



The development of culture in English foreign language textbooks: the case of English File



Ángela Larrea Espinar¹ ·  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6049-9905>

Universidad de Córdoba

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Plaza del Cardenal Salazar, 3 · 14071 · Córdoba, Spain

Antonio Raigón Rodríguez ·  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9761-6271>

Universidad de Córdoba



ABSTRACT

Article history

Paper received: 23 January 2019
Paper received in revised form
and accepted for publication:
23 September 2019

Keywords

culture, EFL teaching/learning,
textbook, big "C" culture, little "c"
culture

Palabras clave

cultura, enseñanza/aprendizaje de
inglés como lengua extranjera,
libros de textos, Cultura con
mayúscula, cultura con minúscula

The cultural content of textbooks has become an important issue since the main goal of teaching English as a foreign language has shifted from communicative competence to intercultural citizenship. This paper reviews the trends in teaching culture in EFL and examines different approaches to the cultural analysis of textbooks. Then, our study analyses the cultural content of two editions of an intermediate (B1) EFL textbook using our own cultural content checklist. By comparing older and more recent editions, we examine how comprehensive the cultural content is in each book and determine how many thematic categories are covered in both textbooks.

RESUMEN

El contenido cultural de los libros de texto es un tema de especial relevancia puesto que el objetivo fundamental de la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera ha pasado del desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa a la formación de ciudadanos interculturales. Este artículo revisa las principales corrientes de enseñanza cultural del inglés como lengua extranjera y examina los distintos enfoques del análisis cultural de libros de texto. A

¹ Corresponding author · Email: angela.larrea@uco.es



continuación, analizamos el contenido de dos ediciones de un mismo libro usaremos nuestra propia lista de ítems culturales para analizar el contenido de dos ediciones de un mismo libro de texto de nivel intermedio (B1) de inglés como lengua extranjera. La comparación de los contenidos culturales entre la edición más antigua y la más reciente nos servirá para determinar si ha habido cambios en el tipo de contenido cultural y en las categorías temáticas se abordan.

1. Introduction

Risager points out that language teaching and learning has many different cultural dimensions due to its interdisciplinary character (2011). Despite this obvious difficulty, some visible stages can be distinguished over the years. Thus, Weninger and Kiss (2013) identify three trends in dealing with culture in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

In the first period (mid 1950's-early 1990's), culture was treated as an object, a series of facts to be learnt about the target language culture (easily-observable events and statistics related to art, history, education, festivals, customs, etc.). This is what Hall (1976) called the external aspect of culture. The internal culture, however, consists of values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions, which are implicitly learned and difficult to change. The same idea is recast as big "C" and little "c" culture (Bennett, 1998; Lee, 2009). For these authors, big "C" culture means the easily observable events while little "c" culture represents the socio-cultural values, norms, beliefs, and assumptions.

The second period (the 1990's) introduces big changes. In this decade, it is widely accepted that language and culture are interrelated (Kramsch, 1993). As the notion of intercultural competence is unfolded, culture is deemed necessary for successful language acquisition. In order to develop intercultural communicative competence, Byram (1997) proposes a five-savoir approach. This model makes explicit the cultural dimension of language learning introducing the notion of cultural awareness, which highlights the need for learners to grasp the behaviours, beliefs and values of their own culture and of other cultures. Thus, culture not only refers to big "C" but also to little "c". In English Language Teaching (ELT), this change in emphasis is mirrored in the communicative approach and its focus on socially and culturally appropriate language. Besides, as English is becoming an international language, there are also some voices that start to question the concept of "target language culture" (Prodromou, 1992).

The last trend (2000 onwards) is a transnational approach that focuses on "cultural complexity and hybridity" (Risager, 2011, p. 485). The teaching and learning of English have to make reference not only to the target culture (s) but also to the world around them (Cheng, 2012). This idea is comprised of the notion of "critical citizenship" (Guilherme, 2002, pp. 50-51) and the concept of "intercultural citizenship" (Byram, 2008, p. 157). In this approach, students need to be able to develop intercultural communicative competence but also "need to learn to be politically conscious citizens of a modern society" (Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p. 698).

2. Culture in textbooks

As textbooks are carriers of cultural information, many scholars addressed the subject of the cultural content of textbooks (Starkey, 1991; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). In recent years, there also has been a renewed interest in the cultural analysis of textbooks and materials in the context of ELT and on the question of which culture should be represented in the textbook. The answer to that question goes beyond the scope of the present study, but some views suggest a balanced combination of local, target and global or international cultures.

In relation to methodology, one of the main approaches is content analysis. Thus, for example, Lee (2009), Larrea-Espinar (2015) and Raigón-Rodríguez (2015) used a cultural analysis table with different categories for each aspect of culture (culture in general, big “C” and small “c”). Yuen (2011) established four aspects to categorise foreign cultural references: products, practices, perspectives, and persons. Méndez-García (2005) designed a cultural analysis table classifying cultural objectives, contents, methodology and assessment. Apart from content analysis, Weninger and Kiss (2015) identify other common methodological approaches in dealing with foreign language textbook analysis: critical discourse analysis and semiotic and multimodal analysis. Thus, Weninger and Kiss (2013) propose a semiotic analysis to examine two EFL local textbooks in Hungary.

Research findings show that the treatment of culture in Iranian and Spanish EFL textbooks is not adequate to promote intercultural speakers (Aliakbari 2004; Larrea-Espinar 2015). Méndez García (2005) found out that *Bachillerato* textbooks in Spain do not present an intercultural and contrastive approach. Similarly, Wu (2010) concluded that the Chinese college textbooks of non-English majors analysed in his study did not have a cross-cultural and contrastive approach.

Lee (2009) reported that high-school conversation textbooks in Korea neglected both the teaching of the culture-general aspect of culture learning and the small “c” target-culture learning. Likewise, Larrea-Espinar (2015) and Raigón-Rodríguez (2015) found that the small “c” aspect of culture was the most neglected in Spanish B1 and B2-level textbooks.

Zarei and Khalessi (2011) reveal in their study of the Interchange Series in Iran that textbooks are culturally biased. These findings are similar to those of Varón-Páez, who examines the cultural content of six ELT textbooks in Colombia to conclude that cultural content is conditioned by the purpose of textbooks (intention, political view, market trends, etc.). Gray went further and analysed 4 ELT global coursebooks arguing that textbooks are cultural artefacts “which seek to make English mean in specific and highly selective ways” (2010, p. 3).

Both, Yuen (2011) and Shin, Eslami and Chen (2011) examined textbooks in relation to the international status of English. The first author analysed two series of junior secondary English language textbooks in Hong-Kong while Shin, Eslami and Chen focused on seven series of internationally distributed ELT textbooks in Asian countries. Yuen reported that foreign cultures are represented in a stereotypical way and that the cultures of English-speaking countries are favoured. Likewise, Shin, Eslami and Chen’s study found that the inner circle (countries where English is the first language) cultural content was prevalent in most textbooks.

Lastly, textbooks can be global or locally produced (Freebairn, 2000, p. 5). International or global textbooks are developed for an international market; local textbooks are completely or partially produced by non-native authors and follow the guidelines of the national curricula of that country. They also present features of that particular culture.

3. Analysing the cultural content of textbooks

There have been many approaches to the task of analysing the cultural content of EFL textbooks. As each study has its own purpose, some authors have focused on textual data; others have preferred visual materials, yet others have drawn on visual and textual information.

In relation to methodology, quantitative techniques have proved very useful for content analysis. Moreover, many quantitative techniques draw on checklist and models.

Revised versions of textbook evaluation checklists incorporate culture as one of the components of ELT (Skierso 1991; Cunningsworth 1995). However, they do not turn attention to the intercultural dimension.

Risager (1991, pp. 182-191) and Byram (1991) used similar models for textbook assessment paying attention to four dimensions: the 'microlevel' (life and activities of the characters), the 'macrolevel' (social, political and historic events), international and intercultural issues, and the author's style and point of view. Later, Byram (1994) suggested several thematic categories to analyse the cultural content.

Then, Paige, Jorstad, Paulson, Klein and Colby (1999) put forward a conceptual model of cultural learning. Their model highlights the fact that, for learning to be complete, students need to acquire aspects of culture in both the general and specific sense. In the case of culture in general, learning is focussed on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes of a more general character that are transferable to other cultures. As for culture-specific learning, it involves acquiring knowledge, behaviours and attitudes related to a particular cultural group or community; in this sense, specific culture refers both to big "C" culture and little "c" culture.

In order to examine the cultural content of textbooks, Lee (2009) adapted the model developed by Paige et al. (1999) and added a classification by themes. Drawing on Lee's model, we worked on a more practical version and designed a cultural content checklist to determine the cultural component of textbooks (Larrea-Espinar 2015). We established three cultural categories: culture in general, big "C" culture and little "c" culture. Each one is subdivided into different thematic categories.

Working on this comparative study, we have reviewed the "culture in general" category of our list, since it was very difficult to identify some of the proposed themes in textbooks (especially the ones dealing with behaviours). Thus, we have redefined and reduced those themes for the sake of a functional and more workable list. We believe this new list is more applicable to the analysis of curricular material.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Questions

“Given that textbooks still play a pivotal role in education and language instruction, the analysis of the representation of culture in textbooks is of great interest” (Canale 2016, p. 239). Thus, the main research objective in this study is to examine the cultural content of two editions of the same textbook. In order to do that, we identified the cultural occurrences in both textbooks and categorized them following our cultural content checklist.

Our analysis was designed to answer the following research questions:

- How comprehensive is the cultural content in both editions?
- How many thematic categories are covered and which ones are more frequently addressed in each edition?

4.2 Sample

Our sample consists of two versions of an EFL textbook, an older edition and the most recent version. The choice of level (Intermediate-B1) was determined by the fact that level B1 is the threshold for a traveller visiting a foreign country and the level required of university students in order to graduate. The textbook selection was based on the international character and high reputation of the publishing house and also on the fact that this is a well-known and widely used series.

Title	Publisher	Authors	Level	Date
English File	Oxford	Clive Oxenden Christina Latham-Koenig	Intermediate	1999
English File	Oxford	Christina Latham-Koenig Clive Oxenden	Intermediate B1	2013

Table 1. Textbooks

The 1999 edition is an international EFL textbook for intermediate students. The target readers are young and middle-aged adults. Mention to culture learning is not stated in the course aims or in the introduction. Songs are foregrounded on the back cover, but they are integrated in the coursebook as a motivating feature rather than as a cultural resource, as the introduction to the teacher’s book implies: “they appeal to most students” (Oxenden 1999, p. 11). The textbook is structured in 8 units called files. The last one is an optional lesson with review and preview material. Every file contains three topic-based lessons and an International English lesson. The syllabus content for each unit consists of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, speaking, listening, reading and writing. In the introduction to the teacher’s book, we can see that the International English lesson follows a functional approach to language “to enable students to

cope in travel and social situations in an English-speaking environment" (ibid., p. 9). Grammar comes first in the breakdown of contents. However, the book is intended to have a communicative focus as we can see in the blurb: "this level focuses particularly on maximizing opportunities for students to speak"; also, in the introduction the authors claim that speaking is the main goal of each lesson.

The 2013 edition is an intermediate EFL textbook marketed for Spain. The target readers are then young and middle-aged Spanish adults. Again, there is no reference to culture or culture learning in the course aims or in the authors' introduction. Although there are still songs, these are not foregrounded anymore. The blurb calls attention to the digital resources of that edition. The book is organized in 10 files. Each file contains two lessons (A and B) and a Practical English lesson (odd-numbered files) or a Revise and Check lesson (even-numbered files). The syllabus checklist is only for lessons A and B, and it consists of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, speaking, listening and reading. Grammar comes first and writing is not listed in the syllabus, although the blurb emphasizes that this edition offers "a proven balance of Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and skills". Anyway, writing is included in the introduction to the teacher's book alongside the rest of skills. Here, there is also a description of the writing needs of the students for this level and the authors claim that the book "provides guided writing tasks in each File" (Latham-Koenig 2013, p. 9). The Practical English lessons tell us the story of two characters, Jenny (North American) and Rob (British). Similar to the International English lessons described above, these are focused on functional language and social situations; it is also stated that they feature "faster, more colloquial speech" (ibid., p.9). In the introduction to the teacher's book, the authors state that the goal of this edition "has been to make every lesson better and more student -and teacher- friendly". To that aim, they have blended material for new lessons, updated texts and activities, and "refreshed" and "fine-tuned" previous material (Latham-Koenig, 2013, p. 8).

4.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

We have used problem-driven content analysis for the examination of textbooks in order to quantify qualitative data. As a methodology, content analysis can be traced back to the context of mass communications in the 1950s (White & Marsh, 2006). Although there are several definitions that correlate to its development, for the purpose of our study content analysis is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). It is a dependable and objective method in educational research (Chao, 2011). Our study is framed in a cultural context from the perspective of intercultural citizenship (Byram, 2008). Our analytical construct is based on established theories: for culture learning/teaching to be complete, the three aspects of culture need to be acquired. Thus, we have used a quantitative design to compare cultural traces inferred from two coursebooks.

As for the data language, we have used our own cultural content checklist. The checklist is verbally designated and composed of three cultural aspects: culture in general, big "C" and small "c" culture. Each cultural category presents different thematic categories, comprehensive enough

to provide “an exhaustive account” of the category (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 155). The names of the thematic categories intend to be self-explanatory and have been used before in previous studies. However, an explanation (in brackets) has been added to those categories that could pose semantic ambiguity (for example, *cultural learning*, a thematic category from the culture in general aspect, has been rephrased as *metacultural knowledge*).

The data analysed came exclusively from the student’s textbook, ignoring any complementary course material. We believe that using additional materials could have biased the study as the later edition includes many resources that have to do with the development of technology.

The units of analysis are the activities in the textbooks. In relation to the recording units, only the activities conducive or related to culture learning were recorded in the checklist as cultural occurrences. Once an activity was identified as a cultural occurrence, it was determined which aspect of culture was into play. Then, it was assigned to a cultural category and recorded (see appendices) according to the main skill used to develop the activity (reading, listening, speaking, writing). The author of this study, an English language teacher from Spain who has been teaching adults and university students for over 10 years, recorded the data. However, I invited a critical peer, who works in this area, to review my analysis and share his views on borderline cases.

The classification by skills proved easier in the new version, since the 1999 edition was not so clear-cut about skills, being more focused on grammar. For example, on page 10, we find 3 activities under the heading *Practice*. The first one asks students to make questions in the past simple or present perfect using prompts: “When/ Pavarotti /born?; How long/married/Adua?; How long/be/ an opera singer?” etc. (Oxenden, 1999, p. 10). As we can see, exercise “a” is just grammar. The second activity reads: “Ask a partner the questions. Answer them from memory” (*ibid.*, p. 10); this is speaking controlled practice. Finally, in the last exercise, the students have to go to the *Communication* section at the end of the book and practise asking “Have you ever...?” questions (substitution drill). In terms of cultural occurrences, we have registered one occurrence in speaking (as grammar is not a skill and the students are supposed to practice controlled speaking). In these cases, we have chosen the main skill at work to categorize the activity.

Also in the 2013 version there is a section called *Reading and Listening* (Latham-Koenig, 2013, p. 20) or *Reading and Speaking* (*ibid.*, p. 84). These sections are made up of a reading text and a listening. Since the listening script is printed on the page or the listening is just the end of the story, we have categorized these activities as readings, which we believe is the main skill.

As for the cultural aspects, when an activity was found to deal with more than one aspect (culture in general, big “C” culture, little “c” culture), it has been recorded in the different cultural categories. Likewise, the same activity can be listed more than once in different thematic categories if it is considered to be dealing with different topics. For example, in English File 2013 (hereafter, EF 2013), the listening on page 41 is recorded in the three cultural categories (“culture in general”, big “C” and little “c”) and in 3 different thematic categories of culture in general (Cultural adjustment stages, strategies and cultural adaptability).

We have assigned different thematic categories to the same activity only if it was unquestioned and unambiguous. However, if the activity dealt mainly with one thematic category and included just a few questions about some other theme, we have only registered the activity in the main topic.

4. 4 Findings: Research question 1

“How comprehensive is the cultural content in both editions?”

Appendix 1 shows that the new edition has more cultural occurrences. We can see that in the older edition the total number of cultural occurrences is 68 while in the later version is 141. That means that the new edition doubles the number of cultural occurrences.

In relation to the three aspects of cultural learning, the cultural aspect most covered by both textbooks is big “C” culture (61 occurrences in EF 1999 and 106 in EF 2013). In the 1999 edition, culture in general occupies second place (5 occurrences) and little “c” culture comes last (2 occurrences). The 2013 edition shows 18 occurrences for culture in general and 17 for little “c” culture, which means that there is no substantial difference between these two aspects.

Textbook	Big “C” culture	Little “c” culture	Culture in General	Total
English File 1999	61	2	5	68
English File 2013	106	17	18	141

Table 2. Cultural occurrences in textbooks

As shown in the figure below, the cultural content in EF 2013 consists of 75% big “C” culture, 12% little “c” culture, 13% culture in general, while the cultural content in EF 1999 is comprised by 90% big “C” culture, 3% little “c” culture and 7% culture in general.

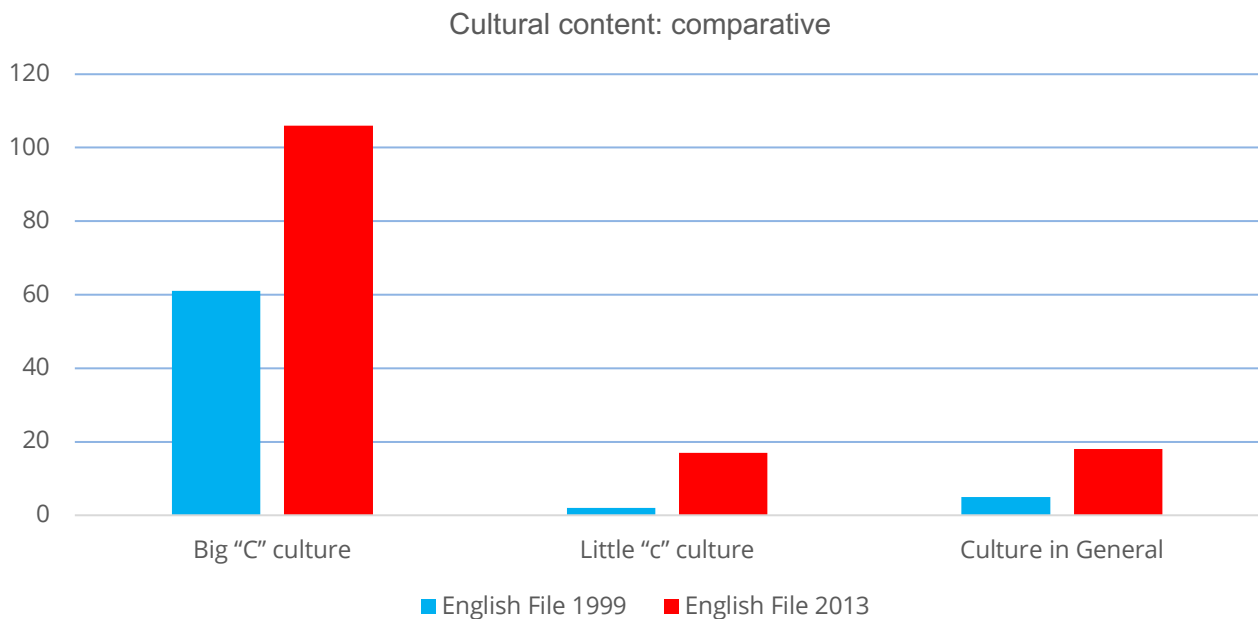


Figure 1. Comparative of cultural content

EF 1999 presents very limited cultural content, and since most cultural occurrences belong to the big "C" aspect of culture, we can infer that this edition offers a "tourist" representation of culture (Starkey, 1991).

In EF 2013, culture in general and little "c" aspects of culture are addressed more and the number of cultural occurrences has increased. Based on those facts, we believe that the cultural content in EF 2013 is more balanced and comprehensive. However, the data show that we are still far from a comprehensive approach in which the three aspects of cultural learning are given the same importance.

4.5 Findings: Research question 2

"How many thematic categories are covered and which ones are more frequently addressed in each edition?"

To answer this second question we have examined the number and frequency of thematic categories for the three aspects of culture in both editions.

With regard to big "C", the analysis of findings revealed that the three most frequent themes in EF 1999 (Figure 2) are Literature/ films/ music /mass media/icons/celebrities (22 occurrences), Urban life/infrastructure/housing/ transportation (7) and Education (6). There are three themes that are not covered: Dress-style, Social customs and Non-verbal communication.

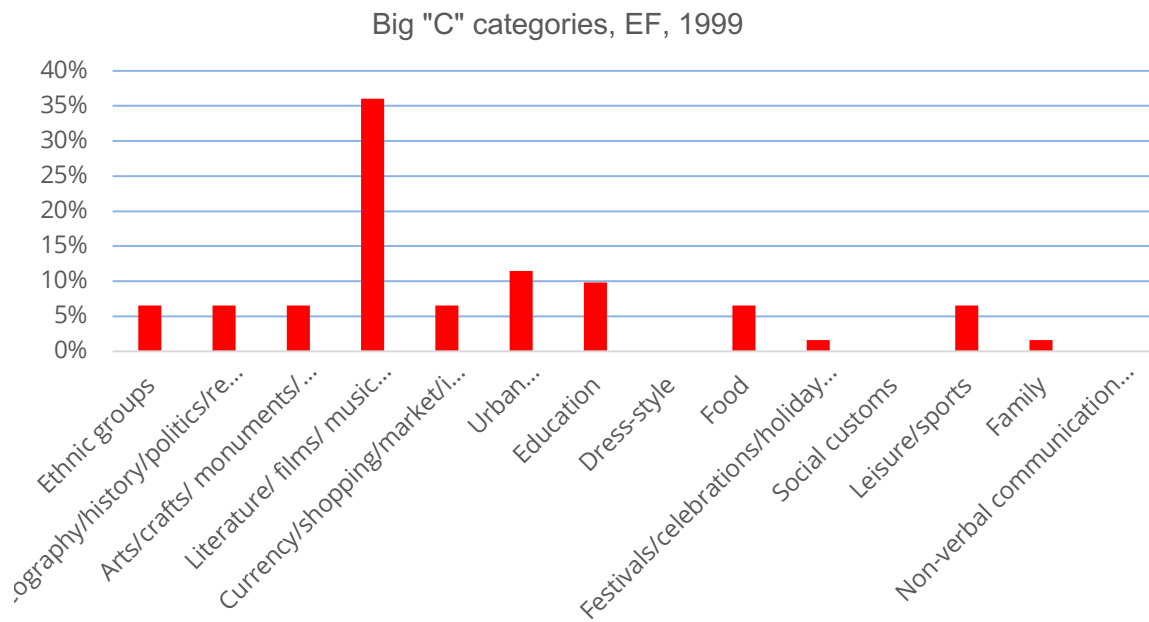


Figure 2. Big "C" categories by theme EF 1999

Figure 3 shows that the most recurrent themes in EF 2013 are *Literature/ films/ music /mass media/ icons/ celebrities* (33 occurrences), *Geography/history/politics/regional variations* (18) and *Urban life/infrastructure/housing/transportation* (13). There is only one theme that is not covered: *Festivals/celebrations/holidays/ceremonies*.

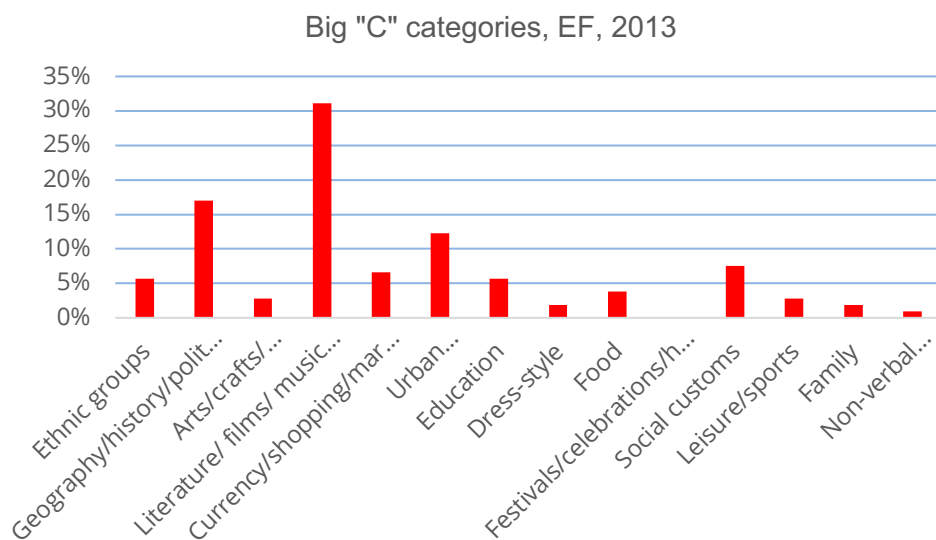


Figure 3. Big "C" categories by theme EF 2013

Regarding the little “c” aspect of culture, the 1999 edition covers only two themes (out of 15): *Competition* and *Nurture (up-bringing, education)*, with one occurrence each.

EF 2013 presents a higher number of occurrences. The most frequent theme is *Confrontation* (5 occurrences) followed by *Equality, Nurture (up-bringing, education)* and *Level of formality*, all of them with 3 occurrences. Only 6 out of 15 themes are covered in this edition.

In relation to culture in general, only one theme is present in the 1999 edition: *Cultural identity (Own’s)*. The other 6 themes are not covered. In the 2013 edition, there are more occurrences (18). The most frequent themes are *Cultural identity (Own’s)* (10 occurrences) followed by *Cultural adjustment stages (Clash)* and *Positive attitude toward cultural learning*. There is only one theme that is not present *Cultural learning (Metacultural knowledge)*. We can see that the three perspectives (cognitive, behavioural and affective) are covered in the 2013 edition, while in the previous one only the cognitive perspective is addressed.

A comparison of the two textbooks in terms of thematic categories shows that the most frequently recurring topic is the same for big “C”, *Literature/ films/ music /mass media/ icons/ celebrities*, and for culture in general, *Cultural identity (Own’s)*. As for the little “c” aspect, it is not possible to identify a recurring theme in EF 1999, since there are only two cultural occurrences, one for *Competition* and the other one for *Nurture (up-bringing, education)*. In the 2013 edition, the most frequent topic for this aspect of culture is *Confrontation*.

As for the number of themes that each textbook covers, EF 2013 includes almost every topic for the big “C” aspect of culture (13 out of 14). In spite of that, the previous edition comes off well in the comparison since it covers 11 topics.

For the little “c” aspect, EF 1999 only addresses 2 themes (out of 15). The later edition brings about an improvement with a total of 6 topics. However, this figure is still low, since more than half of the themes are not covered. The 2013 edition, then, incorporates a few more topics but not enough for an adequate range of topics.

While EF 1999 only addresses 1 topic for the general aspect of culture, EF 2013 incorporates 5 more, covering 6 themes out of 7. This is quite an improvement from the previous edition.

Thus, we can state that, in general terms, there are not many relevant differences between both editions in terms of frequently recurring topics but there are in relation to the number of themes that are covered. The 2013 edition addresses more topics for each aspect of cultural learning showing the greatest improvement in the culture in general aspect of culture (adding 5 more themes).

5. Discussion: Addressing cultural content

In general terms, in the 1999 edition, the activities linked to culture are fewer. Besides, the representation of culture is more touristic and restrictive than in EF 2013 because most of the activities do not engage students in cultural learning, being the main focus grammar and

controlled practice (hence, the *Practice* section). For example, in EF 1999, unit 2B, the topic is food. The listening features a radio programme talking about new flavoured vegetables (chocolate, cheese-and-onion...); it is followed by a True/False comprehension activity and a food quiz. The True/False statements from the listening are, for example: "The first chef is against the new vegetables" or "He thinks the best way to make children eat vegetables is to give them a small portion every day" (Oxenden, 1999, p. 26). As for the quiz, students are asked, among other similar prompts, to "think of five kinds of fattening food, five kinds of vegetables which are often tinned, four kinds of food that you usually buy frozen" (ibid., p. 26). It is difficult to find cultural learning in these activities.

On the other hand, in the 2013 edition the listening is renamed Listening and Speaking (Latham-Koenig, 2013, p. 6) and it is about an English chef who opened a restaurant in Spain. The students have to answer questions like "Have you ever tried English food? What did you think of it?" (ibid., p. 6); also, comprehension questions from the listening include: "What's the main difference between British and Spanish customers?" and "How does he think eating habits in Spain are changing?" (ibid.: 6). Finally, the students have to do a speaking activity and answer this question: "In your country, when people eat out would they normally tell the chef what they really think about the food?" (ibid., p. 6). These questions promote deeper cultural learning.

In both textbooks there is a unit about education and in both editions we have to turn to Vocabulary Builder/Vocabulary Bank (EF 1999/EF 2013), to learn more vocabulary and complete a text about education. In the older edition, the text talks about education in a general way: "In a typical school system in many countries, there are two kinds of schools..." (Oxenden, 1999, p. 133). In the latest version, there are two texts, one dealing with the school system in the UK and the other with the system in the USA (Latham-Koenig, 2013, p. 161). It is evident that cultural learning is not the first concern of the 1999 edition, which seems to imply that there is one generally accepted education system.

Most of the activities from the first edition have a great potential for cultural learning, but it is not used. Thus, in unit 1 *International English* (Oxenden, 1999, p. 20), the focus is on functional language. There is a listening about a foreign student meeting her host family and a role-play as a follow-up. Thus, cultural topics are introduced and then neglected in the accompanying tasks.

As for EF 2013, many activities reflect a concern for cultural matters. As a result, the number of cultural occurrences is higher and the type of cultural learning is less superficial (we have more instances of the other aspects of culture apart from big "C"). For example, many speaking personalization activities incorporate a reflection about the students' own cultural identity: "In your country, are referees a) well-paid b) respected c) unpopular?" (Latham-Koenig, 2013, p. 46) or "Do you think people in your country tend to judge other people by their appearance? In what way?" (ibid., p. 61). In addition, some other activities are linked to aspects of little "c" culture. For instance, the question from the unit about the food that we mentioned before: "In your country, when people eat out would they normally tell the chef what they really think about the food?" (ibid., p. 6). This question refers to confrontation. The listening on that page also deals with aspects of little "c" culture: "Well, when I came to Spain, all the good restaurants were very formal, very traditional. In London then, the fashion was for informal places where waiters wore jeans...".

We have recorded that as Level of formality. The following extract points to confrontation: “The British always say that everything is lovely, even if they’ve only eaten half of it. The Spanish, on the other hand, are absolutely honest about everything. They tell you what they like, they tell you what they don’t like”.

As we have explained, this later edition takes cultural learning more seriously; however, we believe that there is still room for improvement. Thus, cases of big “C” culture make up 75% of the total number of cultural occurrences. This means that the attention devoted to the other two aspects of culture is still insufficient. For example, on page 41 there is a questionnaire about good manners. The activity deals with topics such as greeting people or when you are invited to somebody’s house. As the activity asks students to discuss their opinion and does not tell them which things are good or bad manners, it goes a step beyond “the stereotypical representation of ‘good manners’ from around the world” (Gray, 2010, p. 179). However, the statements are so anecdotic that they fail to introduce other aspects of culture apart from big “C”:

When greeting people...

- use more formal language when speaking to an older person
- kiss a woman on both cheeks when you meet her for the first time
- use your partner’s parents’ first names

When you are invited to somebody’s house...

- criticize the food (e.g. if it is too cold, salty, etc.)
- take a present
- write an email to say thank you
- arrive more than ten minutes late for lunch or dinner (Latham-Koenig, 2013, p. 41)

Moreover, topics like stereotypes (unit 3B) and superstitions (unit 5A) are dealt with so superficially that their cultural potential is not fully exploited. The theme of stereotypes is restricted to the realm of men/women and superstitions are just mentioned in relation to sports.

Finally, regarding the cultures depicted, this edition incorporates contrast between the UK and the USA and between Spain and the UK, but references to international cultures or the cultures of other English-speaking communities are rarely found. Therefore, if we go back to the unit about education, EF 2013 improves considerably the cultural content of the earlier edition comparing the education system in the UK and the USA. Nevertheless, reference to other systems would have proved more comprehensive in terms of cultural learning. Since English is

an international language, students should have the possibility of learning about a wider range of cultures and exploring their own.

6. Conclusion

This paper analysed and discussed the cultural content of two editions of an international EFL textbook, *English File Intermediate*. The analysis revealed that the 1999 textbook shows an excessive focus on language form and grammar: "Cultural elements were often positioned as a lead-in or addendum to a curriculum in which linguistic aspects are the core business" (Luk 2012, p. 260). Thus, there is a stereotypical representation of culture, which is treated as an object even though the theoretical work at that time acknowledged the importance of invisible culture (Hinkel, 2014). The research showed that this edition offers scarce cultural content, most of which is in the sphere of the big "C" aspect of culture. In this way, external or visible culture represents 90% of the total cultural occurrences, neglecting little "c" (3%) and general culture aspects (7%).

As for the 2013 edition, it offers a slightly more comprehensive view of culture since there are more occurrences of little "c" culture and culture in general (12% and 13% respectively). Although big "C" culture still receives more attention than the other aspects (75%), it is encouraging to see that the biggest increase in percentage terms in this edition corresponds to little "c", (rising from 2 occurrences to 17).

After contrasting the thematic categories, we have observed that the most frequently recurring topic is the same for both editions for big "C", *Literature/ films/ music /mass media/ icons/ celebrities*, and for culture in general, *Cultural identity (Own's)*. As for the little "c" aspect, it is not possible to identify a recurring theme in EF 1999, while in the 2013 edition the most frequent topic is *Confrontation*. There are more significant differences in relation to the number of themes that are covered by both textbooks. Thus, the 2013 edition includes more topics for each aspect of cultural learning; this is particularly noticeable in the general aspect of culture. While EF 1999 only includes one topic, the 2013 textbook incorporates 5 more themes, covering six of the seven topics.

Although the cultural content received more attention in the new edition, our analysis suggests that there is more room for improvement, since the general aspect of culture and little "c" culture are less frequently presented in relation to the number of occurrences. In particular, the little "c" aspect of culture is the least covered, despite being essential for understanding a society's way of thinking and its values.

We are aware that classification by cultural themes implicates the analyst's inference about the meaning of exercises and texts (Weninger & Kiss, 2015). Despite this limitation, our study goes beyond corroborating previous findings on the continuous predominance of the big "C" aspect of culture in textbooks (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993; Lee, 2009); it also delves into the relevance of general culture and frequently addressed cultural topics.

In order to achieve cultural awareness "learners should begin by realising and understanding their own culture, respecting others' cultures and being culturally sensitive" (Lai, 2014, p. 6).

Therefore, “FL textbooks need refurbishing” (Sobkowiak 2016, p. 713). The imbalance of cultural aspects should be addressed by publishers and textbook designers; also, teachers should have a proactive role giving feedback to publishers. Redressing this imbalance is the best way to develop culturally relativist learners and interculturally competent speakers.

About the authors

Ángela M^a Larrea-Espinar. After graduating in English Studies at the University of Córdoba, she started her Ph.D. Studies. Then, she moved to the U.S. to work as a Spanish teacher in an elementary public school in Chicago as part of the “Bilingual exchange program” sponsored by the Spanish and American Departments of Education. She was hired by the University of Córdoba as a part-time lecturer within the Department of English and German studies. In 2008, she defended her thesis successfully and became a Doctor. She is now an Associate Professor of English at the University of Córdoba. Lately, she has published several papers on Intercultural Studies and Second Language Acquisition and is currently researching on the topic of Intercultural Communication and Cultural Studies.

Antonio Raigón-Rodríguez. After obtaining a degree in English Studies at the University of Córdoba, he worked as Title 1 teacher in the Illinois Public Schools system, developing bilingual literacy with Hispanic children. Back in Spain, he obtained his PhD. in Education and started teaching as a lecturer in 2006 at the English and German Studies Department. For 8 years, he was English coordinator at the University Language Center. Nowadays, he is coordinator for Language Policy at the UCO. His research interests are language teaching/learning, intercultural communicative competence and cultural studies.

References

- Aliakbari, M. (2004). The place of culture in the Iranian ELT textbooks in high school level. Paper presented at the 9th Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics Conference. Namseoul University, Korea. <<http://www.paaljapan.org/resources/proceedings/PAAL9/pdf/Aliakbari.pdf>> [9/10/2018].
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M. (2008). *From Foreign Language Education to Education for Intercultural Citizenship: Essays and Reflections*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M. & Esarte-Sarries, V. (1991). *Investigating Cultural Studies in Foreign Language Teaching: A Book for Teachers*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M. & Morgan, C. (1994). *Teaching-and-Learning Language and Culture*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Canale, G. (2016). (Re)Searching culture in foreign language textbooks, or the politics of hide and seek. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*, 29, 225-243.

- Chao, T. (2011). The hidden curriculum of cultural content in internationally published ELT textbooks: A closer look at new American inside out. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 8(2), 189-210.
- Cheng, C. M. (2012). The influence of college EFL teachers' understandings of intercultural competence on their self-reported pedagogical practices in Taiwan, *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 11(1), 164-182.
- Cortazzi, M. & Jin, L. (1999). Cultural mirrors: materials and methods in the EFL classroom. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 196-219). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your Coursebook*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Freebairn, I. (2000). The coursebook – future continuous or past? *English Teaching Professional*, 15, 3-5.
- Gray, J. (2010). *The Construction of English: Culture, Consumerism and Promotion in the ELT Global Coursebooks*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Guilherme, M. (2002). *Critical Citizens for an Intercultural World: Foreign Language Education as Cultural Politics*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, Doubleday.
- Hinkel, E. (2014). Culture and pragmatics in language teaching and learning. In M. Celce-Murcia, D. Brinton and M. Snow (Eds.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (pp. 394-408). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.
- Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford, England: O.U.P.
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lai, H. Y. T. (2014). Learning English as an international language: EFL learners' perceptions of cultural knowledge acquisition in the English classroom. *Asian Social Science*, 10(1), 1-11.
- Larrea-Espinar, A. (2015). El aprendizaje cultural en la enseñanza de inglés y su alcance en los libros de texto. *Revista Española de Lingüística Aplicada*, 28(1), 145-168.
- Latham-Koenig, C. & Oxenden, C. (2013). *English File Intermediate*. Oxford: O.U.P.
- Lee, K. Y. (2009). Treating culture: What 11 high school EFL conversation textbooks in South Korea do. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 8, 76-96.
- Luk, J. (2012). Teachers' ambivalence in integrating culture with EFL teaching in Hong Kong. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 25(3), 249-264.
- Méndez-García, M. (2005). International and intercultural issues in English teaching textbooks: The case of Spain. *Intercultural Education*, 16(1), 57-68.
- Oxenden, C. & Latham-Koenig, C. (1999). *English File Intermediate*. Oxford: O.U.P.
- Paige, R. M., Jorstad, H., Siaya, L., Klein, F. & Colby, J. (1999). Culture learning in language education: A review of the literatura. In R. M. Paige, D. L. Lange & Y. A. Yeshova (Eds.), *Culture as core: Integrating culture into language curriculum* (pp. 47-113). Minneapolis, MA: University of Minnesota.
- Prodromou, L. 1992. What culture? Whose culture? Cross-cultural factors in language learning. *ELT Journal*, 46(1), 39-50.
- Raigón-Rodríguez, A. R. (2015). El desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa intercultural a través del aprendizaje cultural en los libros de texto. *LFE. Revista de lenguas para fines específicos*, 21(1), 88-108.
- Risager, K. (1991). Cultural references in European textbooks: an evaluation of recent tendencias. In D. Buttjes & M. Byram (Eds.), *Mediating Languages and Cultures: Towards an Intercultural Theory of Foreign Language Education* (pp. 180-192). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

- Risager, K. (2011): The cultural dimensions of language teaching and learning. *Language Teaching*, 44(4), 485-499.
- Skierso, A. (1991). Textbook selection and evaluation. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (pp. 432-453). Boston: Mass.: Heinle and Heinle.
- Sobkowiak, P. (2016). Critical thinking in the intercultural context: Investigating EFL textbooks. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 6(4), 697-716.
- Starkey, H. (1991). World studies and foreign language teaching: converging approaches in textbook writing. In D. Buttjes & M. Byram (Eds.), *Mediating languages and cultures: Towards an Intercultural Theory of Foreign Language Education* (pp. 209-227). Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.
- Tomalin, B. & Stemplesky, S. (1993). *Cultural Awareness: Resource Books for Teachers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Varón-Páez, M. E. (2009). Componente cultural, libros de texto y enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera. *Forma y Función*, 22(1), 95-124.
- Weninger, C. & Kiss, T. (2013). Culture in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks: a semiotic approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, 47(4), 694-716.
- Weninger C. & Kiss, T. (2015). Analyzing culture in foreign/second language textbooks: methodological and conceptual issues. In X.L. Curdt-Christiansen & C. Weninger (Eds.), *Language, Ideology and Education: The Politics of Textbooks in Language Education* (pp. 50-66). London: Routledge.
- White, M. D., & Marsh, E. (2006). Content analysis: A flexible methodology. *Library Trends*, 55(1), 22-45.
- Wu, J. (2010). A content analysis of the cultural content in the EFL textbooks. *Canadian Social Science*, 6(5), 137-144.
- Yuen, K.-M. (2011). The representation of foreign cultures in English textbooks. *ELT Journal*, 65, 458-466.
- Zarei, G. R. & Khalessi, M. (2011). Cultural load in English language textbooks: an analysis of Interchange series. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 15, 294-301.

APPENDIX 1

ENGLISH FILE 1999. CULTURAL OCURRENCES REPORT

Big "C" categories	Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing	Occurrences	%
Ethnic groups	1	1	2		4	7%
Geography/history/politics/regional variations	1	2	1		4	7%
Arts/crafts/ monuments/ historical sites/	2		1	1	4	7%
Literature/ films/ music /mass media/ icons/ celebrities	5	9	6	2	22	36%
Currency/shopping/market/industry/ business	2			2	4	7%
Urban life/infrastructure/housing/transportation	2	1	4		7	11%
Education	1	1	3	1	6	10%
Dress-style					0	0%
Food	1		2	1	4	7%
Festivals/celebrations/holidays/ ceremonies			1		1	2%
Social customs					0	0%
Leisure/sports	2		2		4	7%
Family			1		1	2%
Non-verbal communication (personal space, oculusics, haptics...)					0	0%
TOTAL					61	100%

Little "c" categories	Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing	Occurrences	%
Individualism/collectivism						
Equality						
Fairness						
Competition	1				1	50%
Materialism						
Confrontation						
Novelty oriented (newer is better)						
Self-improvement						
Nurture (up-bringing, education)	1				1	50%
Time						
Level of formality						
Communication styles: direct vs. indirect						
Rules-regulation oriented						
Male-oriented						
Result-oriented						
TOTAL					2	

Culture in general		Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing	Occurrences
Cultural Learning (Metacultural Knowledge)	KNOWLEDGE					
Cultural adjustment stages (Clash)						
Cultural identity (Own's)				3	2	5
Strategies: Culture learning or dealing with Intercultural stress	BEHAVIOUR					
Cultural adaptability						
Positive attitude towards cultural learning	ATTITUDES					
Positive attitude towards cultural differences						
TOTAL						5

APPENDIX 2

ENGLISH FILE 2013. CULTURAL OCURRENCES REPORT

Big "c" categories	Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing	Occurrences	%
Ethnic groups	2	4			6	6%
Geography/history/politics/regional variations	2	15	1		18	17%
Arts/crafts/ monuments/ historical sites/	2		1		3	3%
Literature/ films/ music /mass media/ icons/ celebrities	8	15	9	1	33	31%
Currency/shopping/market/industry/ business	1	1	3	2	7	7%
Urban life/infrastructure/housing/ transportation	4	1	6	2	13	12%
Education	2	1	3		6	6%
Dress-style		1	1		2	2%
Food			4		4	4%
Festivals/celebrations/holidays/ceremonies					0	0%
Social customs		4	4		8	8%
Leisure/sports	1		2		3	3%
Family	1		1		2	2%
Non-verbal communication (personal space, oculesics, haptics...)		1			1	1%
TOTAL					106	100%

Little "c" categories	Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing	Occurrences	%
Individualism/collectivism					0	0%
Equality	1	1	1		3	18%
Fairness					0	0%
Competition					0	0%
Materialism					0	0%
Confrontation	1	2	2		5	29%
Novelty oriented (newer is better)					0	0%
Self-improvement					0	0%
Nurture (up-bringing, education)	1	1	1		3	18%
Time		1			1	6%
Level of formality		3			3	18%
Communication styles: direct vs. indirect		2			2	12%
Rules-regulation oriented					0	0%
Male-oriented					0	0%
Result-oriented					0	0%
TOTAL					17	100%

Culture in general		Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing	Occurrences
Cultural Learning (Metacultural Knowledge)	KNOWLEDGE					0
Cultural adjustment stages (Clash)			3			3
Cultural identity (Own's)					10	
Strategies: Culture learning or dealing with Intercultural stress	BEHAVIOUR		1			1
Cultural adaptability			1			1
Positive attitude towards cultural learning	ATTITUDES	2				2
Positive attitude towards cultural differences			1			
TOTAL						18