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A Literature Review of Cultural Content in EFL Textbooks

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Abstract

In today's day and age, culture is a central aspect of language teaching. The complexity of the concept results in complications to teach culture, which is reflected in the materials that exist for teaching culture across the world. This literature review deals with how culture is represented in a specific material; it investigates the textbook as a material for teaching culture. It is of interest to look into what type of cultural content is represented, given that some textbooks include either L1 culture or target language culture; some include both as well as international culture. The study aims to give an overview of some of the international research that has been done on cultural representations and content in EFL textbook materials and to distinguish positive and negative implications for teaching/learning culture using the textbook. Within this aim, two research questions are posed: 1) is cultural content bias present in the reviewed studies' findings regarding target, source or international culture, and if so, what? and 2) does the research demonstrate possible reasons as to why the textbook is beneficial or problematic to use, and if so, what? Studies from Asia, the Middle East and Europe are included, as well as some research regarding textbooks that are distributed internationally. This paper presents the results under two categories: inclusive representations of cultural content and negative and biased representations of cultural content. This literature review found that there was cultural content bias present in the reviewed studies' findings, predominantly towards target language culture. The research demonstrates some possible reasons as to why the textbook can be beneficial and problematic to use. The paper finally concludes with a discussion of the findings as well as suggestions for future research.

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1 Introduction

Given its significance in language teaching in the present not merely multilingual but also multicultural society, culture is by some perceived as equal or comparable to the four language skills, i.e. speaking, listening, reading and writing. Tomalin (2008) defines culture as the fifth language skill while others, such as Kramsch (1993), state that culture is not a fifth skill to be "tacked on" (p. 1) to the other four language skills; instead, it has a constant presence in the language learning process. Regardless of it being part of the other four language skills or not, it is an important aspect of language. The close link between language and culture is widely accepted (Brown, 2000; Kramsch, 1993; McKay, 2003) and because of that, most scholars within language education agree that teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) should not only result in language proficiency but should include *cultural awareness* (CA) or *intercultural communicative competence* (ICC).

The changing role of English from a language dominated and owned by a target culture to a language of international ownership (EIL – English as International language) is one of many reasons as to why an increasing number of countries (governments and institutions) include aspects of culture, such as awareness, tolerance and reflection, in their curricula. One example of this is Sweden. According to the Swedish national curriculum (Skolverket), an international perspective is important to be able to see one's reality in a global context and to develop international solidarity. One of the goals of the Swedish school is that every student should be able to interact in meetings with other people, treating them with respect regardless of differences in culture, language, religion and history, etc. (2011a).

The curriculum refers to all subjects of the Swedish school. However, for the subject of English specifically, the syllabus for English (levels 5, 6 and 7) states that the students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge about living conditions, societal issues, and cultural phenomena in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. The teaching of English should stimulate students' curiosity of language and culture and offer opportunities to develop multilingualism (Skolverket, 2011b).

Breaking barriers of cultural diversity is also one of the aims of the policy of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which is something that can be done through educational effort. The goal is for cultural and linguistic diversity to be a "source of mutual enrichment and understanding" (2001, p. 2).

A consequence of culture being a part of curricula and frameworks is that teaching culture in the EFL classroom can no longer be considered a matter of didactic preference, but a requirement. This has implications for the teaching of English. Since there are many English-speaking nations across the world, and many different definitions of culture, the decision of what culture to teach, as well as how to teach culture is often left to individual teachers to make. Therefore, many teachers look to the materials available to teach culture. There are e.g. authentic materials such as news, literature, and pop culture such as music and movies. However, none of the materials mentioned has direct connections to e.g. curricula and authorities other than the textbook. The textbook's relation to government involvement (in e.g. recommending or being part of developing textbooks) makes it an interesting type of material to investigate.

The relationship between language teaching and culture could be seen from several different perspectives. For instance, a distinction has been made between the so called *little 'c' culture* and *Big 'C' culture* (Lee, 2009; Peterson, 2004), where Big 'C' culture refers to the culture traditionally taught in school, which relates to more superficial, easily observable events while little 'c' culture refers to the deeper aspects of culture such as values and behaviors (Rodríguez & Espinar, 2015). Similarly, it could be argued that there is a difference between *teaching about culture* and *teaching culture*. Teaching about culture refers to the more traditional sense of culture, such as teaching and accepting information about a nation's traditional food, music, literature, etc. Teaching culture requires of students to reflect on values, ideas, norms, and behavior and it involves a certain set of communicative skills. The latter involves students that are culturally aware, have developed intercultural sensitivity and can use English as a medium of interaction. Regardless of whether teachers aim to teach culture or teach about culture, it is important that the materials they use are appropriate and fit for the task at hand. Some textbooks are limited to target language culture while others include source culture (L1 culture) or international culture (other cultures) (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). For instance, a textbook could be limited to only including texts by and about e.g. Americans. The pictures in the textbook could be exclusive to represent only stereotypical Americans, etc. The audio clips for listening exercises are all in American accent. The same could be done with source culture (L1) or developers can choose to include numerous other cultures (writers, content, pictures, accents, etc.), i.e. international culture as well. These categorizations of cultural content are examples of how cultures can be presented and represented in numerous ways in textbooks. It is therefore of interest to investigate the cultural content of different textbooks.

The aims of this review are thus to give an overview of some of the international research that has been done on cultural representations and content in textbook materials used across the world to teach English as a foreign language and to distinguish positive and negative implications for teaching/learning culture using the textbook. The research questions are thus: 1) is cultural content bias present in the reviewed studies' findings regarding target, source or international culture, and if so, what? and 2) does the research demonstrate possible reasons as to why the textbook is beneficial or problematic to use, and if so, what?

The paper is outlined as follows:
Section 2 introduces some definitions and aspects of culture while section 3 discusses the material and the method used to present the research. Section 4 presents the results, which are about inclusive cultural content (section 4.1.) and more biased and negative representations of culture (section 4.2.). Section 5 discusses the findings and brings forth some suggestions for future research and section 6 concludes the paper.

2   Aspects of Culture

Culture is a broad and complex concept and its meaning has changed over time. The new role of English, now English as an international language (EIL) (Moirano, 2012), emphasizes the teaching and learning of culture, a practice that should include international cultures. The paradigm shift of the English language has meant that culture is now, perhaps more than ever, largely in focus when it comes to language pedagogy. However, in order to easier engage in further discussion about this, some definitions of culture will be presented, as well as some explanations as to how culture and language relate.

2.1 Defining Culture

There is no one true definition of culture and to define the concept is challenging; however, many have made their best efforts to try to define what culture entails. According to Tylor, who is considered one of the first to define culture, culture is the "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (as cited in Zu & Kong, 2009, p. 112). Hinkel (1999) claims that "there are nearly as many definitions of culture as there are fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviors, and activities" (p. 1). Hall (1977) states that "there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture" (p.

16). Culture used to be synonym to civilization; however, with time, the definition has changed to include "everything that pertains to human life" (Oguro, 2008, p. 32).

The many definitions of culture vary in perspective and scope but what they have in common could perhaps be the true definition of culture: beliefs, values and norms of society, which are shared among and with other humans. However, as anything human, it is not static but does change. Another cultural aspect that has changed over time is the relation between language and culture.

2.2 Culture and Language

Perhaps even more important than the definition of culture itself is explaining how culture relates to language and language teaching and learning. Many academics argue that language and culture are inseparable. For instance, Brown (2000) states that "a language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture" (p. 177).

According to Kramsch (1993), learners of a second or foreign language become learners of a second culture because an understanding of the cultural context in which it is used is necessary to learn a language. This is because:

> culture is not an independent aspect of language learning or 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 (Kramsch, 1993, p. 1).

McKay (2003) argues that cultural significance in language pedagogy is twofold: 1) knowledge of culture is often "the basis for the content and topics used in language materials and classroom discussions" and 2) "pragmatic standards are frequently based of particular cultural models" (p. 10).

Thus, according to the aforementioned scholars, language and culture are so closely related that culture is an aspect of language learning that cannot be disregarded.

2.3 Definitions Used in the Present Study

There is a need to define certain central culture-related concepts to show how they will be used in this study to present, analyze and discuss. When referring to cultures and different types of cultural content included in language textbooks in this study, a categorization by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) will be used. They distinguish between *source, target and international culture*. Source culture refers to the native culture of the learner, such as a textbook from Sweden which includes texts about Swedish culture, pictures representing anything Swedish or English spoken by a Swede. In the case of EFL, target culture is the culture from an English-speaking country (where English is L1), such as British or American culture. The third type, international culture, involves other cultures, both where English is used as well as non-English speaking countries, for instance South Africa or France. Examples of what is meant by content are texts and their content, accent in audio, pictures and drawings, etc.

One of the core concepts in the study is intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The basic components of intercultural communicative competence, according to Byram (1997) are:

- attitudes (such as 'readiness to suspend one's own beliefs', or curiosity and openness),
- knowledge (about cultural and social groups)
- skills of interpreting (an event from another culture or a document) and relating (to one's own)
- skills of discovery and interaction
- critical cultural awareness/political education (evaluating practices in own and other cultures)

Thus, ICC involves "looking at culture as not just knowledge, but also a set of skills, behaviours, and attitudes that help a person succeed in a cross-cultural environment" (Watson, Siska & Wolfel, 2013, p. 64).

ICC is closely related to the similar concept of cultural awareness (CA). The two stand in a "certain competitive relationship" (Risager, 2000, p. 161), which can be explained by the fact that ICC includes a dimension that cultural awareness does not, i.e. skill. It could be said that "[i]n comparison to intercultural competence, CA is a more general, non-technical term liable to many different interpretations, which have to exist given the manifold nature of the contexts and interests connected with the content dimension of language teaching" (Risager, 2000, p. 161). What cultural awareness then actually is, is "a key concept which emphasises

both cultural insight and [attitude] and identity development" (Risager, 2000, p. 160). Thus, CA is a part of ICC. However, ICC is not a part of CA, but is rather the next level of CA. For example, when a student has become culturally aware, the next step is to acquire the competence and skill of intercultural awareness which includes the components mentioned above.

Another way of categorizing culture and cultural content is Big 'C' culture and little 'c' culture, as previously mentioned in section 1. Big 'C' culture refers to culture traditionally taught in school. It entails "easily-observable events and statistics related to art, history, education, festivals, customs, etc." while "sociocultural values, norms, beliefs, assumptions, etc." are aspects of culture that are less visible and compose little 'c' culture (Rodríguez & Espinar, 2015, p. 10). Hence, it involves "informal and often hidden patterns of human interactions and viewpoints" (Moirano, 2012, p. 74).

3 Method and Material

The literature collected for this review is peer-reviewed. The research is from different countries across the world, which means that the findings can be compared to see whether using textbooks as a material to teach culture is successful in other countries. The research can also be used to discuss pedagogical implications for teaching using textbooks in Sweden. This is firstly because some of the research investigates global textbooks, designed and developed for EFL teaching anywhere. It is also due to the fact that the findings concern intercultural communicative competence and, therefore, an international perspective can be used for discussion of how previous research results affect implications for teaching in Sweden. If a textbook series fails to promote ICC for students in e.g. Argentina, the same could probably be said for Sweden. However, this will further be discussed in section 6. In addition to that, there are a few Swedish student essays included which further support the results. The Swedish student essays are not peer-reviewed; however, they are still of interest to use in the present review because they show a Swedish perspective. They do not have the same scientific value as other peer-reviewed studies, therefore, not much focus will be placed on them.

The decision was made to focus on textbooks used to teach English as a foreign language rather than English as a second language (ESL). This is because English as a second language is usually taught to students who already live in the target culture. That entails teaching culture in a different way because the teachers of ESL will not have to face the same

problems with e.g. authenticity of materials and making sure students have authentic input of language (and culture) due to the fact that they are already surrounded by it. Teaching culture does not have the same implications in the two different classrooms. The literature collected for this review contains analyses regarding textbooks from countries where English is treated as a foreign language and the textbooks analyzed are developed for EFL teaching.

There will not be a distinct age group focus or any specific level of EFL; the research includes primary school through college/university. This is because age group is in this case insignificant. The goal is to look at cultural content in textbooks and there is no prime age to start teaching culture (or at least some culture) because it can and, arguably should be taught to beginners of English as well as advanced learners. Therefore, no distinction has been made.

In the presentation of the results, the main classification will be in section 4.2, which is categorized geographically. The reason behind this geographical categorization is an easier overview of the results. It is convenient for when one wants to compare research from different countries or parts of the world. The other aspect of teaching culture that is interesting to look into will be presented in section 4.1.

4 Literature Review

The review is divided into two major categories. Firstly, section 4.1 includes one analysis that found textbooks with inclusive representations of cultural content. The main results are then presented, in which textbook analyses show biased and negative representations of cultural content in section 4.2.

4.1 Inclusive Representations of Culture

Kirkgöz and Ağçam (2011) analyzed textbooks developed and published in Turkey for primary school education. They conducted a quantitative analysis of cultural elements of 18 textbooks. The aim was to investigate the extent to which cultural content in the textbooks refers to source culture (Turkish), target culture (British/American) and international culture. They found that source culture, target culture, and international target culture content is presented and represented in a fairly balanced way. According to the authors,

> [t]his allows students to compare and contrast their culture with other global cultures, increasing their awareness of the social conventions of other cultures and thereby expanding

their cultural knowledge. Thus, in using English as an international language a good balance between local, target and international target cultural elements in teaching materials is needed. (Kirkgöz and Ağçam, 2011, p. 157)

The authors state that the textbooks are designed to foster familiarity with culture in order to acquire cultural awareness at a superficial level. The goal is therefore not intercultural communicative competence. However, for CA in the EFL primary school classroom, the textbooks analyzed are inclusive and show positive representations of culture. Interestingly, the study by Kirkgöz and Ağçam (2011) is the only one in this literature review that shows positive representations of culture.

4.2 Target Culture Dominance, Bias and Discrimination

A body of research on cultural representations in textbooks from different parts of the world shows results that are related to bias and target culture preference. As opposed to the former inclusive representations, these would be exclusive.

4.2.1 Asia

A large amount of the research investigates culture teaching in the EFL classroom in Asia. For instance, Liu and Laohawiriyanon (2013) analyzed four teachers' manuals of Chinese university level EFL textbooks in order to distinguish the type of culture introduced in the material. The authors explain that the teachers' manuals were mainly used instead of the students' books due to the fact that the textbooks were not as informative as the manuals. The investigation analyzed cultural content based on Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) framework; however, some cultural content had no reference to any country and therefore, Liu and Laohawiriyanon used an additional category – "unidentified sources of culture" (2013, p. 87). The results show that a majority of the cultural content in the textbooks was unidentifiable, i.e. with no reference to any specific culture. However, among the identified cultural content, the predominant type of culture was target culture. The material analyzed contains a low percentage of source cultural content, which, according to the authors, might not be sufficient when it comes to developing students' intercultural communicative competence. Instead, they recommend that textbooks include more international target culture and source culture content (Liu & Laohawiriyanon, 2013).

Similarly, Wu (2010) also analyzed textbooks from China with the aim of distinguishing type and features of cultural content, among other things. Using both quantitative and qualitative methodology, Wu came to the same results as Liu and Laohawiriyanon, i.e. a majority of target language cultural content. The author suggests that more content should reflect source culture as well as international culture.

Also from Asia, Song (2013) examined cultural representations in South-Korean high school EFL textbooks that were developed according to the national curriculum. Mainly, the reading sections were the focus of the investigation. The analysis of four textbooks revealed a bias favoring American (US) culture. Some variation in cultural and intercultural interactions was included but the nature of these interactions remain superficial. The author argues that such textbook content reproduces social inequalities and presumably does not benefit students' intercultural competence or cultural awareness. Song also suggests a critical approach for teachers when engaging in intercultural education. This is in order for students to develop more inclusive and critical worldviews.

Oguro (2008) examined how culture is addressed in Japanese EFL textbooks. The author analyzed edited reading material in the textbooks, comparing it to the original passages and found that the culture was either omitted or changed. The pre- and post-reading activities in the textbook material analyzed were not designed to promote comparison or contrast of the students' culture to the cultures portrayed in the original reading material in the textbooks. Thus, Oguro comes to the conclusion that "the learners were not provided with the opportunity to become aware of the similarities and differences between two cultures." (2008, p. 64).

Lee (2009) performed a content analysis through reading selected textbooks. His study shows how textbooks can be used to discriminate, teach prejudice and stereotyping, which is the opposite of what teachers aspire to achieve with their teaching. In the South-Korean textbooks that he analyzed, there was target culture included. His study findings are that "[p]eople in Western countries are presented as being law-abiding, capable of getting things done, living in a society that respects equality, and educated in a way that gives them a sense of personal responsibility." (Lee, 2009, p. 52). There was also foreign culture included in the textbooks. However, the representation of these cultures was not as positive: "On the other hand, people in the non-West are described as being less respectful of the law, incapable of getting things done, resigned to social inequality, and lacking in personal responsibility because of poor education." (p. 53). This is an example of how textbook content can present stereotypical, discriminative views which teaches discrimination and prejudice to the students.

Kang-Young (2009) is also among those whose research shows negative representations. The author conducted an investigation using a method of content analysis of 11 South-Korean textbooks and found that the selected textbooks neglected teaching of both the culture-general aspect of culture and also little 'c' target-culture learning. According to Paige et al, the culture-general aspect of culture refers to the more generalizable "acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes" that can be transferred across cultures (as cited in Kang-Young, 2009, p. 78). A majority of the textbook content relates to Big 'C' target culture (such as memorizable facts and statistics regarding arts, history and customs), mainly American culture being presented as 'the supreme source'. Kang-Young argues that the EFL textbooks that were examined are not designed to allow the learners to develop neither ICC nor culture-specific competence (which is little 'c' culture).

4.2.2 The Middle East

Findings from the Middle East show similar results as previously mentioned research about target culture bias and negative representations of culture. Bahrami (2015) examined, among other things, teachers' perceptions of the cultural representation in a textbook series used in Iran. The author used a survey and a thorough text analysis to answer the research questions. The results show that the material promotes Western culture and Western values predominantly. In addition to that, the research indicates that the teachers of English that took part in the study "do not have a good command of target culture (L2); and use limited number of activities to introduce cultural elements of the books" (Bahrami, 2015, p. 128).

Aldera (2017) looked into the cultural content of textbooks used in Saudi Arabia to teach EFL. Through a content analysis and a survey, the investigation revealed that the content mainly represents foreign cultures and indicates a neglect of local culture. From the survey, the author found that the learners' attitudes are negative to this cultural bias. Interestingly, this time, the bias does not concern target culture but foreign (international) culture.

4.2.3 Europe

Several studies regarding cultural representations in textbooks are from Europe. Rodríguez and Espinar (2015) looked at the cultural content in six Spanish textbooks for adult learners from a different point of view. They used a quantitative approach which was based on observation of cultural occurrences. In their study, culture was divided into categories of

general and specific, and big 'C' culture and little 'c' culture (i.e. elements of culture that are visible and objective). Their findings suggest that the textbooks analyzed contain mostly big 'C' culture. The study identified weaknesses which they recommend textbook editors should take into account. One example of a weakness is superficial discussion questions which do not engage students in cultural self-awareness. Their study showed no difference in results in lower and higher level textbooks. There was no reference to what culture is included regarding target, source or international culture (Rodríguez & Espinar, 2015).

Moirano (2012) set out to investigate whether Argentinian textbooks help students (from Argentina) to reinforce their own cultural identity and whether teachers using the textbooks that were analyzed compensate for any potential lack of local elements. For her investigation, she interviewed 11 EFL teachers using three different textbooks. Additionally, a content analysis of the textbooks was carried out. The study shows that textbooks designed to prepare students for the Cambridge First Certificate Exam did not help the students to reinforce their cultural identity. Another textbook series which was not designed as preparation for any exam, did include some content that promotes awareness of own culture; however, in an indirect way. The teachers who took part in this study mostly did not notice any lack of local elements in the textbooks. The author did find a correlation between the teachers' age and their level of awareness of "the presence/absence of (local) cultural content in the textbooks they use" (Moirano, 2012, p. 88). Interestingly, Moirano's findings raise the question of how much the age of the teachers affects teaching culture. However, that is more relevant for another review.

There is a lack of research from Sweden about cultural content in EFL textbooks. A couple of student essays exist; some of them will be used to present the current situation in Sweden. Bovin (2015) investigates 12 English language textbooks, specifically looking at how they adhere to the Swedish curriculum and syllabi for English. Through her content analysis, she found that the most frequently occurring theme in the textbooks is cultural differences/living conditions. This is in accordance with the national curriculum. In the analysis, it was found that a majority of the textbooks describe international culture, i.e. cultures from different parts of the world. It seems that the most predominantly included cultures were South Africa and China. According to the author, a large amount of cultural content texts deal with cultural differences. However, it would seem that the comparisons tend to focus on Western culture differences, but not on why differences exist and what they mean (Bovin, 2015).

Similarly, Demir (2007) investigated "the extent to which the stated goals of the

syllabi are incorporated into the design and content of the most popular textbook/s" (p. 3). Even though the study is from 2007 and the school reform in 2011 resulted in a new curriculum and syllabus change, the syllabi have not changed significantly. Therefore, this study can still be used today. Demir's survey investigation of what was at the time referred to as the most popular textbook used in Stockholm, *Blueprint*, shows results that are in accordance with some of the research from countries across the world. The positive results according to the study are that the textbooks teach high as well as low culture and the material teaches what the author refers to as 'deep' culture (orientations, values, etc.). She also found that cultural knowledge is taught explicitly and that source culture has a role in the teaching of second culture. However, as for the negative representations, the textbook material does not include any characters from outer/expanding circles of English nor does it include different varieties of English other than the target model. There is no interaction between non-native speakers of English (Demir, 2007).

Sobkowiak (2016) researched EFL textbooks used in Poland with the aim of investigating 1) whether the cultural content goes beyond depicting only target culture, and 2) whether they include opportunities for critical thinking. Some scholars, such as Bennett (as cited in Sobkowiak, 2016), argue that intercultural competence (or intercultural communicative competence) and critical thinking are so closely related that they are even parallel, while e.g. Deardorff (as cited in Sobkowiak, 2016) claims that they at least overlap. The author carried out a content analysis of 20 EFL textbooks of different levels. Most of the textbooks used had a seal of approval by the Polish Ministry of Education, recommended for use in the EFL classroom.

Findings from the analysis show that critical thinking skills "help learners develop ICC and contribute to more appropriate and effective communication across cultures. Thus, developing knowledge of other cultures and communicative practices in a FL classroom has to parallel fostering the ability to critically reflect on and adapt knowledge by means of reasoning" (p. 712). Despite this link between ICC and critical thinking, the capacity to develop students' critical thinking in the textbooks analyzed by Sobkowiak proves to be very limited. The textbooks do not contain many activities related to culture which promote any purposeful reflection from the students, the study reveals. The author states that "[a]lthough the coursebooks provide some opportunities to explore foreign cultures, and contrast and compare them, which requires reasoning, they do it very superficially and mostly indirectly, merely by providing texts for reading." (Sobkowiak, 2016, p. 712).

4.2.4 International research

All previously mentioned studies investigated textbooks that were developed and used locally. However, Shin, Eslami and Chen (2011) analyzed the cultural content of seven series of internationally distributed English-language teaching (ELT) textbooks. The authors used a mixed-method approach for textbook analysis, employing content analysis and coding of the data. The study shows that there is diverse cultural content included in the textbooks; however, "inner circle cultural content" still dominates. Inner circle refers to English varieties used by native speakers (Kachru, 1985), in other words: target language/culture. In addition to that, it was found that cultural presentation mostly relates to traditional knowledge which does not engage learners in deeper reflection (Shin et al, 2011).

5 Discussion

The literature in this review brings forward several interesting aspects for discussion. The textbook could be seen as both problematic and beneficial to use for teaching culture, which are two aspects that will be discussed here. The other major areas which will be discussed concern cultural content in textbooks and critical thinking.

5.1 Intercultural Communicative Competence or Cultural Awareness?

As mentioned previously in section 1, an increasing number of curricula from across the world include culture to some degree. The national curriculum and syllabus for English of Sweden includes aspects of intercultural communicative competence such as to compare culture and reality in a larger, global context; develop international solidarity; interaction based on respect despite differences; develop knowledge; stimulate attitudes (curiosity), etc. Other than merely awareness or knowledge, there is the skill dimension. Thus, one of the goals of teaching English in the EFL classroom in Sweden is ICC. This would mean that for Swedish students of EFL, textbook material with only target culture Big 'C' cultural elements is not enough. There is a need for little 'c' cultural elements as well as Big 'C' culture from target, source and international cultures in order to teach culture adequately in the EFL classroom. Thus, the reasons as to why the textbook could be beneficial or problematic to use for teaching culture depends on if ICC is the goal of teaching culture, or if it is CA.

5.2 Why the Textbook is Beneficial for Teaching Culture

According to the research presented in this paper, the textbook can be a beneficial material for teaching culture only if the textbooks' representation of culture is true: inclusive and authentic. It has to include a mix of source, target and international culture, little 'c' and Big 'C' culture, engage in critical thinking and compare differences. Only then can it be a sufficient material for teaching culture. Kirkgöz and Ağçam (2011) showed that textbooks that they analyzed included a fairly balanced representation of source, target and international culture. They did not mention any deeper culture, critical thinking or deep cognitive involvement, which would be required for development of ICC. However, the goal of using the textbooks was development of cultural awareness and not intercultural communicative competence. In addition to that, the textbooks were designed for primary school education use, which could be a factor of interest for the results.

The fact that only one study in this literature review showed inclusive representations of culture could be seen as surprising, given the extent to which textbooks are usually used in the EFL classroom to teach language and culture.

5.3 Why the Textbook is Problematic for Teaching Culture

Within the aims of this investigation, one of the research questions concerned possible reasons as to why the textbook could be seen as beneficial or problematic to use. A large amount of the research brings forth suggestions of problems with the textbook as material to teach culture. Firstly, one of the problems lies in the possible reason as to why textbooks are predominantly target culture based and superficial, which could have to do with the limitations of the material. The scope of what textbooks can include is very limited, which means that textbook designers and developers have to make a choice of what to include and what to leave out. That is why it could be seen as surprising that the content that is specifically chosen to be included is superficial, traditional knowledge which students could, in fact, acquire information about themselves from somewhere else. However, it is not only the scope of what textbooks can include that is limited, so is the teachers' time to teach, as well as their knowledge of culture (target, source, international). The increase in the amount of cultures that are presented in textbooks is a possible reason as to why they are being treated superficially. Ito states that this is because "[t]he efforts to include many different cultures resulted in eliminating the unique characteristics of each culture […] As a result, what is

presented as culture is far from any real culture of any people" (as cited in Oguro, 2008, p. 32). Oguro (2008) brings up that deep culture, i.e. "the underlying values of a society" (p. 33) has been neglected in textbooks until recently. One reason as to why this is might be the qualities of these underlying values not being concrete enough for textbook developers and writers to be able to define them (Oguro, 2008).

As previously discussed in section 1, what separates textbooks from other material is authority involvement. Lee (2009) refers to Apple (1992, 1996) and Ornstein & Hunkins (2004) when he explains that the school's curriculum is shaped by cultural and social beliefs which means that the "depictions presented in the textbook passages […] mirror the prevalent beliefs in South Korea and exemplify a cultural model that South Koreans, as a cultural group, exhibit" (2009, p. 56). This shows one difficultly of teaching culture. Not only do the textbooks often fail to present culture in a representative, inclusive and objective manner, according to the research presented here, the people controlling the design and development of these textbooks can be (and probably is difficult to not be) affected by their own cultural beliefs. This means that textbooks, in a worst case scenario, teach students how to discriminate against other cultures. This can be done by either choice of textbook content that reflects negative, exclusive views, such as the example by Lee's study (2009), or as the previously mentioned study by Oguro (2008) shows, by editing original content with the intention to help the students, only to see that neither language acquisition nor intercultural communicative competence is achieved.

This is not to say that curricula- and textbook developers and designers as well as government authorities *want* students to learn how to discriminate. To the contrary, many claim to promote intercultural communicative competence and to have the aim to help students achieve that (Liu & Laohawiriyanon, 2013; Song, 2013; Rodríguez & Espinar, 2015, etc.). However, an aim does not equal success. As previously stated, the scope of what textbooks can include is limited, as well as the teachers' time to teach culture and knowledge of culture. That has resulted in that textbooks' content of culture is limited and often superficial (Shin, Eslami & Chen, 2011; Rodríguez & Espinar, 2015; Kang-Young, 2009 & Song, 2013).

Sobkowiak (2016) places emphasis on critical thinking, which is an aspect of intercultural communicative competence that makes it different from cultural awareness. It is also one aspect that is not considered in many of the textbooks analyzed in the present literature review. There could be several reasons as to why this is. However, regardless of the reason or reasons, critical thinking is a requirement for ICC to take place. Thus, if textbooks

are to teach culture in a sufficient way, the questions, exercises, and texts included should engage students in deep cognitive interaction. Hence, this shows another problematic aspect of using textbooks; they usually do not present opportunities for critical thinking, according to the research reviewed.

5.4 Pedagogical Implications

If ICC is the goal of teaching culture, the textbooks analyzed in the research reviewed usually do not aid in that. The question is posed as to what this means for teaching culture in the EFL classroom. Many of the authors from the studies reviewed suggest that teachers adopt a critical approach when they engage in intercultural education. Teaching/learning culture that leads to ICC without the use of the textbook could require a lot of commitment from both teachers and students. For teachers, it implicates finding alternative material but also requires a lot of knowledge. For students, it means critical thinking, deep cognitive involvement and perhaps not the same structure that they are used to when using the textbook. However, teaching/learning culture using the textbook proves to result in no ICC at all.

The results show that a large amount of the research about cultural representations in EFL textbooks indicates cultural content which is dominated by the target culture and that much of the culture taught in the analyzed textbooks is superficial. Many of the analyses that have been done on cultural content in textbooks show that there is usually target culture bias in the cultural content and that it is superficial Big 'C' cultural content with the aim to teach about culture. This is, however, not in accordance with the goals of language teaching for most teachers.

The pedagogical implications for this are that a) textbook developers should take this into consideration if the goal is for students to achieve ICC, but until then b) employ the use of other alternative materials. As previously mentioned, teaching and learning culture takes a lot of engagement from the teachers and from the students, no matter what kind of material is used. Teachers will have to know which questions, which tasks will engage the students in reflecting and critical thinking, rather than providing the students with superficial information about cultures and considering them culturally aware. Hence, from a broader, more general point of view, the results indicate a need for an existing alterative to the textbook until developers find a way to include deeper target, source and international culture in a way to engage students into critical thinking in the EFL textbooks. It might therefore be of interest to look to other materials for teaching deep culture.

5.5 Future Research

Research by Oguro (2008) shows that the altered texts in textbooks result in that learners do not have opportunities for awareness of similarities and differences between cultures because the edited material either omitted or changed the cultural content. This could reveal a need for authentic material as a step towards teaching culture that leads to ICC. Authenticity is a central part of the communicative approach (Hinkel, 2006) and is necessary for learners to have real input in order to acquire language proficiency. The same goes for intercultural communicative competence; students must have authentic input of cultural content. If they do not, they might run into difficulties understanding cultural differences when facing them in real life situations.

Thus, for future research, it would be interesting to investigate authentic material for teaching culture. Arguably, it does not have all the limitations of the textbook (such as superficial treatment of content due to limited scope) and it will provide the students with authentic input from whatever culture chosen (target, source and international). One example of such authentic material is news. It comes in both spoken and written form and can be used for getting information about different countries, but it can also easily be compared to other news items in order to reflect, think critically, analyze, etc.

The fact that language and culture are so closely intertwined would mean that they cannot be separated – in theory. In reality, it could be argued that they can be focused on separately. For instance, the textbook could be used to read about e.g. democracy. Students could work on vocabulary, grammar, as well as understanding and reflecting on the text, after which, a news item related to democracy in a certain country could be read and students could reflect on cultural differences, compare, criticize, discuss and thus become aware.

Of course, when using news items to teach culture, one does not have the same comfort of already having questions ready to hand out as is the case with textbooks. It takes more commitment from teachers to prepare assignments and questions as well as to actually make the choice of what material to use every time. However, authentic material such as news appears to fulfil the requirements that are needed to acquire intercultural communicative competence. That is why it is interesting to investigate for future research.

6 Conclusion

The aims of this review were to give an overview of some of the international research that has been done on cultural representations and content in textbook materials used across the world to teach English as a foreign language and to distinguish positive and negative implications for teaching/learning culture using the textbook. The research questions were: 1) is cultural content bias present in the reviewed studies' findings regarding target, source or international culture, and if so, what? and 2) does the research demonstrate possible reasons as to why the textbook is beneficial or problematic to use, and if so, what?

There is cultural content bias present in the reviewed studies' findings and the results regarding target, source and international culture reveal that textbooks include predominantly target language culture. The research does demonstrate possible reasons as to why the textbook is beneficial and problematic to use. According to the literature in this review, it is beneficial for teaching culture if it is inclusive, but only for teaching culture with the goal of development of cultural awareness. As for why the textbook is problematic to use for teaching culture, there are several factors such as limitations of time and knowledge, lack of inclusive content, not enough (or any) tasks which require deep cognitive involvement, etc. For future research, there is an interest in investigating authentic materials for teaching culture in the EFL classroom.

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