matching exercises alongside choosing items from a list and verb conjugation constitute the most frequently solicited exercises with frequency rates that vary between 9 and 5 appearances each. Similarly, *Ticket to English 2* makes use of verb conjugation, multiple choice gap filling and sentence rewriting with rates that vary between 6 and 8 occurrences each. It is also notable that *Ticket to English 2* overuses the 'read and notice' exercise since this exercise appears more than once in the same lesson (frequency rate is 1.4 per unit, as compared with 0.9 in the other textbooks). *Insights into English 2* does not make use of the same exercise type as frequently as *Gateway to English 2* and *Ticket to English 2* because it uses a more diverse repertoire of exercises, which allows it to avoid overusing the same types of exercises.

The qualitative analysis of the types of grammar lessons included in the three textbooks reveals that they encourage teaching grammar inductively. It is observed that 'read and notice' exercises dominate the three textbooks. These exercises ask students to read texts, dialogues or a set of sentences in order to observe a certain grammatical structure. Such exercises enable students to notice a grammatical structure and raise their awareness of the form and use of that target structure. Noticing exercises usually comprise two main elements; the first element consists in reading and answering comprehension questions that allow learners to grasp the context in which the structure is being used, and the second element consists in underlining, extracting or copying the observed grammar structure. Thus, these 'read and notice' exercises are basically directed towards teaching grammar inductively since they help students recognize the form of the target grammatical structure and understand the context in which it is used.

Read and notice exercises are often followed by exercises that target the formulation of the grammar rule that underlies the target grammar structure. Thus, a variety of consciousness-raising exercises that deal with forming or using the rule are identified in these textbooks, such as completing the rule, answering questions about the rule, writing examples to support the rule and simply reading the rule already provided in the grammar summary. Exercises of completing or answering questions about the rule help student develop their critical thinking skills and metacognitive awareness as they are given part of the rule and they are asked to complete the missing part by observing and analyzing the underlined elements in the reading passage. Other exercises enticing students to provide examples that support the rule help them to improve both their creative thinking skills and their ability to demonstrate the extent to which they actually grasp the rule being studied. This latter type of exercises allows learners to receive immediate

formative feedback from their teachers. An alternative type of exercises is provided by *Gateway to English 2* through presenting exercises that ask students to read sentences and evaluate their correctness based on their own understanding of the rules. These exercises are instruments that help learners test their judgements and improve not only their evaluation strategies but also their understanding of the use and form of the newly introduced grammar structure. Nevertheless, exercises that merely ask students to read the rules are useless unless they are part of a task that aims at helping learners check their understanding of the form and use of the target language structure rule.

Comprehension check exercises are vital constituents of a grammar lesson. The three textbooks include several types of grammar exercises that aim at helping students check their understanding of the target grammar structure. Thus, matching exercises, multiple-choice exercises, filling the gap from a list and verb form conjugation are often frequently identified in these lessons. While multiple-choice exercises and matching exercises require the use of analytical and critical thinking skills, students may simply guess the answer. Therefore, these exercises should include an instruction that requires the students to justify their answers. Verb form conjugation and other forms of transformation exercises cannot be performed correctly unless the students actually master the rules underlying the form of the structure. Nevertheless, the transformation may be a mere mechanical process in case the student does not understand the context in which the form is actually produced. For instance, in *Ticket to English 2*, students are asked to write the verbs between brackets in the future perfect. It is often observed that some of the students start transforming mechanically all the verbs in the future perfect without paying attention to time expression ‘... by 2010’ in 10 sentences (exercise 4, 6 and 7, pp. 58-59).

The third set of exercises encourages students to use the newly learned structure to produce their own sentences. They are divided into two types; the first one is controlled and the second one is free. For instance, exercises that require students to rewrite sentences, transforming a text into a dialogue, completing a dialogue and using situations to form sentences are examples of controlled productions in which students are not totally free to produce sentences as they wish; they are guided by a pre-established context that limits their creativity. On the other hand, exercises that allow students to produce dialogues, act out role-plays and describe pictures are examples of free production exercises which are unfortunately exclusive to *Insights into English 2*; *Gateway to English 2* and *Ticket to English 2* do not include free production exercises which allow students to “prepare and present an extended piece of discourse in which the target rule is used accurately, meaningfully and appropriately” (MNE, 2007: 39). One way in which textbooks can achieve this stated goal is by including and using pictures and images as supporting elements that serve the communicative teaching of grammar structures. Table 3 presents findings related to this particular issue.

**Table 3: Number of pictures identified in grammar lessons**

	<i>Gateway to English 2</i>		<i>Insights into English 2</i>		<i>Ticket to English 2</i>	
<b>Unit 1</b>	2	Irrelevant	2	Relevant	1	Irrelevant
<b>Unit 2</b>	1	Irrelevant	1	Irrelevant	1	Irrelevant
<b>Unit 3</b>	0		3	Irrelevant	0	
<b>Unit 4</b>	0		2	Relevant	0	
<b>Unit 5</b>	0		0		3	Irrelevant
<b>Unit 6</b>	1	Irrelevant	0		0	
<b>Unit 7</b>	1	Irrelevant	0		2	Irrelevant
<b>Unit 8</b>	3	Irrelevant	5	4 Relevant	0	
<b>Unit 9</b>	0		2	Irrelevant	0	
<b>Unit 10</b>	0		0		1	Irrelevant
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8 Irrelevant</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8 relevant</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8 irrelevant</b>

Table 3 demonstrates that 32 pictures are included in the grammar lessons throughout the three textbooks. It also shows that only 8 pictures are actually relevant to the teaching of the select grammar items as they are explicitly used as an active teaching tool. The table also indicates that all of these relevant pictures are identified in *Insights into English 2*. This textbook contains 16 pictures in total; 8 of them are effectively employed in teaching the intended grammatical structures, while 8 pictures are used for purposes other than the teaching of the target grammar structure. Each one of *Gateway to English 2* and *Ticket to English 2* contain 8 pictures that are irrelevant to the purpose of the grammar lessons. Some grammar lessons included in several units (5, 4 and 4 units in *Gateway to English 2*, *Insights into English 2* and *Ticket to English 2*, respectively) do not feature any pictures or images.

The qualitative analysis of the identified pictures shows that *Gateway to English 2* and *Ticket to English 2* do not use pictures as effectively as *Insights into English 2*. In *Gateway to English 2* and *Ticket to English 2*, pictures are used as visual illustrations that present characters that feature in a text or in a particular example. Thus, it is observed that most of the pictures included in these textbooks facilitate the understanding of the reading passages that are usually presented in the 'read and notice' exercises which serve to introduce the new grammar structure. These two textbooks often include pictures that provide a visual illustration facilitating the understanding of some vocabulary words that are encountered in sentences of various grammar exercises. The pictures and images used in these textbooks do not have any direct or indirect relationship with the grammatical structure being taught; they are usually used as visual aids that aim at explaining difficult words or understanding the context of the reading passage of the 'read and notice' exercise. Therefore, these pictures are to a great extent irrelevant to the purpose of the grammar lessons since they by no means help learners recognize, practice and produce the newly introduced grammar structure.

*Insights into English 2*, however, makes effective use of pictures in ways that encourage learners to use the newly introduced grammar forms to make good use of these pictures. This textbook places pictures at the heart of the grammar activities by using them as the main source of

instructions. For instance, in Unit 1, students are required to look at two pictures and discuss what had happened before they were taken. The pictures are authentic and may enable students to create various scenarios of what had happened before they were taken. The purpose of using these pictures is to allow learners to produce sentences using the newly introduced grammar structure: the past perfect. Similarly, in Unit 8, the students are asked to build up sentences expressing different uses of gerund and infinitive forms using a set of 4 pictures related to sports and health. Furthermore, in Unit 4, two pictures are used to illustrate the difference between direct and reported speech by including dialogue bubbles in which spoken words are included to illustrate direct speech. Therefore, it is observed that *Insights into English 2* employs pictures effectively in teaching various grammar structures through enticing learners to analyze the pictures using their creative thinking skills as well as their imagination to produce contextualized sentences in which the grammatical structure is used correctly. However, there are instances in which *Insights into English 2* makes irrelevant use of pictures in ways that are similar to *Gateway to English 2* and *Ticket to English 2*.

The analysis of the grammar content throughout the three textbooks identified three main problematic categories. The first category is the gradation of the grammar lessons which, in accordance with Cunningsworth (1995), does not generally flow smoothly from simple to complex and from easy to difficult. In fact, the three textbooks conform to the description by Maleki et al. (2014) and Tok (2014) since they exhibit three different gradation styles that do not reveal any logical order in gradation and sequencing of lessons to the extent that the three textbooks give the impression that these grammar lessons are not related at all. The second questionable category of is relevant to recycling grammar items as indicated by Sabzalipoor and Koosha (2014) and Azarnoosh and Ganji (2014). The three textbooks do contain enough activities that allow learners to encounter a given grammatical structure after they have finished the lesson introducing such structure either within or after the teaching unit in which the lesson is included. The third category is that of production activities. In line with Javanmehr (2013), Zohrabi et al. (2014) and Adilifar and Arjmandi (2014), these textbooks do not contain a sufficient number of activities that entice learners to produce the different grammar structures in both oral and written forms in communicative, contextualized and authentic situations.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The present study was an attempt to evaluate the grammar content of three Moroccan ELT textbooks currently used in teaching the second year Baccalaureate level in public high schools. Its aim was to examine the extent to which these textbooks present grammar contents that has the potential of gearing learners' communicative competence, with particular focus on investigating their selection, gradation, sequencing and recycling schemes. The findings revealed several problems related to the selection, presentation, gradation, sequencing and recycling of grammar lessons throughout the three textbooks. Based on these findings, the present study concludes with a set of recommendation that are addressed to teachers and textbook designers to inform current textbooks' use and future textbooks' design:

- Teachers should use textbooks flexibly without strictly following the order of lessons within units to allow for better gradation, sequencing and recycling schemes
- They should supplement the textbooks with more authentic production activities that foster fluency in lessons of grammar,
- Textbook designers should refer to the official guidelines issued by the educational authorities in the processes of selection and organization of grammar lessons
- They should ensure that grammar lessons are organized gradually from simple to complex and from easy to difficult to ensure better recycling schemes; therefore, they should always create a linear development of learning that builds on what students have learned in previous years
- They should include instances of newly introduced grammar items in reading passages, listening texts and writing assignments to help students recognize and retain these items more authentically
- They should present all tenses first, before passive voice, indirect speech and conditional type three
- Images and pictures included in the textbooks should be purposeful in that they should contribute the learning process by facilitating the understanding of situations or by providing support for practicing the newly learned items; they should not be merely used for decorative and aesthetic purposes

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