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MEMOIRE DE MASTER 2

MEEF SECOND DEGRE – ANGLAIS

**Grammar teaching-learning within the action-oriented
approach: a comparative analysis of three textbooks of
English as a Foreign Language**

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Soutenu le **27 janvier 2023**

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ABSTRACT

I wrote this thesis as part of my MEEF master's degree about teaching English grammar in the context of a foreign language class and in relation to the action-oriented approach, following this statement: the place of grammar teaching and learning within the action-oriented approach, through a comparative study of three English textbooks used in Year 12 (*Première*) in French high schools. In order to carry out this study, I analysed both the official instructions issued by the French Ministry of Education and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in order to understand the pedagogical expectations linked to the official guidelines in the context of the modern language course. Once the principle of the action-oriented approach had been delimited by this research, I analysed three English textbooks of *Première* from three different publishers to compare them in their approach to the study of grammatical structures, both in class within the activities, but also in an autonomous way for the learner. This analysis was both quantitative in terms of the number of grammar structures studied in each book and qualitative in terms of the way they were treated by the textbook authors, in terms of their pedagogical freedom and the official instructions. This study led to several conclusions, but also to many persistent questions concerning the limits of textbook authors' pedagogical freedom in relation to the action-oriented approach implemented in the educational context.

RESUME

J'ai rédigé ce mémoire dans le cadre de mon master MEEF sur le sujet de l'enseignement de la grammaire anglaise dans le cadre d'un cours de langue vivante étrangère et en lien avec l'approche actionnelle. Cette recherche porte sur la place de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage de la grammaire au sein de l'approche actionnelle, à travers une étude comparative de trois manuels d'anglais en classe de *Première*. Afin d'effectuer cette étude, j'ai analysé à la fois les instructions officielles transmises par le Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et le Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les Langues afin de comprendre les attentes pédagogiques liées aux directives officielles dans le cadre du cours de langue vivante. Une fois le principe de l'approche actionnelle délimité par ces recherches, j'ai utilisé comme support trois manuels d'anglais de *Première* tronc commun de trois éditeurs différents afin de les comparer dans leur approche de l'étude des structures grammaticales, à la fois en classe au sein des activités, mais aussi de manière autonome pour l'apprenant. Cette analyse a été à la fois quantitative par rapport au nombre de points de grammaire étudiés dans chaque ouvrage et

qualitative par rapport à la façon dont ils ont été traités par les auteurs de manuel, au regard de leur liberté pédagogique et des instructions officielles. Cette étude a abouti à plusieurs conclusions, mais aussi à de nombreuses questions persistantes concernant les limites de la liberté pédagogique des auteurs de manuels scolaires par rapport à l'approche actionnelle mise en place dans le contexte éducatif.

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INTRODUCTION

In France, learning English begins with a familiarisation in primary school in cycle 2, based mainly on lexical discovery (colours, days, seasons, etc.) and evolves until the child enters middle school (last year of cycle 3), during which learning is built around a wider set of skills and language aspects: phonology, lexicon, grammar or the civilisational and cultural aspect. Since the 2000s, the French education system has seen the introduction of a new form of teaching and learning, in which the pupil is placed at the heart of his or her learning, marking a break with older, more traditional methodologies. In France, this teaching perspective is called the “*approche actionnelle*”. The publication of the *Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe 2001)* made it possible to align the expectations of the language course in France with the skills to be acquired provided by this guide to teaching foreign languages in Europe. Indeed, the *CEFR* is, as its name indicates, a reference document for the development of syllabi and the implementation of foreign language teaching, presenting a grid of levels in correlation with the progress of pupils in their school curriculum (from their beginnings in the learning of the language to an almost autonomous mastery at the end of their learning). Through this framework, both teachers and students can access all the skills related to the different levels of learning, which make it possible to formulate clear objectives considering the different language activities that make up the learning of a language: understanding (oral and written), expression (oral and written), and interaction. The correlation between the pedagogical approach implemented in France and the one chosen for the formulation of the *CEFR* can be seen in the name chosen within the framework to refer to this teaching/learning perspective. Indeed, in the French version of the *CEFR*, Chapter 2 states that the approach adopted by the framework is the “*perspective actionnelle*”. However, the English version does not mention the equivalence or translation of the names of the different approaches in European countries. Therefore, the French term “*approche actionnelle*” does not appear in the English version, but the term “action-oriented approach” is used instead. “Action-oriented approach” is mentioned several times and seems to describe this approach in the same way as the French version of the *CEFR* defines the “*perspective actionnelle*”. In this thesis, I have chosen to use the term “action-oriented approach” to translate “*approche actionnelle*”, because the French education system is closely linked to the principles of the *CEFR*, and teachers are

encouraged to follow it to teach in class¹. Moreover, the word “action” in English is very close to the term “*actionnelle*” in French.

From the beginning of my English learning, the action-oriented approach had been the mainstream teaching method established in the programs and in class. I have not known any other approach, yet over the years, and now with the benefit of hindsight, I have come to realize that language teaching, and primarily English, has evolved to include more and more context, authenticity, and interaction between students and the English-speaking world. However, I noticed that throughout the process of learning English, one area has always been a concern for many students: grammar. In the mastery of a language, whether native or foreign, grammar is often considered the *bête noire* of students, a complex and inaccessible notion, and therefore a hindrance to understanding and expression. Having a personal interest in grammar since my early school days, I took advantage of my internship at a school to talk with English teachers who, I noticed, had a very divided opinion on the teaching and learning of grammar in English class, some thinking that it is inevitable and a priority to access meaning and to know how to make oneself understood, others preferring to leave grammar aside and give priority to oral and cultural discovery instead. I therefore wanted to take a closer look at this tension generated around the learning-teaching of grammar in English class. I remember that during my middle school and high school years, my English teachers all used textbooks as a basis for their teaching. I therefore asked myself many questions about their contribution to the teaching of English, and how the action-oriented approach could be transcribed through these books, such as: what choices do textbook authors make in terms of learning strategies? In this thesis, I focus on the way grammar is introduced, presented, and explained within the action-oriented approach, through a comparative analysis of three textbooks of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) used in Year 12 (*première*) at the high school level. Indeed, I chose a high school class to analyse how the grammar basics of cycle 4 are reviewed in the final cycle, and how new and more complex notions are introduced in the textbooks. Here again, many questions arise about the freedom of textbook authors: How do they transcribe their interpretation of the official instructions of the Ministry of Education but also of the *CEFR* guidelines for learning grammar? Can learners expect to master the same level of English by following all three textbooks or are some more in line with the guidelines than others?

¹ I will explain in more detail in section 1.1 the principles of the action-oriented approach as described in the *CEFR* as well as in the official French curricula.

This research on the place of grammar within the action-oriented approach is analysed in three sections: Firstly, I report on previous research on the action-oriented approach and how it fits in with official national instructions. This first section begins with an overview of the different educational systems which followed each other over several decades, resulting in changes in the way languages are taught and learned, with a focus on the way grammar was addressed in each educational system. I then look more closely at the action-oriented approach itself and compare it with the ways in which grammatical skill is developed in accordance with the expectations of this approach. Finally, I discuss existing tensions between official instructions and the reality in the field, between the different sources of guidelines and what is possible to do with learners in class.

The second section provides a general comparison of the three textbooks selected for the corpus of analysis in relation to the main question, put in relation and compared through a presentation of their general organisation and the specificities and sections common to the three books, then a more detailed comparison by focusing on the grammatical structures presented in each table of contents. The aim here is to become aware of the differences in content between publishers and to question the authors' motivations for favouring one structure over another. I then discuss the way in which grammar is introduced into the organisation of the three textbooks. Here, I compare the layout and format of the presentation of grammatical structures and then I focus on one grammatical form for a case study, namely, the past perfect. This last section is a more in-depth analysis of the different strategies used in the three textbooks to teach the past perfect according to the action-based approach. After some background on the past perfect and the interest of studying it in class at this level, I analyse the way it is introduced in the three textbooks, first within the chapters, then in the grammar toolkits ("*précis grammatical*") provided in the textbooks.

I conclude by looking at the exercises involving the past perfect, located in different places in the textbook, as well as the skills mobilised in the learners to retain and master this structure.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 A brief history of teaching methods related to grammar

In the evolution of language teaching, there have been many different systems, which have also led to variations and developments in the teaching of grammar to learners. The brief history I am going to present is based on Puren (1988) who studied and analysed the history of language- teaching methodologies.

From the 17th to the 19th century, the classic methodology or grammar-translation methodology was setting up in France. It consisted in a teaching based on literature through a formative objective: learners were supposed to be able to read and understand literary work, not to speak English. That is why this methodology prioritised written language over spoken language. As far as grammar is concerned, its learning was based on a descriptive approach using a textual description of forms, functions, and uses of grammar forms based on translation. The process of learning grammar was therefore deductive and explicit because rules were given by the teacher, and they were illustrated with examples taken from literary texts. Learners had to learn the grammar rule before practicing it. Indeed, the form of language was considered as the most important through a learning based on grammar rules and exceptions. The reference language, i.e., French, was used as the language of instruction, mainly through translation. Moreover, the whole progression of the chapters was linked to grammatical structures.

From the 1900s onwards, the system evolved in reaction to the classic methodology, with the aim of learning a second language (L2) in the same way a native or first language (L1) is acquired. Learning involved not resorting to the students' L1 and not using translation, but instead, training learners to think directly in the target language. The name of this system is the direct method. It consisted in articulating chapters in the syllabus no longer according to grammatical structures but thematically, focusing on the learners' interests (daily life, activities, hobbies, etc.), while using the language as a communication tool (practical objective), starting from the form to reach meaning. Grammar learning was inductive, as learners started with examples to define the rule and then applied it through exercises, routines, and drills.

From the 1920s to the 1960s, the active methodology was implemented, otherwise known as the mixed methodology. This approach was created as a compromise between classical methodology and the direct method. In general, the orientation of this method was more practical but with methodology given for a better understanding.

The teaching of grammar was rather descriptive and deductive with application exercises, but also with the integration of phonology in the focus on the language. There were three different types of classes in reaction to the direct method: eclectic or traditional classes, active classes with a practical orientation and active classes with a cultural orientation (Puren, 1988). In traditional classes, grammar was deductive and based on memorization and restitution, while keeping a practical objective. Indeed, language was seen as a set of rules and words that require methodical study. Active classes with a practical orientation were close to the direct method with both practical and formative objectives, with the aim of making learners cultured and able to communicate in context. Active classes with a cultural orientation were linked to a more cultural objective but still linked to a linguistic one. Therefore, the study materials were authentic, but explanations were provided with them. Active methodology also saw the introduction of the teaching practice known as “*Pratique Raisonnée de la Langue*” an inductive way to study grammar in use, to know in which context a specific form is used.

The audio-lingual method was implemented in the USA from the end of the 1950s to the 1960s. It consisted in an acquisition of new grammar automatism through an inductive approach, based on the American structural linguistics of Bloomfield, which corresponds to the description of language without referring to sense. The aim of this method was to remain at the level of structural grammar, as far as possible from semantics (working on the form of the language, without worrying about meaning). This method had a Behaviorist origin (language as a predictable mechanism) and led the learner to progress step by step to fix one structure before learning another one, through a stimulus-response-reinforcement pattern.

In parallel to the audiolingual method used in the USA, the SGAV (Structuro-global audio-visual) method was introduced in Europe between the 1960s and the 1970s. Through this method, the priority was given to spoken language with the use of dialogues and the introduction of communication with speaking in situation. Learning was based on the combination of sound and image, with an inductive and implicit approach to grammar, but with imitation of similar linguistic structures in different contexts to be aware of the regularities of L2.

From the 1970s – 1980s to 2005, the term “method” was replaced with “approach” through the implementation of the communicative approach. The aim of this approach was to consider language as an instrument of communication and social interaction and to consider learners’ needs and progress. This form of teaching was based on the principle of notion and function: notion is related to semantics, through concepts and general ideas. Function is linked to pragmatics, which corresponds to what we do with language.

In 2001, the publication of the *Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR)* led to the development of the communicative approach into an approach called the *approche actionnelle* in France from 2005 onwards. The definition of this teaching/learning perspective is given by the Ministry of Education in its *Bulletin Officiel* (2005), which mentions “an approach that makes the student active and allows him/her to construct his/her learning.”² (own translation, p.2). In the French secondary education system, language teaching is still done with the *approche actionnelle*, with curricula based on the principles of the *CEFR*. The Common European Framework of Reference for languages is a document published by the Council of Europe which provides a European basis for language teaching, and which makes it possible to describe the different levels in a foreign language. These levels, ranked on a scale from pre-A1 to C2, allow the level of learners to be situated according to several language skills such as reading or writing for example. The principle of this approach in conjunction with the *CEFR* corresponds to an objective of communication through action and practice, based on tasks and projects to assess skills. This is connected to the definition of action-oriented approach provided by the English version of the *CEFR*:

“The overall approach outlined above is distinctly action oriented. It is centred on the relationship between, on the one hand, the agents’ use of strategies linked to their competences and how they perceive or imagine the situation to be and on the other, the task or tasks to be accomplished in a specific context under particular conditions.” (Council of Europe, 2001, p.15)

Moreover, in her study on the action-oriented approach in secondary school foreign language textbooks, Bento (2013) points out that “reading the corpus shows that all didacticians use the *CEFR* definition to define *perspective actionnelle*.”³ (own translation, p.63). She adds that most of the authors mentioning their choice for the *CEFR* definition were involved in its drafting. It therefore seems only natural that they should wish to retain the definition in the *CEFR*. The choice to keep the translation of action-oriented approach for the French term *approche actionnelle* is therefore essentially based on the definition of this approach given by the *CEFR*, as well as the explanation provided by Bento (2013).

² « Une démarche qui rend l’élève actif et lui permet de construire son apprentissage » (Ministère de l’Education Nationale, 2005, p.2).

³ « La lecture du corpus indique que tous les didacticiens donnent comme définition pour « perspective actionnelle » celle du CECRL ». (Bento, 2013, p.63)

It should be noted, however, that the *CEFR* mentions the expression “task-based approach” to refer to the action-oriented approach linked to the notion of tasks to be carried out to validate various skills in the context of language learning. This notion of “task” is defined as follows:

“We speak of ‘tasks’ in so far as the actions are performed by one or more individuals strategically using their own specific competences to achieve given result. The action-based approach therefore also takes into account the cognitive, emotional and volitional resources and the full range of abilities specific to and applied by the individual as a social agent”.

(Council of Europe, 2001, p.10).

In the *approche actionnelle*, the task corresponds to the purpose of this way of teaching, as the principle of the task is a way of evaluating students to validate skills and to show that lessons have been learnt and mastered all along the chapter. The technical term “task-based approach” makes a clear reference to the notion of task without mentioning the purpose of the teaching system, whereas the expression “action-oriented approach” does not mention the notion of task but shows within the word “action” the intention of putting the student at the centre of his learning, through a certain number of activities and tasks, and this is the focus of our analysis, especially in terms of learning grammatical structures.

1.2 Place of grammar-teaching in the “action-oriented approach”

In the context of the action-oriented approach, in which the learner must be placed at the heart of his or her learning through real and contextualised situations, “it is important to ensure that situations call for structures, not the other way around” (Perrot and Julié 2017, own translation, p.58). It is therefore important for the learner to realise the need for a grammatical structure in a specific context and then the role of the teacher is to provide the necessary theoretical keys to understand the notion, thus enabling the rules for using a particular structure to be put into practice. This process corresponds to the basis of communication:

*“To communicate is to aim for meaning, but to do so the form must be mastered. [...] You have to start by asking yourself in what situation in life you would use such and such a structure, and then put it into play in the chosen situation.”*⁴

(Perrot & Julié 2017, own translation, p.58)

In the *CEFR*, grammatical competence is “the ability to organise sentences to convey meaning” (Council of Europe 2001, p.152.), which means that grammar is linked to communication needed in the action-oriented approach. In the study of a grammatical structure, we can find the same steps in a different order: the identification of the form, the explanation of the structure as well as the rule of use, the use in context, and the application. But what are the priorities of the action-oriented approach regarding these steps? How can these stages be adapted to the grammatical needs of learners, but always in such a way as to keep them in a learner-centred and communicative learning situation? The *CEFR* reports on different points of view on the way learners acquire skills depending to the way they learn: some consider that “explicit teaching or study of the language is irrelevant.” (Council of Europe 2001, p.141), but on the contrary, others consider that “students who have learnt the necessary rules of grammar and learnt a vocabulary will be able to understand and use the language in the light of their previous experience and common sense without any need to rehearse.” (Council of Europe 2001, p.141). These are two opposite schools of thought, but a middle way might consider that on the one hand learners do reflexively learn all the lessons seen in class, but that they also need context and communication, which can be provided within the classroom, thus combining both intensive learning and application through language practice. This can raise another question about how grammatical structures are integrated into the different units articulated in the classroom according to the official curriculum and the level of instruction. The official instructions concerning high school explicitly present the grammatical approach as inductive and implicit, through context and authentic documents: “On the basis of the documents discussed in class, the learner is led to discover the rules of language use [...] in order to master them”.⁵ (Ministère de l’Education Nationale, 2019, own translation p.4).

⁴ « Communiquer, c’est viser le sens, mais pour ce faire il faut maîtriser aussi la forme. [...] il faut commencer par se demander dans quelle situation de la vie on emploierait telle ou telle structure, puis la *mettre en scène* dans la situation choisie ». (Perrot et Julié, 2017, p.58)

⁵ « A partir des documents abordés en cours, l’élève est conduit à découvrir les règles d’usage de la langue [...] afin de se les approprier » (Ministère de l’Education Nationale et de la Jeunesse, 2019, p.4).

In both middle and high schools, official instructions specify that the approach to learning grammar should be inductive, which links this objective to the principle of the action-oriented approach. (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2005, 2019). In her study on the representations and practices of grammar in foreign language classes, Castagné-Véziès (2020) notes that “at the heart of an action-oriented approach, grammar has the advantage of being introduced according to an inductive approach, far from ‘rote learning’ and the arbitrariness of the rule”⁶ (own translation, p.10-11). She thus specifies that the emphasis is placed not on memorising the grammatical rule but on understanding it while adding context to make it more meaningful. This is how she describes “contextual” grammar in the context of the action-oriented approach, as it is “based on the reasoned or reflective observation of language”⁷ (Castagné-Véziès, 2020, own translation, p.12). The link between the mastering of language skills and the principle of the action-based approach as described in the *CEFR* leads us to question the place given to grammar within the tasks carried out by learners throughout their learning process. Here again, the notion of task is mentioned directly in the *Bulletin Officiel* in which it is explained that “tasks generally require the application of language skills. [...] The performance of tasks involves the application of general, linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills.”⁸ (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2005, own translation, p.1).

1.3 Tensions between official instructions and the reality of teaching

Since 2001, two sources have governed language teaching in France. Firstly, at a national level, the *Instructions Officielles* of the Ministry of Education provide the curriculum for language teaching at all levels. In addition, the Council of Europe provides common support for all European countries to guide teachers and learners in the process of language teaching and learning. In 2005, the Ministry of Education published an official journal in which it recommended using the *CEFR* as a basis for language teaching. This form of collaboration between a national vision and a more global European vision of language teaching has therefore encouraged textbook authors to adapt their content and to consider the evolution of this new teaching-learning approach.

⁶ « Au cœur d’une approche actionnelle, la grammaire présente l’avantage d’être introduite selon une / l’approche inductive, loin de l’apprentissage ‘par cœur’ et de l’arbitraire de la règle ». (Castagné-Véziès, 2020, p.10-11)

⁷ « « s’appuie sur l’observation raisonnée ou réfléchie de la langue ». (Castagné-Véziès, 2020, p.12).

⁸ « Les tâches exigent en général la mise en œuvre de la compétence langagière. [...] La réalisation de tâches implique la mise en œuvre de compétences générales, linguistiques, sociolinguistique et pragmatique. » (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2005, p.1).

However, official instructions, the *CEFR* guideline and teachers' relationship to linguistics can create several tensions between national and European guidelines and the reality of teaching as experienced by language teachers.

The *CEFR* is not an official guideline that teachers have to follow imperatively. Indeed, it “cannot replace reference grammars or provide a strict ordering [...] but provides a framework for the decisions of practitioners to be made known.” (Council of Europe, 2001, p.152). It proposes an inductive approach to language in line with the action approach, but according to Castagné-Véziès's research (2020, p.4), tensions remain between the implementation of the *CEFR* and the reality of teaching. Indeed, she explains that this implementation led to the fact that grammar is no longer prioritised in language classes. The *CEFR* is thus omnipresent at all levels and language teachers must refer to it to implement common teaching. Between 2005 and 2019, there was an evolution in the official instructions for lower and upper secondary schools, but the *CEFR* is still mentioned in the development of level objectives and in national curricula (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2005, 2019).

According to official instructions, the teacher is associated with a guiding role that leads the learners to be active in their learning and anticipates possible obstacles and difficulties encountered. This guiding role is again based on the *CEFR* available to teachers, which is specified in the 2019 *Bulletins Officiels* for the *seconde* and *terminale* levels, which explicitly state that they are based on the *CEFR*, both for the language levels to be reached at the end of the cycle (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2019, Annexes 1&2, p.2) and for the curriculum itself (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2019, Annexes 1&2, p.5). The official instructions for middle school also provide information in the *Bulletin Officiel* of 2005 that the curricula are based on the *CEFR*, and even specify that “teachers will be able to find more information on this framework in the documents accompanying the curricula which will be distributed to prepare their implementation”⁹ (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2005, own translation, p.1). Already in 2005, four years after the publication of the *CEFR*, the Ministry of National Education was aiming to guide teachers through the strategies of the Council of Europe. Moreover, the choices made by the Official Instructions are more restrictive than the strategies put in place by the *CEFR*, both in relation to the interaction involved in learning and its purely cognitive nature, but also in relation to the teacher himself and his role alongside the learner.

⁹ « Les enseignants pourront trouver davantage d'informations sur ce cadre dans les documents d'accompagnement des programmes qui seront diffusés pour préparer leur mise en œuvre. » (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2005, p.1)

Indeed, the teacher appears to be more of a guide for the student to progress in his/her learning and understanding. Despite this, the Official Instructions refer to the *CEFR* in their choice of strategies and language teaching (Bento, 2013, p.72). After comparing the strategy choices of the *CEFR* and the content of the Official Instructions, Bento questioned the role of the teacher in relation to the action-based approach within the *CEFR* (2013, p.72).

Faced with these official guidelines, teachers may feel uncomfortable with the idea of teaching inductive grammar in this action-oriented approach, and Castagné-Véziès (2020) conducted research on the representations of grammar among language teachers. According to her, the place of grammar in the action-oriented approach needs to be seen through the *CEFR* and the official instructions, but also through the eyes of the language teachers and their own representations of grammar, which can influence their teaching: “representations influence the practice of teaching grammar”¹⁰ (Castagné-Véziès, 2020, own translation, p.3). Indeed, the feeling of teaching legitimacy, enthusiasm, personal interest in grammar, official instructions, etc. can together create many tensions between the very principle of the action-oriented approach based on the accomplishment of a final task and the place of grammar in the language classroom (middle and high school). This paradox between the learning of grammar and the definition of the action-oriented approach is also raised by Castagné-Véziès-Véziès (2020) in her study: “Whatever the grammatical approach, and the associated didactic device, we note a great difficulty in getting students to use grammatical structures, in a correct and fluid expression, and mobilize this knowledge and language skills”¹¹ (2020, own translation, p.13). Consequently, throughout her study, she distinguishes between “practicing language” and “doing grammar”, which are two different visions of grammar teaching. The principle of “practicing language” appeals, according to Castagné-Véziès-Véziès (2020), more to communication and interaction. The use of the reference language in English lessons at school, and particularly when introducing grammatical structures, also raises tensions and different approaches between sources.

¹⁰ « Les représentations influent sur la pratique d’enseignement de la grammaire » (Castagné-Véziès, 2020, p.3)

¹¹ « quelle que soit l’approche grammaticale, et le dispositif didactique associé, on constate une grande difficulté à faire réinvestir les notions grammaticales par les élèves, dans une expression correcte et fluide, et à les voir mobiliser ces connaissances et compétences langagières. » (Castagné-Véziès-Véziès 2020)

Indeed, in her analysis of textbooks, Bento (2010) shows that among the textbooks of the different foreign languages under study (English, Spanish, German, Italian and Portuguese), the English textbook *New Springs* makes little use of the reference language (French), but “encourages throughout the book the use of word transparency”¹² (Bento, 2010, own translation, p.61).

In this case, the authors of the textbook choose to use the target language (English) for the most part but give hints for identification based on the learners’ knowledge of their reference language. This research allows us to note that textbook authors choose to emphasise student autonomy while following the official instructions, but we can then question their way of placing students in autonomy in front of grammatical notions.

¹² « [...] incite tout au long de l’ouvrage à utiliser la transparence des mots ». (Bento, 2010, p.61)

2. GENERAL COMPARISON BETWEEN THREE TEXTBOOKS OF ENGLISH 1ERE

2.1 Presentation of textbooks

For this comparative analysis, I chose three textbooks for the *premiere* level in high school, each published in the same year (2019), but by three different publishers. The aim here is to analyse how grammar is presented to learners and studied in each of these three books. The three textbooks are: *Blockbuster* (Richter 2019) published by Maison des langues, *Sky's the Limit* (Lansonneur and Wilkinson 2019) published by Bordas and *Shine Bright* (Bellamy et al. 2019) published by Nathan.

At first glance, these three textbooks seem to be organised in a similar way, with four sections common to all three textbooks: a table of contents, chapters, methodological cards, and a grammar toolkit. But some elements differ between the textbooks such as a phonological section only present in *Sky's the limit*, an exercise section in *Blockbuster* and *Sky's the limit*, or a glossary only in *Shine Bright*. Furthermore, each section that the textbooks have in common do not always have the same name, which we will compare.

- The table of contents

In *Blockbuster*, the table of contents presents the name of the different themes mentioned in the official agenda of the Ministry of Education written in French.

As a reminder, the syllabus for the final cycle (year 12 and final year) is composed of eight themes, and this textbook proposes two units per theme, which gives a larger choice for teachers in their lesson organisation, and a great diversity of subjects for the learners. The table of contents is composed of five different columns with specific functions. The first column contains the title of the unit with a picture illustrating the theme, a main question written in English, and the source of the introductory double page (movie, tv series, documentary, etc.). This information lets the learners discover the different units through media and elements they probably already know. It is also a way for the teacher to have an idea about what he/she will have to work on, and maybe choosing one unit rather than another for the same theme. The second column depicts the three or four documents that are studied in each unit, with a title given to each set of documents, as a progression to answer the main question and to prepare the final task. In front of each document, there are pictograms referring to the type of language

activity: audio understanding, reading, writing, spoken interaction or spoken production. A warning “prepare for the task” is mentioned under some documents to inform the learners and teachers that these documents pave the way to the final task. The third column corresponds to the final task, recognisable by the “action” pictogram, which also refers to the principles of the action-oriented approach, involving the learners directly in their work. The instructions for the final task are short and clear, written in bold, to highlight the goal of the unit. The penultimate column is entitled “Language tool” and is divided into three types of objectives: grammar, vocabulary, and phonology. There are at least two grammar structures studied per chapter. The grammatical objectives are written in French, in order to be better understood by the learners. In vocabulary objectives, there are at least three lexical fields that are studied per chapter, and they are written in English. These lexical fields can be a way for learners to be sure that they have memorised this vocabulary in preparation for the final task. The phonological objectives, entitled “Train your voice”, are presented in French, and there are only one or two phonological topics studied in each unit. The last column is called “On your way to the Bac”, with a preparation for the *Baccalauréat* (high school graduation exam) mixing different language activities.

Shine Bright's table of contents is presented in a very different way. Indeed, the different units are presented under the name “File”, which can belong to two themes in each case. Under the title of the unit written in English, the main question (also in English) is written above three columns representing the organisation of the unit.

The first column entitled “Explore” lists the different sections of the unit. It is also a way to show learners the different angles or aspects that will be covered in dealing with the main topic. The second column, entitled “Boost your skills”, corresponds to the linguistic objectives of the unit. Here, the grammatical structures studied during the different courses are detailed in French. The grammatical objectives are indicated with a blue bullet point, and the phonological ones are indicated with a green bullet point, so that the learner can separate the two. In each unit, at least two grammatical forms and one phonological objective are studied. Finally, the last column is the presentation of the final task. Like *Blockbuster*, the table of contents presents only a brief instruction for the final project, with the beginning of the instruction written in bold to emphasise the nature of the task: “create”, “give a talk show”, “record”, “write a page”, “make a speech”, etc. The beginning of each instruction corresponds to an imperative form with an action verb, which allows both learners and teachers to have a preview of the language activity planned at the end of the unit. This snapshot access from the

table of contents could also be a way for the teacher to decide on the continuation of the chapters according to the nature of the task (oral or written expression), or to adapt the project if it does not correspond to the teacher's objectives. Following the brief statement of the final task, the “yes you can!” insert mentions the methodological tools that can help learners achieve their final project.

Sky's the Limit presents its table of contents in another different way. The layout here is different from the other two textbooks, as the units are presented in boxes, but the content of the presentation of topics is rather like *Blockbuster* and *Shine Bright*. The general theme is mentioned first, followed by the name of the chapter. Then the main question is written in English, and the different sections representing the progression of the unit are also specified in English. Unlike *Shine Bright*, the different documents corresponding to the sections are given in the table of contents. Following the presentation of the different parts of the unit are the different linguistic objectives, mentioned as “words” to refer to the lexicon and lexical fields, “Grammar” to list the grammatical structures worked on in the unit, and “sounds” to refer to the phonological structures to be seen or reviewed.

Following the language objectives, we find, as in *Shine Bright*, a reference to the methodological sheets under the name “strategy”. This term implies a tool necessary for the elaboration of the final task, which can serve as support and guide for the students in addition to the lesson delivered by the teacher.

The insert ends with “your project”, which specifies the nature of the final task and the associated language activity (“write”, “create”, “discuss”, “record and listen” etc.), followed by a *baccalauréat* exercise to train learners for the English part of the national exam.

- The organisation of units

All units in the three textbooks begin with an introductory double-page that sets out the main questions, as well as one or more anticipatory documents serving as resources for the introductory session. In all three cases, the title of the final task is also included, but *Sky's the Limit* is the only textbook to present the linguistic objectives necessary for the development of the final task directly in the introductory double page. We might then ask why the other textbooks do not also present these objectives on the introductory pages? Perhaps they consider that their presentation in the table of contents would be sufficient, or that the course of the activities could lead the learners directly to master the objectives without having them constantly mentioned.

In *Blockbuster*, each chapter is composed of one and a half pages of texts, images and oral documents which serve as support for comprehension and expression, with the help of short instructions in English, whose verbs are written in bold (“discuss”, “sum up”, “look at”, “react”, etc). These action verbs allow the learner to be directly involved in his or her own learning through targeted references in the documents. For each document on these pages, certain instructions are specified with the pictogram “Prepare for the task”, which gives the learner a warning that answers to these questions will be relevant to the final task. In addition, this page and a half of documents is enhanced with vocabulary and grammar inserts. The lexical input does not involve translation but rather presents synonyms and oppositions, as well as phonetic transcriptions for some, and orange highlighting of stressed syllables. The grammar inserts are presented in French (for the name of the grammatical structure), but the corresponding examples are given in the target language. After the documents section, there is a vocabulary page in the form of a mind map which includes all the vocabulary of the unit in a thematic and colourful way for better memorisation.

Finally, the next page corresponds to the preparation of the final task with methodological advice written in French, then the last page is dedicated to the final task itself, whose instructions and all the steps to succeed in the project are written in English. Here again, the action verbs at the beginning of the instructions are written in bold, which allows learners to make connections with the instructions seen during the unit when studying the documents.

In *Shine Bright*, each unit is composed of an introductory double page, three double pages of documents presented to answer the main question through different language activities: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Each document is numbered within the different sections of the unit, and there are several questions to guide the learner in their understanding of texts or analysis of pictures. At the end of each double page of documents, there is a micro-task that is attached, to be sure that the learner has understood the content of each document. From a layout point of view, each double-page presents at least two to three documents (written, audio or iconographic), as well as numerous comprehension questions (oral and/or written) written in English, and whose action verbs are in bold as in *Blockbuster*. There is also a “words” insert which provides the learner with a few vocabulary words related to the content of the documents and can help him to formulate the answers to the questions. As in *Blockbuster*, words are not translated in French in this box, but they are presented with synonyms and antonyms, and their stressed syllables are also highlighted. An insert referring to the “Boost your skills” section is also present on almost every page, using grammatical forms related to the objectives of the chapter, and offering keys to expressing oneself or answering. The grammar inserts also

include a reference to the grammar toolkit at the end of the textbook to refine knowledge of a particular structure. Following the “explore” section is the “Boost your English” one, which contains two pages of grammatical structures worked on during the unit, phonological forms as well as mind maps for the study of vocabulary presented in a thematic way. This double page allows the learner to draw inspiration from it and to use it during the final task. Finally, the chapter ends with a page about the final task, with the instructions written in green and bold, and the different steps necessary for its successful completion, as well as methodological activities to help learners master their final project.

The structure of units in *Sky's the Limit* is very similar to the other two textbooks, as each chapter is made up of two double pages of documents of a different nature, with comprehension questions written in English and which also have the action verbs highlighted (in blue and bold) so that all learners can immediately spot the nature of the question (reading, listing, quoting, listening, etc). The double-page spreads are also punctuated by grammatical inserts which present the structure related to the document to be studied, but also by vocabulary inserts entitled “Need help?” which present the lexicon in a similar way to other textbooks, with the difference that for certain words which might seem complex, the French translation is given. On the other hand, stressed syllables are also underlined, and some words are transcribed using the symbols of the international phonetic alphabet (IPA).

The next double page is devoted to vocabulary in the form of a thematic mind-map and a theoretical explanation of a particular semantic structure related to the unit. There is then a grammar section with a lesson on a grammatical structure followed by application exercises, then a phonological section to work on the phonological objective of the unit. Just before the page dedicated to the final task, a page in French is dedicated to methodology on the material that will be used for the project, and on the final task page, the instructions are given in English and the steps are numbered for a better framing of the work. Some units end with a “to go further” page which presents a more complex text related to the chapter, which can allow learners to be autonomous in their learning and to look for more information about the topic. There is also a page for practising for the *Baccalauréat* exam, with comprehension and expression activities (written and/or oral).

- Methodological cards

All three textbooks offer methodological sheets at the end of the chapters, which are titled in different ways. In *Blockbuster*, there is a section called "*Fiches méthodologiques*",

which refers to the essential synthetic points written in French for working on pragmatic skills such as memorisation, organisation of ideas, tools for understanding an audio or video document, etc., but also offers tips and advice on improving pronunciation, improving English outside the classroom, or doing research on the Internet. These eleven method sheets allow the learner to come and get advice on how to improve, both in and out of the classroom, to enrich his or her skills that will help him or her in communication situations.

In *Shine Bright*, this section is called “Stratégies”. This word indicates a set of coordinated information, which, when mastered, can allow the learner to become autonomous in English, and thus validate both pragmatic and linguistic skills. These method sheets are coloured, illustrated, and written in French to make these strategies transferable to other subjects than English. The authors of *Shine Bright* may have sought to create a more general guide for the learner to provide a theoretical framework and synthetic explanations on how to understand an iconographic document, how to interact and participate in a debate, how to enrich one’s vocabulary or how to write a letter.

Sky’s the Limit offers method sheets under the name “Stratégies Epreuves communes – BAC”. Here, the authors of the textbook insist on the scope of this methodology which places learners directly in the exam situation, and thus provides the keys to success. It includes tips and advice on reading comprehension, written expression, and oral expression.

Unlike other textbooks, *Sky’s the Limit* gives “Les clés pour réussir” by providing steps that learners can follow on test day to succeed.

- Grammar toolkit

A grammar toolkit can be found at the end of the three textbooks presented. It is a theoretical reference document that covers all the grammatical structures studied in the chapters, but in greater detail, with an emphasis on the conditions of use in context and the formation of structures. There are also concrete examples to illustrate the theory. In the case of the textbooks *Blockbuster* and *Shine Bright*, their grammar toolkits are called “*précis grammatical*”. The use of the term “*précis*” may imply that this tool allows learners to come and look for more precise information on grammatical structures in parallel to the chapters studied, thus leaving more room for the action-oriented approach during the English class (activities, tasks, oral, interaction, etc.), and giving greater autonomy in the study of grammar, for the achievement of the final task or for revisions for an evaluation for example. In *Sky’s the Limit*, the grammar toolkit is called “*Repères grammaticaux*”. The term “repères” in the plural

form may indicate a help provided to learners to orient and guide them through short lessons to summarise the grammar pages located within the chapters. Unlike the *précis grammatical*, explanations in the *repères grammaticaux* section do not add new elements but repeat in another way those already seen by the learners. The grammar toolkit in *Shine Bright* and *Sky's the Limit* includes application exercises to put learners on the path to direct practice, whereas *Blockbuster's précis grammatical* does not include application exercises, but they are present in a practice section related to the chapters studied.

- Other sections specific to each textbook

Some sections are specific to each textbook, which brings originality and can guide teachers in choosing a particular book. Indeed, *Shine Bright* is the only one of the three to present a lexicon at the end of the book, both from English to French and from French to English. The vocabulary is listed in alphabetical order, and the nature of the word is indicated in orange (*n* for noun, *v* for verb and *adj* for adjective).

Sky's the Limit is the only one of the three textbooks to offer a “*repères phonologiques*” section before the grammar toolkit, which summarises all the phonological objectives present throughout the chapters and gives new examples. This section can be very useful for learners when preparing final oral tasks, for example.

This textbook also presents a set of exercises following the grammar toolkit to apply the grammar explanations provided in the book. This dissociation between theory and application allows learners to select their needs: either to search for information or to choose to practice structures. In addition, answers to the exercises are available to students in the digital textbook. They can therefore test themselves and self-correct endlessly to master the structures.

Finally, *Blockbuster* also presents a set of exercises that are linked to the units in order to keep the learners in context. Each exercise is designed to work on a specific grammatical structure or to work on vocabulary related to the corresponding chapter. There are between four and six exercises per chapter, with instructions in French and an emphasis of verbs at the beginning of the instructions, in bold and orange, to guide the learners on the nature of the different exercises.

2.2 Grammar structures presented in the tables of contents

In order to identify the different grammatical structures presented by the three textbooks, I decided to list in *Table 1* all the grammatical forms they cover. Indeed, each table of contents

presents both the chapter and the grammatical structures studied in the units. The following table therefore presents all the grammatical structures mentioned as they are in the tables of contents, in their original presentation, i.e., in French and with the phrasing directly copied.

Table 1 - List of grammar structures presented in the tables of contents of the three English textbook of 1ere

Title of textbooks	Blockbuster - Maison des Langues	Shine Bright	Sky's the Limit
Pages	207	279	240
Grammar points presented in the summaries (written in French)	Le présent simple	Le prétérit simple	Le present perfect
	Le present perfect	L'obligation et la capacité au passé	La proposition infinitive
	Le comparatif	Présent simple et présent be + V-ing	Le gérondif
	Le gérondif	Le present perfect	Le prétérit et le past perfect
	Les énoncés exclamatifs	Prétérit simple ou prétérit be + V-ing	Le prétérit en be + V-ing
	Le superlatif	Les subordonnées de temps	Le past perfect en be + V-ing
	Les subordonnées de temps	L'opposition et la concession	Les articles
	Le présent en be + V-ing	Les articles a/an, the ou Ø	Comparatif et superlatif
	Le present perfect en be + V-ing	L'expression du futur	La proposition relative
	La voix passive	Voix active et voix passive	Les auxiliaires modaux
	L'habitude dans le passé	Contrainte ou volonté: les modaux should et would	L'impératif
	L'expression du but	Les subordonnées relatives	Les pronoms réfléchis et réciproques
	L'article zéro	For, since et ago: prétérit ou present perfect	Les hypothèses en IF
	Les subordonnées relatives	Prétérit et past perfect	Le présent simple
	L'expression du haut degré	Cause, but et conséquence	Le présent en be + V-ing
	L'expression de la concession	La probabilité et l'hypothèse	La voix passive
	Les quantifieurs	Discours direct et discours indirect	La conséquence
	L'expression de l'obligation et de l'interdiction	La proposition infinitive	L'expression du futur
	Associer deux verbes grâce à TO	"Faire faire" et "laisser faire"	Les causatives
	La phase conditionnelle en IF	Le présent be + V-ing	Le discours indirect
	"Faire faire" et "laisser faire"	Le conditionnel	Would et used to
	Le prétérit et le prétérit en be + V-ing	Les groupes verbaux nominalisés	Since, for et during
	Le past perfect	Adverbes et adjectifs	
	L'impératif	Les auxiliaires modaux	
	Faire des propositions	Les mots de liaison	
	L'expression du conseil	La forme V-ing	
L'expression de la nécessité	Enrichir avec des adverbes		
L'expression de la permission	Le prétérit be + V-ing		
Les question tags	Les conjonctions		
L'expression du futur			

Grammar structures studied in the LLCE syllabus

The first thing that can be noticed from this table is that the three textbooks do not present the same number of grammatical forms to be worked on, even though they are books adapted to the same level and having the same year of publication. *Blockbuster* introduces thirty grammatical structures, while *Shine Bright* focused on nineteen (and ten more for the Languages, Literature and Foreign Cultures optional course), and *Sky's the Limit* offers twenty-two. This difference shows that *Blockbuster* has more grammatical forms than the other two textbooks, but we may wonder how these grammatical points are introduced in this textbook. Are they included directly in the chapters? Are they only mentioned? Conversely, *Sky's the Limit* has the fewest grammatical structures for the core curriculum, and we will see later how these structures are addressed. Are they more detailed? Did the authors emphasise certain grammar structures in particular to work on them more thoroughly?

Moreover, we may interrogate the relationship between the number of grammatical structures covered in relation to the length of each book. Indeed, with 207 pages, *Blockbuster* is the shortest textbook of the three, and yet it is the one listing the most grammatical forms in its table of contents. Conversely, *Shine Bright* is the textbook covering the fewest grammatical

structures concerning the core curriculum, yet it is the longest textbook (279 pages). This could raise many questions, such as how are these structures addressed throughout the books? Are they much detailed or simply mentioned?

Did the authors choose to focus more on the action-oriented approach, leaving out the more traditional grammar explanations? A question about why the textbooks do not cover the same grammatical structures can also be raised. With official instructions from the Ministry of Education in mind, we know that high school curricula are based on major themes to be covered during the school year. Based on the themes chosen by the authors of the textbooks, we can presume that each structure proposed in the tables of contents is adapted to the civilisational and communicative context, while remaining in an action-oriented perspective.

If we look at the titles of the grammatical structures covered in the three textbooks, we can see that some structures are studied as a system of oppositions (two by two), while others are studied separately. For example, we note that the comparative and the superlative are studied separately in *Blockbuster*, whereas they are studied together in *Sky's the Limit*, but not covered in *Shine Bright*.

One could therefore question the choices made by the authors of these three books as much on the choice of this structure to be worked on as on the choice of whether to work on it as a system. In the case of the three textbooks, there are similarities in the way they are studied, such as the structure of the present perfect, which is studied separately in each textbook, but some grammatical forms, such as BE +V-ing, are worked on in different ways and in different systems according to the textbooks. Indeed, in *Shine Bright*, the present simple is studied along the present continuous (BE + V-ING), whereas the other two textbooks treat them separately. We can wonder whether the choice of treating the two forms separately could be linked to a need to guide learners to master one form at a time (in terms of construction and values in context), and a desire to have them master the simple form first before adding the BE + V-ing form. In addition, depending on the context of the unit, the need to study the BE + V-ing form of the present tense may not be immediately useful, but would rather be needed in another unit. From a more general perspective, it may be noted that *Blockbuster* studies the BE + V-ing form independently of the simple form for several tenses such as the present tense and the present perfect but studies the simple preterit together with its BE + V-ing counterpart. *Shine Bright* also offers a systematic study of the present and preterit (simple form and BE+V-ing form). It may therefore be difficult for learners to distinguish between the different values in context, and there could be a risk of ambiguity when practicing or preparing for final tasks. *Sky's the limit*, on the other hand, does not offer a systemic study of simple forms with their BE + V-ing forms.

These examples show that we are faced with different statements and different pedagogical choices made by the authors of the textbooks, which can lead us to many questions, in particular about the distribution of the difficulty for the students: do the learners risk being lost between the different values if the forms are studied in a system? Could this create the ambiguity of not knowing which form to use correctly in context and in a communicative situation? The usefulness of context therefore also adds some questioning about the communicative situation of learners in relation to the use of grammatical structures. This comparison of the treatment of grammatical forms in the three textbooks could also raise questions about the pedagogical freedom of textbook authors in relation to the official instructions and the *CEFR* guidelines.

2.3 The way grammar is introduced in textbooks' organisations

According to Bento's (2013) analysis of foreign language textbooks, "all the authors of the textbooks in the corpus state [...] that they are situated in the action-oriented perspective as defined in the CEFR and take into account the recommendations of the official instructions." (Own translation, p.73)¹³. This is stated in the pedagogical guides (teachers' books) of the various textbooks studied by Bento (2013). As I did not have access to the teacher's guides of the three year 12 textbooks studied for this thesis, I cannot say whether this intention is also followed by the authors of *Blockbuster*, *Shine Bright* and *Sky's the limit*, but we will see from their detailed analysis whether this is also the case. The main purpose of the action-oriented approach according the CEFR and official instructions is to place the learner at the centre of his learning, through the implementation of tasks, especially final tasks corresponding to an evaluated project at the end of each chapter. This notion of final task is omnipresent in the three textbooks and in every chapter, and grammar is always worked into the objectives and tools that are necessary to the final task of the unit and acquire the target skills. The learner is able to build his own learning by training on grammatical structures through the elaboration of his final project. However, the three textbooks present three different ways of introducing grammar structures.

Sky's the Limit is the only textbook to include grammar structures directly on the unit's introduction page. Here we can find the title of the final task that awaits the students, and the textbook lists all the tools they will need to complete this task: pragmatic tools, lexicon, and grammatical tools. It correspond to the different linguistic objectives linked to this final task. In addition, there are grammar inserts on the document pages to indicate the structures needed to formulate responses to document analyses. It can be noted that the structures are related to the types of documents. For example, if there is a text in the present simple describing a celebrity, there is a small insert on the present simple next to this text, and learners are expected to identify this structure in the document to be able to apply it in another activity and in another context. There is also a link between the grammar inserts and the preparation steps for the final task in the "prepare your project" tab. In this way, the learner manipulates the structure during the chapter to practise before the assessment.

¹³ « Tous les auteurs de manuels du corpus indiquent [...] se situer dans la perspective actionnelle telle qu'elle est définie dans le CECRL et prendre en compte les recommandations des instructions officielles » (Bento, 2013, p.73).

At the end of the document pages, the page dedicated to the grammar lesson includes the points that are mentioned in the inserts next to the documents. Next to the title of the lesson is the page with the grammatical reference points so that the learner can look up additional information. For each grammatical structure, the “Grammar” page has a green box entitled “L'essentiel” in which there is a summary of the written structure in French. Next to this box there is a succession of examples to illustrate the summary, with the structures worked on underlined in bold so that the learner can directly access the appropriate linguistic form. Following this lesson there are one to three application exercises which allow learners to practise the structure worked on. The sentences of the exercises are anchored in the theme of the chapter (TV series, human rights, the city of London, etc.) to maintain a civilisational and communicational connection/topic even in the study of a grammatical form. On the other hand, as the application is written and with repetitive exercises, the learners are not placed at the heart of their learning as indicated by the action-oriented approach. Indeed, the implementation of grammar is presented as support to the understanding of the documents and as a key tool to be used to succeed in the final task, but the rules are brought in an explicit and deductive way (the rule is given and then the learners are invited to apply the rule directly through application exercises for which a model is given each time). However, a tool is made available to the learners to increase their autonomy and thus place them at the heart of the grammar lesson without going through the lecture given by the teacher.

This application brings education into the digital age, which is more contemporary and suitable for students now. The “Flash page” application is free and accessible on smartphones, which means that students can access the resources in their textbook even outside of class, as long as they have a device and internet connection. Through this tool, they can find all the digital resources in the textbook, such as audio and video documents and quizzes to test their knowledge. They just need to scan the pages of the textbook where the “Flash PAGE” pictogram appears with their phone, to have access to PDF activity sheets or online quizzes to practice.

Shine Bright is quite like *Sky's the Limit* in terms of the presentation of grammatical structures, except that the introductory pages of the units do not display the language objectives related to the final task. On the other hand, as in the previous manual, the “Boost your skills” inserts are present next to the documents to guide learners in formulating their answers. In addition, it can be noted that each page of documents ends with a task to synthesise the findings

from the documents (reading and/or listening comprehension). The synthesis tasks can correspond to different language activities such as written expression or oral expression (continuous or interactive). It can be noticed that the grammar insert is linked to the instruction of the synthesis task.

For example, in one of the chapters of the textbook, a task is given with the following instruction: “You are a young activist and adults around you claim ‘youth cannot enact real social or political change’. Discuss the topic, giving precise examples of youth commitment and achievements”. (p.143). In the instruction, the verb “discuss” is put in bold, in order to draw the learner's attention to the nature of the task (oral expression in interaction).

We then notice that the title of the language insert next to it is “Appuyer ses arguments”. It contains tips on how to get learners to work on argumentation, including the presentation of the verbal tenses to be used to support general truths using the present tense, or to give examples on the sequence of tenses (mainly focusing on backshift). In this way, the learner manipulates grammatical structures directly through a communicative task, and the reference to the grammar lesson offers a guide for success in the task. The most detailed part of the grammatical structure is given in the “Boost your English” page at the end of the document, to present the lesson in a more explicit and deductive way.

On the other hand, *Shine Bright* presents the grammatical structures in a more playful way than *Sky's the Limit* because each grammatical structure is presented in a coloured diagram, thus allowing for better memorization by the learner. The lesson is also followed by a series of application exercises to enable the learner to put the lesson into practice through exercises of a different nature (replacing brackets, completing sentences, choosing between several options, etc.) to call upon several skills (forming structures, choosing values, etc.). Here again, the statements of the exercises are linked to the unit being studied, which keeps the learner in the same cultural dynamic. However, the learner is not placed in a communicative situation, as these exercises are to be done in writing and individually, unless the teacher chooses otherwise. Finally, *Shine Bright* also offers a digital tool for learners to access digital files. This digital tool works in the same way as *Sky's the Limit*, i.e., it is free for learners and can be downloaded to a phone or tablet under the name "Nathan Live", which is the name of the publishing house of the textbook.

In this application, the learner also scans the pages of the textbook where the “live” pictogram appears, and can thus have access to videos, audios, but also to grammar tutorials at lesson level. Indeed, when we scan the pictogram above the “Boost your English” lesson page,

we are sent to a short video of about three minutes, which presents in French the elements present in the lesson but displaying the elements progressively like a slide show. The voiceover of the video also presents the English examples provided in the textbook.

This digital approach to grammar tutorials thus provides learners with an alternative source of learning and can help learners who do not feel confident working on grammatical structure in writing to use the spoken word to listen to the explanations. This digital tool therefore complements the textbook to suit all learner profiles.

Blockbuster has similar elements to the other two textbooks, because, like *Shine Bright*, it does not present the language objectives on the introductory page of the chapter but places the learners directly in a communicative process by giving instructions that trigger speech and a call for the learners' reaction to an image or a video extract. On the cultural content pages, the grammar insert is short and summarises at the end of the page all the structures linked to the analysis of the various documents. The insert then serves as support for the formulation of answers to the questions, while indicating to the learner which pages to see to access the lesson. As a reminder, *Blockbuster* does not present a grammar lesson within the chapters like the other two manuals. Access to grammar is thus more restricted in this manual, both in terms of the inserts, which only contain the name of the structure and a corresponding example, and the absence of theoretical explanations in the chapters. One might then wonder whether the authors' choice was not more focused on communication and the civilisational aspect than on the structural aspect. As the official instructions and the *CEFR* emphasise the use of language as a tool for communication and interaction, the *Blockbuster* textbook is rooted in this dynamic by focusing on contemporary documents of very different natures, thus enabling learners to find themselves more often in communicative situations. Moreover, the Maison des Langues publishing house does not offer digital applications like Bordas and Nathan but specifies on the cover of the textbook that the audio content in MP3 format can be downloaded from the publisher's website.

The three textbooks thus each have their own way of presenting grammatical structures, despite some similarities. The three textbooks anchor their examples and exercises in the unit being studied, so as to keep learners in the cultural dynamic involved, but the application exercises are not communicative. There is therefore a paradox in that the exercises offered are not communicative but are anchored in the thematic context of the unit.

One may thus wonder whether the authors of the textbooks have chosen to reproduce pseudo-real situations through the exercises, or whether they have chosen to keep the cultural dynamic by using deductive and explicit grammar (rule, example, application) such as can be found in older teaching methods.

3. CASE STUDY: THE PAST PERFECT

3.1 Background on the past perfect

The past perfect is an aspect-temporal structure symbolically represented with the notation HAD + V- EN, as it involves auxiliary HAVE in the past tense combined with the past participle form of the main verb. Within the Theory of Enunciative Operations, the past perfect is considered to have a core or “fundamental” meaning, namely the link between two distinct moments set in the past (T-1 and T-2). This link can be temporal or mental. The auxiliary in the preterit thus marks a point of view that is no longer situated in the present as in the case of the present perfect, but in the past. In discourse, according to Larreya and Rivière (2014), the past perfect can have a continuative, resultative, backshift or irrealis value. With a continuative past perfect, the verb situation started before (T-2) and continued until a past moment of reference (T-1). With a resultative value, the verb situation occurred in the past and had a consequence on a later past moment of reference (T-1). On the other hand, the past perfect can have a backshift value, when there is a transposition of direct speech in the present perfect into indirect speech. Finally, the past perfect can have a counterfactual or irrealis value, to talk about an event that never happened in the past. The past perfect can be used both in the simple form, but also with the addition of the BE+ V-ING aspectual form, which adds a progressive meaning to its simple value. At this point, the activity that is taking place at one point in the past is linked to a later point still in the past.

Listed below are examples of the different values of the past perfect, taken from Larreya and Rivière (2014, p.39,79,80):

1. “*When I met Rodney, he had been a racing driver for ten years*”. - **Continuative**
2. “*Rodney couldn’t tell me the time yesterday. He had lost his watch*”. – **Resultative**
3. “*Tom said that he had arrived on May 1st*”. – **Backshift**
4. “*I wish you had asked me for that money*”. – **Irrealis**

As a past tense that can be replaced by a preterit in the case of a past tense narrative, the past perfect is not the first tense that learners encounter in their English lessons.

Indeed, the emphasis is first placed on the simple present to construct a discourse, then the preterit in order to constitute a narrative and state facts in the past, and later they work on the present perfect, to nuance their discourse with the incidence of the past on the present.

Gardelle (2018) discusses common challenges when introducing past tenses to French-speaking learners in the EFL classroom. French learners of English tend to use the *passé composé* to talk about past events, and therefore use the present perfect as a direct equivalent of the *passé composé*, which it is not. In addition, there are learners who do not master the preterit or who do so with difficulty, and the study of the different past tenses can also be a way of diversifying the use of the past tense, to perfect one of the others. Gardelle (2018) highlights that the past perfect is used to situate verb situation prior to another past verb situation, and she provides the following figure, reproduced as *Figure 3*), to illustrate it:

- un present perfect : *Andrew, who had known her for many years, knew she would relent eventually.*

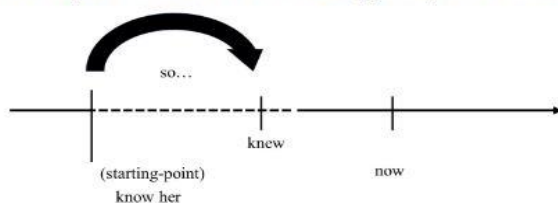


Figure 1- Representation of the past perfect according to La Clé des Langues

We might think that the past perfect is not a priority for learners because, in the context of the action-oriented approach where we try to ensure that learners can use their knowledge and skills in an English-speaking world, the past perfect is not much used in many conversations. The past perfect complements the preterit in past tense speech to chronologise past events, or to take stock of the past, or to talk about a regret or a fact that did not happen, all in past tense speech. To construct this kind of discourse, learners need to master the past perfect, both in terms of construction and uses. The construction of the past perfect is based on the construction of a similar tense, the present perfect, which is composed of the auxiliary HAVE in the present and the past participle form of the main verb. In the case of the past perfect, learners have to understand that in the context of an utterance in the past, the construction is similar but with the auxiliary HAVE in the past form. In terms of its use, learners in secondary school are normally already familiar with the continuative and resultative values of the present perfect. It is therefore possible to guide them to the contextual values of the past perfect by taking up the continuative and resultative values of the present perfect while focusing on the past.

3.2 The way the past perfect is presented in the three textbooks

3.2.1. Within the chapters

In *Shine Bright*, the past perfect is introduced in a chapter on “Fictions and Realities”, a topic which requires the use of past tenses to tell a story. However, the term “past perfect” does not appear until a section entitled “Boost your skills” which leads to the preparation of the final task at the end of the chapter. As the chapter and activities progress, learners are introduced to other grammatical skills or structures such as structuring a story in the past tense, but only naming explicitly the preterit and present perfect at this stage. In the grammar section “Boost your skills”, the past perfect is discussed alongside the preterit and through a schematic representation of the use of each of these two tenses.

If we first look at the form of this lesson on the past perfect/preterit, we can see that it is divided into two drawings, which feature a character, the subject of the examples given to illustrate the use of each tense. From top to bottom, we are first presented with a short text written in French which gives a general definition of the past tenses, represented on a chronology which allows us to link events with each other. This is followed by a more precise remark on the use of the past perfect, also symbolised “*had + V-en*”, compared to the use of the preterit, symbolised “*V-ed*”. Here, the learner considers the use of the past perfect as a reference to an event preceding another one stated in the preterit.

The first example provided in the textbook corresponds to the continuative value of the past perfect: “He had lived on a desert island for 28 years when they rescued him”. To illustrate this theoretical explanation, subsequent drawing shows two events linked by a time indicator.

On one side, there is a man on an island, corresponding to **1** (“He had lived on desert island for 28 years”), and on the right, the image of a boat, corresponding to **2** (“They rescued them”). These two clauses are linked by the conjunction “when”, which then shows the sequence of the two events on the timeline leading up to the present: a past event in clause #2, and an event prior to this past event in clause #1. The construction of the sentence is therefore logically:

*clause n°1 in the past perfect + **WHEN** + clause n°2 in the preterit*

The aim of the second picture is to demonstrate to learners that the order of the clauses, and therefore, of tenses, can be changed by adapting the time indicator. Indeed, the second picture illustrates a second sentence involving the same character: “He decided to take to the sea after he found a treasure map”. The character on the left corresponds to clause #1 (“He had found a treasure map”) and the boat on the right corresponds to clause #2 (“He decided to take to the sea”). These two clauses are linked this time by the conjunction “after”, which shows the cause-

consequence relationship of two past events, and the order in which the facts took place. Therefore, the sentence construction here is reversed:

*clause n°2 in the preterit + **AFTER** + clause n°1 in the past perfect*

A “warning” symbol warns learners that the sequence of clauses is not always dependent on chronology but can also depend on the choice of temporal indicators.

Here, it could be presumed that the authors of the textbook wanted to emphasise the visual side of the lesson in order to make the difference between the preterit and the past perfect easier to understand, through pictures and colours making the explanations more entertaining. In addition, the parallel study of the preterit and the past perfect is a way for learners to differentiate between two past tenses and to know how to favour one or the other depending on the context of the statement.

In *Blockbuster*, the past perfect is introduced in a chapter belonging to “territory and memory” on the topic of the city of London. Here, the grammatical skills and structures needed for the chapter only appear in a small blue box on the first double-page of the chapter and are not detailed in this unit.

Indeed, the names of the three language facts to be worked on (past perfect, passive voice and expression of purpose) are only mentioned to refer to the *Précis Grammatical* located at the end of the textbook. An example written in English and related to the chapter is mentioned just below the name of the grammatical structure, just to illustrate these grammatical forms. In this grammar box, the name of the grammar structure is written in bold and coloured in blue, to make a corresponding colour mark within the given example. Here, in the example given for the past perfect (“Christopher Wren made new plans for the city, because the fire had damaged it”), the verb form “had damaged” is highlighted in bold and blue to help the learner locate the relevant structure in the example. In this way, the learner is directly confronted with the grammatical structure used pragmatically, in a context that echoes the chapter under study. However, compared to the previous textbook, *Blockbuster* does not present a lesson directly within the chapters, but relies on the *Précis Grammatical* to provide the necessary information for understanding the grammar form. Learners are therefore encouraged to be autonomous in their discovery of grammar, by guiding them to the end of the textbook for further clarification, but the authors of *Blockbuster* also allow teachers to provide their own explanation of the past perfect within the chapter. Here, the emphasis is mainly on mastering the final task, and the grammatical structures are given as material and as a basis for doing it.

Sky's the Limit refers to the past perfect directly on the introduction page of a chapter related to the theme “Identities and exchanges”, where the different language tools are mentioned to work on the final task. However, we can notice that in this chapter, the past perfect is not studied alone, it is put in relation with the preterit as in *Shine Bright*. Nevertheless, it brings a new element, namely the introduction of the -ING aspect combined with the past perfect. All along the chapter and the activities, the past perfect is first brought into opposition to the preterit through a grammar insert at the bottom of the page containing two examples involving both the preterit and the past perfect. In addition, this insert refers to the “Grammar” section at the end of the chapter.

It is then presented with the -ING aspect in the following activities, again through a blue grammar insert, and with an example representing the structure "past perfect en be + V-ing", and a reference to the "Grammar" section.

Thanks to these boxes located directly in the middle of the activities of the chapter, the learners are directly aware that they must study a particular grammar structure, thanks to the word “Grammar” written in white on a blue background, and thus standing out from the other instructions of the activities. In addition, the inserts are written in a concise manner, with the name of the language fact written in French and in dark blue (on one side the preterit with the past perfect and on the other the past perfect with the addition of the -ING aspect). Following the name of the grammatical point, an example is given in English and in the context of the chapter. In these example sentences, the verb form is underlined and written in bold, and the symbol of the form is indicated underneath in blue (“BV + -ed”, “had + part.passé”, “had + part.passé de be + V-ing”).

The aim of these examples is therefore pragmatic by putting the learners in a situation related to the context, and by showing the correct construction of the past perfect form. Finally, we note that in the two cases of past perfect studied, the values illustrated in this chapter are chronological in both cases, adding the durative value for the ING aspect. Moreover, at the end of the chapter, a double page focusing on grammar helps learners complete their final task by giving a lesson to go further than the examples given in the activities. Here, we are presented explanations on the use of the past perfect in relation with the use of the preterit, describing the continuative and resultative values of the past perfect, just as the two other textbooks do.

Like the other textbooks, the theoretical explanations are given in French on the right of the lesson, but the examples are in English, with the verbal structures highlighted in bold, and the tense symbol used in blue and italics just below the verbs (“BV + -ed” and “had + part.

passé”) on the left of the presentation of the lesson. The examples are presented in the same way as the examples throughout the chapter, to keep the learners in the same learning dynamic, with colour and layout hints. Here again, the verb forms are highlighted in bold and underlined, with the symbol of the form written just below. On the right-hand side, the explanatory part in French takes up synthetic elements in order to guide the learner to the strict meaning of the past perfect, giving an explanatory sentence on the use of the preterit first, insisting on its core value of dissociation with time of speaking (T0): “permet de parler d'un fait passé, coupé du present”. This approach allows the learner to be placed directly in the context of the past, so that he/she will understand the anchoring of the past perfect more clearly later. The textbook mentions the temporal markers for the preterit as does *Shine Bright*, as well as the principle of succession of events. There is then an explanatory sentence on the use of the past perfect, which builds on the values of the preterit (in relation to past events) but adds two key pieces of information: that the past perfect is used for past events anterior to another past event, and that it allows the speaker to talk about his experience in the past. Following the lesson that shows the use of the simple past perfect in relation to the preterit, we are also presented with a lesson on the use of the past perfect combined with BE + V-ing, with the same presentation seen previously.

With the addition of BE + V-ing, the lesson presents the highlighting of the subject of the action or the action itself in a sentence. In the examples given, there is a past perfect in BE+V-ing and a simple preterit to show the connection between two past events. Through these two lessons, we can suppose that the authors of *Sky's the Limit* want to present the different forms of the past perfect that can be found in context, and explicitly specify the link between the preterit and the past perfect through examples that also allow the learner to identify the linking words and the temporal connectors to be used to be accurate in the correct tense agreement.

3.2.2. In the grammar toolkit

We will now see how the grammatical notions of the past perfect are introduced in the grammar toolkits of each of these three textbooks.

In *Blockbuster*, the *précis grammatical* about the past perfect is rather short and synthetic, with an explanation in French, and presents only the resultative value of this aspect, with an example which is the same that is given in the grammar box in the chapter.

First, a general sentence depicts the past perfect as a tense which shows that one fact occurred before another one set in the past. The term “flashback” is mentioned to summarise the theory. Following this definition, there is an example sentence featuring two clauses, one in the preterit and one in the past perfect. The verb in the preterit is underlined, while the verb in the past perfect is coloured in blue. This same example is then deconstructed on a timeline with pink dots representing different elements of the sentence. A bold pink dot shows the present tense, with a box in French indicating “le moment où l'on parle” (time of speaking), and the other two pink dots relate the two events in the example sentence, which are in the past given their positioning to the left of the present tense on the timeline. We can then see the clause “Christopher Wren made new plans” which is commented on in French as a “point de repère” (reference point) which is anchored in the past and which therefore corresponds to the preterit, and the clause “The fire had damaged London” whose commentary indicates that this event occurred even earlier. To give a more concrete illustration, there is even a dotted arrow linking the preterit to the past perfect, to show the link between the two past events. Here, the grammatical structure is presented explicitly, as the authors of the textbook have chosen a synthetic approach to explain the rule but with examples as illustration, and they focused on a single value to focus learners on mastering it, as seen in the chapter under study.

In the *précis grammatical* of *Sky's the limit*, there is a presentation of the past perfect through the two values seen in the middle of the chapter, i.e., the continuative value (“The party had already started when they arrived”) and the existential value (“He knew his way around Dublin as he had been there before”), but we can notice that on the next page, the irrealis value of the past perfect is also presented, as an unreal past event (“If he had stayed in his own country, he would have been killed”).

Unlike the grammar section in the chapter, the grammar toolkit presents a summary of the simple past perfect without paralleling it with the preterit. In this way, the learner can focus directly on this particular grammatical structure, concentrating on the essential information related to the past perfect. Just after the summary on the simple past perfect, there is a summary on the past perfect in BE + V-ing which also includes the information present in the corresponding chapter. It can be noted that for the BE + V-ing past perfect, the section also includes the note in French that explains the French equivalent of this tense. The summaries are presented in the same way as in the chapters, highlighting with bold the most important elements to remember to guide the learners towards the essential structure in terms of meaning. However, we can notice that the summaries only present the values of the tense that can be

found in context, but we have no information concerning the formation of the simple past perfect or the past perfect in BE + V-ing. Since the information on their formation is already included in the lesson in the corresponding chapter, we may wonder if the authors of Sky's the Limit have chosen to guide the learners more on the use of the tense than on its formation, which they may have already acquired.

In Shine Bright, the précis grammatical follows the pattern of the corresponding chapter to provide a complete overview of the past perfect, presenting it on its own, without contrasting it with the preterit as in the “Boost your English” section of the unit. Unlike the other two textbooks, Shine Bright’s précis presents both the formation and use of the past perfect, in two distinct sections. The formation of the past perfect is presented first and explicitly, as if to emphasise the importance of the construction of the form, including the past form of the auxiliary HAVE. In addition, the “*formation*” section specifies the construction of the present perfect in interrogative and negative forms, to familiarise learners with all the forms that this tense can take in context.

An example coloured in purple illustrates each statement, and the elements considered essential are highlighted in bold (place of the auxiliary, tense used for the construction, etc). In the examples, the two elements necessary for the construction of the past perfect (past form of HAVE and past participle of the main verb) are displayed in bold so that the learner can automatically locate the form in the sentence. Once the construction of the past perfect has been explained, the learner can concentrate on its use and values in context. Here, we find the chronological value illustrated by the diagram in the “Boost your English” section of the corresponding chapter. In contrast, there is no diagram in the grammar book, so that the chronological value can be explained with the help of a short text and an example. However, there are key words in bold similar to the lesson in the chapter: “bilan”, “repères passes”, “antériorité”. These words are highlighted because they contain the essential elements for understanding the chronological value of the past perfect. This explanation thus allows learners to add content to the diagram, and to have a new example to support their understanding. In addition, the examples given are translated into French to show why this tense has been used. It can be noted that here, the grammatical precision takes on its full meaning because it provides a value of the past perfect which is not specified in the chapter’s lesson: reported speech in the past tense. Adding a value of the past perfect adds more precision to the notion and allows the learner to realise that a single tense can be used in different ways.

3.3 Application exercises and skills that must be mobilised

In *Shine Bright*, inside the chapter, just after the lesson, there are two types of exercises with their instructions written in French. Exercise number one is a fill-in-the-blank exercise which involves choosing between the preterit and the past perfect for four sentences which are rather complex.

It is a choice activity in which learners have to select the right form and conjugate the verbs that are presented in the infinitive form: *see, hear, read, tell, find, arrive and be*. There are two verbal forms per sentence to conjugate, and verbs are given between brackets. This exercise aims to train learners to form the two tenses correctly, and to know when to use one form or the other. Focusing on the instruction, we can see that it is written in an imperative form “*mets*” in a short and concise sentence. However, there is no indication about the way learners have to do the exercise (copy the whole sentence, only copy the verbs, in your textbook, on a draft, etc.) but only the most important information, namely the fact of choosing the right form. From a semiotic point of view, we can see that instructions are written in bold, and each sentence is marked with a letter (a to d). Infinitive verbs between brackets are written in italics in order to catch the learner’s attention who eventually didn’t pay attention to brackets. The aim of this exercise is therefore to allow learners to apply the lesson, using sentences linked by context to the chapter, and allowing the student to identify temporal connectors that help differentiate when to use the preterit and the past perfect. The instruction does not specify that the focus should be on the actions that take place in the sentence, but this instruction is implicit because in order to complete this exercise, learners are asked to mentally represent the pattern of the lesson for each sentence, in order to reproduce the thinking. To continue to make the link between the lesson and application, exercise 2 combines both reading comprehension and reflection on the language. It is a six-line text in English that learners have to read, and then they place events on a timeline (as indicated in the instructions).

The objective of this exercise is thus to allow the learners to test their skills in locating the connectors linked to the different past tenses, and to be able to understand the sequence of the actions presented in the text. They should also be able to identify the different grammatical structures present in the text, allowing them to distinguish between regular and irregular verbs, but also to become more familiar with the different forms of the past tense. By using sentences related to the unit studied and linked to the lesson, these two exercises place learners in a situation of a “*pratique raisonnée de la langue*” as it is required by the official instructions, because they study language in context, with the visualization of different values.

In the *précis grammatical*, the exercise involves both the construction of the form and the choice of the right time according to the context. Here, the instruction specifies that the learner has to choose between the preterit and the past perfect in the given statements, by choosing the correct tense for the verbs in brackets.

Five sentences are to be completed, but the statement is already given, so the learner must change the infinitive form of the verbs in brackets to the correct form. The learner is expected to make the correct temporal markings in each sentence in order to be able to distinguish between a past event and an earlier one in the past tense or reported speech form. These values are those communicated in the summary above and allow the explanations to be applied directly. This is why the approach to grammar is explicit here, as the rule of construction and use is explained and illustrated, and then applied through an exercise requiring both work on the formation and choice of value in context.

Blockbuster does not present an application of the grammatical structures within the chapters or in the *précis grammatical*, but offers a set of exercises at the end of the textbook, containing the grammatical structures proposed in all the chapters of the textbook in the form of an average of five exercises per chapter. The name of the grammatical structure worked on is given at the beginning of each exercise, so that the learner can practise independently on particular structures.

The two exercises presented are different in nature, and mobilise different skills in the learners. The first exercise is designed to work on the construction of the past perfect without focusing for the moment on its value in context. In this exercise, the learners have to choose the right verb for the right sentence, and the instruction specifically states that they must conjugate them in the past perfect. Here, the skills required are to be able to form the correct structure by putting the auxiliary HAVE in the past and the selected main verb in the past participle (distinguishing between regular and irregular verbs – “to rebuild” and “to burn down”). As the lesson on the past perfect does not explain precisely the construction of the past perfect in the *précis grammatical*, it can be considered that learners are expected to have understood it through the examples given, or through a grammar lesson given by the teacher. The second exercise also consists in construction of the past perfect as indicated in the instructions, but also calls on the lexicon as learners are asked to finish sentences related to the chapter about London that has been studied. Here, we can see the presence of the connector “because” between the preterit clause and the rest of the sentence that students have to complete. This connector

emphasises the resultative value of the past perfect, thus echoing the timeline in the *précis grammatical*.

The authors of *Blockbuster* may therefore expect the learners to master both the construction of the past perfect and to apply the resultative value by creating sentences following a connector, so as to make them autonomous in the application of this tense in context during a written expression activity, for example.

In *Sky's the Limit*, there are application exercises right after the lesson at the end of the chapter. This approach corresponds to explicit grammar, as learners first discover the rule, then the examples and finally the application through exercises that put them in a situation of manipulation of the structure.

These exercises are progressive because they aim to make learners master the chronological and resultative values of the past perfect. The first exercise asks the learners to number the order of the actions in each sentence from 1 to 3. To help them, the three verbs in each sentence are indicated in bold so that they can concentrate on them and distinguish between verbs in the preterit and verbs in the past perfect. Through this exercise, learners should be able to establish a timeline of events for each sentence, to understand which tense is used for which situation, and to understand whether previous actions have an impact on a past event, or whether it is a succession of actions in the past.

It is also a way for them to identify linking words and connectors (“just before”, “because”, “that”) that link information and determine the correct tense to use. The second exercise pushes the learners further in the manipulation of the past perfect, still directing them on the order of the actions, but making them more autonomous on the choice of the right verb form. An example at the beginning of the exercise allows the learner to practice this thinking and to have a model to follow.

The sentences in exercise 2 have two to three verbs to be conjugated correctly, and therefore allow learners to put the lesson into practice and makes them differentiate between the use of the preterit for an event cut off from time of speaking, and the use of the past perfect as a link between a past event and another, earlier past event. Finally, the instruction for the last exercise no longer tells the learner to focus on the sequence of actions but instructs the learner to choose between the preterit and past perfect for each verb in the four sentences. The aim of this exercise is to check the learners' ability to choose between two past tenses according to the context of the sentence, but also to be able to construct these forms correctly. The objective is

also to make them master the identification of elements such as temporal or logical connectors in order to be able to choose between the two tenses.

To work on the difference between the simple past perfect and the past perfect in BE + V-ing, the exercise that follows the lesson aims to let the learners manipulate both a simple form and a form to which the ING aspect is added to add a durative value and a focus on the action or the action itself. The instruction of the exercise tells the learner to choose the correct form for each verb in parentheses. Again, a model is provided to serve as a basis for thinking about this choice, and to show that here again, the mental representation of a timeline is possible, but with a focus on the action or on the subject of the action.

At the end of the textbook, there are three types of exercises that learners can do to practice the past perfect and the past perfect in BE+V-ing, which allow both to review the explanations of the lesson in the chapter and in the “*repères grammaticaux*” section, but also to train students through different types of activities ranging from construction to translation, including form choices. The first exercise provided is a training for the construction of the past perfect in BE + V-ing. The purpose of this exercise is to work on the -ING aspect alone and to train learners to master the correct formation of the structure, which can be difficult with the addition of BE to the past participle (been) and the verbal base to which the ending -ing is added. The authors of *Sky's the Limit* may want to use this exercise to develop automatic construction of the verb form to focus on the use values.

The next exercise is the same as the one proposed at the end of the lesson in the chapter, and thus brings new examples on which to practice spotting the connectors and adapting the choice of tense. However, it should be noted that compared to the exercise in the lesson, the one in the exercise bank features only one target verb per sentence. It could therefore be a quicker exercise for the learners to practice making them. autonomous in their learning and practice.

In the section entitled “*Les temps du passé*”, the authors of *Sky's the Limit* provide three exercises which allow learners to test themselves on everything they have worked on so far in terms of verb constructions (preterit, past perfect and past perfect in BE + V-ing) but also in terms of choice of tense in context, in each sentence, with the help of precise location and chronological reflection.

Exercise 18 uses the instructions from exercise page 44 and consists in choosing between the preterit and the past perfect for each verb in the sentences. In each statement, two verbal bases are to be conjugated, which allows the learners to identify triggers for the preterit, for example. However, this precise instruction sets learners on the road to mastery by progressively reviewing the grammatical structure. Exercise 19 extends the assessment by adding practice on the -ING aspect through the conjugation of one verb per sentence in the correct form. Here, we want the learners to focus on the durative aspect of -ING.

The last exercise in the section “*Les temps du passé*” is a translation exercise from French to English. This translation into the target language allows learners to practice directly on the mastery of past tenses, working on both the preterit and the past perfect, while also adding the ING aspect. This exercise echoes the traditional method which was also called “grammar-translation” and could have the objective of drawing parallels between the tenses in French and their equivalent in English. The sentences are short, and the lexicon is not difficult for this level of high school, which means that the authors of the textbook have preferred to focus on grammatical structure and give less importance to lexical skills. It could be supposed that if learners are able to translate these sentences, then they would be able to use the past tenses in a communicative context. On the other hand, the translation method proposed by the textbook does not fit into the principles of the action-oriented approach, as it is more of a traditional method.

CONCLUSION

Through this study, I wanted to analyse the way grammar is studied at the *première* level through a comparative study of three textbooks, from three different publishers but all issued the same year. The three textbooks were published in 2019, following the latest publication of the *Bulletin Officiel* on the curricula of the terminal cycle in common core. They are therefore rooted in the action-oriented approach introduced in 2005 by the French Ministry of Education, in response to the publication of the CEFR by the Council of Europe in 2001, which guides teachers in the language objectives for each class and also guides learners in the learning of a foreign language, in this case English. It seemed relevant to compare different textbooks in order to assess how much pedagogical freedom was used to translate into practice the official instructions and guidelines given by the Council of Europe. I have listed the different educational systems that have succeeded each other until I arrived at the action-oriented approach, based on a task system in which language is used as a tool for communication and interaction. This approach may have generated tensions between secondary school teachers and the official instructions, particularly in relation to their own representation of grammar, which, according to the *CEFR*, should be approached implicitly and inductively, i.e., students should deduce the grammatical rule from concrete examples, and structures should be brought into a civilisational and communicational context in order to place learners in their own learning. A general comparison of the textbooks revealed the pedagogical freedom of the authors in the choice of structures and the number of grammatical structures to be worked on by the learners during the year and in the course of the chapters, but also their freedom to introduce grammar in different ways in different editions.

A comparison of one structure in particular, the past perfect, showed that here again the approaches are different, both in terms of theoretical explanations and the examples and exercises used. We can therefore note a certain paradox between the place of the teacher as described in the official instructions, as a guide through an inductive and explicit approach, and the rather deductive approach used in the textbooks. One may therefore wonder how to explain this gap between language teaching theory and training, and teaching practices, as exemplified in textbooks. Textbook authors enjoy pedagogical freedom but are in line with official guidelines because through the documents, activities and final tasks, the learner works on reflection on language with a view to communication.

The place of grammar learning-teaching within the action-oriented approach thus remains a complex question which oscillates between the need for learners to master grammatical structures in order to succeed in tasks, as seen in textbooks (with the integration of grammatical objectives in the table of contents, in the introductory pages or in the instructions for the final task) and the desire of the official guidelines and the CEFR to place learners in communicative situations through a cultural anchorage. One question remains unanswered at the end of this study: In order to be able to communicate, the learner must be able to master the language, but how can he or she master the language if grammar is not addressed in a concrete way in English lessons? Teachers still seem to be divided on this issue.

We could have gone further in this study by making classroom observations in order to have another approach than the one proposed in the textbooks, and the implementation of strategies to work on grammatical structures in connection with the action approach and the setting of learners in a situation. It would also have been possible to observe teachers using one of the three textbooks we compared, to see how they apply the implementation guidelines given by the authors, or to see if they follow the same format for explaining grammatical structures.

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