

# Researching Cultural Elements in Primary School Textbooks for EFL setting

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Diplomski studij Engleskog jezika i književnosti i hrvatskog jezika i  
književnosti

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**Researching Cultural Elements in Primary School  
Textbooks for EFL Setting**

Diplomski rad

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## **Summary**

This paper deals with incorporation of cultural elements in language teaching, especially English. It starts off with defining the concept of culture, followed by the historical overview of teaching culture. Inseparable connection between language and culture is explained, from which is concluded that language is culture and culture is language. Importance of building cultural awareness is also explained and the importance of helping learners broaden their mind, increase tolerance and achieve cultural empathy and sensitivity is introduced. Possession of intercultural skills and aiming for becoming a successful intercultural speaker are introduced and discussed; the same as inclusion of culture into the classroom. In addition to this, ideas are suggested of how teachers can approach the matter of culture teaching. Moreover, importance of textbooks for language teaching, together with ideas for evaluation of textbooks and culture as an integral part of every successful language textbook are explained. What is more important, research of cultural elements in primary school for EFL setting in Croatia is introduced. Firstly, there is a list of prominent textbooks currently used in Croatia. Secondly, cultural topics and their occurrence are analyzed. Thirdly, results are presented and discussed and some ideas for enhancement are given in the conclusion.

Key words: culture, teaching English as a foreign language, textbook evaluation

**Contents:**

Summary.....2

Key words.....2

1. Introduction.....5

2. Culture teaching.....6

    2.1. Definition of culture.....6

    2.2. History of culture teaching.....8

3. Language and culture.....10

4. Cultural awareness.....11

    4.1. Teachers’ and learners’ role in building cultural awareness.....12

    4.2. Techniques for teaching and building cultural awareness in the classroom.....13

5. Intercultural competence.....16

    5.1. Teachers’ and learners’ intercultural competence.....16

    5.2. Cultural awareness and intercultural competence.....18

6. Incorporating cultural elements into the foreign language classroom.....18

    6.1. Goals for teaching culture.....19

    6.2. Culture teaching devices.....20

7. Role of textbooks in EFL classroom.....23

    7.1. Advantages of using textbooks in EFL classroom.....24

    7.2. Disadvantages of using textbooks in EFL classroom.....24

8. Textbook analysis.....25

    8.1. Cultural elements.....26

    8.2. Review of previous research studies.....27

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 9. Researching cultural elements in primary school textbooks for EFL setting..... | 28 |
| 9.1. Aims and research questions.....   | 28 |
| 9.2. Sample.....  | 29 |
| 9.3. Procedure.....   | 30 |
| 9.4. Criteria for analysis.....   | 30 |
| 9.5. Results.....   | 31 |
| 9.5.1. <i>Dip in set</i> .....  | 31 |
| 9.5.2. <i>Project set</i> .....   | 33 |
| 9.5.3. <i>Way to go set</i> .....   | 35 |
| 9.6. Discussion.....  | 36 |
| 9.7. Compliance with Croatian National Curriculum.....                            | 39 |
| 10. Conclusion.....   | 41 |
| 11. Bibliography.....   | 42 |
| 12. Sažetak.....  | 46 |

## **1. Introduction**

In the context of language teaching, culture has an important role. Language and culture are inseparable concepts. If we want to learn and adopt a foreign language, we have to be aware of different customs, beliefs and manners of people speaking that particular language. It is equally important for teachers and learners to build their cultural awareness and become interculturally competent. In addition to this, while learning the target language; it is important to compare it with learners' own culture.

Textbooks are the basic tool for language teaching and it is important to evaluate them and choose the most appropriate one. In the light of that, this paper explores cultural elements in primary school textbooks in Croatia. The aim is to analyze which cultural elements and topics most frequently appear and in which way are they used as a part of a language teaching process.

## **2. Culture teaching**

### **2.1. Definition of culture**

The term culture is not easy to define since there are many different opinions and suggestions on how to approach this matter. It is the best to start with a general definition and continue with the more specific ones.

Starting with the most general definition, culture has been referred to as ‘the ways of people’ (Lado, 1957, as cited in Thanasoulas, 2001) from which we do not learn anything about the term culture only that it has to do something with people. Thanasoulas (2010: 10) gives us anthropologists’ view and points out that culture revolves around “the whole way of life of a people or a group”. Now, let us get more specific in defining the term culture by connecting it with the behavior, customs and traditions of people.

Cakir (2006: 155) gives more connotative definition from which we find out that culture “is the context within which we exist, think, feel and relate to others”. Again, connection with other people is emphasized since Cakir sees culture as the ‘glue’ that binds a group of people together. He also believes that culture can be defined as a blueprint that guides the behavior of people in community and is incubated in family life (Cakir, 2006).

Considering the importance of the group for forming cultural behavior, Peck (1998, as cited in Thanasoulas, 2001) says that culture consists of all the accepted and patterned ways of behavior of people living in the same group (country, family). He goes on by revealing that culture is learned by people as they observe others in their environment and everyday life. It is evident that culture regulates our social lives at every turn and we should accept it as our social legacy.

Additionally, it should be explained what culture means to people. Weaver (1993, as cited in Thanasoulas, 2001: 4) discovers that “many, if not most, people think of culture as what is often called ‘high culture’ – art, literature, music, and the like. (...) This dimension of culture can be seen as an iceberg with the tip sticking above the water level of conscious awareness. By far the most important part, however, is unconscious or below the water level of awareness and includes values and thought patterns.” This goes to show that people are not aware of the importance of culture and that it is important to improve cultural awareness in the classrooms. It is wrong to connect culture only with art, movies and books and forget about the importance

of tolerance among people from different cultures and the uniqueness of their customs, values and beliefs.

Similarly as Weaver, Lustig and Koester (2003, as cited in Liton and Madanat, 2013: 4) go in the same direction claiming that “culture is a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values and norms which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people.” Another important issue comes up, and this is the need for correct interpretation of beliefs, values and norms in different countries. In order to be polite and to know how to behave in a particular situation, learners should be aware of different customs in different countries, they should know what appropriate behavior is and what could be considered rude.

Ketabi and Rajabi (2012: 705) also talk over the ideas of values and beliefs while defining the term culture. They point out that culture is “the system of knowledge shared by a group of people, including a group’s values, beliefs, and attitudes, notions of appropriate behavior, role expectations, and worldview (notions of time, space, and cosmology). Culture also includes material objects and knowledge about their purpose and use. Culture is understood to be a symbol-rich template that shapes human consciousness and behavior.”

To make it clearer, it would be the best to divide culture into two major groups, as described by Kottak (1991, as cited in Zergollern-Miletić, 2011) who has concluded that scholars seem to agree that the term ‘culture’ has two basic meanings: culture with a *capital C* – culture in general sense – a capacity and possession shared by humans, transmitted through learning. It is spiritual reality rather than material. It encompasses knowledge, arts, music, etc. On the other hand, culture with a *small c* is a culture in the specific sense, where the world denotes different and varied cultural traditions of specific societies which govern behavior and beliefs. What scholars also agree upon is that culture is all-encompassing. It is learned and shared, and it is symbolic.

Another important concept is the bond between culture and communication. They are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meaning they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted. Culture is the foundation of communication (Samovar et al., 1981, as cited in Thanasoulas, 2001).



Considering everything previously mentioned, it could be concluded that culture is a concept which starts and develops within a particular group of people, it connects people and commands their behavior within a group. On the other hand, when people think about the term culture, they mostly mention art, literature and music, which are inseparable parts of the culture, but, not the most important. That is why it is necessary to emphasize that value, beliefs and norms are foundations of every culture of a particular group of people. Knowing and appreciating your own culture and being aware of other people's culture shapes individual's consciousness and enriches his knowledge.

Culture should not be taken for granted, it should be thought. The purpose of teaching and learning culture "is to help learners develop the ability to use the target language in culturally appropriate ways for the specific purpose of empathizing and interacting with native speakers of the target language" (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, as cited in Liton and Madanat, 2013: 6). Empathy and tolerance should be considered when learning about different cultures more than acquiring cultural facts without being aware of how to use them in real life situations.

## **2.2. History of culture teaching**

From the 1960s until today, there have been many different approaches to culture teaching. From the idea that culture should not be taught as a part of language learning process, to incorporating culture in the classroom as equally important as other aspects of language (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling).

Zergollern-Miletić (2011) declares that we may mark the 1960s as the era when the importance of culture for language learning started being recognized. She exemplifies how Brooks, in his seminal work *Language and Language Learning* (1960), has offered sixty-four topics regarding culture, some of which were about greetings, expletives, personal possessions, cosmetics, tobacco and smoking, verbal taboos, establishments providing refreshments, contrasts in town and country life, patterns of politeness, etc. That was already an indication that the term culture covers a vast area and that there should be a way of incorporating it into the classroom and textbooks.

In his review of the history of culture teaching, Thanasoulas (2001) remarks that since the 1960s, a great many educators have concerned themselves with the importance of the cultural

aspect in foreign language learning, with Hammerly, Seelye and Damen being among those who have considered ways of incorporating culture into language teaching. During the 1970s, an emphasis on sociolinguistics led to a greater emphasis on the situational context of the foreign language. Savignon studied communicative competence and suggested that communicative skills should be thought from the very beginning of starting to learn a new language. As a result, the role of culture in the foreign language curriculum was enhanced. Finally, the idea of integration of language and culture was praised more than the grammatically based approach. Another improvement was that teacher-oriented texts included detailed chapters on culture teaching for the foreign language classroom emphasizing the importance of communication within the cultural context of the target language. Moreover, in the 1980s and 1990s, advances in pragmatics and sociolinguistics have led to attempts at bridging the cultural gap in language teaching. Correspondingly, scholars deliberated about the importance of learners understanding the perspective of others and having opportunities to reflect their own perspectives.

Nowadays, modern textbooks for learning English are learner oriented and there the culture is included as an inseparable part of language learning. Since culture could provide many different topics there was a need to organize it and create the most important categories that would be introduced and learned in the classroom. These include facts about everyday life, ways of addressing people in conversation, letters and e-mails, facts about holidays, education system, nature and wildlife, monuments, history, etc. It usually depends on the authors of the textbook and the National Curriculum of a particular country. Textbook authors put a lot of effort into presenting the cultures of the English-speaking world in such a way that learners can understand and accept them. Besides learning cultural facts, critical thinking is encouraged, which should, ideally, diminish the occurrence of stereotypes and judgmental attitudes (Zergollern-Miletić, 2011).

It can be concluded that cultural knowledge is important because it is “an all-encompassing kind of knowledge” (Thanasoulas, 2001) and it should be the basis for acquiring any other language learning aspects, as it gives teachers an opportunity to make a connection between different skills and language aspects (practicing grammar on texts about culture). That type of approach to language learning makes it easier for learners to acquire both a new language and cultural facts.

### 3. Language and culture

The interrelation between language and culture is one of the most complex ones (Levi Strauss, 1968, as cited in Zergollern-Miletić, 2011). In addition to this, Sapir (1970, as cited in Thanasoulas 2001: 7) claims that “language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives.” Deneme et al. (2011: 152) go in the same direction, while saying that “only with a language are societies able to transmit their own cultures, beliefs and ways of life to the others and shape their own lives with different cultures to which they are exposed, also Brooks (1964) argues that language is the most advanced element of culture.” Many other scholars agree with the idea of inseparability between language and culture, so Tang (1999, as cited in Cakir, 2006: 155) “propounds the view that culture is language and language is culture.” That could be the basis for understanding the relationship between the language and culture. Tang 1999, as cited in Cakir, 2006) suggests that to speak a language well, one has to be able to think in that language, and thought is extremely powerful. It is especially useful to think in the target language while doing some written tasks or writing essays or research papers. Many learners start by translating from their mother tongue to the target language which makes place for many mistakes. It should be emphasized by the teachers that this approach is not only wrong, but could also be harmful for their language learning. Tang (1999, as cited in Cakir, 2006) also poetically observes that language is the soul of the country and people who speak it that is why it should be appreciated and used correctly.

After concluding that language and culture are inseparably connected, Buttjes (1990, as cited in Thanasoulas 2001) offers some reasons why this is the case. He describes the importance of the relationship between children and their caregivers, where caregivers’ primary concern is not how to teach their children grammatical rules, but how to transmit sociocultural knowledge and how to find the ways for their children to acquire paralinguistic patterns and the kinesics of their culture. This goes to show that language and culture should not only be dealt with at school, but also that the importance of tolerance and empathy towards other cultures should be introduced at home at the early age.

Equally important, McKay (2003, as cited in Bada and Genc 2005: 75) “contends that culture influences language teaching in two ways: linguistically and pedagogically. Linguistically, it

affects the semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of the language. Pedagogically, it influences the choice of the language materials because cultural content of the language materials and the cultural basis of the teaching methodology are to be taken into consideration while deciding upon the language materials.” This shows how culture has become equally important as semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of the language and that every teacher has to pay attention to how to find the best way to include cultural facts into their lessons.

In addition to this, Lund (2006: 30) concludes by saying that “although a language offers great potential for a diversity of meanings, users of a language are often not aware of this potential.” The problem is that teachers sometimes do not show interest in broadening the lessons from the textbooks. In some cases it is not necessary, but in order to make learners interested it is useful to use authentic materials or to raise discussions based on the given texts from textbooks. Lessons where learners only read from the textbook and solve the tasks are not productive. Subsequently, such an unfavorable approach should encourage teachers to find new and interesting ways to make the subject matter more appealing. This especially applies to the cultural facts that could always be expanded with some additional text, personal story, pictures of the localities, maps of cities, short videos and films.

Teaching and learning language is impossible without considering culture of the target language. Language is inseparable part of the culture in the same way that the culture is inseparable part of the language. This issue should be considered both by teachers and learners of the foreign language and they should find the best ways to make their lessons as diverse as possible.

#### **4. Cultural awareness**

Cultural awareness is another important aspect that needs to be explained when discussing connection between language and culture. Before learning a new language, learners should be aware of their own culture. Teachers have an important role in this process, since they have to promote tolerance and emphasize the importance of appreciating learners’ culture as well as being open to the values, beliefs and norms of the target culture.

#### **4.1. Teachers' and learners' role in building cultural awareness**

Cultural awareness should be gradually introduced into the classroom, and the priority should always be given to increase international understanding and enable learners to enter into the life, thought, and literature of people who speak another language (Qu, 2010). Moreover, Jaspersen (1904, as cited in Qu, 2010) also promotes the idea of international understanding before going any further in exploring different cultures. He implies that the highest purpose in the language teaching may perhaps be the access to the best thoughts and institutions of a foreign nation, its literature, culture – behind which is hidden the spirit of the nation in the widest sense of the world. After being aware of the importance of acquiring cultural knowledge, learners are ready for gradual development of their cultural knowledge.

In addition to this, Tomilson and Masuhara (2004, as cited in Ghorbani Shemshadsara, 2012) also agree that cultural awareness involves a gradually developing inner sense of the equality of cultures, and increased understanding of learners' own and other people's cultures, and a positive interest in how cultures both connect and differ. They believe that increased cultural awareness helps learners broaden the mind, increase tolerance and achieve cultural empathy and sensitivity. With that in mind, every teacher should find the best way to broaden the minds of their learners. Teachers should be able to choose the most suitable topics and tasks appropriate for their learners' level and interest.

Promoting cultural awareness among learners of the target language is essential. Cultural compatibility and adaptation to cross-cultural issues are motivating factors in second language acquisition. An individual's attitudes concerning cultural values and beliefs, toward the target language are effective factors to EFL learning (Liton 2012, as cited in Liton and Madanat, 2013). This means that learning about different cultures is a great motivation for learners to practice the target language, especially if teachers use the texts about some cultural matter for teaching or practicing grammar or any other aspect of language. In that way not so appealing language matter can become more interesting and easier to comprehend.

There is also a great emphasis on promoting tolerance while learning about different cultures. Qu (2010) reveals that the study of a foreign language should make learners aware of the fact that there are more than one way of looking at things and expressing things. It is also important to emphasize that differences do not necessarily represent moral issues of right and wrong. This

should be the basis of every lesson with the cultural content. In that way the study of a foreign culture can become liberating experience. Learners would be encouraged to develop tolerance of their viewpoints and other forms of thinking and behaving while understanding those of their own society or culture better.

Along with learning about a new culture and promoting tolerance, teachers should increase learners' awareness and develop their curiosity towards their own culture and help learners to make comparisons among the two. The comparisons are not meant to underestimate any of the cultures being analyzed, but to enrich learners' experience and to make them aware that although some cultural elements are being globalized, there is still much diversity among them. This diversity should then be understood, and never underestimated (Qu, 2010). Again, the issue of tolerance is introduced, and it is especially important when comparing different cultures. Sometimes different countries value different customs. In order to show politeness and tolerance, learners should be interested and motivated to learn about these differences.

Having mentioned all of the above, we can conclude that cultural awareness encompasses three qualities: awareness of one's own culturally-induced behavior, awareness of the culturally-induced behavior of others and ability to explain one's own cultural standpoint (Tomilson and Masuhara, 2002, as cited in Ghorbani Shemshadsara, 2012). Moreover, promoting tolerance and mutual understanding should be the basis of every successful lesson.

#### **4.2. Techniques for teaching and building cultural awareness in the classroom**

Let us now provide some techniques for teaching and building cultural awareness. Galloway (1984, as cited in Ghorbani Shemshadsara, 2012) has proposed a framework for building cultural understanding. She suggests four categories around which cultural understanding should be developed. She introduces *convention*, *connotation*, *conditioning* and *comprehension*. In other words, *convention* regards a way people typically behave in common situations in a given culture, whereas *connotation* deals with the many culturally significant meanings that are associated with words. Third category – *conditioning* has to do with the fact people act in a manner consistent with their cultural frame of reference, and all people respond in culturally conditioned ways to basic human needs to learn how to interpret behaviors that are different from their own without making judgments based on their own standards. The last

category – *comprehension* includes skills such as analysis, hypothesis formation and tolerance of ambiguity. Comprehension goals can be best achieved by paying attention to the source of one's information, examining one's stereotypes avoiding overgeneralization, and the ways to resolve conflicts.

In other words, individuals could successfully develop their cultural understanding by paying attention to the way they behave in a foreign country or among foreigners in general. What is more, they should possess basic knowledge of language to be able to communicate, they should also be tolerant and know how to interpret different cultural customs and behaviors.

Similarly, Hughes (1986, as cited in Jablonowska and Proskien, 2005) offers and defines some techniques for introducing culture analysis in the second language classroom:

1. *Comparison method*

The teacher begins each lesson with a presentation of one item in the target culture that is distinctly different from the learners' culture. Then learners discuss why these differences may cause problems.

2. *Culture assimilators*

The teacher gives a brief description of a critical incident of cross-cultural interaction that is likely to be misunderstood by learners. Next, the learners are presented with four possible explanations from which they are to select the correct one.

3. *Culture capsule*

The teacher gives a brief presentation showing one essential difference between learners' own and a foreign custom. It is accompanied by the visuals, which illustrate the difference, and a set of questions to stimulate the class discussion.

4. *Drama*

This technique directly involves learners in cross-cultural misunderstandings. The teacher selects a group of learners to act out in a series of short scenes a misinterpretation of something that happens in the target culture. The cause of the problem should be clarified in the final scene.

5. *Total Physical Response*

The teacher constructs the list of commands. Next, the teacher gives them to the learners and they respond to them. The commands ought to have cultural context.

#### 6. *Newspapers*

The teacher asks learners to compare a certain item in a foreign newspaper with the equivalent in their own. Good cultural insights may be found in headlines, advertisements, editorials, sports pages, comics or weather reports. The humour found on the comic page may say much about the people.

#### 7. *The culture island*

The teacher creates the culture island in the classroom. It may be done through the use of posters, pictures or a frequently changing bulletin board. The purpose is to attract learners' attention, stimulate them to comment and ask questions.

As can be seen, raising cultural awareness in the classroom is a key for acquiring a new language and also a good way of showing respect and knowledge of learners' own culture. While considering techniques for building cultural awareness, it is evident that the main goal is to make learners feel more comfortable in situations where they would have to use the target language, especially if they would find themselves communicating with native speakers. In the same way, it is important to introduce and discuss customs and behavior that could be misunderstood in different countries. It is well known that something that is considered polite in one country could be highly offensive in another one. Therefore, teachers have to introduce these possible situations and teach their learners the right response to the given situations. It is also important to compare target and learners' culture as much as possible. Should learners get the chance to share their opinion and anecdotes, it will be much more interesting for them to discuss about the target culture and see the differences or similarities in comparison with their experiences.

All things considered, it is the most important to help learners feel comfortable using the target language and prepare them for interactions with native speakers and communication with foreigners and foreign cultures.



## **5. Intercultural competence**

Intercultural competence revolves around having the ability “to behave adequately and in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures” (Meyer, 1991, as cited in Lund 2006: 93). Rajabi and Ketabi (2012) approach this issue in a similar way saying that intercultural understanding means dual culture understanding where learners are exposed to the target language culture, specifically English and, to a certain extent, American culture as well as being introduced to their own culture in comparison with the target culture.

To be interculturally competent, teachers and learners have to possess intercultural skills, both verbal and non-verbal. To clarify, “intercultural skills are often defined in terms of the ability to adapt to new cultural contexts” (Lund, 2006: 93). Together with possessing intercultural skills, teachers should develop and follow the aims for raising intercultural competence among their learners. According to Byram et al. (2002), teachers should help their learners become both interculturally and linguistically competent; prepare them for interaction with other people of other cultures; enable them to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviors; and to help them to see that such interaction is an enriching experience.

### **5.1. Teachers’ and learners’ intercultural competence**

In order to raise interculturally competent learners, teachers should create a third culture in their classroom, as Kramsch (1993, as cited in Ghorbani Shemshadsara, 2012) suggests. To clarify, she describes the third culture as a conceptual space that recognizes the second language classroom as the place of intersection of multiple world of discourse. She advises teachers to encourage learners to create this third culture, while, at the same time, not allowing either the home culture or the target culture to hold them hostage to its particular values and beliefs.

Having in mind the concept of the third culture in the classroom, we can go on discussing the importance of teachers in making their learners culturally competent. Moreover, Qu (2010: 61) claims that “foreign language teachers should be foreign culture teachers, having the ability to experience and analyze both the home and target cultures.” In order to reach that goal, teachers need informed insight into the culture to be taught and informed insight into the culture of the language learners. Similarly, it would be good for teachers to live for some time in both cultures they are teaching, and if that is not possible, it is expected of teachers to be familiar with literature, music, television and art of the target culture. Together with a large range of knowledge, teachers should have contact with native speakers, discuss all kinds of subjects with them and in this way educate themselves in cultural interpretation. Along with the knowledge possession, it is as important for teachers to overcome the temptation to demonstrate the superiority of one culture over another, as it is essential for them to develop sensitivity toward the attitudes of the learners toward their own and other culture (Qu, 2010).

However, teachers should be aware of the fact that the acquisition of intercultural competence is never complete and perfect, and they should not worry about it, they should just do their best. To clarify, it is not possible to acquire all the knowledge one might need in interacting with people of other cultures. Cultures are constantly changing and one cannot know every aspect of the culture they are teaching or learning about. Another issue is the possibility of a culture shock. Sometimes meeting new people, having new experience, coming across unexpected beliefs, values and behaviors can shock and disturb those deeply embedded identities and values, however open, tolerant and flexible one wishes to be (Byram et al., 2002). That is why cultural knowledge and importance of tolerance should be introduced gradually and with a special attention to learners’ abilities of coping with particular topics and issues.

Even though there is not a perfect solution for how to be completely intercultural competent, Byram et al. (2002) suggest five components of intercultural competence:

1. *Intercultural attitudes* – curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own.
2. *Knowledge* of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in the target culture, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.
3. *Skills of interpreting and relating* – ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one’s own.

4. *Skills of discovery and interaction* – ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.
5. *Critical cultural awareness* – an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.

Given these points, it could be concluded that the role of the language teacher is to develop skills, attitudes and awareness of values just as much as to develop knowledge of a particular culture or country (Byram et al., 2002).

## **5.2. Cultural awareness and intercultural competence**

On the whole, it is important to discuss concepts of cultural awareness and intercultural competence and explain their similarities and differences. Before being introduced to target culture, teachers should evoke learners' interest in their own culture, they should make them evoke the knowledge they already possess. Only after that, target culture should be introduced. Learners have to be aware of the importance of tolerance and have respect towards the target culture as much as their own. After being culturally aware, teachers should work on making their learners interculturally competent, which means that teachers have to find the best methods and techniques to introduce the cultural facts. In addition to this, learners should be open-minded and ready to acquire knowledge. Moreover, learning about cultural diversity will provide learners with the knowledge and skills required for more effective communication in intercultural situations. It is important to know certain patterns of behavior in order to be successful in interactions with foreigners. It has also been said that the more one knows about the different cultural backgrounds of others, the better prepared he/she will be to recognize and understand the differences in their cultural behavior (Jablonowska and Proskien, 2005).

## **6. Incorporating culture into the foreign language classroom**

After discussing cultural awareness and intercultural competence, it is essential to describe the ways in which cultural facts could be introduced to learners.

At first, culture teaching was a part of the hidden curriculum, but over the years, culture teaching has included a cognitive, affective and behavioral component. *The cognitive component* refers to various forms of knowledge – geographical knowledge, knowledge about the contributions of the target culture to world civilization, and knowledge about differences in the way of life as well as understanding of values and attitudes in the second language community. *The affective component* refers to second language learners' curiosity about and empathy for the target culture. *The behavioral component* refers to learners' ability to interpret culturally relevant behavior, and to conduct themselves in culturally appropriate ways (Stern, 1992, as cited in Ghorbani Shemshadsara, 2012). In order to be well prepared for intercultural communication, teachers should help their learners acquire all three components. It should be done gradually and none of the components should be less-favored.

### **6.1. Goals of teaching culture**

Having in mind previously mentioned components, let us present seven goals of teaching culture, developed by Seelye (1998) and modified by Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, as cited in Thanasoulas, 2001). Cultural knowledge is useful:

1. To help learners develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviors.
2. To help learners to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.
3. To help learners to become more aware of conventional behavior in common situations in the target culture.
4. To help learners to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.
5. To help learners to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence.
6. To help learners to develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture.
7. To stimulate learners' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people.

Presented components show how much an individual learner can benefit from the cultural knowledge. Not only that *he/she* will be able to communicate with foreigners and know where to place certain countries on the map, but *they* will also have a better understanding of the world and people, which is a valuable quality to possess.

## 6.2. Culture teaching devices

There are different techniques and methods about how to incorporate the target culture into the classroom.

Qu (2010) divides culture teaching devices into five categories:

1. *Describing and explaining culture* – one of the commonest methods of presenting the cultural information has been by exposition and explanation. For this method, teachers could choose to talk about geography, history, literature, art, scientific achievements and the small details of a foreign people. These culture talks could be part of their subject teaching or some special topics particularly for foreign culture teaching.
2. *Experiencing culture through language use* – there is another approach which does not take time from the essential work of language learning, that is, teaching for culture understanding is fully integrated with the process of assimilation of syntax and vocabulary. Since language is closely immersed into every aspect of culture, this approach is possible, when the teachers involved are well informed and alert to cultural differences and thus, their learners absorb the meaning in many small ways.
3. *Dialogues and mini-dramas* – situations which learners then act out in a culturally authentic fashion. This is a common method used in language teaching. Each dialogue should be constructed around an experience compatible with the age and interests of the learners. As learners become familiar with the dialogue and act it out, they can learn through role plays how to interact with all kinds of people, as they did in their own culture. In terms of the material, some textbooks deliberately began with dialogues

reflecting common and everyday experience of the learners in their native culture. In other textbooks, one finds that dialogues are deliberately kept culturally neutral which will be inevitably interpreted by the learners as familiar patterns of their own cultures. The two cases, to some degree, deprive the learners from being exposed to the real situation, and thus should be avoided.

4. *Role playing* – after learners have learned acted-out dialogues or dramatized situations from the early stage, they are encouraged to try to use what they have learned freely and spontaneously in communications. If they are encouraged to look upon much of their language learning as role playing, they are more likely to carry this over into classroom conversations with contents, gestures, and reaction to simulate a situation in the second culture.

5. *Other popular activities within culture*

#### *5.1. Songs and dances*

It has always been suggested that a sense of reality should be brought into the classroom when learners have the opportunity to enjoy the types of activities native speakers of the language enjoy. Learners are fond of such experience when they are given the chance to feel the foreign culture with appropriate action and atmosphere, and of course, opportunity should be taken to teach them within a certain context of explanation, illustration and discussion which will breathe cultural life into them.

#### *5.2. Pictures*

Suitable pictures with authentic cultural setting will bring many of the lessons to life. Many may be found in the pages of illustrated magazines. Often advertisements in magazines portray natural situations and the activities of people of different ages, social groups. While choosing pictures for teaching purposes, those that are cluttered with too much detail must be avoided. The pictures should be illustrative of one main aspect of cultural behavior that is clearly depicted.

#### *5.3. Films*

Since film is a vivid medium of presentation, it should be an imperative not to use it as a medium that promotes a distorted picture of people's lives. Bearing in mind that only few films are suitable for a program where cultural knowledge is completely integrated in language learning, we should be alert to the subject selection.

#### *5.4. Bulletin board*

Another way of making life in the country where the language is spoken seem real and contemporary is the keeping of an up-to-date bulletin board in the language classroom. The board should exhibit affixed news of current events, new ventures, works of art, cartoons, proverbs, which usually contain the folk wisdom of a race and are often a significant index to the value system. The daily news is a rich source of cultural information.

#### *5.5. Inviting native speakers*

From time to time, native speakers should be invited to the language classroom. Learners can ask a question about anything connected to culture that interests them and thus get a clearer understanding of the target culture. Regular communication and exchanging views would certainly help them improve the level of mutual understanding, trust and respect towards different cultures, which is one of the outmost goals of our language teaching and learning.

These are just a few suggestions that could be used in the classroom. It depends on both the teachers' and learners' level of preparation and willingness to work and learn. Sometimes teachers are very well prepared, but learners are not interested. Then, teachers should try as many different activities as possible to find the best way to make their learners interested. Equally, it would be immensely useful if learners would suggest some topics or activities they are personally interested in.

Another valuable resource in culture teaching are authentic materials. They should be frequently explored in the classrooms because they not only promote every aspect of language learning but also enormously improve all four language skills (reading, writing, speaking and

listening). It is encouraging to know that the majority of teachers agree that authentic materials can be used to develop tasks that depart from formulaic language learning and provide a bridge between the linguistic skills of learners and their professional knowledge goals if they are appropriately selected and implemented (Khaniya, 2006). In addition to this, Khaniya (2006) extracts the main advantages of using authentic materials in the classroom and reveals that authentic materials have a positive effect on learner motivation, they provide authentic cultural information, they provide exposure to language, they relate more closely to learners' needs, and they support a more creative approach to teaching.

Conclusively, Khaniya (2006) comments that a successful language learner has to be aware of the culture underlying the target language. However, teaching culture should not be only about teaching facts, but promoting a better understanding of a target language. Kelly et al. (2002) suggest that exposing the learners to cultural features generates a deeper understanding of their interest in the topic. On one hand, the learners develop their ability to adopt relevant information, and on the other, they learn how to disregard what is not relevant.

## **7. Role of textbooks in EFL classroom**

Textbooks are tools that aid culture teaching. Textbooks are important resources which learners can easily and frequently access. Likewise, a textbook can be referred to as a published book specially designed to help language learners to improve their linguistic and communicative abilities (Sheldon 1987, as cited in Wong, 2011). Moreover, Risager in Cunningsworth (1995, as cited in Deneme et al. 2011: 154) points out that “foreign language teaching textbooks no longer just develop concurrently with the development of foreign language pedagogy in a narrow sense, but they increasingly participate in the general cultural transmission with the educational system and in the rest of society.”

Textbooks are the main materials used in language classes. They can have different roles in the classroom and it all depends on teachers and learners' decision on how they want to use them. Textbooks are produced massively for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) purposes all over the world with the aim to meet the needs of language learners, so that they can function linguistically and culturally well in English communicative acts (Hinkel 1999, as cited in Rajabi and Ketabi, 2012). Still, teachers are the main interpreters of textbooks and if they see any lacks or disadvantages, they have to make sure that their



learners still reach the aim of each lesson and activity. In some cases, it means that they have to add a piece of information to the topics offered in the textbook, whereas in some others that they have to disregard information that is found unnecessary or too complex for their learners.

### **7.1. Advantages of using textbooks in EFL classroom**

Cortazzi and Jin (1999, as cited in Lund, 2006) list many positive roles that a textbook can have, i.e. that of a teacher, a map, a resource, and a trainer. As a *teacher*, the textbook can provide explanations and guide the learners through parts of the course, thus relieving the teacher of some of the time-consuming and tedious work, leaving him or her to focus on the parts of the job that only a teacher can do. As a *resource*, the textbook can provide teaching and learning materials as well as suggestions and ideas for the classroom, and thus facilitate the work that needs to be done to find suitable materials and approaches for a given group of learners. As a *trainer*, the textbook can provide step-by-step instructions for the inexperienced or untrained teacher. The most important role that a textbook can have is, perhaps, that of *a map*. It seems obvious that all teaching programs and all classrooms need a map so that the involved parties have a shared understanding of the goals and the contents of the course.

Not only teachers, but also learners can benefit from using textbooks for learning the target language. Textbooks could be used as a reference point for their learning process and for keeping track of their development (O'Neil 1982, as cited in Wong, 2011). Equally important is that textbooks can provide additional benefits to learners as they are an efficient collection of materials for self-accessed learning and for knowledge consolidation. Also, textbooks can save learners from teacher's incompetency and deficiencies (O'Neil 1982, Litz 2005, as cited in Wong, 2011).

### **7.2. Disadvantages of using textbooks in EFL classroom**

Textbooks and teachers' dependence on textbooks have been criticized for a number of reasons. In the case of English language, one area of dispute has been the idea that it is possible to produce textbooks for a global market, with the understanding that "one size- fits all" (Harmer 2001, as cited in Lund, 2006: 45).

Textbooks have also been criticized on the grounds that they present a set of already made decisions, often with some stamp of authority on them. A textbook that provides a self-contained teaching program can be seen as an obstacle for the teacher who is trained and motivated to use creative and independent approaches in the classroom (Lund, 2006). In the same way, Cortazzi & Jin (1999, as cited in Lund, 2006: 46) refer to this role of the textbook as a possible 'deskilled' of the teacher.

Additionally, there is no universal textbook which could effectively address individual learning styles, differences of learners and the requirements of every classroom setting (Tomilson 2003, Ur 1996, Williams 1983, as cited in Wong, 2011). Also, teachers could become totally reliant on the textbook (Ur 1996, as cited in Wong, 2011). In that way, lessons could become demotivating for learners. Still, textbooks are good means for learning, but language learning should be interactive and not limited to the structure imposed by the textbook (Tomlinson 2010, as cited in Wong, 2011).

All things considered, textbook can function as a trainer and show teachers, gradually, how the new elements can be dealt with and also provide teachers with concrete examples of what the change might look like (Hutchinson and Torres 1994, as cited in Lund, 2006). It is essential for teachers to use textbooks as guides in preparing for their lessons, but they should also feel free to give their learners extra information if necessary. In that way, teachers will show their competence and interest and learners will be motivated to work on their own and investigate about the topics of their interest, which in the end, is the main goal for every successful teacher.

## **8. Textbook analysis**

Since there are many textbooks teachers can choose from, there is a need for their evaluation. There are many problems a teacher can encounter while choosing the textbook. Firstly, the problem is that frequently a textbook selection is not based on its intrinsic pedagogical value, but of the perceived prestige of the author and/or the publisher (Green 1926, McGrath 2002, as cited in Wong, 2011). Secondly, textbooks, like any other published books, are pieces of merchandise and the ultimate objective of their production is commercial success (Dendrinos 1992, as cited in Wong 2011). Thirdly, textbook writers sometimes rely on their intuition and produce materials they think would be the best, instead of focusing on how learners could

benefit from using the textbook (Tomlinson 2008, as cited in Wong, 2011). Textbook evaluation is necessary to avoid previously mentioned problems.

Textbook evaluation involves measuring the value or potential value of a set of learning materials by making judgments about the effect of the textbook on people using them (Tomlinson and Masuhara 2004, as cited in Wong, 2011).

Many researchers have suggested that it would be the best to adopt a *levelled* approach in evaluation where a first level overview - *impressionistic* evaluation should be first conducted followed by an *in-depth* evaluation (Wong, 2011). Additionally, Cunningsworth (1995, as cited in Wong, 2011) has helped to provide a good brief summary on how a levelled evaluation can be conducted. Firstly, impressionistic method takes place; researchers should quickly look around the textbook cover to cover to try and get an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the book. In that way, overview can provide a formation of a quick opinion of the design and structure of the textbook and how it is sequenced. Eventually, textbooks found unsuitable would be disregarded from the further research. Secondly, an in-depth evaluation takes place. Researchers choose one or two chapters and look at the balance of skills and activities contained in each unit. Most scholars agree that this is the best way to research the quality of textbook.

Another important question is when should textbook evaluation take place – before, during or after the textbook has been used in the classroom. *Pre-use* evaluation can facilitate the textbook selection process by gaining an impression as to the potential educational value of the textbook. *While-use* evaluation can help to examine the suitability of the textbook and seeing how it is actually used. Lastly, *post-use* evaluation can help to assess comprehensively the short and long-term implications of continued use of the textbook (Tomlinson 2008, as cited in Wong, 2011).

### **8.1. Cultural elements**

Textbooks are the main source of cultural content in the classroom. The responsibility lies on the teachers and how they will use the given tools, whether they will only give learners essential information, or whether they will cultivate their learners' attitude towards their own culture and the target culture. In order to be aware of these problems and possible solutions in the classroom, textbook analysis is essential. Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997), as cited in Ketabi and Rajabi (2012) suggest that textbook evaluation helps teachers move beyond

impressionistic assessments and it helps them to acquire useful, accurate, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material.

Considering cultural elements in the textbook, Hinkel (1999, as cited in Rajabi and Ketabi 2012: 707) implies that it is extremely important that textbooks include the vital components to teach the language, its culture, and are appropriate for learner' needs, cultural background, and level. The problem is that certain aspects of the target culture, such as oral and written history, literature, music, drama, dance, visual arts, celebrations, and the lifestyle of native speakers are not always represented in these resources. In that case, teachers should add extra information for a better understanding of the topic.

To summarize, the main reason for researching cultural elements in the textbook is to see which textbooks offer the most appropriate content for teachers and learners and to prevent previously mentioned problems.

## **8.2. Review of previous research studies**

Since the evaluation of textbooks is a relatively young phenomenon in language teaching, and it is subjective, there are not many researches of this kind. But, there is a research by Ketabi and Rajabi (2012) who have researched aspects of cultural elements in prominent English textbooks for EFL setting, investigating the need to integrate cultural elements into the second language teaching. Authors have examined cultural elements in four English language textbooks: *Interchange*, *Headway*, *Top Notch*, *On Your Mark* that were used in Iran to determine the most prominent cultural dimension portrayed. They have concluded that clearly, ESL and EFL educators support the inclusion of a cultural component in the teaching of English. Therefore, the issue now is not whether to include, but what aspects of culture to include, what role culture should play and, more importantly, how culture should be taught in the teaching of English as a second language.

Next, Bada and Genc (2005), in their research about culture in language learning and teaching, emphasize the importance of raising cultural awareness in the classroom. Their research investigated the effect of the culture class that students of the ELT department in the University in Turkey had attended. Conclusion was that there was a significant similarity between the students' views and the theoretical benefits of a culture class. Attending the culture class has raised cultural awareness in ELT students concerning both native and target culture.

Finally, Lujčić and Vrhovac (2012), in their research of cultural elements in French language textbooks, analyze the importance of the teacher as a key mediator in acquiring cultural knowledge.

## **9. Researching cultural elements in primary school textbooks for EFL setting**

### **9.1. Aims and research questions**

Firstly, this research sets out to determine themes, type, occurrence, suitability, diversity and frequency of the cultural content in the primary school textbooks for EFL setting in Croatia.

The eight years of primary education in Croatia are divided into two stages: classes one to four and five to eight. For this research only textbooks from grade five to grade eight were taken into consideration.

Secondly, it is the intent of this research to examine the most prominent cultural dimension portrayed in the textbooks – aesthetic, sociological, semantic or pragmatic.

Dimensions of culture are given and explained by Adaskou et al. (1990):

1. *the aesthetic sense* (Culture with a *capital C*: the media, the cinema, music (whether serious or popular) and, above all, literature – the study of which used often to be one of a main reasons for language teaching. Many of these forms of culture are at the same time sources of information on culture in our second sense);
2. *the sociological sense* (Culture with a *small c*: the organization and nature of family, of home life, of interpersonal relations, material conditions, work and leisure, customs and institutions. This, of course, is a vast area from which only salient points can be selected.);
3. *the semantic sense* (Many semantic areas (food, clothes, institutions) are culturally distinctive because they relate to a particular way of life – that is, to our sociological sense of culture. For instance, learners cannot use the names of meals without learning the main meal times. These cultural features may differ from one English-speaking country to another. On the other hand, some more general conceptual areas may be the same in different societies using the same language: time and space relations, emotional states, colors, lexical hyponymy.);

4. *the pragmatic sense* (The background knowledge, social skills, and paralinguistic skills that, in addition to mastery of the language code, make possible successful communication: the ability to use appropriate exponents of the various communicative functions; the ability to use appropriate intonation patterns; the ability to conform to norms of politeness, wherever they are different from the learners' culture, including taboo avoidance; awareness of conventions governing interpersonal relations – questions of status, obligation license, where different from the learners' culture; finally and above all, familiarity with the main rhetorical conventions in different written genres, e.g. different types of letters and messages, form-filling, advertisements.).

## 9.2. Sample

Three different sets of textbooks were analyzed. They are as follows:

### *Dip in set:*

Ban, S. (2013) *Dip in 5*. Školska knjiga, Zagreb.

Mardešić, M. (2010) *Dip in 6*. Školska knjiga, Zagreb.

Anić, V. and Pavlinek B. (2011) *Dip in 7*. Školska knjiga, Zagreb.

Breka, O. (2010) *Dip in 8*. Školska knjiga, Zagreb.

### *Project set:*

Hutchinson, T. (2008) *Project*. Algoritam, Zagreb. (5<sup>th</sup> grade)

Hutchinson, T. (2008) *Project*. Algoritam, Zagreb. (6<sup>th</sup> grade)

Hutchinson, T. (2009) *Project*. Algoritam, Zagreb. (7<sup>th</sup> grade)

Hutchinson, T. (2009) *Project*. Algoritam, Zagreb. (8<sup>th</sup> grade)

### *Way to go set:*

Anić, V. (2007) *Way to go 2*. Školska knjiga, Zagreb.

Breka, O. (2007) *Way to go 3*. Školska knjiga, Zagreb.

Breka, O. and Mardešić, M. (2007) *Way to go 4*. Školska knjiga, Zagreb

Džeba, B. And Mardešić, M. (2007) *Way to go 5*. Školska knjiga, Zagreb

The reason why these textbooks were chosen is that textbooks for lower classes (from the first to the fifth grade) mostly consist of pictures, illustrations, comics, and have very little or no texts. Cultural facts are mentioned from the first to the fourth grade, but there is much more cultural content from the fifth to the eighth grade. And finally, last but not least reason for choosing these particular sets of textbooks is that they are among most frequently used textbooks in primary schools in Croatia, which was additionally checked and confirmed in the book-stores.

### **9.3. Procedure**

The first step was deciding on the materials which were going to be analyzed. As already mentioned, the three sets of textbooks (*Dip in*, *Project* and *Way to go*) were chosen because they are most commonly used in primary schools in Croatia. Secondly, research was carried out by a page to page analysis in search of cultural content. While cataloguing, any textual discourse with cultural information was recorded in the tables. Thirdly, checklists were created (in an interrogative form). Finally, texts and tasks were analyzed in order to see which cultural dimension is mostly portrayed in the textbook.

### **9.4. Criteria for analysis**

Checklist questions were as follows:

1. Are cultural elements mentioned in the content? Are there any instructions on how to use them?
2. Which topics are covered?
3. Are British and American cultures prevailing? Which other cultures are mentioned?
4. Is Croatian culture mentioned? In which way (comparison with some other culture or as a separate topic)? Are learners given a chance to talk about their own culture?
5. What types of texts are given (chapter from a book, a comic, postcard, song, rhyme, etc.)?
6. What types of tasks are given? Are the tasks appropriate for the learners' level?

7. Which skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are mostly practiced while acquiring cultural content?
8. Is the cultural information used for practicing grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or spelling?

Findings are presented together with the examples from the textbooks, after which they are justified and discussed quantitatively.

## 9.5. Results

### 9.5.1. *Dip in set*

Since each textbook in *Dip in set* has different authors, it results in different structure of the content and tasks in the textbooks. Consequently, in *Dip in 5* culture is not mentioned within the content pages. In *Dip in 6* cultural content is represented by the title *Across the curriculum / Across cultures / Across the world* and appears five times in the content pages. Similarly, *Dip in 7* has *Culture spot* at the end of each lesson. While, *Dip in 8* has lessons dedicated to culture after every two units (*Across cultures*).

Topics are diverse and some of them are upgraded from fifth to the eighth grade. They are listed by the frequency of appearance: the UK (*England, landmarks of London, Scotland, Wales, Liverpool*); famous people (*W. A. Mozart, Pablo Picasso, Michael Phelps, John Lennon, Ernest Hemingway, Albert Einstein*); history (*Olympics, the Middle Ages, British queens*); geography (*solar system, Earth day, the environment*); music (*the Beatles, U2, Bob Marley, Queen, Madonna*); books (*Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Pride and Prejudice, Alice in Wonderland*); USA (*L.A., San Francisco*); films (*Superman, Pirates of the Caribbean, Titanic, Home Alone, Twilight*); other cultures (*Australia, New Zealand, Canada, general facts about the world*); holidays (*Christmas, New Year, Easter, Valentine's Day*).

Considering different types of texts given in the *Dip in set*, there are lyrics for *Silent Night*, excerpts from the books (*The Emperor's New Clothes*), and an article from the newspapers about the death of John Lennon.

Tasks by frequency appear as follows: answer questions; finish sentences; match (words with definitions); quiz; correct the wrong sentence; guess the meaning (of the word from the text);



fact file; true or false; (tick) the correct answer; (put sentences) in the right order; fill in the blanks; unscramble words; make questions.

Considering the practice of different skills within the tasks, mostly practiced is reading, followed by speaking and listening, and, in the end – writing. For speaking practice, learners usually have to choose a part of a text, or a favorite character, and talk about it with their colleague. Writing is introduced in the eighth grade when it is expected from learners to write a short review, or to finish a story by giving it a different ending.

When we look at grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling, texts with the cultural content are often used for the practice of these skills. Grammar is mostly practiced on the texts with the cultural content (*superlatives, comparatives, Past Simple, prepositions of time, regular and irregular verbs*). For instance, there is a text about the UK followed by the task – *Fill in the gaps with the correct form of the verb*, and sentences used in the task are connected to the previous text about the UK. In that way, learners are practicing grammar, and at the same time they are acquiring cultural knowledge. Vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling are not used in the same way as grammar on texts connected to culture. Sometimes, there is a grammar spot at the end of a page with rules for pronunciation or spelling (*rules for –ing, -ed suffixes, diphthongs, syllables, stress*), but there are no tasks for the practice.

*Table 1* shows that sociological and aesthetic senses most frequently appear in *Dip in set*.

In order to find the most frequent cultural dimension in the given sets of textbooks, it was necessary to go through all the texts and tasks with the cultural content and decide which dimension of culture they represent (*aesthetic, sociological, semantic or pragmatic*). Results were written down and counted for all four textbooks within one set, after which they were translated into percentage for a better visibility.

Going back to the *Table 1*, it is no wonder that sociological and aesthetic sense prevail in the *Dip in set*, because within the topics that most frequently appear in the set are *the UK, famous people, music, films, books*. To clarify, sociological sense revolves around institutions (the UK – localities, institutions) and personal relationships (famous people – through these texts and tasks, learners were asked to talk about themselves, their favorite actors, musicians, etc.). Then,

aesthetic sense refers to literature (in *Dip in set*, learners have to discuss favorite books and authors), media and cinema (learners share their opinion on recent films).

*Table 1: Dimensions of culture in Dip in set*

| The Sociological Sense | The Aesthetic Sense | The Pragmatic Sense | The Semantic Sense |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 21                     | 20                  | 3                   | 4                  |
| 43,7 %                 | 41,7 %              | 6,3 %               | 8,3 %              |

### **9.5.2. Project set**

Considering the content of the textbook, *Project set* consists of four columns (*Grammar; Vocabulary and pronunciation; Communication and skills; Culture, Across the curriculum; Project*).

Listed by the frequency of appearance, there are ten representative topics – the UK (*history of England, Cambridge, London*); customs (*holidays, birthdays, family*); geography (*British Isles, Eastern vs. Western Europe*); TV, movies, music (*reality TV, stunt doubles, British cinema, pop music*); famous people (*Angelina Jolie, Rosa Parks, William Shakespeare*); history (*Greek theatre, Stone Age*); food (*traditional meals in the UK*); the USA (*education*); other cultures (*Australia*); sports (*sport events in Britain*).

Authentic materials suggested for usage during a particular lesson are only song lyrics (*Friday I'm in Love, Act Naturally*), rhymes (*London Bridge is Falling Down*) and postcards (with pictures of Portugal and Scotland).

In *Project set*, tasks, by frequency of appearance, are as follows: answer the questions (from the text); chart (fill in, make your own); match (words with explanations, words with pictures); true/false statements; put in order (words in a sentence); find information in the text; correct the sentences and recognize from the picture.

As for the skills practiced in a particular task, reading and listening are mostly suggested for practice, after which comes writing, and at the end, speaking. For reading task there is a text about teenagers' reading habits in Britain, followed by the task in which learners have to write about their own reading habits and reading habits in their country (*Project 7*). For listening

practice, there is for example a text about *the Iceman*, after which learners have to listen about the Stone Age and answer some questions after listening (*Project 7*). Also, for the listening task, learners have to listen about people who share their experience of their trip to London, after which learners have to match the activity people have mentioned with their names (*Project 6*). Then, after talking about birthdays in Britain, learners have to write about birthday customs in their country (*Project 5*). As for the speaking, there is a task where learners have to talk in pairs about their country and their home after learning about the life in the UK and Australia (*Project 6*).

Similarly, there are tasks connected to culture, but used for practicing grammar, pronunciation, spelling or vocabulary. Grammar is most frequently practiced in these cases (*tenses, superlatives, adjectives, articles, passive, modals*), after that vocabulary (pre-teaching – find expression in the text), and, rarely, pronunciation and spelling. To exemplify, after text *The movies*, the Present Perfect is introduced, followed by the task – *Complete the sentences from the text by using Present Perfect Tense (Project 7)*. Considering vocabulary, there is a text *The sale of the century* that is followed by the task – *Match words from the text with their definitions (Project 8)*. Next, pronunciation is practiced on lyrics for *The Cure* song *Friday I'm in Love* where learners have to find words with given sounds (*Project 5*).

*Table 2* shows that sociological and aesthetic sense most frequently appear in *Project set*, while pragmatic and semantic sense have equal representation among cultural topics.

To point out, sociological sense in *Project set* usually revolves around family live in Britain and the UK, learners own experiences and insights, while aesthetic sense appears in topics about movies, famous people and books. Considering semantic sense, there are tasks where learners are asked to talk about the way of life in their country and some specific customs considering food, clothes or institutions. As for the pragmatic sense, learners are asked to use their background knowledge and social skills.

*Table 2: Dimensions of culture in Project set*

| The Sociological Sense | The Aesthetic Sense | The Pragmatic Sense | The Semantic Sense |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 20                     | 16                  | 8                   | 8                  |
| 30.3%                  | 24.2%               | 12.1%               | 12.1%              |

### 9.5.3. *Way to go set*

Content pages of *Way to go set* are divided into four columns (*Grammar, Vocabulary, Skills, Develop your skills*), from which is evident that there is no special column dedicated to culture. However, at the end of each unit there is a *Culture spot* (there are three to four *Culture spots*, in *Way to go 5* there are no culture spots, *Way to go 6* and *8* have three, and *Way to go 7* has four *Culture spots*).

Topics, by frequency of appearance, are as follows: the UK (*life in Great Britain, London, landmarks*); famous people (*George Washington, Marie Curie, Charles Dickens, Leonardo da Vinci*); TV, movies, music (*cartoons, comics, magazines*); other cultures (*Australia, Canada, naming countries, capitals, oceans*); the USA (*New York, Washington DC*); geography (*maps – the UK, the USA*); history (*history of the USA*); customs (*holidays, fashion*); food (*English breakfast*); sports (*football*).

There are various examples of authentic materials within some lessons, for instance, song lyrics (*All about me*), rhymes (*World in Action – rhyme about people from all over the world*), covers of magazines, pages from a TV guide, a comic about development of English language and a questionnaire about life in New York.

Tasks are arranged by frequency of appearance as follows: answer the questions, match (names, expressions), true/false statements, discuss, fact file (filling in the table with facts from the text), put in order, connect, unscramble.

Reading and listening are most frequently practiced skills, followed by speaking (with tasks like retell, discuss), and in the end, writing (report, write an interview). To clarify, text *Let's go to the movies* is followed by the task – *Fill in the table with information from the text (Way to go 8)*. Then, there is a text *The Wonderland of Lewis Carroll*, where learners have to retell the story while using some suggested verbs (*Way to go 8*). Next, after the text *Taking a break*, learners are expected to speak about the best ways to spend their free time (*Way to go 6*).

Considering grammar, pronunciation, spelling and vocabulary, grammar is most frequently practiced (tenses, articles) in the tasks connected to culture. For instance, the text *Taking a break* is used as an introduction for practicing articles, where after the text *Our world* learners are given a *Grammar spot* with rules for superlatives (*Way to go 7*). Considering pronunciation, the text *Atlantis – the lost continent* is followed by the task – *Read, pronounce and translate given sentences and definitions (Way to go 8)*.

Table 3 shows that sociological and aesthetic senses are representative for the texts and tasks in *Way to go set*.

Sociological sense is presented with topics and tasks such as: connect pictures and names of famous people, talk about their jobs and reflect on your interests and hobbies.

One of the texts with the aesthetic sense is *Tell me a story* where learners have to talk about their favourite authors and book titles and retell the story about one of the famous book protagonists (*Oliver Twist, Tom Sawyer, Robinson Crusoe*) – *Way to go 6*.

Table 3: Dimensions of culture in *Way to go set*

| The Sociological Sense | The Aesthetic Sense | The Pragmatic Sense | The Semantic Sense |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 23                     | 12                  | 11                  | 5                  |
| 54.8%                  | 28.6%               | 26.2%               | 11.9%              |

## 9.6. Discussion

Content pages of all three sets of textbooks are divided into columns for a better visibility and understanding. In some cases, there is *Culture spot* at the end of each unit (*Dip in 7 and 8, Way to go set*), while in *Project set* there is a special column dedicated to the cultural content. On the other hand, there are cases where cultural information is a part of a lesson, but it is not mentioned within the content pages (this appears in all three sets). This should be changed and all cultural content should be introduced in the content pages to make it clearer for teachers and learners what each unit and lesson consists of.

In all three sets of textbooks topics are mostly the same. Main reason for that is the curriculum which presents topics that have to be learned at a particular level of education. As expected, British culture is prevailing, only to be followed by American. This is not surprising since the UK and the USA are the largest and the most influential English speaking countries. Other cultures (Australia, Canada, texts with general facts about the world – world in superlatives and shorter texts about different nations and countries) are mentioned in just a few lessons or tasks. On the other hand, Croatian culture is portrayed differently. For instance, in *Dip in set* and

*Project set* there are tasks in which learners are asked to talk about their own culture or compare the target culture with their own. While in *Way to go set*, Croatian culture is rarely mentioned. Comparing their own culture with other cultures is an important and valuable task for learners because in that way they are spreading their horizons and working on their cultural awareness. In addition to this, authentic materials are essential for culture learning and teaching since they provide in-depth information about the particular topic and make the topic more appealing, so it is important to use them as much as possible. That is why it is particularly disappointing to see that in all three sets of textbooks authentic materials are rarely mentioned or suggested for usage. At the same time, it gives teachers a great opportunity to introduce authentic materials by their own choice whenever they believe they could be useful. It could also be interesting to tell learners to bring some authentic materials they have at home and present it to their colleagues. Only one example of authentic material (for instance a map of London) could help to raise discussion and open many different possibilities for practicing speaking or writing skills.

Another important issue are the tasks. From the textbook analysis on three sets of textbooks, it could be concluded that learners and teachers are given a variety of tasks, which are appropriate for the learners' age and knowledge level. On the other hand, tasks could be more creative. Learners are mostly asked to read the text and extract the information and remember it, there are not enough discussions, role plays, writing interviews, working on maps or creating their own maps or tables with the cultural content – which could be more useful and interesting for primary school learners. In contrast, *Dip in set* is the only one that introduces the possibility of choosing the most appealing task (for instance, writing is the main task, but learner can choose from finishing the end of the story, writing about a favorite character, or writing a modern version of the given text). These types of tasks are useful because in that way learners are given an opportunity to express themselves in a way that is more suitable for them.

Most frequently practiced skills are reading and listening. In all sets lesson usually starts with listening, followed by reading of a particular text and the tasks for comprehension in the end. There is not enough speaking or writing tasks in *Project set*. While, in *Way to go set*, there are some texts with tasks for discussion. On the contrary, *Dip in set* has a lot of tasks which encourage speaking. Learners are mostly instructed to read the text first, after which they can choose a favorite character or a paragraph and in the end, talk about it with their colleague. Putting reading and listening first and not paying enough attention to speaking and writing skills are issues that should be solved. There should be equal number of tasks regarding all four skills.

In that way it would be obvious for learners and teachers that all skills are equally important and should be practiced after the introduction of every topic. In those cases where there are very little or no tasks given for practice, teachers should interfere and find some additional tasks for their students.

Practicing grammar, pronunciation, spelling or vocabulary on a text about culture is what learning a language is all about. Using the same text for practicing as many language aspects as possible gives learners' opportunity to learn some cultural facts, but at the same time, grammatical topics can become more appealing. *Dip in set* and *Project set* have many tasks used for this kind of learning, but *Way to go set* has a different way of dealing with this issue. In *Way to go set* grammar spot is given at the end of the lesson and there are no specific tasks on which could different aspects of language be practiced. With this in mind, it would probably be better for a teacher to choose *Dip in* or *Project* since it is much easier and better for learners to use the same text as much as possible. In that way, learners will acquire the subject matter more easily. In case of *Way to go set* and grammar spots, it is not entirely a bad solution. It is good for learners to have grammar rules divided from the rest of the texts and tasks. On the other hand, there should still be tasks for practice in order to connect grammar with other language aspects (vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling).

Conclusively, cultural dimensions portrayed in the textbooks – sociological, aesthetic, pragmatic, semantic, are displayed in *Table 1*, *Table 2* and *Table 3* from which is evident that sociological and aesthetic senses are prevailing in all three sets (with 30% in *Project set*, 40% in *Dip in set* and 55% in *Way to go set*). Main reason is that sociological sense mostly deals with topics connected to customs and institutions, while aesthetic with topics like literature, film and music. All of these topics are mostly learned at the beginner's level, while pragmatic and semantic senses are more developed on higher levels of education.

### **9.7. Compliance with the Croatian National Curriculum**

Croatian National Curriculum defines and clarifies the importance of culture teaching as a part of learning a foreign language.

Based on the Curriculum, learners will be able to:

1. deduce, through listening, reading, speaking and writing, facts about the country or countries of the foreign language in question, and compare them with their own life and surroundings,
2. acquire habits of courteous communication in a foreign language,
3. appreciate the importance of observing their own and other cultures, based on concrete examples,
4. recognise universal human values such as friendship, collaboration, altruism, and tolerance.

Based on the research, we can now point out which sets of textbooks adhere to the curriculum. Considering listening, reading, speaking, and writing it has already been mentioned that these skills are not equally practiced (based on the tasks given) and it is so in all three sets of textbooks. Additionally, comparison between the target culture and learners' own culture is also not mentioned in the tasks as frequently as it should have been. For this purpose, *Dip in set* and *Project set* would be better since in the *Way to go set* Croatian culture is rarely mentioned.

Considering courteous communication and concrete examples for observing their own and other cultures, learners would be well equipped with any of the given textbooks.

Altruism and tolerance are not directly dealt with in any of the textbooks. But, there are topics that could initiate discussion about tolerance (customs comparison or topics about different nationalities and countries).

Considering intercultural activity, learners will:

1. become aware of the existence of similarities and differences between their own culture and that/those of the foreign languages in question, based on concrete examples, in terms of their everyday lives and the meaning and use of linguistic expressions,
2. develop fundamental curiosity and interest in the culture/cultures of the foreign language in question,
3. become aware of the need for tolerance and empathy with persons from other cultures.

For developing learners' intercultural awareness, teachers have much more important role than any textbook could provide. Tolerance and empathy are mentioned in the *Curriculum* as a very



important issues, also, when describing the term culture it is usually mentioned that for learning about a new culture, learners should be tolerant and emphatic towards customs, values and beliefs of other people. The problem is that tolerance and empathy cannot be learned from reading texts and solving tasks, and that is why teachers have to find ways how to incorporate working on these issues while preparing for their lessons. For instance, if there is a text about similarities and differences between Croatia and the UK, teachers can raise a discussion about different nationalities living in the UK and compare it with Croatia while raising awareness of the importance of being tolerant toward every person.

Intercultural communication is also explained within the Curriculum. Learners are expected to:

1. recognize familiar situational and contextual information about their own cultures and foreign cultures,
2. try to apply appropriate behavior in familiar situations,
3. try to react curiously and empathetically to foreign and unintelligible information, behavior and situations.

If learners are well equipped with cultural knowledge and if teachers did their job in helping them to become aware of cultural issues (different customs, values, and beliefs), they should be ready for communication in a foreign country.

## **10. Conclusion**

The connection between culture and language is undeniable and should be respected by the foreign language teachers and learners. Teachers should be interculturally competent and able to find the best ways to raise cultural awareness in their classrooms. Textbooks are one way for achieving this goal and that is why they should be well equipped with cultural information.

Textbook analysis should be used more often for all the aspects of language learning because it could improve teaching and learning of the target language.

To conclude, in all three sets of textbooks, cultural topics are suitable for learners, tasks are familiar and cultural information is used for the better understanding of the target culture, also, in occasions it is used for practicing other aspects of language and different skills (grammar, vocabulary, reading, speaking).

On the other hand, only the most popular cultural elements are included, also British culture is prevailing while Croatian and other cultures are poorly represented, mostly only in comparison with British culture.

Teachers should improve this situation by raising discussions in which learners would compare their culture with the target culture and share their experiences, also, teachers should create more culturally oriented lessons (use more authentic materials).

Textbook authors should emphasise where cultural elements could be found in the textbook, also present more creative tasks and offer a variety of topics and cultures.

Based on the presented research, it can be concluded that if we want to teach or learn a new language, it is essential to explore the culture of that language, it is necessary to build our cultural awareness and become culturally competent speakers of the target language.

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## **Sažetak**

Ovaj diplomski rad bavi se problematikom uključivanja elemenata kulture u poučavanje stranoga jezika, posebice engleskoga. Rad započinje definiranjem pojma kulture nakon čega slijedi povijesni pregled. Nerazdvojna veza jezika i kulture također je objašnjena, iz čega je zaključeno da je jezik kultura, a kultura jezik. Važnost kulturne osviještenosti također je objašnjen uz zaključak da je bitno razvijati svijest učenika te podizati razinu tolerancije i empatije. Predstavljene su ideje za razvijanje vještina uspješne komunikacije na stranome jeziku i u stranoj kulturi, kao i načini uključivanja elemenata kulture u učionicu. Naposljetku, prikazani su rezultati istraživanja elemenata kulture u udžbenicima za osnovnu školu. Istražena su tri seta udžbenika (*Dip in, Project, Way to go*) za 5., 6., 7. i 8. razred osnovne škole. Teme

vezane za kulturu izdvojene su i analizirane, a naposljetku su ponuđene i ideje za poboljšanje udžbenika.

Ključne riječi: kultura, učenje engleskoga kao stranoga jezika, evaluacija udžbenika