

Exploring American Cultural Themes in Language Learning: A Qualitative Analysis of 'Focus 4' EFL Textbook

Flora Amiti, PhD Candidate

South-East European University, North Macedonia

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Abstract

Learning a foreign language requires both time and dedication. Hence, achieving proficiency in the four language skills definitely necessitates the integration of culturally relevant materials that can enrich the learning process, particularly in developing speaking skills. This study examines an upper-intermediate English as a foreign language textbook utilized at the Medical High School “Gostivari” in Gostivar. While the textbook serves as a crucial teaching resource, its content also significantly shapes the students' learning experiences by addressing topics that contribute to both their academic and personal growth, preparing them for future success. The textbook's analysis mainly concerns activities related to cultural themes, particularly those related to American culture, thus highlighting the importance of examining how these activities facilitate the development of speaking skills. A qualitative research approach was adopted to analyze the textbook's content and evaluate its cultural relevance. The study reveals that the textbook incorporates a diverse array of culture-related activities, aimed at enhancing students' speaking abilities. These activities not only promote cultural understanding but also provide opportunities for students to practice and refine their spoken language skills in meaningful contexts. The incorporated cultural content can boost student engagement since it introduces relevant and thought-provoking scenarios that encourage active participation in speaking activities.

Keywords: Foreign language learning, EFL textbooks, speaking skills, cultural relevance, qualitative analysis

Introduction

Textbooks play a pivotal role in shaping and guiding curricula in educational settings. From primary schools to universities, they provide structure and consistency in the learning process. In many cases, educators do not select their teaching materials, but rather use textbooks mandated by the Ministry of Education. This approach ensures that students across the nation engage with standardized content, making textbooks a cornerstone of language instruction.

While some teachers have the freedom to choose their textbooks, the majority operate within systems where government education departments, school boards, or academic institutions dictate these resources. Such decisions reflect pedagogical priorities aimed at aligning materials with educational objectives and curricular standards. For example, textbooks designed on the communicative approach may prioritize practical language use, while others may emphasize grammar or vocabulary.

Despite these benefits, the reliance on prescribed textbooks can sometimes restrict teachers' creativity and flexibility, particularly when the material does not fully align with their students' unique needs and interests. Nevertheless, textbooks remain indispensable, offering a reliable foundation that guides both educators and learners through structured lessons, activities, and exercises.

Garinger (2001) emphasizes the widespread reliance on textbooks in language classrooms globally, noting that “textbooks play an axial role in language classrooms in all types of educational institutions...all over the world. In some contexts, teachers are free to choose their own textbooks. The vast majority of teachers, however, have textbooks suggested, prescribed, or assigned to them” (as cited in Khosravani et al., 2014, p. 54). Instead Celce-Murcia (2001) has mentioned an important and famous language teacher, Johann Amos Comenius, a Czech scholar and teacher, who published books about his teaching techniques between 1631 and 1658:

- Use imitation instead of rules to teach a language.
- Have your students repeat after you.
- Use a limited vocabulary initially.
- Help your students practice reading and speaking.
- Teach language through pictures to make it meaningful.

Thus Comenius, perhaps for the first time, made explicit an inductive approach to learning a foreign language, the goal of which was to teach use rather than analysis of the language being taught. (p.4)

The Role of Textbooks in Language Learning

Textbooks are essential tools for both educators and learners, providing a systematic approach to language acquisition. According to Radić-Bojanić and Topalov (2016):

“As a teacher, a textbook gives students relevant information about grammar and vocabulary, as well as English speaking countries and their cultures. As a map, it shows an outline of linguistic and cultural elements as a structured programme and it guides students and teachers to follow the steps taken in previous lessons.” (p.139)

In addition to linguistic knowledge, textbooks introduce students to the cultures of English-speaking countries, enriching and shaping their language use. This cultural dimension enhances learners’ ability to appreciate and meaningfully engage with the language, making the learning process itself deeply engaging.

Additionally, textbooks serve as a structured resource that facilitates both instruction and learning. While this structured approach provides valuable guidance, it may also limit adaptability to diverse student needs. Ultimately, textbooks continue to play a crucial role in language education, but their impact depends on how educators integrate flexibility within their structured framework. The balance of linguistic and cultural content, ensures that students have the tools to develop both proficiency and cultural competence, furthermore preparing them for effective communication in diverse contexts.

The Importance of Cultural-Related Speaking Activities in Language Learning

Language is linked to culture, and understanding this connection is essential for effective communication. Language serves as a tool for expressing ideas, sharing experiences, and interacting socially. According to Ali, Kazemian, and Mahar (2015), effective language use requires an understanding of both linguistic and cultural contexts:

“It is observed that language is used in a cultural phenomenon to exchange ideas and opinions or share experiences. It is so much interrelated that without understanding properly the cultural setting and social behaviour of a language use, it leads to misinterpretation and breakdown in the language communication, or it may result into errors and misunderstanding because language is not simply sending or receiving information but it functions as a social behaviour in certain cultural context.”(p.3)

Without awareness of these cultural nuances, misinterpretations and communication breakdowns are likely to occur. For instance, certain phrases or expressions may hold different meanings across cultures. Failure to recognize these differences can lead to confusion and misunderstandings. Thus, learning a language involves not only mastering grammar and vocabulary, but also understanding the social practices, values, and conventions that govern its use. In essence, effective communication hinges on a deeper cultural understanding of how language functions within specific societal contexts.

Moreover, language as social behavior impacts relationships and interactions. The cultural context dictates how people express politeness, respect, or authority. These subtle social cues are crucial for smooth communication. As such, learning a language goes beyond academic proficiency; it requires a comprehension of the social dynamics that guide language use. Without this cultural insight, communication can fail to meet its intended goals, leading to errors and misunderstandings.

Incorporating culture into language learning enhances communicative competence. Hossain (2024) emphasizes that:

“The integration of culture enhances communicative competence, fosters cross-cultural understanding, and promotes inclusivity and respect in language learning environments. This integration motivates learners, refines their language learning strategies, and prepares them as effective communicators in diverse, intercultural settings.” (p. 3)

This integration equips learners not only with linguistic skills but also with the ability to communicate effectively in diverse settings. By engaging with cultural nuances, learners become more capable and confident communicators. Cultural integration also promotes cross-cultural understanding. According to Chung and Long (2024) “Role-playing different cultural scenarios in class was highlighted as a particularly effective method for building confidence in using English in real-world situations. This enhanced language skills through cultural content demonstrates the practical benefits of integrating cultural understanding into language education.”(p.5350) As students learn about the customs, traditions, and values of different societies, they begin to appreciate the perspectives of others. Understanding cultural differences is essential in our increasingly globalized world. Furthermore, integrating culture into language education fosters inclusivity and respect in the classroom. When cultural diversity is embraced, students feel valued for their unique backgrounds and experiences. Boucard (2023) notes that understanding the culture of the language being learned can significantly enhance motivation. Gaining insight into the cultural context of a language connects learners more deeply to their studies. Culture

extends beyond vocabulary and grammar, sparking curiosity about the history, art, literature, music, and cinema of the language community. This cultural immersion makes learning more enjoyable and helps students see the practical and emotional value of mastering the language. As mentioned by Menacho-Vargas et al. (2021):

“If teachers get students familiar with different English cultural topics, students can speak about those topics more fluently. Speaking English does not mean just knowing English vocabulary and grammar but also knowing English cultural issues. Students encounter some problems in presenting their ideas in speaking class; one of their problems is made by their language proficiency and background knowledge. To have a good capability in speaking English, students should have the schemata to convey what they talk about.”(p.111)

When motivated by cultural elements, learners are more likely to want to use the language in authentic settings—interacting with native speakers, participating in cultural events, or traveling to places where the language is spoken.

According to Gaeini & Basirizadeh (2011), “Language and culture are inextricably intertwined. At the very least, students should be given the insights which will enable them to acquire the necessary cultural knowledge for participating in the second culture setting.” (p.4095). This connection between students makes communication more relevant and real, boosting learners' confidence and enthusiasm for learning.

Introduction to the book as the primary source for analysis

The book “Focus 4” by Pearson, used in the Medical High School “Gostivari” in Gostivar, will serve as the primary source for this analysis. Designed for secondary school students, it incorporates various themes and topics that help improve students' language skills in writing, reading, and listening. The units introduce daily life themes and encourage critical thinking about age-appropriate topics. It also integrates grammar explanations within each unit.

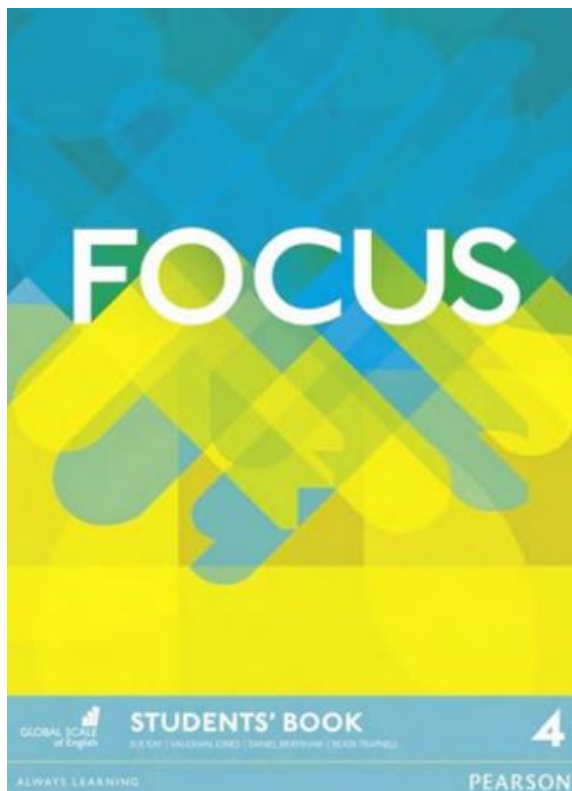


Figure 1. Student's Book "Focus 4" by Pearson

Notably, "Focus 4" includes cultural-related topics, particularly those related to English-speaking countries like the USA. The book presents culture-oriented activities that help students develop speaking skills while understanding the cultural context in which the language is used.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions guide this analysis:

1. Are there culture-related speaking activities presented in the book "Focus 4"?
2. Are most of the culture-oriented activities related to American culture?
3. Is importance given to speaking skills during culturally related activities?

Based on the literature and observations, the hypotheses are:

1. There are culture-related speaking activities presented in the book "Focus 4".
2. Some of the culture-oriented activities are related to American culture.
3. Importance is given to speaking skills during culturally related activities.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the relationship between speaking activities and cultural themes, particularly focusing on how American culture is integrated into language learning. The analysis will focus on thematic topics such as food, music, societal issues, and how speaking exercises facilitate language acquisition.

Data Collection & Analysis

The book was carefully examined by reviewing its chapters to identify activities that incorporate cultural topics. A thorough page-by-page examination followed, with notes on activities that aligned with American culture. Speaking exercises were selected based on their cultural relevance. The following categories illustrate the findings:

- **Page 10**
Topic: UK vs. USA
Exercise: "Match pairs of words representing the same concept in American and British English."
Skills: Speaking, Vocabulary
Cultural Connection: Explores vocabulary differences between American and British English (e.g., "cookie" vs. "biscuit").
- **Page 11**
Topic: USA vs. UK
Exercise: "Discuss differences in food portions and living spaces between the US and the UK."
Skills: Speaking, Listening
Cultural Connection: Highlights American lifestyle and cultural practices.
- **Page 72**
Topic: US Today
Exercise: "Work/Home life for the average American family"
Skills: Speaking, Critical Thinking
Cultural Connection: Discusses work dynamics and household roles in the US.
- **Page 85**
Topic: Art by Banksy
Exercise: "Analyze the meaning behind murals and political themes in American street art."
Skills: Speaking, Listening
Cultural Connection: Examines the influence of American culture on contemporary art.

- **Page 103**
Topic: Historical Social Issues in the US
Exercise: "Explore how key historical events have shaped modern American society."
Skills: Speaking, Listening
Cultural Connection: Encourages discussion on major historical events like the Civil Rights Movement.

Data Analysis

The analysis of culturally related materials in the textbook involves several ways of portraying cultural themes. One technique is to analyze the content to review the activities, visuals, and examples of their cultural content. This analysis aims to determine if the representation can aid students in becoming culturally informed and if it will help them improve their speaking skills.

A significant aspect of this analysis involves examining the cultural relevance of the exercises, specifically American cultural-related themes. Although the textbook itself includes a variety of cultural content, this study specifically focuses on analyzing the representation of American culture within the material. This targeted analysis was conducted to understand better how these elements contribute to learners' familiarity with American traditions, societal values, and communication practices. By narrowing to American cultural themes, the analysis aims to identify how effectively these exercises support learners in engaging with only one cultural context.

Another analysis focused on the role of speaking skills within the textbook's activities. Speaking exercises are evaluated to determine the improvement effectiveness of EFL learners' speaking skills. Activities such as debates, role-plays, and discussions are examined for their ability to encourage authentic language use and interaction. However, gaps were identified in whether these speaking tasks promote fluency and confidence, suggesting room for improvement. These kinds of exercises could help students with the communication skills necessary for both academic and real-world settings.

Lastly, the study considers how the information provided by the exercises aids in education and globalization. Although a focus on American culture provides important cultural insights, it is worth considering whether this perspective alone adequately prepares students for interactions in a variety of global settings. Incorporating a wider range of cultural contexts, including various English-speaking communities beyond the main focus, could enable learners to gain a deeper understanding of global viewpoints, enhancing their adaptability in an interconnected world.

Findings and Discussion

The textbook features a range of different activities that incorporate the four skills, but this study focuses on the speaking activities which are designed to enhance student engagement with cultural content, allowing students to explore cultural differences and communication styles. These activities often encourage students to share personal experiences, compare cultural practices, and reflect on their viewpoints.

A part of the activities relates to American culture, addressing themes such as holidays, social norms, and historical events. For example, students may discuss American holidays or the traditions and values tied to these celebrations. Activities also focused on freedom of expression, providing students with insight into the US cultural identity and its global influence.

When evaluating cultural sensitivity, the textbook presents both strengths and weaknesses. On the positive side, it encourages students to engage with diverse cultural perspectives, but also brings up comparisons and discussions for students regarding native culture vs. the American culture. While globalization is discussed, the materials fail to address complex cultural content that may not be age-appropriate for the students, leaving them with an incomplete or weak understanding of real American cultural history. For example, topics like historical racial inequalities or socio-political issues may not be suitable for all age groups but are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of cultural dynamics. Furthermore, this leaves students with an incomplete or superficial understanding of American cultural history, as the textbook cannot fully encompass the complexities of historical narratives.

Limitations

While the book was published in 2016, the content does not incorporate current cultural trends and global issues, making the material feel less relevant to modern learners and limiting engagement. Additionally, the textbook focuses on a single perspective, which restricts the scope of cultural analysis.

The cultural themes that are presented in the textbook, might not provide sufficient methods for evaluating cultural understanding. While there are numerous activities for evaluating the four main skills, assessing cultural knowledge through discussions and debates is more challenging. This is particularly true when it relies solely on real-world speaking skills, as it may not fully capture a student's understanding of cultural contexts.

Additionally, this analysis considers the varying perspectives and backgrounds of the students, recognizing that their experiences, internet usage, and research on cultural topics can differ. However, it is important to note that these activities, despite being informative, may not fully capture the diverse experiences of students from different cultural backgrounds.

Recommendations

Educators who use this textbook should make sure that students understand the cultural contexts in which the language is used. To enhance the student's cultural awareness, teachers should provide additional resources, such as videos, songs, lyrics, and role plays, that could offer different perspectives on the topics presented in the textbook. In this way, students gain knowledge by incorporating cultural practices.

Open discussions in class are recommended, students can share their own cultural experiences, and thus including globalization in a teaching setting can also help foster a more inclusive learning environment. Educators should create a classroom atmosphere where students feel comfortable critiquing cultural representations, challenging stereotypes, and engaging in respectful debates about cultural differences.

Conclusion

Key Findings

The study revealed that the textbook incorporates various speaking activities related to American culture. It covers cultural topics that are age-appropriate and interesting for the age group and also promotes discussions and cultural comparison. These activities provide insights into American life and inform students regarding some areas where cultural portrayal is used in describing culturally related materials in a speaking setting. Furthermore, the textbook promotes cultural awareness.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies could work on analyzing and including a range of educational materials from the point of view of an L1 language instructor, by providing activities that incorporate speaking and communication. Comparing cultures in textbooks could offer valuable insights into language learning resources. However, such comparative analyses would require additional time, space, and specialized expertise. Therefore, it might be more feasible to suggest these comparisons as optional classroom or homework activities for students. It would also be important to explore how these materials influence students' ability to engage in intercultural communication.

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Appendix A: UK vs USA

0.7 UK vs USA

Grammar: Comparative structures
Vocabulary: Adjectives and adverbs

SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

1 Find pairs of words that describe the same thing in American and British English. Use a dictionary if necessary.

binoculars coast seaside elevator
garbage holiday lift pavement
rubbish sidewalk subway
underground vacation wardrobe

Кличевит (UK) = ваљак (US)

2 **WORK TOGETHER** In pairs, read the blog entry and discuss which option you think is correct. Then listen to Jess talking to a friend and check your ideas with hers.

An American in London

I've been chatting to a British friend, comparing life in the USA with life here in the UK. Here are some of my conclusions.

In the UK ...

- the cost of living is a lot **higher/lower** than ...
- salaries are **quite a bit/a little** lower than ...
- food portions are a lot **smaller/larger** than ...
- most people live in **a little/slightly/much** smaller houses than ...
- housework is a lot **harder/easier** because there are **more/fewer** appliances than ...
- health care **is** more expensive than / **isn't** as expensive as ...
- employees get **the** lot / **slightly** more time off than ...
- people visit museums far **more/less** frequently than ...

... in the USA.

where I lived in the USA

where I live now in the UK

3 Read **REMEMBER THIS**. Then complete the cartoon caption with **as, less, much, quite, than** or **the**.

REMEMBER THIS

• Adjective forms = add **-er** to short adjectives, **more** to the rest or long adjectives. Irregular adjectives: good, bad, far.

• Adverb forms = add **more** to the most or **less** to the least to adverbs. Exceptions include early/earlier, fast/faster, well/better.

• Modifying comparatives = **far** (much) **to** (big) **a bit/a little** (a little/slightly) + comparative adjective/adverb

• Other structures = **as ... as**, **not as/so ... as**, **the ... the**

A: Wow that coffee cup is as big **as** my head is everything **is** bigger in the USA than in the UK!

B: Yes, except one thing: bathtubs are **a little** a bit smaller.

A: Why? There's far more space in American houses **than** British ones.

B: Americans take baths **more** regularly than British people. They prefer showers. But their shower rooms are **the** biggest in the world!

Grammar Focus page 123

4 Form the comparative and superlative forms of the adjectives and adverbs in the box.

[badly-paid (adj) extreme (adj) fit (adj) late (adv)]
[healthy (adj) soon (adv) well-dressed (adj)]

badly-paid/worst-paid/the worst-paid

5 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first. Use the words in capitals.

- 1 British comedies aren't as funny as American comedies. **THAN**
American comedies are _____ British ones.
- 2 Andy Roddick's serve is faster than Andy Murray's. **AS**
Andy Murray's serve is _____ Andy Roddick's.
- 3 One World Trade Center in New York is much taller than the Shard in London. **LESS**
The Shard in London is _____ the One World Trade Center in New York.
- 4 If you live in Boston, you grow to love it more each day. **MORE**
The longer you live in Boston, _____ you love it.
- 5 English rock music is better than any other. **BEST**
English rock music is _____ world.

6 Use the prompts and the words in brackets to write comparative sentences. Which facts did you already know?

- 1 football players / well-paid / American football players (much)
- 2 Big Ben / high / Statue of Liberty (a bit)
- 3 US life expectancy / short / UK life expectancy (a little)
- 4 US military expenditure / great / UK military expenditure (far)

Figure A1: Vocabulary differences between American and British English

Appendix B: USA vs UK

0.8 USA vs UK

Grammar: The Passive - have something done
Vocabulary: Politics - Society

SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

1 Complete the table. Put words and phrases with similar meanings side by side under the USA or The UK.

Georgians	Conservatives	50 States	Pound
Constitutional Monarchy	98 Counties	Dollar	
Democrats	House of Parliament	Labour	
President	Prime Minister	Republic	Republicans

The USA	The UK	Your country
Congress	House of Parliament	

2 Add equivalent words to describe the institutions in your country. Then, in pairs, discuss similarities and differences between all three countries.

3 Read the quiz and choose the correct options.

QUIZ


- 1 This country hasn't been / isn't invaded since 1066, when King Harold was / has defeated by William the Conqueror.
- 2 Until 1913 it was legal to have / be children sent to other parts of this country by parcel post.
- 3 One in eight workers in this country has had / has been employed by McDonald's at one time or another.
- 4 Eighty percent of everything on sale in this country is / has bought by women.
- 5 When Abraham Lincoln became President of this country in 1861, slaves were still being / had still imported from Africa. During his presidency, Lincoln had / was slavery abolished.
- 6 In 1918 women over thirty were / have allowed to vote in elections in this country. Women over twenty-one weren't / haven't allowed to vote until 1928.
- 7 Eight billion chickens are / have consumed in this country each year.
- 8 This country's king, Henry VIII, had been / had had married six times and had been / had two of his wives executed by the time he died in 1547.

4 **Match** Replace this country with the USA or the UK in Exercise 3. Then listen and check. Which facts did you find surprising?

5 Read **REMEMBER THIS**. Then complete the cartoon caption with the correct auxiliary verbs.

REMEMBER THIS

- The Passive + it isn't important or you don't know who performed an action
- Passive sentence + by + agent = a way to mention who (or what) performed an action
- Have something done = you don't perform an action yourself somebody does it for you!



America: I love your royal family, especially William and Kate. Their wedding in 2011 shown by the biggest American TV stations. It my hair done like Kate's for the occasion! Do you think George be crowned King one day?

Brit: Um, maybe, but he's just a child now, so he's only interested in his meals served and the TV into his favourite cartoons.

Grammar Focus page 129

6 Read some more trivia facts about the USA and the UK. Rewrite the sentences in the passive, using by + agent only if it is necessary.

- 1 Most people think that Christopher Columbus discovered America.
Most people think that America was discovered by Christopher Columbus.
- 2 Every year in the USA judges sentence around 100 criminals to death.
- 3 In 1815 in Britain, parents named nearly a quarter of all girls Mary.
- 4 People in the UK drink more tea than in any other country.
- 5 French people built the Statue of Liberty in France.

7 Use the prompts to write questions with have something done. Then, in pairs, ask and answer the questions.

- 1 have you ever / repair / a bicycle?
- 2 when did you last / test / your eyes?
- 3 will you ever / colour / your hair?
- 4 are you going to / redecorate / your bedroom?
- 5 have you / pierce / your ears?
- 6 when did you last / take / a passport photo?

Figure A2: American lifestyle and cultural practices

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Appendix C: US Today

5.4 Reading
Multiple choice
I can find specific detail in a literary text.


1 In pairs, read **US TODAY** and answer the questions.

- 1 What percentage of women can the highest salary in the family?
- 2 How much time do men spend doing the housework and childcare?
- 3 What is the trend for people who are both parents and compared to previous ages?

US TODAY

Work/Home life for the average American family

- Seventy percent of American children live in households where both parents are employed.
- Women are primary breadwinners in forty percent of homes with children. Two thirds of these women are single parents.
- With the rise of dual-income marriages, women do less housework than in previous generations, and men do more. However, women still tend to do more housework than men; in the USA, women spend 248 minutes per day on domestic work, while American men spend 161 minutes per day cooking, cleaning or on child-rearing duties.



2 Replace the underlined words and phrases in Exercise 1 with the words and phrases in blue in **US TODAY**.


3 In pairs, discuss what similarities/differences there are between working life in the US and in your country.

4 Read the text and answer the questions.

- 1 What was the author's mother's job and what did his father think about it?
- 2 How many siblings did the author have and what sort of house did they live in?
- 3 Which of these descriptions do you think best describes the book that this extract was taken from?
 - a historical novel
 - a memoir
 - a travel guide

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CHAPTER 1



Rosper's magazine in December 1951 published an article by Nancy B. Mavity on an unsettling new phenomenon, the two-income family, in which husband and wife both went out to work to pay for a more ambitious lifestyle. Mavity's worry was not how women would cope with the demands of employment on top of child-rearing and housework, but rather what this would do to the man's traditional status as breadwinner. 'I'd be ashamed to let my wife work,' one man told Mavity tartly, and it was clear from her tone that Mavity expected most readers to agree. Remarkably, until the war many women in America had been unable to work whether they wanted to or not. Up until Pearl Harbor, half of the forty-eight states had laws making it illegal to employ a married woman.

In this respect, my father was constitutionally – I would even say enthusiastically – liberal, and was completely in favour of my mother working. She worked for the *Des Moines Register*, as the Home Furnishings Editor, in which capacity she provided calm reassurance to two generations of homemakers who were anxious to know whether the time had come for paucity in the bedrooms and whether they should have square sofa cushions or round [...].

Because they both worked, we were better off than most people of our socio-economic background (which in Des Moines in the 1950s was most people). We – which is to say, my parents, my brother, Michael, my sister, Mary Elizabeth (or Betty) and I – had a bigger house on a larger lot than most of my parents' colleagues. It was a white clapboard house with black shutters and a big screened porch on top of a shady hill on the best side of town [...].

Figure A3: Work dynamics and household roles in the US

Appendix D: Art by Banksy

6.3 Listening
Sentence completion
I can identify specific detail in a conversation.

1 In pairs, describe these two murals by controversial British artist Banksy. What do you think they mean?

2 **CD-ROM MP3** Listen to a news report. Tick the information if it has been confirmed. If not, put a question mark.

Banksy Bio

- 1 real name is Robin Gunningham
- 2 was born in Bristol in 1972
- 3 trained to be a butcher
- 4 became famous in the 1980s
- 5 has never been arrested
- 6 authenticates his work on his website
- 7 is a multi-millionaire

3 In pairs, add pro- or anti- to the words to describe whether you think Banksy is for or against these things.

1 _____ anonymity 4 _____ peaceful protest
2 _____ authority 5 _____ fairness
3 _____ war & 6 _____ equality

4 **CD-ROM MP3** Listen to Robert and Alice talking about Banksy and check your ideas in Exercise 3.

EXAM FOCUS Sentence completion

5 **CD-ROM MP3** Listen again and complete the sentences with a word or short phrase.

- 1 Robert needs information to write a(s) _____
- 2 Alice did something like Robert when she was doing her _____
- 3 Alice's first thought Banksy was _____ years ago.
- 4 Banksy started painting graffiti _____ years ago.
- 5 He used spray cans and stencils instead of paintbrushes so that he could _____ his work.
- 6 Banksy doesn't want to be identified because his activities are _____
- 7 Some murals show soldiers with _____ in their hands.
- 8 Robert advises a mural showing a little girl with a _____

PRONUNCIATION FOCUS

8 **CD-ROM MP3** Listen and put these four-syllable words into the correct group A, B or C.

alienation authority ceremony commentator
inauthentic photographer uncomfortable
underlying vandalism

A B C

9 **CD-ROM MP3** Listen, check and repeat.

WORD STORE 6E

10 **CD-ROM MP3** Complete WORD STORE 6E. Add nouns or adjectives to the table. Mark the stress. Then listen, check and repeat.




Figure A4: The influence of American culture on contemporary art

Appendix E: Historical Social Issues in the US

7.6 Speaking

Clarification
I can ask for and give clarification.

1 Put ✓ next to the machines you would trust in place of a human and ✗ next to the ones you would not. Then, in pairs, discuss your choices.

1 a self-driving car	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 a robotic surgeon	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 a computer-generated online friend	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 a virtual teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 a robot police officer	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 Imagine you are going to a technology fair. In pairs, read the adverts and discuss which exhibition you would rather visit.

1

From Mario to Minecraft



an interactive history of games, gaming machines and gaming culture

2

Mind-blowing machines

From self-driving cars to robo-cops

The latest developments in robotics and artificial intelligence



3 **GOALS (20-25)** Listen to a conversation at the Mind-blowing Machines Exhibition. What type of machine is the 'Explainer' describing?

4 **GOALS (20-25)** Listen again and tick the phrases in the SPEAKING FOCUS that you hear.

SPEAKING FOCUS 25

Signaling confusion

Sorry, I'm not with you.

I'm not sure I follow you.

I'm afraid you've lost me there.

I don't know what you mean by ...

Checking your understanding

So, in other words, ...

Are you saying ... ?

If I understand correctly, you mean ... , right?

Giving clarification

Yes, precisely/exactly.

Yes, (that'd) pretty much (it).

No, that's not (quite) what I meant.

What I meant was ...

5 **GOALS (20-25)** Complete the conversations with words from the SPEAKING FOCUS. Then listen and check.

1

A: Not many people agree with me, but I think computer games are a bit of a waste of time. I'd rather kick back with my friends than stare at a screen for hours on end.

B: Er ... sorry, but I don't know what you mean. I ... 'kick back'.

A: What's ... was 'spend time together' – you know, hang out, chat, relax.

2

A: I think I'd do without my phone.

B: "And this year's Oscar for best actress goes to ..."

A: Ha, ha, very funny. Are you ... I'm being dramatic?

B: Yes, ... I think you'd survive without it.

3

A: Dan, I have to answer this question for homework. Can you help, please?

B: Sure, what's the question?

A: "In what ways might socially-intelligent robots benefit human society?"

B: Hmm. Well, I suppose the ability to have conversations with our machines will make a big difference.

A: I'm not sure I ... you.

B: Well, we interact with today's machines mostly by typing or pushing buttons. But some phones and tablets already understand voice commands, right? Imagine they and other machines could react to what you say and talk back to you properly.

A: Hmm, OK. If I understand ... you mean we'd be able to have a conversation with our television or our fridge, right?

B: Yes, that's ... much it.

A: I'm not sure I'd want to have a conversation with a fridge.

B: Why not?

A: Well, they have a reputation for being rather cold.

B: Oh, very funny!

6 In pairs, discuss the questions. Use the SPEAKING FOCUS to help you.

- 1 In what ways are computer games good or bad for the people who play them?
- 2 What do you think has been the most important technological development during your lifetime?
- 3 Have social media made us more or less sociable? Explain your opinion.
- 4 In what ways might socially-intelligent machines benefit human society?

Figure A5: Speaking focus