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Biljana Radić-Bojanić
(University of Novi Sad, Serbia)

CULTURAL MATERIALS IN EFL TEXTBOOKS

This article specifies the importance of cultural content in EFL textbooks. It is emphasized that cultural awareness and learning about target culture may assist in achieving second language proficiency. Three main goals of foreign language instruction are pointed out. The features of the cultural content in textbooks are determined.

КУЛЬТУРОВЕДЧЕСКИЕ МАТЕРИАЛЫ В УЧЕБНИКАХ ПО АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ КАК ИНОСТРАННОМУ

В статье отмечается важность культуроведческого компонента в учебниках по английскому языку как иностранному. Подчеркивается, что знание культуры и традиций страны изучаемого языка может помочь в овладении вторым иностранным языком. Выделены три основные цели обучения иностранным языкам. Определены особенности культуроведческих материалов, размещаемых в учебниках.

Cultural materials in EFL textbooks have been discussed among teachers and other professionals in education for many years. They share the opinion that cultural content needs to meet general objectives of the curriculum and needs to be guided by social, psychological and cognitive characteristics of students. Topics should be suitable for both sexes and appropriate for students' age and experience, with the aim to encourage and motivate them to search for more information from available sources [1; 2; 3; 4]. Cultural content in textbooks should cover topics regarding global issues as well as those related to home culture and target culture.

The proponents of cultural education in schools agree that the interrelatedness of language and culture reflects the need to integrate culture learning into language learning. Kramsch [5] suggests that cultural awareness and learning about target culture may assist in achieving second language proficiency. In her view, teaching culture explicitly or implicitly affects the teaching of social interaction and written and spoken language. Therefore, learners of a foreign or second language become learners of the second culture since: "culture is not an independent aspect of language learning and teaching, it is a feature of language, it is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners' proficiency when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them" [5].

However, it is necessary to decide what aspects of culture will be taught in class since it is impossible to include all of them in a limited time and space, having in mind learners' needs and their level of linguistic proficiency.

In 1999, a document called *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* was published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), with the aim to set the standards for foreign language education in American schools. In this document Culture is viewed as one of the five target areas of language instruction in addition to Communications, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. The *Standards* represents one of the most important factors that influence cultural content in textbooks, defining content standards in foreign language education and pointing out the following:

Because language is the primary vehicle for expressing cultural perspectives and participating in social practices, the study of a language provides opportunities for students to develop insights in a culture that are

available in no other way. In reality, then, the true content of the foreign language course is not the grammar and vocabulary of the language, but the cultures expressed through that language [group of authors qtd. by Cutshall – 5, p. 32].

As stated by the *Standards*, cultural content consists of three closely related elements: products, practices and perspectives. Products relate to concrete and abstract cultural elements created by members of a culture, such as: literature, books, songs, food, clothes, homes, sports equipment, educational system, political institutions, dance, music, rituals and the like. Practices refer to socially accepted behaviour and social interactions within a particular culture, such as greetings, gestures, table manners, traditions related to holiday celebrations, personal space, etc. Perspectives represent a worldview of a particular culture, such as values, beliefs, attitudes, and ideas. The products of a certain culture are conditioned and required by underlying values and beliefs (perspectives), and practices involve their use. Products are direct results of perspectives and practices. In terms of culture, the *Standards* aims at students' understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives, as well as the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied (group of authors – 1, p. 1–2]. In other words, students need to understand that acquired value systems, beliefs and attitudes of a society affect the way people behave, and that literature, music, dance, institutions, educational systems, and laws are created as a consequence of socially conditioned and accepted behaviour.

Moran [7] adds a category of self-awareness to the definition given by the *Standards*, suggesting that culture in textbooks is seen as:

– Knowing about, referring to cultural information – facts about products, practices and perspectives of the target culture as well as of students' own culture;

– Knowing how, pertaining to cultural practices of people belonging to the target culture;

– Knowing why, creating an understanding of basic cultural perspectives – values, attitudes and beliefs;

– Knowing oneself, relating to learners' self-awareness.

Consequently, it is important that students understand themselves and their own culture in order to comprehend the target language culture [Moran qtd. in 8, p. 40).

Cortazzi and Jin [1] explore cultural content in textbooks further. They classify textbooks in terms of cultural content into three groups: source culture materials, target culture materials, and international

materials. Source culture materials are published to be used on a national level. They are based mainly on learners' society and culture, which enables learners to engage in discussions without hesitation, since they are familiar with cultural topics. Target culture materials focus on countries where a foreign language is used as mother tongue. In terms of learning English as a foreign language, cultural materials in textbooks reflect mostly British, American and Australian culture and way of life. International materials include a wide range of cultural materials from a variety of cultures where English is used as an international language. They aim at helping students to develop intercultural skills, encouraging them to discuss global issues in English and giving them the opportunity to compare their home culture with cultures in question [Cortazzi & Jin qtd. in 9]. Cultural materials in textbooks should contain all three types of cultural information, i.e. information about home culture, target culture and other cultures in order to give students the opportunity to become aware of their own cultural identity and cultural identities of target culture and other cultures, and the existing differences among them. A comparative approach to cultures enables learners to understand and accept other cultures on the basis of knowledge and understanding of one's own culture.

Byram [10] gives constructive suggestions regarding cultural content, pointing out three main goals of foreign language instruction that should be integrated in a textbook. The goals indicate the significance of three types of development:

– The development of communicative competence that learners might expect to use in interactions with native and non-native speakers of the English language, such as fixed phrases, greetings, and other vocabulary items used by both native and non-native speakers;

– The development of an awareness of the target language in order to learn to communicate appropriately and fluently;

– The development of insight into the foreign culture and positive attitudes toward foreigners. It is important to understand the target culture in order to acquire it more easily [Byram qtd. in 8, p. 39].

In Byram's view [10], cultural content in textbooks focuses on nine areas, such as:

– Social identity and social group (social class, regional identity, ethnic minorities);

– Social interaction (different levels of formality; as outsider and insider);

– Belief and behaviour (moral, religious beliefs; daily routines);

– Social and political institutions (state institutions, health care, law and order, social security, local government);

– Socialisation and life cycle (families, schools, employment, rites of passage);

– National history (historical and contemporary events seen as markers of national identity);

– National geography (significant geographical factors);

– National cultural heritage (cultural artefacts as symbols of the national culture);

– Stereotypes and national identity (symbols of national stereotypes) [Byram qtd. in 8, p. 45].

The areas mentioned are used as a useful, practical and comprehensive checklist for the evaluation of cultural content in textbooks, covering almost every aspect of culture. Since not all textbooks meet these requirements, it is important to analyse their contents.

A teacher's role while presenting cultural themes to students is to motivate and encourage them to ask questions, make comparisons and explore the topics further. Teaching materials can help students become aware of cultural diversities, understand them and adopt a positive attitude towards other countries and their cultures. Consequently, students will develop a critical intercultural perspective.

On the other hand, one of the most significant preconditions for introducing cultural materials into language lessons is to familiarise teachers with the culture of the language they teach. However, teachers are likely to lack the necessary knowledge of the target culture, which results in their insecurity and lack of self-confidence about cultural issues. Therefore, it is necessary to give teachers the opportunity to improve their knowledge in order to prevent conveying their own misconceptions and wrong representations of cultural topics to students.

In Seelye's view [3], teachers should bear in mind the goals set for teaching culture in the classroom, which are used as a framework for developing intercultural skills and facilitating intercultural communication. Firstly, teachers should motivate their students to learn about other cultures, stimulate their interest and arouse their curiosity. Secondly, they should help students understand social factors, such as age, sex, social class, ethnicity, and country of residence and how they affect their language and behaviour. Thirdly, teachers should give explanations on the situational change in the use of appropriate language, that different expressions are used in common, routine situations from those used in sudden, unexpected ones. However, students should avoid generalisations

concerning other cultures learning how to select, carefully analyse and evaluate information found in available sources, such as the media, books and personal experience. Consequently, students will be able to understand the reasons for specific behavioural patterns and develop necessary skills for the use of proper discourse and behaviour in certain situations.

To sum up, cultural content in textbooks should include the following features:

– A wide range of various cultural topics that would be interesting, amusing, challenging, informative and important to students, such as social issues, everyday life, customs, family relations, relationships, and leisure;

– A realistic representation of home culture and target culture in order to facilitate making comparisons, to raise students' awareness about cultural differences and encourage them to try to understand and accept a different worldview and way of life;

– A focus on global issues, such as environmental protection, global warming, extinction of endangered animals, world population, pollution and the like in order to give students the opportunity to understand and face the challenges of modern world;

– Authentic texts and illustrations that truthfully represent home culture, target culture and other cultures, and various culturally conditioned activities that highlight conventional patterns of behaviour, such as pair and group work, role play, interviews, projects and the like.

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E. V. Sazhyna, Niu Wenjuan
(Francisk Skorina Gomel State University, Gomel)

FUNCTIONAL FEATURES OF ADVERTISING INTERNET TEXTS AND THEIR LANGUAGE REPRESENTATION (ON THE MATERIAL OF ENGLISH AND CHINESE)

This work is devoted to the study of patterns of linguistic representation of the functional potential of advertising Internet texts on the material of the English and Chinese languages. A comparative analysis of the syntactic, lexical and stylistic levels is carried out. The relationship between the subject of the advertising text and its linguistic repertoire has been revealed. The similarities and differences in advertising texts on the material of non-closely related languages have been found out.