(IM)POLITENESS CONTENT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF PERNAMBUCO: A TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This article aims to examine to what extent the textbook *Time to share -7° ano* (2018) addresses (im)politeness. For that purpose, it takes into consideration the guidelines regarding learner's pragmatic competence as defined by the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* - BNCC (2018). In particular, the ability EF07LI01 which highlights the importance of conflict resolution in oral interactions for learners from *Ensino Fundamental*. Besides, the corpus analysed is part of a collection approved by the *Programa Nacional do Livro Didático (PNLD)* of 2020. In this sense, it seeks to verify how the activities in the textbook attempt to raise the learner's pragmatic knowledge in dealing with the phenomenon of (im)politeness. Therefore, the theoretical framework adopted in this study is based on the concept of (im)politeness as presented by Culpeper, Haugh, and Kádár (2017). It also presents the role of the textbook in the teaching process based on the ideas of Huang (2019), Richards (1993), Wells and Moon (2019). The corpus analysed consists of the 8 units and 6 sections of the textbook along with a sample activity. Lastly, the findings have shown that the textbook was not able to achieve the goals related to the BNCC as established in the syllabus, even though it already shows an effort to approach (im)politeness within the classroom. Overall, the results illustrate that the chosen ability was not successfully approached even when addressed.

Keywords: (im)politeness, pragmatics, BNCC, ability, textbook.

Resumo: Este artigo tem como objetivo examinar até que ponto o livro didático *Time to share* - 7° ano aborda o tópico de (im)polidez. Para isso, é levado em consideração as diretrizes relacionadas ao desenvolvimento da competência pragmática dos alunos como estabelecido pela Base Nacional Comum Curricular - BNCC (2018). Sobretudo, a habilidade EF07LI01, a qual destaca a importância da resolução de conflitos em interações orais para os alunos do Ensino Fundamental. Ademais, o corpus analisado é parte de uma coleção aprovada pelo Programa Nacional do Livro Didático (PNLD) de 2020. Desta forma, é procurado examinar como as atividades do livro pretendem melhorar o conhecimento pragmático dos estudantes ao lidar com o fenômeno da (im)polidez. Portanto, a fundamentação teórica deste estudo é baseada no conceito de (im)polidez como apresentado em Culpeper, Haugh e Kádár (2017). Ela também apresenta o papel dos livros didáticos baseado nas ideias de Huang (2019), Richards (1993), Wells e Moon (2019). O corpus analisado é constituído das 8 unidades e 6 seções do livro, juntamente com uma amostra de atividade. Por fim, os resultados encontrados demonstram que o material analisado não conseguiu completamente atingir os objetivos relacionados a BNCC como estabelecido em seu currículo, apesar de já ter mostrado um esforço em abordar a (im)polidez dentro de sala de aula. Assim, a análise ilustra que mesmo quando abordado, a habilidade e os conceitos investigados não foram devidamente trabalhados.

Palavras-chave: (im)polidez, pragmática, BNCC, habilidade, livros didáticos.

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INTRODUCTION

The teaching of pragmatics has a great impact on the development of learners' communicative abilities (Yan, 2022), however, this topic still does not have a consistent approach within the classroom environment. Owing to that fact, the teaching of some elementary aspects of pragmatic competence have been significantly underrepresented in this space, and the ability to perceive and respond to impolite acts is one of them (Talebzadeh; Khazraie, 2021). Similarly, Harwood (2014) highlights the importance of instruction to the development of learners' pragmatic knowledge to produce polite behaviour and avoid impolite ones. Therefore, the study of (im)politeness should not be regarded as optional but rather a regular component of textbooks syllabus (Harwood, 2014). That is because of its fundamental participation in the development of learner's communicative competence along with the vital role instruction plays in the acquisition of this component.

In agreement with that, the Brazilian national curriculum has shown an effort to include in its guidelines the necessity to address the mentioned content in the stages of basic education in all schools across the country. That resolution came along with the publication of the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (BNCC), a document released in 2018 by the Ministry of Education that aims to establish a common set of abilities and competencies that learners must develop during their schooling process. As a result, the presence of elements related to learners' pragmatic competence, such as instruction on politeness, was from that moment on, at least, legally assured.

However, even though the national curriculum has taken a significant step to include this type of pragmatic knowledge as one of the abilities that should be addressed and developed, some things must be considered. One of them is the analysis of how this phenomenon has been materialised in the nationally commercialised and used textbooks, once there are several difficulties in conciliating the national guidelines and everyday classroom practices. Thus, the current study was developed to address the following question: to what extent is the teaching of politeness addressed in the textbook *Time to share - 7° Ano* ?

Additionally, the main objective of this research is the analysis of how the activities in the textbook attempt to raise the learner's pragmatic knowledge in dealing with (im)politeness. For this purpose, it was necessary to identify the units and sections used to approach the topic along with the activities and the type of pragmatic content and instructions provided in them.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework is based on the concept of politeness as presented by Culpeper, Haugh, and Kádár (2017). It also relies on the findings of Nu and Murray (2020) and Talebzadeh and Khazraei (2021) regarding the underrepresentation of pragmatic content in foreign language contexts. Besides, it takes into consideration Félix-Brasdefer and Mugford (2017) studies on the effectiveness of instruction on students' pragmatic competence development, and on Huang (2019), Richards (1993), Wells and Moon (2019), who supported the key role played by textbooks in language teaching classrooms. Lastly, this research brings the competencies and abilities that must be acquired by Brazilian students while learning the English language as proposed by BNCC (2018).

Finally, the corpus presented in this study consists of the units, sections and one activity extracted from the Brazilian textbook *Time to share - 7° Ano* that has been used in schools of Recife, Pernambuco, since 2020. The corpus selected was part of my internship period during my undergraduate course. The groups observed and taught were from the 7th grade and, therefore, the textbook used was the one being analysed in this work.

Additionally, this textbook has been approved by the *Programa Nacional do Livro Didático* (PNLD). In short, according to the Ministry of Education[2], the main goal of PNLD is to evaluate and distribute, free of charge, to public schools in the country, educational and literary materials that will support the whole educational process. The resources provided by the program can be selected by the school once they have been approved by several pedagogical evaluations and a specialised committee formed by specialists in the field of Education. In addition, the textbooks available are reusable and have a limited 'lifetime', which means they can only be used in the classrooms for 4 years after their approval.

Overall, this work is divided into 6 sections: the first one explores the place pragmatics has been having in foreign language classrooms. The second section presents the role of textbooks in the learning/teaching process. Followed by that, the third section analyses the guidelines established for English language teaching in the Brazilian national curriculum. Then, the methodological procedures are explained in the fourth section. To conclude, the fifth section discusses the results found in the analysis, and the final remarks are presented in the last section.

1. THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF PRAGMATIC CONTENT IN ENGLISH

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[2] BRASIL. MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO. **PNLD**. 2018. Available at: http://portal.mec.gov.br/component/content/article?id=12391:pnld. Accessed on: 02 mar. 2023.

LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

This section explores the lack of a consistent approach to Pragmatics within foreign language classrooms. This discussion takes into consideration the effects of this underrepresentation in student's communicative competence and the paradigms of the current teaching methodologies. Finally, it introduces the fundamental role textbooks play in this process.

Firstly, the teaching process of a language should address the elements necessary to make communication possible and effective. Mainly when dealing with contexts of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in which the learners are expected to achieve certain communicative competencies such as, "[...] [k]nowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions, [k]nowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants [...]" (Richards, 2006, p. 3), etc. Therefore, there is a need to provide learners with authentic tools and strategies to use language in real life, and Pragmatics seems to be one of the key elements to be addressed in language classrooms to meet this expectation.

However, according to Nu and Murray (2020, p. 2), "(...) pragmatic knowledge still seems to be undervalued in the teaching and learning of English, especially in English-as-a-foreign language (hereafter EFL) contexts". The authors also argue that the two most common reasons for this phenomenon are: the emphasis given to other areas of language proficiency and teachers' lack of pragmatic knowledge. That combination results in a decrease in the learners' abilities to deal with language in contexts of use taking into account the appropriateness required for different communicative situations.

In fact, that outcome is observed in the study developed by Talebzadeh and Khazraie (2021, p. 2), which states that "one of the (neglected) components of pragmatic competence is producing and perceiving (im)politeness in second or foreign language contexts (Felix-Brasdefer & Mugford, 2017)". (Im)politeness can be defined as "how we maintain good relations and avoid interpersonal conflict through the use of different linguistic forms and strategies" (Culpeper; Haugh; Kádár, 2017, p. 2). Hence, the learner's linguistic ability to deal with the different nuances of speaking a language, being one of them the topic described, is almost completely forgotten and seen as not as important as other aspects of linguistic proficiency.

Ultimately, this underrepresentation is even clearer in the textbooks used in the English language classrooms, in which the pragmatic-related contents are not truly

incorporated into the syllabus. In agreement with that, Harwood (2014, p. 7) highlights the necessity of including pragmatics not as an "[...] optional extra in a textbook syllabus [...]" but rather as an essential component to be developed in the classroom. Finally, the researcher emphasises that even when incorporated, pragmatics is handled in a simplistic way and with a lack of context that cannot provide learners with enough information to develop their pragmatic competence.

Therefore, the study of pragmatic-related contents is still a gap to be filled in EFL classrooms, even when taking into account the requirements of CLT and the impact of this component on learners' communicative competence. Finally, this 'erasure' is more significant when learners' exposure to pragmatics is not only limited within the classroom, but even the inclusion of this component in the textbooks' syllabi is jeopardised.

2. TEXTBOOKS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING

The understanding of the role textbooks play in the 'disappearance' of pragmatics from the language classroom takes into account the place this tool has in the learning process. Hence, this section aims to further the notion of the textbook as the primary guide of the teaching/learning environment. In particular, how textbooks are responsible for selecting the contents that will be presented during the lesson, and how it is used as a strategic tool to implement the demands of the national curriculum.

To start with, Huang (2019, p. 87) stated that "[t]he language textbook, as one of the primary learning resources for language learning, is a significant factor influencing effective language learning". In that sense, the author explores a fact that is not strange to the people that take part in the process of teaching and even learning a new language. Overall, the textbook plays an essential role in not only providing the content to be studied but also in organising the whole pedagogical work and methodological procedures to be followed during the teaching process.

In particular, Richards (1993) remarks that:

> If we wish to determine what the objectives of the ESL course are, the kind of syllabus being used, the content which the students will study, and the assumptions about teaching and learning that the course embodies, we need look no further than the textbooks used in the program itself (Richards, 1993, p. 1).

Therefore, the textbook tells a lot about all the elements that integrate the learning environment it is being used. That is the result of the power it can have in shaping and selecting what information is going to be provided and how it also assimilates a specific view

of the language that is being taught. Accordingly, the scholar also emphasised that "[...] for many teachers the commercial textbook is the primary source of teaching ideas and materials in their teaching" (Richards, 1993, p. 1).

Furthermore, the textbook is also a way of consolidating the demands derived from the national guidelines regarding the contents to be addressed within the English language lessons. According to Wells and Moon (2019), "[a]t times of rapid curriculum change, textbooks can also facilitate the process of translating new curriculum demands into classroom practice". On the whole, by providing a pre-established syllabus, the textbook can help teachers to address in a more controlled and consolidated way the contents set by the national regulations.

To conclude, the presence of pragmatics is still a gap to be filled within textbook syllabi. Consequently, that problem also contributed to 'the disappearance' of this component from the whole teaching program. To be specific, textbooks can be used to analyse the goals and procedures that guide the teaching process along with the skills and competencies that will be developed throughout the course. Therefore, instruction on pragmatics is even more difficult to happen without the support of this fundamental part of the teaching process. In reality, "without instruction (implicit or explicit) various aspects of pragmatics are learned slowly, and some, perhaps, may never be learned" (Félix-Brasdefer; Mugford, 2017, p. 491).

Thus, by also not having its space guaranteed in the primary source of materials and ideas in a language classroom - the textbook - the assimilation of pragmatic-related concepts is exponentially harmed. In this sense, an approach that attempts to enhance learners' exposure to pragmatics in a foreign language classroom should consider including in its guidelines the impact of textbooks' syllabi and how it can be used as a strategic tool.

3. THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The third section presents the problem around the inclusion of pragmatic-related content in a national sphere. Thus, it analyses how the Brazilian National Curriculum attempts to approach the problem around the underrepresentation of Pragmatics. In fact, this discussion is developed taking into consideration the new abilities and competencies established by the national guidelines. At last, it is explored how this legal procedure influences the textbooks being used in public schools in the country.

With the creation of the *Plano Nacional de Educação*[3] (PNE) in 2014, the elaboration of a national curriculum was seen as vital to the improvement of basic education in Brazil. Said curriculum would establish a common set of competencies and abilities that should be developed by all Brazilian students regardless of which school they were attending. A few years later, the new curricular standards were set in the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (BNCC) published by the Ministry of Education in 2018, the document entailed all the curricular components that should be explored within the Brazilian schools. Among all the predefined elements presented and dissolved in these national guidelines, pragmatics was one of them.

In other words, with the setting of the new curriculum, the study of pragmatics gained more attention. From that moment on, BNCC has defined pragmatics as one of the specific competencies integrated into the learning of languages:

> 3. To make use of different languages - verbal (oral or visual motor, as Brazilian sign language (libras), and written) body, visual, sonorous and digital -, to express yourself and share information, experiences, ideas and feelings in different contexts and to produce meanings that lead to the dialog, conflict resolution and cooperation (Brasil, 2018, p. 65, author's translation)[4].

Moreover, in the specific section for the English language, the teaching of speaking is seen as articulated with the strategies of accommodation or conflict resolution (Brasil, 2018, p. 243). To sum up, learners must know the ways in which the lexical items and linguistic strategies help them to effectively participate in the meaning negotiation processes that take place in oral communication.

Additionally, the ability EF07LI01, which specifically address the students from the *7º ano - Ensino Fundamental* and deals with orality and discursive interaction, highlights that learners must be able to "[i]nteract in situations of oral exchange to perform activities in the classroom, in a respectful and collaborative way, sharing ideas and engaging in games and sports" (Brasil, 2018, p. 253, author's translation)[5].

So, if politeness can be understood as the ways in which "we maintain good relations and avoid interpersonal conflict through the use of different linguistic forms and strategies" (Culpeper; Haugh; Kádár, 2017, p. 2), and that "[r]ather than teaching students how to be

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[3] The *Plano Nacional de Educação* defines the guidelines, goals, and strategies for national politics regarding education during the period of 2014 to 2024.

[4] "3. Utilizar diferentes linguagens – verbal (oral ou visual-motora, como Libras, e escrita), corporal, visual, sonora e digital –, para se expressar e partilhar informações, experiências, ideias e sentimentos em diferentes contextos e produzir sentidos que levem ao diálogo, à resolução de conflitos e à cooperação" (Brasil, 2018, p. 65).

[5] "Interagir em situações de intercâmbio oral para realizar as atividades em sala de aula, de forma respeitosa e colaborativa, trocando ideias e engajando-se em brincadeiras e jogos" (Brasil, 2018, p. 253).

rude in the target language, studies of TL impoliteness have examined how learners can be prepared to negotiate uncomfortable situations" (Félix-Brasdefer; Mugford, 2017, p. 495). Therefore, BNCC has taken an interesting step towards the improvement of learner's pragmatic competence: with the legal background and guidelines defined and settled, the presence of pragmatics and its related contents have a higher chance of becoming part of the classroom routine.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to develop a textbook analysis that involves qualitative methods. The objective of this research was to analyse the content provided by textbooks to develop students' polite behaviour while also integrating the national guidelines established by BNCC. The primary source of data collection was the textbook *Time to share - 7ª ano*, which was collectively produced and organised by Editora Saraiva in 2018 under the supervision of the head editor Alice Silvestre. Besides, this collection was approved in *Programa Nacional do Livro Didático* of 2020 and the textbook analysed is a second edition that was produced in order to include the guidelines established by BNCC. In that sense, the authors emphasise that the focus during the production of the activities was on the development of the abilities and competencies of said document.

Additionally, the textbook is divided into 8 units which are organised according to different contemporary themes, such as cultural diversity, human rights, health habits, etc. Similarly, the units are structured in 6 sections: reading comprehension, focus on vocabulary, listening comprehension, language in use, speaking and writing. The analysis conducted has initially focused on all the units and sections that were said to be addressing the topic. After that, the activity 5 from unit 5 has been used as a sample to investigate how the textbook has materialised the goals presented in the curriculum. This sample has been selected because it deals with the topic of internet and digital interactions while also exploring the things that can be considered as appropriate or not in this environment. Therefore, it seems to be a key opportunity to explore the ability and make learners' reflect upon the role of (im)politeness in this communicative context.

Overall, the analysis took into consideration the content that was available for learners and the instructions in the teacher's guide. For that purpose, the following elements have been analysed: a) the units and sections that in fact addressed the ability related to (im)politeness in relation to the expected amount; b) the frequency of occurrence; c) the

pragmatic input and instructions provided in the sample activity to deal with the topic investigated.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section analyses the Textbook *Time to share - 7º ano*. For that purpose, it presents the sections that addressed (im)politeness along with how they were distributed within the units. Furthermore, the result is compared with the information provided in the textbook regarding the sections and units that were supposed to address the ability EF07LI01. Finally, one sample activity is used to illustrate how the textbook decided to explore the ability.

To start with, the initial pages of the textbook present a table of contents that provides an overview of the units, sections, and abilities addressed in each section. The ability EF07LI01 is addressed in 16 out of 48 sections of the textbook, which represents 33,33% of the total number of sections. Additionally, the activities regarding this ability are included in 3 out of the 6 types of sections, they are: Speaking, Focus on Vocabulary, and Language in Use. At last, the activities are divided into these sections according to Graph 01.

Graph 01: The number of sections that deal with the ability
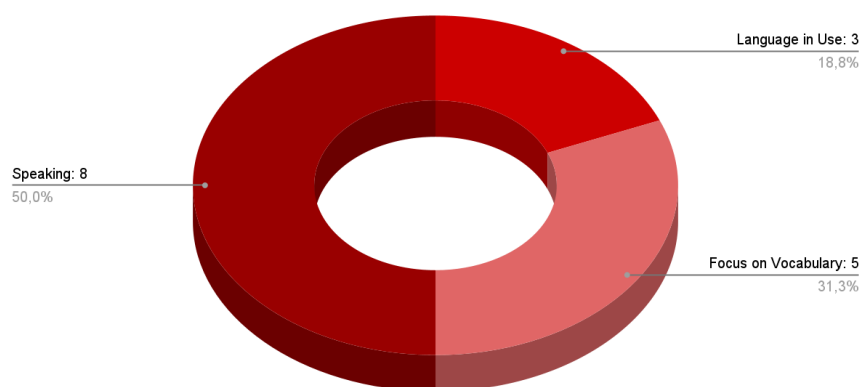
Source: Elaborated by the author

Furthermore, the sections highlighted in Graph 01 are distributed within the 8 units of the textbook as can be seen in Table 01. The Speaking section is the one that has a consistent approach to the ability throughout the whole material, while the Language in Use section has an imbalanced inclusion of the topic.

Table 01 - The distribution of the sections within the units

Unit/Section	U1	U2	U3	U4	U5	U6	U7	U8
Speaking	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus on Vocabulary		X	X	X		X		X
Language in use		X	X			X		

Source: Elaborated by the author

Besides the frequency of occurrence, after a page-by-page investigation, not all the sections described actually had an explicit inclusion or instructions that could possibly address the ability from BNCC. To exemplify that, Graph 02 presents a comparison between the sections that were meant to be dealing with the topic - *expectation* - and the ones that actually did - *reality* (this second group also includes the activities which provided the teacher with instructions but did not explicitly present students with information about the topic).

Graph 02: Comparison between the sections that were said to be addressing the ability and the ones that actually did.
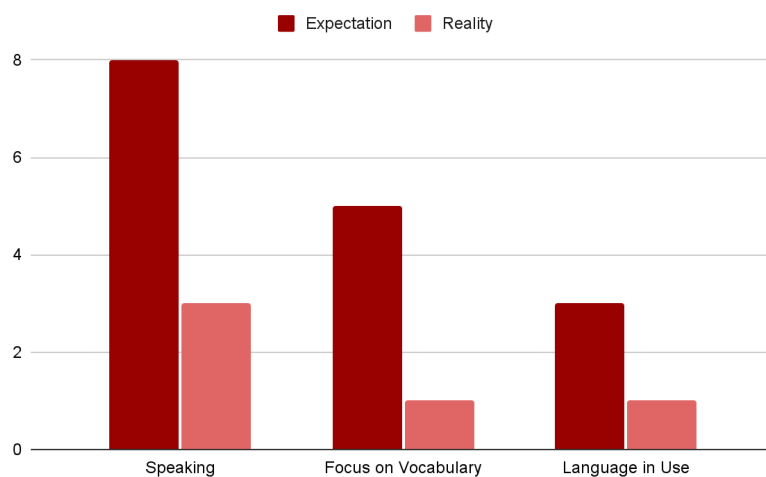
Source: Elaborated by the author

Therefore, the section regarding focus on vocabulary was the one that least addressed the ability in comparison with what was expected from it: just 20% of the sections dealt with it. Followed by that, 33,37% of the speaking sections and 33,33% of the Language in Use sections addressed, within the activities proposed, the ability being discussed.

In terms of the instructions provided in the teachers' guide, they were structured equally: the teacher should engage the students to orally participate in the activities in a polite and collaborative way. Aside from that, the activities did not expose the students to the content nor provided the teacher with enough guidance and information to assess them in this process.

To further this discussion, the activity 5 from unit 5, page 99, was selected to be analysed. In this sample retrieved from the speaking section, the students are dealing with the topic of internet safety and digital friendship. They have already been asked to classify different behaviours as appropriate or inappropriate. Along with that, they also had to create a list of the things they believe to be suitable or not regarding the use of the internet. Once they have finished, they would have to move to activity 5 in which the students were asked to share the list created with the whole class. They also had to discuss and justify their answers. For that purpose, the students are provided with a set of tips to be followed during the discussion. They include:

> a) Express your opinion about the topic, but wait for your turn;
> b) Listen to your classmates carefully, show agreement or answer politely when you disagree;
> c) To express agreement, you can say: "That's right"; "Exactly"; "I totally agree";
> d) To express disagreement, you can say: "I don't agree"; "That's not right";
> e) To justify your answer, you can say: "I think it is…, because…" No further instruction is provided to the teachers (Silvestre, 2018, p. 99).

The main focus of this section was to raise students' awareness of how they can make the internet a more respectful and safe space. In order to do so, they were provided with a set of situations that represent what would be appropriate to be done while using technological devices such as not sharing their password, turning your cell phone ringer to vibrate, and not carry loud cell phone conversations. However, the topic of language, and in particular, the ability to be polite and to avoid conflicts, one of the most important tools to make the internet more welcoming and safe, was not explored. In agreement with that the author Hendi Pratama (2019) highlights:

> What people assume about our intention and what we assume about other people intention cannot be correct all the time. That is the reason why politeness is needed as a failsafe. Words and ideas are exchanged continuously in a conversation or interaction. Along the way of the interaction, there is an inherent risk of conflict. Politeness is at place to reduce the potentials of communication-related conflicts (Lakoff, 1990) (Pratama, 2019, p. 2).

Despite that, the learner's knowledge of politeness was only expected to be developed in activity 5. In which they were presented with speech acts to express agreement/disagreement while sharing their answers about the previous task.

Remarkably, it is said in the teachers' guide that the students would only have to use the speech act in English while the rest of the explanation could be delivered in their L1. Nevertheless, learners are not previously exposed to the differences between Portuguese and the target language pragmatics, and how the selection and use of these structures may vary in different communicative situations. In fact, Nu and Murray (2020, p. 19) state that "[t]hese kinds of information can be helpful in raising students' awareness of the gap between L1 and L2 pragmatics, and limiting the effect of pragmatic transfer". At last, according to the researchers, "[p]roviding 'useful expressions' to students in this way may create the impression that these expressions of making suggestions are all the same regardless of to whom and in what situation this speech act is made" (Nu; Murray, 2020, p. 19).

In addition, students were asked to 'politely' discuss, however, no further information on what that encompasses was provided. Hence, the presence of the topic appears as a phenomenon detached from any contextualised communicative situation. This insufficient presentation of context is described by Harwoord (2014, p. 7) as one of the main problems found in textbooks' treatment of pragmatics. Thus, it seems like learners' ability to produce polite behaviour and to avoid conflict is summarised in the use of some polite words, and any other contextual information is left unknown.

Finally, there was no specific guidance provided to the teachers about how to perform the activities or extra materials related to the topic. Overall, no information was given in the teacher's guide, all the instructions necessary for the development of the activity had to be retrieved from the commands in students' textbook. Thus, the insertion of any explanation around the topic is up to the teacher once the material does not present any kind of approach to the topic or more examples. Hence, the textbook "[...] place[s] a large responsibility on the teachers to interpret and explain, and in EFL situations where the teachers have not had the opportunity to use English in natural settings, this may be beyond their capacity" (Nu; Murray, 2020, p. 18).

6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to analyse to what extent the textbook *Time to share - 7° ano* included the ability EF07LI01 taking it into consideration the problems around the presence of Pragmatics in EFL classrooms. In order to do so, the sections and units dealing with the topic were analysed along with a sample activity used to enhance students' abilities to produce polite behaviour.

As a result, the main findings of this research have revealed that, despite its intention of providing learners' with activities that focus on said ability from BNCC, the material could not properly materialise this goal. That is due to two main reasons: (I) most of part of the sections/units said to be addressing the ability did not actually approach it nor offered any additional instructions to the teacher; (II) the few activities that dealt with the topic provided the students and teacher with little information on the topic that would result in the improvement of their knowledge.

Furthermore, in terms of lack of guidance, the textbook transfers the responsibility of providing a broader explanation of the topic to the teacher, which can be translated into a challenging task in EFL contexts. Additionally, the absence of an adequate explanation also impacts the contextualization of the content which results in a vague treatment of the topic.

Overall, this research indicates that, even though the textbook analysed has taken an interesting step in the inclusion of pragmatic-related content, it could not successfully perform the task as intended. At last, since this investigation only took into consideration the volume designed for the 7th grade, it would be necessary to conduct further analyses that could focus on the other textbooks from this collection. That way, it would be possible to have a broader view of the collection's approach to the ability studied.

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