The Importance of Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom

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Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Jadranka Zlomislić
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Abstract

Teaching culture should be an essential part of teaching English as a foreign language because one of the main aims of teaching a foreign language is intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between language and culture and to determine to what extent culture is incorporated into the *Croatian National Curriculum* at the secondary school level and the EFL classroom. In order to ascertain the degree to which textbooks comply with the *Croatian National Curriculum* and the topics prescribed by the grammar and the four-year vocational schools curricula, the textbook analysis focuses on the cultural content in three textbooks used in Croatian secondary schools. The questionnaire study investigates the views of teachers of English on ICC in language teaching and verifies whether their teaching is in compliance with the *Croatian National Curriculum*. The results show that the examined textbooks generally adhere to the prescribed demands. Also, the analyzed answers from the questionnaire study show that the interviewed teachers are aware of the significance of ICC in foreign language teaching and that they incorporate culture into their teaching. However, the outcomes of the *Croatian National Curriculum*, which deal with culture, are still not incorporated into the operational plans of the secondary schools. Considering the overall results of the conducted study, it can be concluded that EFL teachers recognise the significance of culture in foreign language teaching but there is still no complete coherence of the outcomes given in the *Croatian National Curriculum* and what teachers actually promote in their school practice.

Keywords: culture, intercultural communicative competence, textbook analysis, questionnaire study

Contents

Introduction

The main goal of this paper is to explore the presence of culture in the foreign language classroom with a particular focus on teaching English at the secondary school level. Teaching culture should be an essential part of teaching English as a foreign language because one of its main aims is intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which refers to knowledge of social groups and their practices and customs (see section 2 for further elaboration). Therefore, in order to achieve well-rounded development and progress in all areas of language learning, it is necessary to incorporate culture as an essential component of language learning. Moreover, since language and culture are inseparable it is important to mention that the inclusion of culture in EFL teaching does not exclude grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation and the four language skills.

The first chapter of the paper introduces the concept of culture and its role in the foreign language classroom. It also reveals a brief history of teaching culture and focuses on starting points and topics that should be included in teaching culture. The second chapter deals with ICC which is listed as one of the aims of learning a foreign language. The role of English as a lingua franca is also examined and is put into the context of ICC. The third chapter investigates the means of integrating culture into the EFL classroom and names textbooks, prose, poetry and electronic media as sources of cultural content. The fourth chapter covers the *Croatian National Curriculum* and presents the topics prescribed by the curricula of the grammar and the four-year vocational schools. The fifth chapter provides an overview of previous relevant studies concerning textbook analysis and presents a questionnaire study which serves as a starting point for the study conducted as a part of this paper. The sixth chapter examines a sample of three textbooks recommended by the state in order to determine to what extent they meet the set requirements. The examined textbooks are *Opportunities Upper-Intermediate*, *New Headway Upper-Intermediate*, and *Log-on @ 2 In Frame*. The textbook analysis is intended to reveal the extent to which culture is incorporated into the EFL classroom. Furthermore, the seventh chapter which contains a questionnaire study aims to demonstrate the views of Croatian teachers of English regarding ICC and to what extent culture is incorporated into the teaching process. The final chapter presents personal experience acquired during the student teacher practice which serves as an example of teaching culture in the EFL classroom.

1. Teaching culture

Language and culture are interconnected so that they complement each other. Sun describes language as a primary vehicle by which a culture emanates its beliefs, values and norms (371). Similarly, language is influenced by culture – "If there is no culture, language will be like water without a source or a tree without roots" (Sun 371). Thus, the connection between language and culture must be considered in foreign language teaching because the main purpose of learning a foreign language is to learn the customs and traditions of the speech community, and to become competent for communication with speakers of the foreign language (Sun 371).

1.1. What do we mean by 'culture' in the EFL classroom and why do we need it?

Successful communication requires proficiency on multiple levels – grammar, phonology, lexis and culture. The latter is a fundamental factor if we communicate on an international level. Culture is a complex term that can be defined from various perspectives. It can be accessed through five different views – the communicative view, the classical curriculum view, the instrumental or culture-free-language view, the deconstructionist view, and the competence view. In the communicative era, a combination of these five views is frequent. The first three views pay little attention to cultural context concerning its contribution to successful language learning. The last two views treat language and culture as a unity, with one being essential to the full understanding of the other (Holme 18). In other words, they cling to the idea of language being affected and shaped by culture.

The *deconstructionist view* offers a critical view of a language. It attempts to dissociate a language student from implicit meanings in language. Language is a social semiotic and is under the influence of its context. The best example of language analysis is explaining the metaphors and their hidden meaning. It is a fact that certain fixed expressions used in the English language lose their meaning when they are translated into other languages. Likewise, other languages have their distinctive phrases, idioms or expressions that would sound strange if translated into English for an English speaker. The *competence view* "contends that the knowledge of a language's culture is thought essential for a full understanding of a language's nuances of meaning" (Holme 20). The last view unifies culture and language as scaffolding for successful communication and that is the notion that should be aspired to in English teaching.

Due to inseparability of culture and language, Cunningsworth adds, a study of language solely as an abstract system would not equip learners to use it in the real world (qtd. in Skopinskaja 39). Therefore, teaching materials (TM) should include elements of culture. Also, teachers need to motivate students and make the learning of a new culture interesting. Culture *per se* can be described from various points of view. It is a matter of interest in anthropology, psychology, sociology, linguistics, and numerous other sciences. Also, many people equate culture with food, drinks, behaviour, music and art, among others. Culture is an essential part of every person's identity but language is the most expressive part of that culture. Furthermore, a person's way of thinking, emotions and communication can be affected by a change from one culture to another (Çakir 155). Tang promotes the view that culture and language are interconnected. She suggests that "to speak a language well, one has to be able to think in that language" and she adds that "language is the soul of the country and people who speak it" (Tang). That clearly suggests that language and culture are inseparably linked and that they have to be paired with one another in the EFL syllabi.

Culture can also be seen as a context in which we exist and affect each other. It is like a blueprint which organizes our lives on both national and family levels. It is incorporated in all spheres of human life and it leaves traces everywhere. Culture can be summarized within a 3P model – perspectives (what members of a culture think, feel and value), practices (how members communicate and interact with one another) and products (technology, music, art, food, literature, etc.; the things members of a group create, share, and transmit to the next generation) (Frank 3). These aspects transcend human life completely. It is often said that all people are 'equal' but maybe 'of equal worth' would be a better choice of words. Every human life is equally precious but people are generally different. They are moulded by their culture. For example, there is an undeniable difference between the Western world and indigenous tribes. Perspectives, practices and products of the West strive for progress, financial well-being, technology, etc. Also, products as tangible things are often considered more important than perspectives and practices. On the other hand, less developed communities, such as tribes, cherish spiritual over material aspects of life. They focus on unity, faith and humanity rather than on products. This is just an example of a 'gap' or 'culture shock' that is present not only within the mentioned instance but it can be seen in every culture. Not everyone values the same things. Language is a bond that can bridge every gap but not without cultural awareness.

Another important classification of cultural content is highbrow and lowbrow information. Highbrow culture (also known as the capital 'C' culture) involves factual information related to literature, arts and similar aspects, while lowbrow culture (the small 'C' culture) may focus on customs of everyday life, habits and folklore (Kramsch, *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* 24). Focusing on the first perspective leaves learners short of a deeper understanding because their learning consists of memorizing facts or rote learning. The other perspective has a cross-cultural aspect because it connects the learner's culture and the target culture. However, this approach has some limitations. Students' knowledge is still passive and "it is left up to them to integrate that knowledge with the diversity they encounter when they go to the target country" (Kramsch, *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* 24). A distinctive culture cannot be described only by listing important writers, artists, cities, etc. A deeper view into a way of living and a way of thinking is the key to cross-cultural awareness. In other words, both highbrow and lowbrow information form a picture of an unknown culture and bring it closer to the learners' minds.

In order to provide a proper balance of the two previously mentioned perspectives, teachers should have a developed understanding of cross-cultural awareness so they will be able to incorporate culture or culture oriented topics into their teaching. This will offer their students a great opportunity to become familiar with a certain culture and bring versatility into the EFL classroom. Unfortunately, teachers who have spent a little or no time outside their own countries might experience problems with depicting the features and complexity of the target culture (Frank 4). However, through the use of Internet sources and other valuable sources found in digital and print media they can collect numerous data which will familiarize their learners with interesting cultural facts. All of the above mentioned suggestions can be summarized in Byram's three goals of foreign language instruction:

- The development of communicative competence for use in situations the learners might expect to encounter;
- The development of an awareness of the target language;
- The development of insight into the foreign culture and positive attitudes toward foreign people. (qtd. in Skopinskaja 39)

As it can be seen in the above mentioned goals of foreign language instruction, one of the main aims of foreign language teaching is to develop awareness of cultural otherness and effective

communication. To do so, students must acquire knowledge about the target language and then reflect their own culture in relation to other cultures (Skopinskaja 40). Students must acknowledge that not everyone in this world lives in the same way and values the same ideas.

Since the English language is widely used as a lingua franca, there is a growing need for competence in English in the everyday life of non-native speakers of English. They need to be fully prepared so they can overcome misunderstandings that could happen while communicating with speakers of English. Therefore, learners should be made familiar with the cultural differences that affect their communication. Even though a language is best learned in an authentic context, students must be prepared before travelling abroad and that is what foreign language instruction is about. Turkish professor Ismail Çakir explains why culture is obligatory in foreign language classes:

> (. . .) as the use of language in general is related to social and cultural values, language is considered to be a social and cultural phenomenon. Since every culture has its own cultural norms for conversation and these norms differ from one culture to another, some of the norms can be completely different and conflict with other cultures' norms. Consequently, communication problems may arise among speakers who do not know or share the norms of other cultures. (154)

Since language is a culturally conditioned phenomenon, it is necessary to raise awareness of cultural otherness. Each culture has distinctive rules and social courtesies that are irrelevant in other cultures. In order to minimise possible misunderstandings, teaching culture along with language can provide students with greater cultural sensitivity and can help them to adjust to other cultures when necessary.

Similarly, Camilleri sees communication as an exchange of shared knowledge and she claims that "it is facilitated by the extent to which we have similar meanings for the terms we use and the behavioural norms we share. This, in turn depends on both knowledge of language and knowledge of culture, or better still cultural awareness" (9). The more shared knowledge interlocutors have, the easier communication becomes. As learners become aware of the diversity of cultures, their perceptions become more refined and complex, enabling them to detect numerous variations in new surroundings (Camilleri 20). In addition to Camilleri's statements, it is convenient to say that communication is a mutual occurrence of interlocutors

that may come from different cultural contexts but their shared knowledge of language and culture makes their communication successful. It is clear that without cultural awareness intercultural communication would most probably fail.

The awareness of cultural otherness is the beginning of learning a foreign language. It paves the way to ICC which is the goal of foreign language instruction and requires culture and language to be perceived as a unity. Furthermore, students must be acquainted with perspectives, practices and products of a target language culture in order for them to communicate successfully. Also, highbrow and lowbrow information must be equally assimilated into the teaching so the students could get a proper insight into the target culture. However, teaching culture has not always been as important as it is today. Its importance increases along with the changes in the world, such as globalisation and multiculturalism.

1.2. The history of teaching culture

In the past, language learning has been restricted to teacher-centred teaching; traditional ways of visualization and textbooks were mainly language oriented (Wendt 92). Furthermore, "people learned a second or foreign language in order to read and study its literature" (Lessard-Clouston). Therefore, this was the main source of culture. Students were getting acquainted with the target culture through novels they were reading and at that point there is no synthesis of language and culture.

Cultural awareness has its beginnings in the 1960s and 1970s. Brooks emphasized the importance of culture, not in relation to the study of literature, but in the means of language learning. His seminal work *Language and Language Learning* (1960) offers sixty four topics regarding culture among which are greetings, town and country life, cafes, bars, restaurants, expletives, verbal taboos, patterns of politeness, etc. (Thanasoulas). These topics are nothing less current today and similar topics can be seen in most of the EFL textbooks, as it is also evident in the textbook analysis in this paper (see section 6). Conclusively, Brooks certainly paved the way for modern teaching of culture and the topics covered nowadays.

Byram, Morgan et al. state that it is only in the 1980s that scholars begin to study the dynamics of culture and its impact on 'successful' language learning (qtd. in Thanasoulas). For example, Littlewood advocates the value of culture but he still emphasizes linguistic proficiency as the

aim of communicative proficiency. A view that has much more common ground to the view that is fostered today makes its appearance towards the end of the 1980s. Melde mentions 'critical awareness' of social life and he sees it as an essential part of foreign language teaching. This can be linked to cultural awareness that is included in modern EFL teaching (Thanasoulas).

In the past few decades, globalization has taken hold and the need for communication in foreign languages has increased. However, the connection between language and culture has not always been important as it is today. During the 20th century culture had slowly been displaced from its unity with literature to an equal position in relation to language. In order to achieve complete foreign language acquisition, it is important to deduce which aspects of culture should be taught and in which manner to incorporate a unity of culture into EFL teaching.

1.3. What should be considered while teaching culture?

Each topic that is supposed to be covered in the classroom needs a proper introduction. Introductory tasks should raise students' interest and give them a clue about the topic. Teachers can introduce students to culture oriented topics by posing several questions. Frank proposes questions such as:

- What behaviours reflect our culture, and how are they learned and shared?
- What important factors (social, religious, and economic) influence our culture?
- What are some important traditions that are unique to our country?
- What ideals and values bind our culture together?
- How does culture in our country function as a way for people to live with one another?
- What symbols are prevalent in our culture? (3)

Self-awareness is a good start and it encourages students to think about their own culture and to compare it to the target culture. Questions that are linked to the 3P model can be a valid introduction. Practices, products and perspectives, along with typical behaviour can raise interest for a topic and increase brainstorming. Furthermore, they can elicit a discussion concerning beliefs, values and attitudes. Finally, after realizing the instances of their own culture, students are ready to comprehend the target language culture.

By thinking about their own culture, students develop cultural sensitivity that provides a foundation for future research of other countries. If learners do not appreciate what they have in their own country, they will not appreciate another's values. Accordingly, teachers must create a "culture friendly" atmosphere in a classroom before they start teaching other cultures. They can ask learners to bring objects that are relevant for their own culture and it can be a start of a fruitful culturally-related discussion. Frank adds that "classroom discussions based on these considerations can foster an atmosphere that encourages EFL students to think about their own culture and make connections across cultures while studying English" (3). For example, holidays are always an interesting topic for young learners. They can be asked to describe their favourite holiday and how they celebrate it. They can also be introduced to holidays and feasts of the target culture, such as American and British, and draw a parallel to their culture.

Another way of creating a "culture friendly" atmosphere is introducing students to topics such as customs, art and literature, symbols, clothing, nonverbal communication and religion. Çakir claims that "in teaching a foreign language we need to be sensitive to the fragility of students by using techniques that promote cultural understanding" (157). Students can often feel alienated while learning a foreign culture and language but there are certain techniques that help overcoming such issues. Çakir proposes using role-plays, readings, films, simulation, games, culture assimilators, etc. (157). These exercises represent great opportunities for practicing communication and they help students to get rid of anxiety in dealing with the unknown language and culture. Students often find such activities fun and they do not feel the pressure of explicit learning. Instead, they view these activities as a sort of play. However, cultural activities largely contribute to their knowledge. Moreover, a good introduction to a foreign culture on an elementary level can be a discussion about living conditions, family life or leisure-time in a target culture. Intermediate and advanced levels allow studying the impact of geography, history or economy on a certain target culture. This leads to more interesting topics, such as art, movies, historical periods, city and country life, etc.

It is clear that the classroom activities and covered topics have specific aims and that they carry out certain outcomes. The proposed topics must result in expected outcomes. According to Rivers, learners will be able to:

- explain that people act the way they do because they are using options the society allows for satisfying basic physical and psychological needs;

- describe how social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence affect the way people speak and behave;

- demonstrate how people conventionally act in the most common mundane and crisis situations in the target culture;

- explain that culturally conditioned images are associated with even the most common target words and phrases;

- evaluate the relative strength of a generality concerning the target culture in terms of the amount of evidence substantiating the statement;

- locate and organize material about the target culture from the library, mass media, and personal observation;

- demonstrate intellectual curiosity about the target culture and empathy toward its people. (qtd. in Çakir 158)

These outcomes represent skills that are necessary not only for communicating with foreigners, but for raising the learners' cultural awareness in daily communication with people belonging to their own culture. No country is homogenous when we speak about culture. Behaviour and beliefs differ from region to region. Culture and tradition can alter the way of thinking and living and there can be more different influences in a relatively small geographic region.

On the whole, teaching culture offers a great diversity of topics and teaching techniques. Students can profit on many levels while learning about culture. Creating a "culture friendly" atmosphere and raising self-awareness is extremely important so the students do not feel overwhelmed by a new and different culture. Selecting topics that are relevant for teaching a target language culture is of great importance. Some of the possible topics are behaviour, beliefs, values, leisure, family, and lowbrow and highbrow culture in general. The expected outcomes of teaching culture include the above mentioned outcomes but one of the greatest advantages of teaching culture is that learners develop the ability to understand cultures, including your own.

2. Intercultural communicative competence

One of the goals of English teaching, as it is stated by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, is to enable students to apply linguistic skills in various speech situations in foreign countries. In other words, ICC is recognized as imperative in the foreign language classroom.

It has been mentioned that intercultural communication requires not only linguistic, but also cultural knowledge. Communicative competence is far more than grammatical competence and it is highly complex (Sun 372). It is an ability to achieve certain communicative aims and it is not restricted strictly to linguistic means. It is more than that since it results from both linguistic and cultural awareness. Arabski and Wojtaszek add that "language learning is in fact a social-psychological process, in which the role of a wider sociocultural context should not be marginalised" (2). As it has already been mentioned, this means that teaching culture does not exclude linguistic accuracy and proficiency, but that unity of these instances should be aimed at in teaching and learning.

Moreover, the English language is widely spoken as a lingua franca all around the world. That is the main reason why English language learners must be equipped with intercultural competence, if there is to be complete understanding among the non-native users of English who come from diverse cultural backgrounds.

2.1. What is intercultural communicative competence?

Foreign language learners need to increase awareness of the diversity of their own culture and the diversity of the target culture. It helps them to be more linguistically accurate and to choose the appropriate words and phrases for the situation in question. Even though there are numerous authentic cultural texts in foreign language classes, the teacher also has to function as a mediator in such classes, which means that he/she must help students and point out what is of particular importance.

Byram, who developed the concept of ICC, explains that it consists of a number of *savoirs*. *Savoir* is defined as knowledge of social groups and their customs and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country (qtd. in Piasecka 26). There are four kinds of *savoirs*:

- *Savoir-comprendre* which is "the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own";
- *Savoir-apprendre/faire* is the "skill 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";
- *Savoir s'engager* is described as "critical cultural awareness/political education: 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";
- *Savoir-être* refers to "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (qtd. in Piasecka 26).

According to Byram, ICC requires certain attitudes, knowledge, and skills to be promoted, in addition to linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence. Attitudes represent curiosity and openness that is actually readiness to get rid of prejudices about other cultures. Knowledge can be separated into two categories – the first category of knowledge presents knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own culture and of the foreign one; the second category presents knowledge of general processes of individual societal interaction. Skills correspond to interpreting and relating, discovery and interaction, as well as critical awareness/political education (qtd. in Skopinskaja 41). These attitudes, knowledge and skills should be incorporated into the EFL teaching process because they open students' minds toward other cultures and show cultural diversity as something natural and ubiquitous. This makes communication easier and prevents possible misunderstandings.

Communication between two persons who do not share their mother tongue but communicate in the English language is an intercultural event. Thus, participants have to show respect to their interlocutor and to their cultural background by demonstrating that they know who they are and where they come from. They also have to respect each other's identity which is a totality of name, date of birth, marital status, social class or ethnic group and nationality (Camilleri 24). Moreover, speakers have to adapt to the cultural context in which they are found. Therefore, a certain level of ICC is needed for successful communication.

Intercultural communication mostly grew in the post-Second World War era during which there was a great need for international communication due to diplomacy and business. Kramsch adds that "success in business transactions and diplomatic negotiations is not dependent on grammar alone; one has to know how to say what to whom at the right time in the right place" ("Intercultural Communication" 204). The foundation of such communication lies in linguistics and behavioural sciences, such as psychology and social psychology. On the European level, intercultural communication is mostly based on anthropology, pragmatics and discourse analysis (Kramsch, "Intercultural Communication" 202). Kramsch's statements confirm the idea of communication as something much more than a matter of linguistics. Communication can be truly explicated only by a fusion of several different sciences. It can be approached from many different points of view and that makes it so distinctive. Intercultural phenomena stress the importance of proper communication and add up to its peculiarity.

While engaging in intercultural events, people experience intercultural phenomena. According to Cohen et al., that includes culture shock, cultural adaptation, cultural adjustment and the fact that people from other cultures may interpret similar situations differently (qtd. in Frank 4). In her book, *HOW STRANGE! The use of anecdotes in the development of intercultural competence*, Antonette Camilleri gathered anecdotes that show how people can be astonished by an intercultural gap:

> *v.i.i. A Maltese gentleman in Italy*
> Some years ago, when I lived in Italy as a student I remember that one day I needed to buy some salt. I found it very strange to have to buy salt from a 'tabaccaio', a shop that sells tobacco and cigarettes! In my experience salt is always and only bought in a supermarket or grocery store and by no stretch of the imagination could I tell that the 'tabaccaio' would sell salt. To find out about this I had to explicitly ask someone about where I could obtain salt. (17)
> *xvii. An English lady walking with a Spanish lady in London*
> When walking down the street chatting to a Spanish person, I have noticed that if the conversation becomes particularly interesting, they will stop walking and stand in the middle of the pavement in order to talk more animatedly. I find this odd. Normally in England we concentrate on where we are going/reaching our goal! It shows how Spanish people prioritize interaction over 'getting things done'. (20)

Teachers have to prepare their students for such situations in case they decide to travel abroad or move to an English-speaking country. The process of adjusting to a new culture is called acculturation and it consists of four stages – excitement (about being in a new country), culture shock (feelings of frustration and hostility), recovery (adjustment and emergent comfort in the new culture), and adaption (bridging cultural barriers and accepting the new culture) (Frank 4). Teachers need to warn students about each phase and emphasize that those phases are real and mostly unavoidable. Excitement is a usual phenomenon which occurs in travelling. People are eager to find out everything about the new culture, visit places of importance and maybe meet new people. After they are drawn into the new culture, they start to notice things they do not like or things they find strange or unusual. Therefore, the second stage could prove to be the most complicated. People may feel nervous or even afraid. Afterwards, they usually get used to differences in this new culture and start seeing it as diverse instead of hostile. They also make friends and use the target language without restraint. Finally, they accept the new culture and assimilate successfully.

ICC does not come naturally. It requires acquiring certain attitudes, knowledge and skills that can be carried out by EFL teachers. It makes intercultural phenomena easier and makes culture shock less notable. The English language learners must be prepared for intercultural events so they could overcome acculturation more easily because the English language is not just a means of communication, it is also a lingua franca.

2.2. The role of English as a lingua franca in the development of ICC

English as the main European lingua franca has been dissociated, at least partly, from its culture because it is mainly used by non-native speakers. Non-native speakers use it to communicate with speakers of different native languages (Niźegorodcew 7). Niźegorodcew also adds that "ELF as the function of English used by non-native speakers can be a language full of new associations, reflecting a multi-faceted reality, implied meanings and symbols" (9). Those speakers may add their own implied meanings and connotations that are relevant for their native culture.

Generally speaking, there are two views on the relationship between the English language as a lingua franca and culture. The first view sees ELF as a language impoverished of cultural values because it functions on a global level. Such usage of English can be described by the metaphor

of a *meeting point*, where people meet briefly and use this language casually. The other view sees the English language enriched with diverse cultures. Here the metaphor of *agora* is used where people meet and have a lengthy conversation. English becomes an *interlanguage* and it merges its speakers' cultures (Niżegorodcew 9).

Seeing the English language as a *meeting point* does not include teaching culture at all. Also, it has already been mentioned that language and culture are inseparable. Therefore, language must be enriched with culture and culture must be integrated in the English language classroom if we want English to function as an *interlanguage*.

3. Integrating culture in the English language classroom – culture through textbooks, prose, poetry and electronic media

Teachers who teach English as a second language usually have a positive opinion about teaching culture. Because they have to follow the *Croatian National Curriculum*, they mostly use what already exists in teaching materials as is evident in the next sections. It is observable in the textbooks used in Croatia, which are evaluated in this paper, that the most usual topics are customs, history, geography, popular culture, and religion. The Croatian culture is also present but to a lesser extent. It is important to note that teachers cannot choose which aspects of culture will be taught since they have to follow the *Croatian National Curriculum*. Niżegorodcew claims that combining the users' culture with the target culture is the foundation of teaching English as a lingua franca:

> L2 teachers are under the influence of mainstream educational policy, which is generally monocultural and associates teaching additional languages with their national culture. It remains to be seen if English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers can become aware of the importance of a common intercultural ground, which can be provided by teaching English as a lingua franca combined with teaching ELF users' cultures. (14)

In addition, Cem Alptekin claims that textbook writers compose through culture-specific schemas (138). Widdowson explains that 'schematic knowledge' refers to socially acquired knowledge (qtd. in Alptekin 136). This means that most textbook writers are native speakers who transmit the views and values of their own English-speaking society – which is mostly American or British (Alptekin 138). Another reason why American and British cultures prevail in the EFL textbooks is that writers find it easier to write about their own culture and in tune with that culture's formal schemas (Alptekin 139). That is the reason why topical priorities form and of course, they change from one culture to another. Consequently, the EFL textbooks can be devoid of Australian, Canadian, and other English-speaking cultures. The mentioned instances shape the type of topics introduced in textbooks. Schematic knowledge directs topics in such a way that mostly English-speaking cultures are dominant. The examination of textbooks conducted in this paper aims to show if this is also true for the textbooks used in Croatia.

Given topics need a proper way of implementation in the EFL classroom. A topic is previously prescribed and presented in the textbook but the teacher can also contribute with his/her

creativity. There are numerous sources for integrating culture in the classroom, among others, books, poetry, newspapers, magazines, radio clips, television shows and movies (Frank 10). Using such materials can provoke many questions about how and where people live, how they spend their time, how they dress, what and how they eat and many other items of interest. Students can work in groups and make a presentation on the material they have collected. They can also compare their own culture to the target culture.

There is much one can learn about the target culture while reading a work of fiction. Even though sometimes various stereotypes are presented, literature is a good source of cultural information. David Lodge's novel *How Far Can You Go?*, which is among the required reading for the Contemporary British Literature course at the University of Osijek, is an example of an excellent source of cultural knowledge. The novel focuses on young British Catholics growing up in the 1950s. The reader is made familiar with the kind of clothes they wear, what they think about religion, how they perceive love and friendship, etc. The novel presents the characters in a satirical manner and offers a great overview of customs and beliefs within several decades of the 20th century that can apply not only to Great Britain, but also to most European countries.

Furthermore, "more than any other text, it is said, the piece of literary prose or poetry appeals to the students' emotions, grabs their interest, remains in their memory and makes them partake in the memory of another speech community" (Kramsch, *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* 130). Although some teachers think that students do not enjoy poetry, it should be included in EFL teaching because it offers learners a great opportunity to express their opinions and feelings. Poetry can trigger a variety of emotions and because of its ambiguity it can provoke brainstorming. In addition, it can serve as a vocabulary exercise.

Another good way of incorporating culture in the EFL classroom is the inclusion of electronic media. Various videos, movies, TV-shows, and songs can offer an abundance of useful and interesting information. Students definitely enjoy seeing a movie or a video that is related to their topic. A movie can hold their attention and offer an opportunity to discuss relevant issues and express their personal opinion. The teacher can come up with numerous tasks related to the movie and include culture, vocabulary and grammar at once. Not only do movies contribute to the versatility of the class, but they can also include interesting tasks that can serve as reading, writing, speaking and even listening exercises.

Conclusively, it is common that topics in the textbooks are mostly related to the American and British cultures. Teachers must follow the *Croatian National Curriculum* but that does not mean that they cannot make their classes more versatile. Their teaching methods can make classes more dynamic and make the inclusion of other cultures possible. The students' culture is certainly unavoidable since it opens them up to cultural awareness and offers the possibility of comparison of different cultures. Various media can be a great source for teaching culture and contribute to the versatility of the EFL class. Of course, we should be careful about the selection of media and consider the topics, the students' age and their knowledge level. Culturally-related topics that are covered in the teaching process have to be in accordance with the *Croatian National Curriculum.*

4. The *Croatian National Curriculum*

The *Croatian National Curriculum* focuses on listening, speaking, reading, writing and intercultural activity. It emphasizes the importance of culture in language teaching and includes the following learning outcomes. Due to the incorporation of culture in the *Croatian National Curriculum*, learners will be able to:

1. deduce, through listening, speaking, reading and writing, facts about the country or countries of the foreign language in question, and compare them with their own life and surroundings; (102, 103, 104, 105)
2. acquire habits of courteous communication in a foreign language; (102)
3. respect their own and target culture; (102)
4. recognise universal human values such as friendship, collaboration, altruism, and tolerance, and want to actively and responsibly participate in the issues relevant to the community. (102)

To make an intercultural activity successful, students must acquire appropriate strategies, knowledge and skills. According to the learning outcomes with regard to intercultural communication students are expected to:

1. use known information about their own, target and other cultures, to relate them to new situations and context, to think critically;
2. use the acquired knowledge of the culture characteristics and intercultural communication and to interpret target culture without prejudices;
3. apply appropriate behaviour in familiar situations and to try new behaviour patterns in unfamiliar situations;
4. demonstrate curiosity and empathy towards foreign and unintelligible information, behaviour and situations. (The *Croatian National Curriculum* 106)

These points represent general outcomes of teaching culture in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, it is evident, as our conducted questionnaire will later show, that teachers do not emphasize cultural outcomes as much as they should (see section 7). The learning outcomes related to individual cultural topics of a grammar school operational plan based on *Solutions Advanced 2nd Edition* state that students will be able to:

- understand a long speech and a television programme and recognize the main parts and details;

- recognize the social, political or historical context of a literary work;

- actively participate in a conversation on a topic of common interest.

Outcomes such as understanding and recognition rely on the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy, while active participation relies on the affective domain. The cognitive domain represents the type of knowledge that includes mental skills and the affective domain includes attitude and emotions. The outcomes of studying culture are more appropriately distinguished by the affective domain because teaching culture broadens students' minds and lets them have their own attitude towards cultural otherness. The outcomes given in the previously mentioned operational plan rely more on the cognitive than on the affective domain. This shows vagueness of cultural outcomes in school practice.

To sum up, the operational plans of the grammar schools and the four-year vocational schools should reflect the outcomes given in the *Croatian National Curriculum*. As far as the topics are concerned, they are prescribed for each grade and can be found in the secondary school curricula.

4.1. Prescribed topics

Culturally oriented topics are prescribed by the curricula written for the grammar and the four-year vocational schools. According to the curriculum, topics that should be covered in the grammar schools are:
- topics on cultures and civilizations of English-speaking countries;
- cities and regions of the UK, the USA, Australia and Canada;
- school, learning and school systems;
- leisure (movies, theatre, TV, books, comics, pop-music);
- sports, recreation, ecology;
- habitation;
- jobs;
- advertisements;
- traditional feasts.

The topics are covered from the first to the fourth grade and are gradually broadened every school year. Consequently, teaching materials, such as various written texts, are prescribed in the higher grades (third and fourth) of the grammar school. Thus, students work with dialogues, newspaper articles, prose, poetry, etc.

The four-year vocational school cultural topics are not very different from the grammar school topics. However, English language teaching in vocational schools includes a variety of technical terms and texts specific for a certain vocational career. For example, topics in High School of Economics are:

- topics on target culture and civilisation;
- Croatian culture;
- cities and regions of the foreign-speaking countries;
- school and learning;
- leisure (movies, theatre, TV, books, comics, pop-music, computers);
- sports, recreation, ecology;
- habitation and family;
- jobs;
- advertisements;
- traditional feasts;
- traffic;
- professional topics: tourism, entrepreneurship, accounting, translation of professional texts (English to Croatian in the first and the second grade, Croatian to English in the third and the fourth grade), statistics, Croatian and European economy, information systems, economic law, marketing, banking, trade, business communication, letters, curriculum vitae, telephone messages, E-mails, letters, proceedings, debates, etc.

These topics also gradually evolve and expand. The difference between the grammar school and the four-year vocational school curricula is negligible. The only difference lies in the professional topics that are prescribed for the four-year vocational schools and are specific for each vocation. As far as the textbooks are concerned, they must meet the required topics.

4.2. The prescribed textbooks

Textbooks must be in accordance with the *Croatian National Curriculum* and the *Textbook Standard*. The *Textbook Standard* is a document issued by the Minister of Science, Education and Sports. It contains scientific, pedagogical, psychological, methodological, ethical, linguistic, visual-graphic and technical standards and requirements. The selection of textbooks is conducted by an expert committee consisting of three persons – an expert for a certain school subject, a methodologist for a certain school subject, and a teacher of this subject with at least five years of experience. The choice is based on the judgment whether the textbook meets the requirements prescribed by the Ministry.

Three textbooks (*Opportunities Upper-Intermediate*, *New Headway Upper-Intermediate*, *Log-on @ 2 In Frame*) examined in this paper can be found in the textbook catalogue published on the webpage of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. All three textbooks are used in the grammar schools and the four-year vocational schools. For the purposes of this paper, a textbook analysis was conducted and it determines whether and to what extent the selected textbooks are in compliance with the *Croatian National Curriculum*, the secondary school curricula and the set learning outcomes for the English courses.

5. Review of previous studies

5.1. Aspects of cultural elements in prominent English textbooks for EFL instruction

Rajabi and Ketabi examined four EFL textbooks that were used in Iran at that time: *Interchange*, *Top Notch*, *Headway*, and *On Your Mark*. The aim of their study was to determine the most prominent cultural dimension in the textbooks. Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi divide culture into four dimensions and that categorization was used in Rajabi and Ketabi's study and in the study conducted in this paper as well:

- The Aesthetic Sense: Culture with a capital C: the media, the cinema, music;
- 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 institution;
- The Semantic Sense: The conceptual system embodied in the language, such as time and space relations, emotional states, and colors;
- The Pragmatic (or sociolinguistic) Sense: The background knowledge, social skills, and paralinguistic skills that, in addition to mastery of the language code, make possible successful communication. (qtd. in Rajabi and Ketabi 709)

Findings in that study show that most of the culture distinctive occurrences are pragmatic (or sociolinguistic) and sociological. Also, characters portrayed in the examined textbooks are mostly local characters. Rajabi and Ketabi conclude that English teaching is becoming localized, integrating local flavours with those of the target culture and that the cultural contexts of English-speaking countries are combined with the use of local characters, places, and issues (711). This type of study was also conducted in Korea and the sociological and semantic senses dominate.

Cunningsworth and Ellis claim that the purpose of textbook evaluation is helping teachers to acquire useful, accurate, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material (qtd. in Rajabi and Ketabi 705). For the purposes of this study, a textbook evaluation was conducted with a particular focus on cultural content. The findings are analyzed and compared to the findings of Rajabi and Ketabi's study.

5.2. Questionnaire study on ICC in language teaching

In addition to textbook evaluation, questionnaire studies have been conducted to assess ICC in language teaching. One such study was conducted by Alexandrowicz-Pędich and her co-workers who prepared a questionnaire study on ICC in teaching a foreign language. The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) is intended for teachers and it consists of six open-ended questions. These questions examine personal experience concerning ICC – ICC in teacher education, school practice and generally in life. This research project was a qualitative study conducted in ten countries: Cyprus, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Greece, Malta, Iceland, Hungary, Estonia, and Netherlands.

The findings show that all the respondents recognize the importance of ICC for communication in a foreign language and it is generally agreed that ICC skills should be included in the teaching process. Furthermore, all the respondents emphasize the need to include the theoretical and methodological elements of intercultural studies in the pre-service and in-service training programmes (Alexandrowicz-Pędich et al. 35).

As a part of this paper, a similar study has been conducted using a self-report questionnaire as an instrument of data collection. The respondents comprised five English teachers who work in Croatian schools. The obtained answers are analyzed and compared to the findings of Alexandrowicz-Pędich's study.

6. Study 1: Textbook analysis

6.1. Aims

As already mentioned, for the purposes of this study, a textbook evaluation was conducted with the aim to investigate how much cultural content there is in the EFL textbooks used in Croatian high schools and to which extent they comply to the *Croatian National Curriculum* and prescribed topics. In particular, the study focuses on the topics of such content, and investigates the possible dominance of British or American culture. In addition, the presence of Croatian culture is examined. Furthermore, the study investigates whether there are any authentic materials present in the textbooks. Finally, it assesses which dimension of culture is dominant in the analyzed textbooks. The hypothesis is that with regard the incorporation of cultural content, the textbooks used in Croatia are not in compliance with the requirements set by the *Croatian National Curriculum*. Cultural content is present in a far lesser extent and there is a focus mainly on the British and American culture.

6.2. Procedure

The first step of this research was deciding on textbooks that were going to be examined. For this research three textbooks were taken into consideration:

- *Opportunities Upper-Intermediate*
- *New Headway Upper-Intermediate*
- *Log-on @ 2 In Frame*

These textbooks were chosen because they are the most frequently used textbooks in the grammar and the four-year vocational schools and are found in the catalogue of compulsory textbooks.

The second step was to develop the criteria upon which the research would be conducted. The evaluation was carried out by a page to page analysis. Firstly, the written text in the textbooks was examined for cultural content. All cultural occurrences were written down. Then, the findings were categorized into separate topics. Finally, the findings were analyzed in order to

determine which cultural dimension prevails and the results were recorded in the tables. The criteria for analysis are represented in the next chapter.

6.3. Research questions

During the research, attention was drawn to questions such as:

- Is culture present within the contents pages?
- Is culture present in all the chapters?
- Which topics are covered?
- Which culture prevails? Is there any other culture besides British and American?
- Is the Croatian culture explicitly mentioned? In which way?
- Are there any authentic materials?
- Which cultural dimension prevails?
- Are the topics in accordance with the *Croatian National Curriculum*?

The findings were explained and exemplified.

6.4. Results

6.4.1. Opportunities Upper-Intermediate

Culture distinctive occurrences are found in all ten units of the textbook. First of all, cultural topics are not mentioned within the contents pages. The topics are diverse and are as follows:

- *famous people*: Helen Keller, Anne Frank, Sherlock Holmes, Rowan Atkinson, Whoopi Goldberg, The Marx Brothers, Laurel and Hardy, Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Julia Roberts, Sandra Bullock;
- *history*: Athens, Florence, London, Vietnam War;
- *geography*: world wonders, cities, wild places, natural disasters, climate;
- *movies*: Beauty and the Beast (1946), 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968), All Quiet on the Western Front (1929);

- *books*: *The Diary of Anne Frank, The Diary of Hellen Keller, The Pickwick Papers, The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, The Martian Chronicles*, "The Shepherd Andreas", *No Crime in the Mountains*, "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle";
- *poetry*: "The Jaguar", "Declaration of Intent", "Love Song for Alex", "I wish I could remember that first day", "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun";
- *other literature*: newspaper extracts;
- *music*: Cat Stevens, Elton John, David Gray, rap music, techno, Jimi Hendrix, the Rolling Stones, the Beatles;
- *science*: Albert Einstein, Edwin Hubble, Alexander Fleming, the Eniac Project, cloning, space, consumerism;
- *art*: museums;
- *UK*: Great Britain, British jokes, the history of English, South Shropshire, London Fashion Week;
- *USA*: New York, American street art, the history of the USA, the history of popular music;
- *other cultures*: English around the world, Canada, Chile, Uruguay, Galapagos;
- *sports*: athletes, Lance Armstrong, Olympic Games;
- *miscellaneous topics*: Astrology, Tarot, Utopia.

The British and American cultures are equally present and although the Croatian culture is not explicitly mentioned, the student's culture is present in the 'Comparing Cultures' sections in each chapter where students make comparisons with their own culture. It is interesting to note that other cultures are present as well.

Authentic materials are included in the textbook as excerpts from books (autobiographies of Anne Frank and Helen Keller, "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle", *The Pickwick Papers*, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *Martian Chronicles*, "The Shepherd Andreas", *No Crime in the Mountains*) and poems ("The Jaguar", "Declaration of Intent", "Love Song for Alex", "I wish I could remember that first day", "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun"). There are five 'Literature Spots' at the end of the textbook with authentic materials (except autobiographies, "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle", *The Pickwick Papers*, and "The Jaguar").

Also, there are four 'Culture Corners'. The first 'Culture Corner' offers tasks and information about the history of English. 'Culture Corner 2' introduces students to English-speaking countries. 'Culture Corner 3' deals with the history of the USA. Finally, 'Culture Corner 4' offers tasks and information about the history of popular music in the USA.

The aims of involving culture in the textbook are developing the learners' thinking skills as well as practicing vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, spelling and the four language skills. All four language skills are practiced with the help of cultural content. However, there is a slight predominance of practicing reading and listening. For example, there are excerpts from Anne Frank's and Helen Keller's autobiographies that are followed by pre-reading assignments. The lesson entitled 'National Identity' offers excellent practice in listening and speaking. Learners listen to a radio phone-in programme with callers talking about national values.

In order to find out which cultural dimension prevails in the textbook, it was necessary to review all the cultural content once again and to find occurrences of all four dimensions. Each excerpt was individually analyzed and the results are presented in *Table 1*.

The sociological and aesthetic senses prevail in this textbook because most of the topics revolve around famous people and literature (e.g. actors, writers, excerpts from books) and society (e.g. Great Britain, USA, values). 52.1 % of the overall cultural content is characterized as aesthetic, while 27.4 % of the content is recognized as sociological. The semantic and pragmatic senses are less present. The semantic sense is present in topics such as language, street art and jokes and it occurs in 6.8 % of the cultural content. The pragmatic sense is recognized in texts about tarot, astrology and cloning. It occurs in 13.7 % of the content.

Table 1: Dimensions of culture in *Opportunities Upper-Intermediate*

Total number of cultural occurrences: 73

The aesthetic sense	The sociological sense	The semantic sense	The pragmatic sense
38	20	5	10
52.1 %	27.4 %	6.8 %	13.7 %

6.4.2. *New Headway Upper-Intermediate*

There is culture content present in all twelve units of the textbook. Culture is not incorporated into the content pages. The list of topics is as follows:

- *famous people*: Jamie Oliver, John Travolta, Roman Abramovich, Marilyn Monroe, Robbie Williams, Marx Hobson;
- *history*: Marco Polo, Őtzi the Iceman, The Apollo Moon landing;
- *UK*: London, Soho, princess Diana;
- *USA*: John F. Kennedy Jr.;
- *other cultures*: New Zealand, Chile, Korea, Fiji, travelling, weddings, Chukotka;
- *politics*: protests;
- *art*: Michelangelo;
- *food and drinks*: Starbucks Coffee, The Organic Burger Company;
- *family*: kippers;
- *books*: *The Blind Assassin*;
- *miscellaneous topics*: newspaper articles, billboards, Apple Macintosh.

There is a slight preponderance of British culture over American. However, both British and American cultures are not very frequent in this textbook. A greater emphasis is put on a wide range of cultures, as can be seen above in the list of topics. The Croatian culture is not mentioned at all.

There are fewer authentic materials in *New Headway* than in *Opportunities*. There are only a few occurrences of authentic materials – several short newspaper articles, an excerpt from *The Blind Assassin* and a text about Mary Hobson.

Just like in *Opportunities*, culture content is used for practicing the four language skills, vocabulary, grammar, spelling and pronunciation. Mostly listening and speaking exercises are incorporated into such content. For example, students listen to speeches of homesick people and they practice speaking afterwards by discussing what they miss when they leave their homes.

With regard to different dimensions of culture, most of the cultural content is characterized as aesthetic and sociological, which is also visible in *Table 2*. The aesthetic sense dominates with

41.4 % of the content and the sociological sense amounts 34.5 %. Results are as such because culturally important themes in most cases revolve around media, geography and history. The semantic sense is present in 10.3 %, while the pragmatic sense amounts 13.8 %. The semantic sense can be found in topics related to food and drinks and the pragmatic sense is related to topics concerning technological advances.

Table 2: Dimensions of culture in *New Headway Upper-Intermediate*

Total number of cultural occurrences: 29

The aesthetic sense	The sociological sense	The semantic sense	The pragmatic sense
12	10	3	4
41.4 %	34.5 %	10.3 %	13.8 %

6.4.3. *Log-on @ 2 In Frame*

The third textbook from the list is undoubtedly the most abundant with cultural content, which is present in all sixteen units. Culture is even mentioned within the contents pages. However, there is no separate 'culture' column so that the information is given in the 'topics' column. There is a variety of culturally relevant topics:

- *geography*: wildlife, Kenya, Australia, Arkansas, Nepal, Lake Victoria, Gayko Peak, Zanzibar, Costa Rica, Turkey, India, Ecuador, Canada, Croatia, Mexico, Sicily, Japan, Ireland, the dodo bird;
- *lifestyle*: holidays, personal life, hobbies, friends, family, music, food, pets, school;
- *famous people*: Mother Theresa, Alfred Hitchcock, Stephen Spielberg, Quentin Tarantino;
- *movies*: Casablanca, Frankenstein, Gone With the Wind, The Lord of the Rings, Halloween, Star Wars IV, The Silence of the Lambs, Terminator II, Superman, scary movies;
- *science*: Albert Einstein, inventions, Johannes Gutenberg, Charles Babbage, Bell Laboratories, Alexander Fleming, cloning, future, aliens;

- *UK*: England, Scotland, Wales;
- *USA*: geography, military;
- *sports*: Emil Zatopek;
- *politics*: USA's political system, UK's political system, Croatia's political system;
- *the unusual*: Sasquatch, Ogopog, Nessie, ghosts, haunted places, life after death, Roswell;
- *society*: peer pressure, advertising, drugs, Greenpeace, animal rights;
- *history*: Queen Boudicca, the 'Louisiana Purchase', Sumerians;
- *articles*: "The Battle of the Sexes";
- *songs*: "Cockles and Mussels";
- *miscellaneous topics*: Zodiac signs.

British and American cultures are equally represented but there are more instances of other cultures. This textbook, compared to *Opportunities* and *New Headway*, has the greatest diversity of topics.

There are two instances where Croatia is mentioned in the textbook. These are texts about a Croatian student studying in Canada and about Croatia's political system.

With regard to authentic materials, there are only a few such materials. There is an article by Doug Tailor, "The Battle of the Sexes", and the lyrics of an Irish folk song, "Cockles and mussels".

Culturally-related topics contain tasks that involve practicing the four language skills, vocabulary, grammar, spelling and pronunciation. Reading and listening tasks prevail in such topics. To exemplify, there is a text concerning the geography of the United States. This text helps students to practice new vocabulary and grammar.

As for the most frequent dimension of culture, the sociological sense prevails. It is present in 46.2 %. Results are shown in *Table 3* and they are not surprising since most of the covered topics are related to geography and lifestyle. The aesthetic and pragmatic senses are equally frequent and appear in texts about media, hobbies and school. They are present in 20.5 %. The semantic sense takes 12.8 % of occurrence and is covered through themes such as food, Zodiac, and advertising.

Table 3: Dimensions of culture in *Log-on @ 2 In Frame*

Total number of cultural occurrences: 78

The aesthetic sense	The sociological sense	The semantic sense	The pragmatic sense
16	36	10	16
20.5 %	46.2 %	12.8 %	20.5 %

6.5. Discussion

All three textbooks for the most part adhere to the cultural demands of the *Croatian National Curriculum* and the grammar school curriculum and there is no special focus on American or British culture since a variety of cultures is incorporated in the textbooks. In all three textbooks the topics are mostly the same. The probable reason is the *Croatian National Curriculum* which prescribes topics to be taught at a particular level of education. All three textbooks deal with cultures and civilizations of English-speaking countries, cities, habitation, regions, leisure, jobs and media. School and advertisements are not covered in *Opportunities* and *New Headway*. Sports and traditional feasts are missing only in *New Headway*.

Culture content is present in all the units in all three textbooks. Culture is incorporated into the contents pages only in *Log-on @ 2 In Frame*. However, there is no distinctive culture column. Culture topics are named under the 'Topics' column. Since culture is inseparable from language, putting a 'Culture' column in the contents pages of textbooks would be of a great use. Teachers would have a clearer overview of the provided cultural materials included within the textbook and that would make textbook selection easier.

Opportunities, unlike *New Headway* and *Log-on @ 2 In Frame*, contains four 'Culture corners'. It provides teachers with opportunities to organize classes dedicated mainly to culture. However, culturally relevant topics are found in all units of the textbook, as has already been mentioned. Both the American and British culture are equally present in *Opportunities* and *Log-on @ 2 In Frame*. British culture prevails over American in *New Headway*, but there is a focus on other cultures, not just on British culture. Moreover, *New* Headway is published by a British

publishing house, the Oxford University Press, so that could be the reason why British topics are preferred in their textbooks. It could be presumed that the reason why there is a special focus on British and American culture is the fact that the UK and the USA are the most influential English speaking countries and they are best known to all students.

The Croatian culture is explicitly mentioned only in *Log-on @ 2 In Frame*. This is presumably the case because the authors of the textbook are Croats. There is a 'Comparing cultures' section in every unit in *Opportunities,* but the Croatian culture is not explicitly mentioned nowhere in the textbook. The comparison gives students a chance to think about their local culture and about the target culture. It broadens students' minds and lets them spot and accept the differences between the two cultures. Even though this encourages creativity, students would perhaps have a more positive attitude towards the textbook if their culture was included to a greater extent. Regardless of the fact that the *Croatian National Curriculum* prescribes a comparison of cultures, it is worth mentioning that the examined textbooks on the whole do not offer sufficient opportunity to compare the target culture to the Croatian culture. It lessens cultural awareness and makes creating a "culture friendly" atmosphere harder.

Opportunities contains the greatest number of authentic materials. There are excerpts from books and poetry. *New Headway* and *Log-on @ 2 In Frame* are not as abundant as *Opportunities*. The mentioned authentic materials are a great source to increase knowledge of the world and make the learning process more interesting. On the other hand, the lack of authentic materials encourages teachers to be creative and provide their own resources in EFL teaching.

Results have shown that aesthetic and sociological dimensions of culture dominate. That was expected because the prescribed topics revolve around cultures and civilizations of English-speaking countries, geography, leisure and habits. Rajabi and Ketabi's findings were similar. Their analysis has shown that the sociological sense, besides the pragmatic sense, is the most prominent in the four most used textbooks in Iran. Since young learners spend much of their spare time watching television and use the Internet quite frequently, aesthetic and sociological topics are good choices for them. They enjoy learning about actors, musicians and media in general. The inclusion of themes concerning their hobbies and family is equally useful because they can easily relate to what they learn. However, all four cultural dimensions should be present in the same degree. Textbook writers should broaden the range of topics and include more semantic and pragmatic texts.

Interestingly, the Croatian culture is prescribed only in the four-year vocational school curriculum. Furthermore, vocational schools implement an adjusted curriculum. For example, the high school of Economics integrates topics such as entrepreneurship, accounting and banking into English language teaching. There are no such topics in any of the textbooks. Therefore, these textbooks are more appropriate for the grammar schools, while teachers in the four-year vocational schools could use other textbooks, depending on the vocational career. For example, *Head for Business* is used in the high school of Economics and it contains vocabulary and texts from the world of business.

The textbook analysis shows that culture is sufficiently covered in each of the three textbooks and that cultural content is in accordance with the prescribed topics of the *Croatian National Curriculum*. Since *Log-on @ 2 In Frame* covers all recommended topics, at least for a grammar school, it would probably be the best choice from the three textbooks. It has the greatest variety of culturally relevant topics and all the cultural dimensions are adequately present. This textbook is visually convenient because it looks simple to use and the content is well-organized. It is published by a Croatian publishing house *Školska knjiga* so it includes Croatian culture as well. Apparently, this domestic textbook offers insight into the students' culture and gives more opportunity for comparison of cultures. Therefore, students can broaden their horizons and possibly learn something new about their culture too. The disadvantage of this textbook is that it contains only a couple of authentic texts. Reading authentic materials is important. Not only do students expand their vocabulary and practice reading, but they also broaden their general knowledge. As far as the authentic texts are concerned, *Opportunities* is the most convenient textbook from the three textbooks. However, the choice entirely depends on the teachers.

7. Study 2: The views of teachers of English on ICC in language teaching

7.1. Aims and research questions

For the purposes of this paper, a study has been conducted with the aim to establish the importance of ICC to Croatian teachers and the extent to which they include it in their teaching process. In particular, the study focuses on examples of teaching culture in the school practice and investigates if the teachers give priority to ICC or to grammar, vocabulary and the four language skills. The research questions are as follows:

- Is culture an essential part of English teaching?
- How can students benefit from teaching culture?
- Is culture considered to be less important than teaching the four language skills, grammar and vocabulary?
- How do teachers promote ICC and what are the most common ways of teaching culture?
- Are the outcomes of teaching culture evident in the operational plans?

The hypothesis is that teachers tend to neglect the inclusion of culture in the teaching process but are aware of the positive effect that culture has on students' knowledge.

7.2. Instrument

The type of instrument used in this research is a self-report questionnaire. It shows the personal opinion of teachers of English concerning ICC in language teaching. The questionnaires were administered via e-mail. The research instrument (see Appendix 2) consists of demographic questions - information on the profession (the place of teaching, age-groups of respondents' students and years of professional experience). This is followed by five open-ended questions:

1. Do you think that teaching culture in the English language classroom is important and why?
2. How much importance do you attach to teaching intercultural competence compared to teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four language skills? Why?

3. What can teachers do to promote the intercultural communicative competence of their students?

4. Can you give a few examples of integrating culture in your classes?

5. Do you think intercultural competence should be given more/less emphasis in foreign language teaching? What are the potential benefits?

Alexandrowicz-Pędich's questions number 3 and 6 (see Appendix 1) are used in this study. The respondents of the questionnaire comprised one teacher working in a primary school and four teachers working in secondary grammar schools in Croatia.

7.3. Procedure

The teachers were selected according to convenience and ease of access. This is a qualitative study, meaning it was conducted in the mode of non-comparative analysis. "Qualitative research assumes that in social studies a carefully analysed small sample can provide a significant contribution to the understanding of the problem investigated" (Alexandrowicz-Pędich et al. 9). Although this is a small-scale study, the results do not differ from Alexandrowicz-Pędich's study. The answers were analyzed and the possible generalizations were drawn.

7.4. Interpretation of the responses to the questionnaire obtained from the teachers of English

1. Do you think that teaching culture in the English language classroom is important and why?

All five of the respondents find culture in teaching a foreign language important, but one teacher thinks that its importance has decreased due to easier access to information. One grammar school teacher thinks that teaching culture is "a natural part of such teaching" and that teachers should encourage students to widen their horizons. Besides being inseparable from language, the primary school teacher finds that culture "helps learners understand some aspects of the language more easily". On the whole, the teachers basically agree on culture being helpful while learning a new language because it helps students communicate more efficiently. Moreover, primary school teacher adds that teaching culture helps in "creating a more positive learning environment because learners become more interested in learning a language if they are presented with social,

geographical and cultural information about the country, especially if this information is something that they might find interesting and useful".

2. How much importance do you attach to teaching intercultural competence compared to teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four language skills? Why?

All of the respondents try to incorporate intercultural competence into their classes, to a greater or lesser extent. However, two grammar school teachers agreed that teaching culture is less important than teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four language skills because of the secondary school leaving examination ('Državna matura'). They said that they have to focus on certain tasks because they must prepare students for that exam. Another grammar school teacher tries to balance both culture and the four language skills. She gave an excellent example with modal verbs and she emphasizes that one will never master knowledge of modals without cultural awareness:

> When you teach modals, for example, you have to explain that Croats love using must - moraš! We are a very bossy nation, and in Croatian everything is equally forbidden – you mustn't kill (ne smiješ ubiti), you mustn't steal (ne smiješ krasti), you mustn't chew gum in the class (ne smiješ žvakati na satu).

Furthermore, the primary school teacher also tries to balance culture and the four language skills for the sake of enjoyable learning as well as explaining the context of certain expressions.

3. What can teachers do to promote the intercultural communicative competence of their students?

Two of the teachers agree upon using different media, such as documentaries and movies, while one grammar school teacher even proposes bringing in native speakers and travelling to countries whose cultures they teach. The primary school teacher also adds: "Teachers should stay away from introducing their learners to negative stereotypes about other cultures (e.g. the Scottish are cheap). They should focus on teaching their learners about the reasons which make this foreign culture special and unique." One grammar school teacher thinks that culture cannot be explicitly taught – students must do research and projects on their own.

4. Can you give a few examples of integrating culture in your classes?

Four teachers mention posters and maps of English speaking countries. When they read a text which includes cultural and/or geographical information, they turn to the poster and briefly discuss it. Also, projects, discussions and presentations are quite common in most schools. Three teachers emphasize the importance of texts, but only one teacher mentioned authentic texts. Two teachers mention comparison between the target culture and our own culture. The primary school teacher adds: "We compare and discuss holiday traditions, fashion and even differences between American and British English." Furthermore, secondary school teachers give book reports on American and English authors.

5. Do you think intercultural competence should be given more/less emphasis in foreign language teaching? What are the potential benefits?

Opinions differ on this issue. The primary school teacher thinks that intercultural competence should be given more emphasis "because learners find these cultural facts very interesting and stimulating". Another teacher, for example, thinks that the issue is given enough emphasis. All in all, they all agree that intercultural competence is important and unavoidable in teaching a foreign language. They also list a number of benefits, such as: open-minded students who want to explore their own and other cultures, active citizens who promote knowledge and diversity, people who are ready for changes and the modern world, readiness for real-life situations, etc. One grammar school teacher added that students "get used to doing the same and it isn't a challenge anymore" so adding more culture in the class would be useful for the sake of versatility in learning. However, there is usually not enough time to cover everything that should be covered.

7.5. Discussion

All the respondents see ICC as an important issue. They believe that language cannot be learned or taught without incorporating culture in the classroom. From time to time, all of them put a focus on culture. Three of them believe that it can be balanced with the four language skills, while one teacher from a grammar school believes that the latter should be given preference over other content of the *Croatian National Curriculum*. Another grammar school teacher also finds culture less important because of the secondary school leaving examination, but she tries to

incorporate culture into classes dealing with grammar and the four language skills. The way in which they incorporate culture into their teaching depends mainly on the age and creativity of the teachers. The teacher with the least working years seems to have more enthusiasm and wants her students not only to be well taught but also entertained. The most common ways of incorporating culture into EFL teaching are various media, movies, posters, projects and the comparison of cultures. All of the teachers agree upon the great advantages of incorporating culture into the classroom and see it mostly as a positive issue. They believe that culture widens students' horizons, improves their communication skills, increases their interest in foreign language teaching and even brings versatility to the classroom.

Comparing our study to that of Alexandrowicz-Pędich, respondents were equally divided considering the incorporation of culture into other teaching components. There are a number of teachers in Alexandrowicz-Pędich's study that consider culture very important but they give priority to teaching the four language skills, grammar and vocabulary. Two of our teachers responded similarly. However, both studies show that most of the teachers think that culture should be combined with teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four language skills. The results of the last question (*Do you think intercultural competence should be given more/less emphasis in foreign language teaching? What are the potential benefits?*) in our survey are similar to the corresponding question in Alexandrowicz-Pędich's study. Both studies have shown a divided opinion on this issue. In other words, one of our surveyed teachers thinks that culture is given enough emphasis in the EFL teaching and other three teachers state that intercultural competence should be given more attention. One of the teachers also suggests a balance between intercultural competence and grammar and vocabulary. Even though this question shows a certain disagreement on this issue, all of our surveyed teachers think that ICC is an important part of teaching. Alexandrowicz-Pędich et al. distinguish two types of benefits that ICC brings to teaching and learning: idealistic (e.g. promotion of tolerance, internationalism, and open-mindedness) and pragmatic (e.g. profitability in business, travelling and tourism). Similar benefits are found in the Croatian teachers' answers. Since our findings were limited in scope it is impossible to draw general conclusions. However, they can serve as guidelines for future research.

This study has shown that teachers are aware that culture is necessary in EFL teaching if we want to promote complete linguistic and communicative competence. Culture is present in the school practice but cultural outcomes are still scarce in operational plans, as it was shown in

section 4. The given outcomes are repetitive, vague and focus mainly on the cognitive and affective domains regarding Bloom's taxonomy. Topics that deal with various novels, poetry or other art are accompanied with the same outcomes as grammatical and vocabulary topics, such as the abilities to 'read', 'understand', and 'recognize'. Therefore, the teacher's views are neither evident nor supported by written plans. However, there are teachers who are aware of the fact that they do not deal with specific outcomes as much as they should and they have expressed their intention on doing so in the future.

8. Personal experience

My recent experience as a student teacher can serve to illustrate the teaching of culture in the Croatian foreign language classroom. On May 20, 2015 I held a lesson on Holiday photos which concerned Australia in a fifth grade class using the textbook *Dip in* as well as additional materials.

First, I showed students several pictures of a kangaroo, a koala, Steve Irwin, a dingo and the Sydney Opera House. The aim of this activity was to stimulate the students' brainstorming and encourage them to speak English freely in class without error correction while focusing on topic content. In addition, the discussion of the pictures served as an introduction to the topic in their textbook. Based on the presented pictures they guessed the topic successfully. After completing several vocabulary-building tasks in the textbook, which acquainted the students with a number of common Australian words, I showed a poster of Australia that included a geographical map and illustrations showing national sports, animals and the biggest cities. This poster was additional material that I got from my mentor. I decided to use it because it contains a wealth of information that was not found in the textbook. The textbook had an interesting text with illustrations and entries about the most important facts on Australia. However, it was not included within the pages of the lesson, but was a part of a distinctive cultural section. My mentor advised me to use this text to make the lesson more interesting and informative. Despite the additional information, the text was still lacking so the poster was more than helpful. Also, textbooks are a valuable resource but they should be used as just one of the many resources for knowledge acquisition. Teachers should use a wide variety of materials and resources in order to enhance student engagement and learning.

Combining the textbook and additional materials ensured that the students were presented with sufficient culturally relevant material. Generally, students were interested and attentive during the whole class and it seemed as if they enjoyed learning about a foreign culture. Furthermore, this class offered vocabulary, spelling, speaking, reading, and writing exercises. Even though it was culturally oriented, it aimed at linguistic accuracy and proficiency as well.

This lesson serves as an example of a unity of culture and language. It shows the view that teaching culture does not exclude grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation and the four language skills, as it was already mentioned in this paper. The cultural content given in the

textbook was moderately good but there was a need for additional materials. Since it was my mentor who advised me to use the poster and the text, it can be concluded that she recognizes the importance of incorporating culture into EFL teaching. She has decades of teaching experience and her experience and advice were of great help for fulfilling the requirements of my school practice. She has also given me an insight into her overall work with students, which is unquestionably related to teaching culture. In addition to teaching, she promotes and often does school projects which cover a variety of topics, such as ecology, literature and cinema. The projects reflect the teacher's and students' creativity in researching the topics from textbooks in greater detail and independently.

To conclude, there are cases when additional material is necessary if we are to promote ICC properly. Even though the cultural content in the textbook is considered satisfactory, there is a need to add more materials for the cultural enrichment as well as greater functional versatility of the language learners. Also, this lesson has shown that teaching culture can be in synthesis with practicing grammar or vocabulary and that it is being incorporated into EFL teaching on an elementary school level.

Conclusion

Teaching culture must be an essential part of EFL teaching if we aim at promoting intercultural communicative competence (ICC) which is one of the goals of teaching a foreign language. Moreover, language is a culturally conditioned phenomenon so language and culture are interconnected and their relationship is central to language learning. ICC equips students with knowledge of social customs and practices and serves to minimise possible misunderstandings of intercultural communication and makes communication more efficient. The inclusion of culture in the EFL classroom is possible with usage of textbooks and numerous additional materials, such as posters, movies, prose, poetry, etc., that offer a wealth of cultural information and enhance student engagement and learning.

The textbook analysis has shown that all three evaluated textbooks concur to the cultural demands of the *Croatian National Curriculum* and to the cultural topics prescribed by the grammar school and the four-year vocational school curricula, aside from the professional topics covered in vocational schools. Also, it is significant to mention that there is no particular focus on only British and American culture. The textbooks cover other English-speaking cultures as well as non-native English-speaking countries from all around the world. However, it is worth noting that the Croatian culture is mentioned only in *Log-on @ 2 In Frame*. Also, all three textbooks include authentic texts. Finally, the results have shown that the aesthetic and sociological dimensions of culture dominate. As far as the teachers are concerned, the questionnaire study has shown that teachers generally agree that ICC is an important issue and that language and culture are interconnected. They have named various media, posters, movies, projects, and the comparison of cultures as the most common ways of integrating culture. They all incorporate culture with grammar, vocabulary and other parts of the EFL teaching but there is no mention of this practice in the operational plans. In addition, the cultural outcomes are not specific and do not complement the outcomes given in the *Croatian National Curriculum*. Nevertheless, culture is a part of school practice and my experience as a student teacher has shown that teaching culture can be incorporated into teaching vocabulary, grammar and practicing of the four language skills.

Based on the presented research, it can be concluded that language and culture are inseparably linked. ICC is essential for successful foreign language teaching and linguistic proficiency and efficiency alone is not enough for successful intercultural communication. Therefore, ICC should

be highlighted in teaching or learning a new language and teaching culture is the way to accomplish it. Furthermore, in order to foster the successful incorporation of culture in the foreign language classroom, greater attention must be given to achieving a coherence of the outcomes given in the *Croatian National Curriculum*, the cultural content found in the most frequently used textbooks and what teachers actually promote in their school practice.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire by Alexandrowicz-Pędich et al.

Dear Teacher,

This questionnaire constitutes international research into foreign language teachers' views and attitudes concerning intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in teaching English (or French) as a foreign language. The project is carried out under the auspices of the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, Austria, by a group of researchers:

Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich, University of Białystok, Poland

Janeta Draghicescu, University of Craiova, Romania

Dora Issaiass, Lanition Lyceum A', Limassol, Cyprus

Nada Šabec, University of Maribor, Slovenia

The subject of our research is ICC in language teaching. We understand it as, primarily:

> • preparing students for communication in English with people of diverse
> cultures, with the assumption that successful communication involves
> language skills, but also understanding behaviour, values and attitudes of
> others;
> • incorporating in the process of teaching English the awareness of the existence
> of other cultures (not only target language culture) as well as the skills to deal
> effectively with people from those other cultures.
> This questionnaire contains six open‑ended questions.
> We would also like you to fill in some information about your own teaching context.

Thank you very much for your help!

1. Where you teach:

Name of the country …

(Tick where appropriate)

Capital city

City

Town

Village

2. Age-groups you teach

Pre-schoolers

7-11

12-15

16-19

Adults

3. Years you have been teaching

Fewer than 5

5-10

11-20

More than 20

1. In what ways, if any, was intercultural communication training included in your own teacher education?

2. Describe some of your own experiences with people of other cultures. How do these affect your teaching?

3. How much importance do you attach to teaching intercultural competence compared to teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four skills? Why?

4. In what ways do you create opportunities for students to understand and experience other cultures? How do you help them to avoid intercultural misunderstandings?

5. Which aspects of culture do you consider most important in teaching a foreign language? Why?

6. Do you think intercultural competence should be given more/less emphasis in foreign language teaching? What are the potential benefits?

Appendix 2: Croatian survey

Helena Brdarić

The Questionnaire

Dear Teacher,

This questionnaire constitutes research related to the role of culture and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in teaching English as a foreign language. The project is carried out as a part of my MA paper.

ICC is understood as, primarily[1]:

• preparing students for communication in English with people of diverse cultures, with the assumption that successful communication involves language skills, but also understanding behaviour, values and attitudes of others;

• incorporating in the process of teaching English the awareness of the existence of other cultures (not only target language culture) as well as the skills to deal effectively with people from those other cultures.

This questionnaire contains five open-ended questions.

I would also like you to fill in some information about your teaching profession.

Thank you very much for your help!

(Tick where appropriate)

1. Where you teach:

Name of the country …

Capital city

City

Town

Village

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[1] Lázár, Ildikó. *Incorporating intercultural communicative competence in language teacher education*. Strasbourg: European Centre for Modern Languages: Council of Europe, cop. 2003

2. Age-groups you teach

Pre-schoolers

7-11

12-15

16-19

Adults

3. Years you have been teaching

Fewer than 5

5-10

11-20

More than 20

1. Do you think that teaching culture in the English language classroom is important and why?

2. How much importance do you attach to teaching intercultural competence compared to teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four language skills? Why?

3. What can teachers do to promote the intercultural communicative competence of their students?

4. Can you give a few examples of integrating culture in your classes?

5. Do you think intercultural competence should be given more/less emphasis in foreign language teaching? What are the potential benefits?

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Sažetak

Podučavanje kulture trebalo bi biti suštinski dio podučavanja engleskog kao stranog jezika jer je interkulturalna komunikacijska kompetencija (ICC) jedan od osnovnih ciljeva podučavanja str jezika. Da bi se u potpunosti postiglo usvajanje stranog jezika, nužno je uključiti kulturu u podučavanje engleskog kao stranog jezika. Cilj ovoga rada je istražiti vezu između jezika i kulture i odrediti do koje je mjere kultura uključena u Nacionalni okvirni kurikulum za predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje te opće obvezno i srednjoškolsko obrazovanje (NOK) na razini srednjoškolskog obrazovanja te u podučavanje engleskog kao stranog jezika. Da bi se odredilo koliko su udžbenici u skladu s NOK-om i temama propisanim u nastavnim programima za strani jezik u gimnazijama i četverogodišnjim strukovnim školama, analiza udžbenika usredotočena je na kulturni sadržaj triju udžbenika koji se koriste u hrvatskim srednjim školama. Anketno istraživanje analizira mišljenja nastavnika engleskog jezika o ICC-u u podučavanju jezika i ističe do koje je mjere nastavna praksa u skladu s NOK-om. Rezultati pokazuju da su udžbenici u većoj mjeri u skladu s propisanim zahtjevima. Također, odgovori iz anketa pokazuju da su ispitani nastavnici svjesni važnosti ICC-a te da uključuju kulturu u podučavanje. Međutim, ishodi propisani u NOK-u, a koji se tiču kulture, još uvijek nisu uključeni u operativne planove srednjih škola. S obzirom na rezultate dobivene u istraživanjima, može se zaključiti da nastavnici smatraju da je kultura značajan dio podučavanja engleskog kao stranog jezika u Hrvatskoj, ali još uvijek izostaje podudaranje između ishoda propisanih u NOK-u, kulturnog sadržaja u udžbenicima te onoga što nastavnici zaista promiču u školskoj praksi.

Ključne riječi: kultura, interkulturalna komunikacijska kompetencija, analiza udžbenika, anketno istraživanje