

# Semiotic Analysis of Culture in EFL Textbooks for Secondary School Learners

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J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Study Programme: Double Major MA Study Programme in English Language and  
Literature – Teaching English as a Foreign Language and Philosophy

Martina Gogić

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Supervisor: Dr. Draženka Molnar, Assistant Professor

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U Osijeku, 27.9.2019.

Martina Gogić, 0344000538

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ime i prezime studenta, JMBAG

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## Summary

Language and culture are two inseparable concepts, both in everyday life and in teaching English. Moreover, both concepts are found in textbooks, the main source of information and knowledge in the formal teaching process. There are many different approaches to analyzing textbooks and cultural content in them. In this paper, the study proceeds according to the fundamental principles of semiotic analysis. The aim of the research is to analyze the representation of the cultural content in English as a foreign language textbooks. Moreover, the paper evaluates the quality of the selected examples containing elements of culture and points out to their possible contribution in acquiring knowledge and spreading cultural awareness among high school students. The results of the research have shown that EFL textbooks have sufficient culture-related content, but its potential is not fully utilized as most tasks are purely linguistically oriented.

Key words: semiotics, culture, textbook, analysis

## Sažetak

Jezik i kultura dva su usko povezana pojma, kako u svakodnevnicima, tako i u nastavi engleskog jezika. Također, oba se pojma nalaze u udžbenicima, glavnom izvoru informacija i učenja u službenom procesu nastave. Postoje različiti načini proučavanja udžbenika i kulturološkog sadržaja u njima. U ovom radu, proučavanje zastupljenosti kulturološkog sadržaja u tri udžbenicima počiva na principima semiotičke analize. Cilj je ovoga istraživanja analizirati udio kulturološkog sadržaja u udžbenicima engleskoga jezika. Nadalje, radom se procjenjuje kvaliteta odabranih primjera koji sadrže elemente kulture te ukazuje na njihov mogući doprinos u stjecanju znanja i širenju svijesti prema kulturološkim sadržajima kod učenika srednjih škola. Istraživanje je pokazalo da sva tri udžbenika imaju dovoljnu zastupljenost kulturološkog sadržaja, no da se međusobno razlikuju u njegovom prikazu i učeničkom angažmanu. Nadalje, analiza sadržaja pokazuje da potencijal tekstova nije u potpunosti iskorišten jer je većina popratnih zadataka isključivo lingvistički orijentirana.

Ključne riječi: semiotika, kultura, udžbenici, analiza

## **1. Introduction**

Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is more of a rule than an exception in today's society. Many resources help in acquiring and learning the language, but the first and the most important one is certainly a textbook. The role of the EFL textbooks in general, and their cultural content in particular, are the main topics of this paper. This paper introduces a semiotic approach to analysing the representations of the cultural content of EFL textbook materials. Unlike the traditional linear approach to textbook analysis, a semiotic multimodal approach exploits a more comprehensive picture of the cultural meaning potential as well as often neglected aspect of language learners' involvement in texts and visuals imbedded in the framework of a pedagogic task.

When thinking about language learning, it is crucial to notice the importance of learning not only grammar and vocabulary, but also the culture of the target language. Under the concept of culture, one can think of many complex and unique attitudes, beliefs and customs of a particular group of people speaking a particular language. In order to understand and learn a foreign language, it is important to learn and deliberate about its culture, as well as to raise the awareness regarding its aspects. Researchers have argued that culture and language are two sides of the same coin and therefore inseparable (Brown, 2000; Mitchell & Myles, 2004; Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino & Kohler, 2003). If we consider culture as an integral part of the language, it has to be one of the integral parts of textbooks, too. The aim of the paper is to apply a semiotic approach in the analysis of the cultural meaning potential of EFL textbooks for secondary school learners. The analysis through the semiotic perspective lens will be oriented to multimodality and examination of a semiotic framework comprised of texts, images and tasks. In addition, analysis will include semiotic principles and describe possible ways of meaning-making processes regarding the cultural content.

This research paper consists of two parts. The first part provides a theoretical base for the second, practical part. Firstly, it defines semiotics and basic terminology, from the beginnings to nowadays' modern semiotic approach. It focuses on the semiotic analysis and multimodality in literature, especially in textbooks. Furthermore, it explains the concept of culture and specific relationship between culture and language. Lastly, it provides insights into the use of textbooks for EFL learners and emphasizes the importance of teaching and learning culture. The most important findings are outlined in the conclusion along with a note on practical implications and some recommendations for future studies.

The second part of the paper is the semiotic analysis of texts, images, and tasks related to the elements of culture found in three textbooks for EFL secondary school learners that are currently used in Croatia. The goal is to highlight the relationship between texts, images and tasks and point to its potential contribution to the acquisition of students' cultural knowledge and awareness.

## **2. Theoretical background**

### **2.1. Semiotics – defining the term**

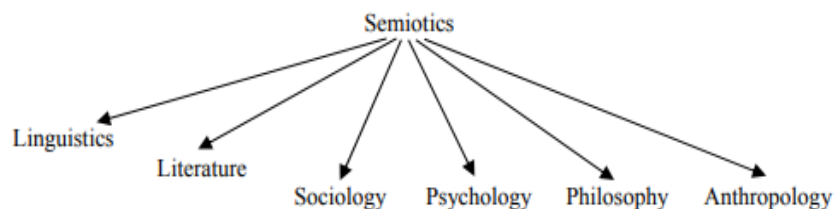
In order to understand many definitions and tasks of semiotics, it is necessary to start with the most comprehensive and the shortest definition. As Chandler (2007) proposes, semiotics is the study of signs that include words, sounds, and even body language. Chandler (2007) also describes the main task of semiotics, which is the study of meanings, their emergence, and relationship with reality.

Signs and their non-scientific study exist from the very beginnings of humanity. According to Danesi (2004), the first term was *semeiotics* and the founder of Western medicine, Hipocrattes, coined it for medical purposes. The symptom of a certain disease was considered a *semeion*, or in other words, mark or physical sign. The first theory of signs, according to Danesi (2004), was written by St. Augustine when he defined natural sign, conventional sign, and sacred sign. Natural sign is found in nature (colours of plants), conventional sign is made by humans, and sacred sign contains a message from God. One relevant fact about St. Augustine's theory of signs is the explanation of the process of understanding. Namely, the understanding of the signs depends on social conventions and subjective experiences, knowledge, and reactions.

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, semiotic is 'a general, philosophical theory of signs and symbols that deals especially with their function in both artificially constructed and natural languages and comprises syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics. Cambridge online dictionary defines semiotics a bit simpler when calling it 'a study of signs and symbols, what they mean and how they are used'. Another definition is offered at the Encyclopaedia Britannica where semiotics is defined as 'semiology, the study of signs and sign-using behaviour.'

Chandler (2007) emphasized that semiotics became more important and popular when Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce had laid the foundations for the emergence of science and offered their own definitions. When talking about semiotics, Saussure (2011: 16) claims that 'a science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be a part of social

psychology and consequently of general psychology ... *semiology* would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them'. Pierce (1934) describes semiotics as a doctrine of signs we observe through process of abstraction, very similar to logic. Therefore, Chandler (2007) concludes that Saussure and Peirce are co-founders of semiotics in general, although a term *semiology* is more often used when talking about Saussurean tradition, while *semiotic* refers to Peircean tradition. Charles W. Morris (1938, as cited in Chandler, 2007:4) accepts Saussure's definition, but considers the term 'science' within the definition of *semiotics* ambiguous and misleading, He further argues that semiotics does not include empirical methodology or assumptions that are widely accepted in the scientific world. Roman Jakobson (1968, as cited in Chandler, 2007: 4) defines semiotics as the one that 'deals with those general principles which underlie the structure of all signs whatever and with the character of their utilization within messages, as well as the specifics of the various sign systems and of the diverse messages using those different kinds of signs.' Regardless of the numerous attempts, successes and failures in defining semiotics and doubts that semiotics as such follow today, Chandler (2007) emphasizes its uniqueness that is manifested in numerous theoretical stances and sciences like linguistic, psychology, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and media theory that are included in the field of semiotic work (*Figure 1*).



*Figure 1. Semiotics and related fields of study (Kumral, 2013: 33)*

### ***2.1.1. Semiotics and linguistics***

The relationship between linguistics and semiotics was questionable for years and many scientists gave their opinion on the subject, especially with emphasis on structuralism. Jakobson (1990, as cited in Chandler, 2007: 5) considers that language is a semiotic system that '...must take into consideration also applied semiotic structures, as for instance, architecture, dress, or cuisine ...any edifice is simultaneously some sort of refuge and a certain kind of message.' Structuralism in this

case helps and requires going below the surface of a sign itself. Thus, Levi Strauss searches for myth and totemism, Lacan searches for new and deep structures in unconsciousness, and Barthes in grammar. Chandler (2007) explains that semiotics draws on concepts of linguistics because of Saussure's influence. Saussure (2011: 16) advocates that semiological problems can be brought out only by the appropriate study of languages because the language itself is one of the most important systems of signs. Many others also agree. Jakobson (1970, as cited in Chandler, 2007: 5) describes the language as central human semiotic system, while Benveniste (1969, as cited in Chandler, 2007: 5) observes the language as a system for interpretation of all linguistic and non-linguistic systems. As the last example, let us consider Levi-Strauss' definition (1972, as cited in Chandler, 2007: 6) of language as 'the semiotic system *per excellence*; it cannot but signify and exists only through signification.'

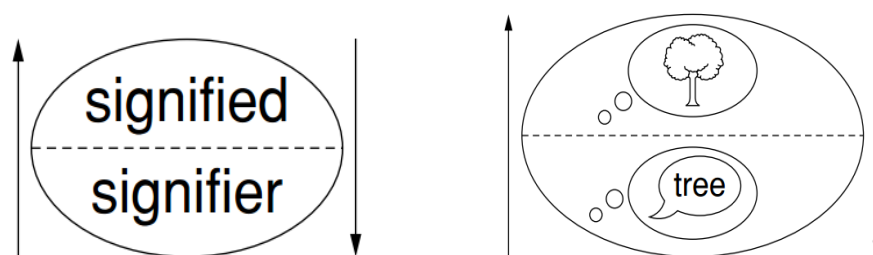
### ***2.1.2. Basic terminology - Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce***

A word *sign* accidentally entered the English language in the thirteenth century. As Danesi (2004) says, a *sign* was at first a word related to a gesture or motion, while in the early 1390s English merchants used signs to label their premises. In Europe were especially popular place signs with the owner's name over the door. Danesi (2004: 4) offers a broader definition of *a sign* claiming that '[it] is anything - a colour, a gesture, a wink, an object, a mathematical equation, etc. - that stands for something other than itself. The word *red*, as we saw, qualifies as a sign because it does not stand for the sounds *r-e-d* that comprise it, but rather for a certain kind of colour and other things.'

Both Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce made their models of what constitutes a sign. As Chandler (2007) mentions, humans have desire to make meanings out of everything. One way of creating meanings is through interpretation of signs around us. According to Peirce (1931-58), people think only in symbols and signs of mixed nature, which eventually allows them to create concepts of their own thoughts. Each sign in itself has no meaning until a person makes it meaningful. Therefore, signs as words, images, sounds, flavours, or objects have no intrinsic value or meaning unless we give them a meaning. That is the explanation of one of the most important Peirce's statements regarding signs. Namely, 'nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign' (1931-58) and everything can become sign only if someone interprets it as signifying.

### 2.1.3. The Saussurean model of sign

Saussure's model of sign consists of two parts and it is primarily focused on words as a linguistic sign. Saussure (2011, 122-123) defines a sign as a composition of a *signifier* and a *signified* or, in other words, as a link between a sound pattern and a concept. The sign represents one whole that is a result of relationship between a signifier and a signified, often called *signification*. Saussure made a simple representation of his sign model and Chandler (2007) explained it by using a linguistic example of a word *tree*, which is shown in *Figure 2*. Each sign, according to Saussure, has its own value only in relationship with others signs.



*Figure 2. Representation of the Saussure's sign model (Chandler, 2007: 14, 15)*

To emphasize the importance of the context and the relationship of all parts for value of a particular sign, Saussure (2011: 113) uses the analogy with chess and explains:

In addition, the idea of value, as defined, shows us that to consider a term (*sign*) as simply the union of a certain sound with a certain concept is grossly misleading. To define it in this way would isolate the term from its system; it would mean assuming that one can start from the terms and construct the system by adding them together when, on the contrary, it is from the independent whole that one must start and through analysis obtain its elements.

### 2.1.4. The Peircean model of sign

In contrast to Saussurean model of sign, Charles Sanders Peirce offered a three-part model of signs which consists of the representamen, an interpretant, and an object. Chandler (2007) says that the representamen is actually the form of the sign, an interpretant is the sense, while the object is something to which sign refers. In one of his notes, Peirce (1931-58) writes about the unity of what is presented, how it is presented, and how it is interpreted (*Figure 3*).

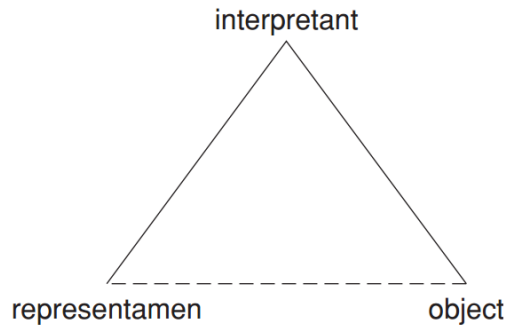


Figure 3. Pierce's semiotic triangle (Chandler, 2007: 30)

As Chandler (2007) emphasizes, there is a broken line at the base of the triangle, which indicates that there is no necessarily observable relationship between the representamen and the object, or the sign vehicle and the referent. It is interesting to notice that Peirce uses the term *representamen*, while Saussure a *signifier* when referring to a sign. The interaction within the semiotic triangle is called semiosis and it is crucial for the understanding a particular sign. Danesi (2004: 16) defines semiosis as 'the brain's capacity to produce and understand signs'. Umberto Eco (1976, as cited in Chandler, 2007: 31) often uses semiosis to refer to the way in which it leads to the series of potential interpretations. Finally, in order to understand the meaning of the semiosis, Chandler (2007) mentions meaning-making process and synonyms like signification and signifying practices.

Except the obvious difference between Saussure's and Peirce's sign theory (one being dyadic and the other being triadic), the most important to point out is Peirce's commitment as far as the detailed typology of signs is concerned. Peirce (1931-58) divides the signs into three modes: symbol, icon and index (Figure 4).

	<i>Icon</i>	<i>Index</i>	<i>Symbol</i>
Signify by	Resemblance	Causal connection	Convention
Examples	Pictures, statues	Fire/smoke	Flags
Process	Can see	Can figure out	Must learn

Figure 4. Three modes of signs (Berger, 2005: 3)

Symbol is a sign in which the signifier does not resemble the signified because their relationship is completely conventional and learned. Chandler (2007) gives examples of symbols and mentions language in general, alphabet and traffic lights. Furthermore, icon is type of a sign in which the

signifier is perceived as resembling the signified, and the examples for icons are usually portraits, cartoons or imitative gestures. Last, but not least, index is a sign in which the signifier is directly connected to the signified, like natural signs, medical symptoms, pointers or recordings.

### **2.1.5. Semiotic analysis**

Semiotics is broadly defined as an interdisciplinary study that includes all kinds of communication. Because of the belief that everything can be analysed semiotically, Berger (2005) emphasizes that some semioticians call semiotics ‘the queen of interpretative science.’ Based on the previous research findings, this part of the paper describes the meaning and the process of the semiotic analysis. It also gives an overview of the use of semiotics and semiotic analysis in many fields ‘that involve or are concerned with communication and the transfer of information (Berger, 2005: 4).’

Firstly, what is interesting is the connection between semiotics and linguistics, or semiotics and language in general. In his research paper, Kumral (2013: 32) applies a semiotic approach and offers the following explanation of the relationship between semiotics and language:

Language is a virtual communication system composed of verbal signs, namely words, already stored in long-term memory of the members speaking the language concerned. When words are considered as verbal signs with their arbitrarily assigned meanings used for any purpose of communication in any setting, semiotic becomes the main focus of the whole issue, concerning itself with all domains of language using ranging from semantics to pragmatics, literary studies, social and scientific studies, and the like. Even one word in any social setting with all its context features (...) can be treated as a sentence communicating across whatsoever intended to convey the verbal message.

Semiotics and language are impossible to separate as they can be combined in so many different ways. Each word in the language contains the meaning and it is simultaneously presented by the symbols, in this case, alphabetic signs. Semiotics is often regarded as a tool for textual analysis, and in that case, it becomes part of *structural analysis*. As the name says, structural analysis focuses on the structural relationship between all parts that are functional in the signifying system. Chandler (2007) says that structuralism as such puts special attention on identification of the constituent units within the semiotic system, studies the structural relationships between them, and examines the relationship between part and the whole. As for the semiotics and its application in



analysis, here are the most prominent scholars who used it in various fields: Barton Beebe (2003) used semiotic analysis for studying trademark law, C. Marlene Foil (1989) investigated corporate language, Gemma Penn (2000) was dealing with the analysis of still images, and Massimo Leone (2004) used semiotic analysis for study of religious conversions and identity. Apart from these, there are still many areas where semiotic analysis can be applied.

### **2.1.6. Denotation and connotation**

Denotation and connotation are terms used in semiotic analysis for describing the relationship between the signifier and the signified. Denotation, as Chandler (2007: 137) states, ‘tends to be described as the definitional, literal, obvious or common-sense meaning of a sign. In the case of linguistic signs, the denotative meaning is what the dictionary attempts to provide.’ According to Cambridge Dictionary denotation is ‘the main meaning of a word, not including the feelings or ideas that people may connect with the word.’ Danesi (2004: 12) gives an example of denotation by explaining a word *square* and says that ‘the word *square* denotes a figure consisting of *four equal straight lines that meet at right angles*. It is irrelevant if the lines are thick, dotted, 2 meters long, 80 feet long, or whatever. If the figure has *four equal straight lines meeting at right angles*, it is identifiable denotatively as a *square*.’

On the other hand, connotation is a term that is used to describe ‘a feeling or idea that is suggested by a particular word although it need not be a part of the word’s meaning (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/connotation>). Danesi (2004:12) gives an example of this extensive process by using a word *house*.

The <i>house</i> is in session	=	<i>legislative assembly, quorum</i>
The <i>house</i> roared with laughter	=	<i>audience in the theatre</i>
They sleep at one of the <i>houses</i> at Harvard	=	<i>dormitory.</i>

Danesi (2004) also emphasizes the importance of connotation for semiotics and semiotic analysis in general. Namely, unlike denotation, connotation allows us, as those who interpret a sign, to be more creative. The importance of connotation is widely recognized within contemporary semiotics, which claims that the vast majority of signs and their meanings are actually culturally based. A brief and concise representation of all the important characteristics is shown in *Table 1*.

<b>Denotation</b>	<b>Connotation</b>
Literal	Figurative
Signifier	Signified
Evident	Inferred
Describes	Suggests meaning

*Table 1. Comparison of denotation and connotation (Berger, 2005: 77)*

### **2.1.7. Intertextuality and codes**

When analysing a text, advertisement, book, movie or any other medium, there are many kinds of signs appearing in written and oral words, like sound or visual images. Alev Fatoş Parsa (2005: 2) explains:

Semiotic analyses of the images in the visual means of mass communication, that is cinema, television, video images, posters, magazine and newspaper advertisements may help us to reveal their innate messages. Of all the approaches used for the analysis of visual images, the most popular one is the semiotics.

Another term, closely related to semiotics and semiotic analysis, is the term intertextuality. ‘Intertextuality as a standard of textuality refers to all the related texts that create a formidable background for the reader to understand and interpret the text better (Kumral, 2013:37).’ Chandler (2007) states that intertextuality often offers necessary context and helps in process of recognition. In a semiotic sense, *context* is related to environment and a more detailed definition would imply the term of the situation and/ or the process in which the interpretation occurs.

Together with intertextuality and context, it is impossible not to mention codes as an important part of semiotic analysis and semiotics in general. According to Danesi (2004: 21), ‘codes guide interpretation into *context*.’ Out of many types of codes, Danesi (200) mentions language, clothes, music, and gestures as an example. Parsa's (2004: 849) definition of codes as ‘the meaning systems shared by the members of a culture’ is by far the closest to our perception of the term, and as such

will be further exploited in the semiotic analysis the of the cultural representation in EFL textbooks in the second part of this paper.

### **2.1.8. Multimodality**

From the very beginning, human communication occurs through signs. One of the best examples are hieroglyphics, written languages of ancient Egypt, well-known for its images that represented sounds and objects. In today's modern time, we also communicate through signs with a help of 'multiple representational and communicative modes (Chen, 2009).' *Multimodal* as a term, according to Merriam-Webster, means to involve several modes into something. Van Leeuwen (2005: 281) describes it as 'a combination of different semiotic modes - for example, language and music – in a communicative artefact or event.' In this case, several modes are included in the process of communication. The combination of different modes such as oral or written language, images, sounds, and gestures allows people many different meaning-making processes and conclusions, depending on a context.

It is obvious that, in this case, it is all about connecting various elements into one coherent whole that can be precisely interpreted by means of semiotics and semiotic principles. As Anna Maria Lorusso (2015) says, semiotics is interested in identifying and defining the link between what is shown, the content itself, and what can be achieved. Precisely because of this, semiotic point of view has the capacity to study and analyse culture, not as an essence or a representation of differences, but as a reality in which we all live.

Before various reviews and definitions of culture are outlined, it is important to note how culture is observed from the perspective of semiotics. Namely, according to Lorusso (2015: 13), culture '... from a semiotic point of view is not limited to a system of values, ideals, and knowledge expressing *the spirit of the times*, but rather it expresses itself and can be seen in a series of *processes* that give substance to culture, *constitute* it.' In accordance with this way of thinking, Lorusso (2015) sets strong theoretical foundations by claiming that semiotic analysis is concerned with the way in which all elements of culture fit into one and emphasizing what cultural content and culture in general can do, and not what just they represent.

Multimodality is mentioned in this paper because the semiotic analysis of the cultural content in EFL textbooks for secondary school learners is carried out not only with images, but also with texts and tasks. Therefore, multimodality is studied in the educational context, and the analysis of the particular images, texts, and tasks will point to the possibility (or inability) of its contributing to creation of cultural knowledge and/or cultural awareness in students.

## **2.2. Culture and language**

Since the semiotics and the concept of semiotic analysis have already been explained, it is time to pay more attention to another important term related to this paper, namely cultural content and culture in general. This part of the paper gives a brief overview of the concept of culture in the context of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL), with the emphasis on building students' cultural knowledge and raising their awareness. In addition, a strong link between culture and language is further promoted by the relevant authors and their respective research findings.

### ***2.2.1. Definition of culture***

Culture and language are inseparable from each other. Piasecka (2011: 21) says that they are 'intricately interwoven thus teaching and learning a language inevitably involves teaching and learning culture of its users.' Culture is very complex term to explain, so there are many definitions of culture, just as many as scientists, writers, anthropologists, sociologists, and others who dealt with that concept throughout the years.

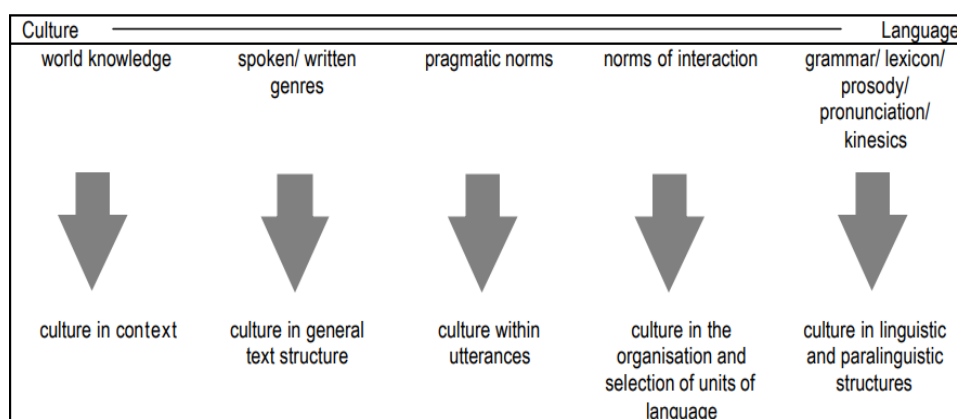
Let us start with a brief overview of the definition of culture. Back in 1998 Kramersch (1988, as cited in Murshed Haider Choudhury, 2013: 20) describes culture as membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings.' Hinkel (1999, as cited in Haider Choudhury, 2013: 20) thinks of culture as many different areas, groups, societies, rituals, behaviours, and lifestyle in general. Brown (2000, as cited in Haider Choudhury, 2013: 20) describes culture as a term for all the ideas, art, customs, and skills that are prescribed to a group of people in a particular time in history. One of the most famous and most accepted definition and categorization of culture was made by Lee and Peterson that refers to the division into Big 'C' and little 'c'. Lee and Peterson (Lee, 2009; Peterson, 2004, as cited in Haider Choudhury, 2013) think that Big 'C' represents culture related to art, history, festivals, customs, geography, and society's norms. Therefore, everything that is visible and somewhat palpable in any sense. On the other hand, little 'c' represents some minor themes like opinions, clothing, food, music, hobbies, and other preferences. Finally, Mohammad Pourmahmoud Hesar et al. (2012) formulated rather connotative definition of culture by comparing it to a puzzle with many pieces.

According to Hesar et al. (2012: 67), ‘each piece – element – must be considered and understood; otherwise, it would not be probable to have a clear understanding and vision of that culture.’

### 2.2.2. Culture in EFL

The issue of culture in English language teaching and learning has been around since the last century, but in the last fifteen years, the topic has been developed in several ways. According to Byram and Grundy (2003: 1), ‘culture in language teaching and learning is usually defined pragmatically as a/the culture associated with the language being learned.’ It is impossible to ignore the strong connection between the language and culture, so it is not surprising that the importance of the cultural component in EFL is greatly appreciated and encouraged. The same is pointed out in Genc and Bada’s paper in 2005. Namely, they think that the study of any language is incomplete if it does not include the cultural components. Also, just like most experts, they argue in favour of the theory that language learning is much more than mere learning of grammar rules and a new vocabulary.

Li Sun (2013) shares their opinion by explaining the main purpose of learning a foreign language, in this case, English. Sun (2013) says that the primary goal is to communicate in the target language, but also to learn customs and tradition of particular community in order to adjust to the society. What is particularly emphasized is the dynamics of the relationship between language and culture. When saying that a language is ‘the primary vehicle by which a culture transmits its beliefs, values, and norms’ (Sun, 2013: 371), it is quite obvious that Sun describes a connection in which it is impossible to imagine the existence of a language without culture and vice versa. According to Si Thang Kieth Ho (2009: 64), ‘there is no level of language that is independent of culture’, and the same is shown in *Figure 5*.



*Figure 5. Points of articulation between culture and language (Liddicoat et al, 2003: 9)*

Let us shortly go back to the part about communication and the purpose of learning any foreign language because a special feature must be added to the definition of communication itself. According to Sun (2013), foreign language learners have to become capable and educated enough to successfully participate in *intercultural communication*. Consequently, students can better demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the language, all because they also understand its cultural background and context. The focus of the next section of the paper is thus not to present various methods and techniques used for teaching culture in the English language, but to show what teaching culture in EFL can bring to the EFL students.

### ***2.2.3. English language in the 21<sup>st</sup> century***

As it has been previous section, culture and language are inseparable concepts that interact with each other. It seems that their special feature is actually tendency to change, so they are constantly developing and spreading influence in many areas.

Due to process of globalization and increasing role of communication in today's contemporary world, the English language has become *Lingua Franca* (Arabski, Wojtaszek, 2011). *Lingua Franca* or the English language used for intercultural communication implies that non-native speakers use English to communicate with native English language speakers and/ or with native different language speakers. During the process of communication, various cultures meet and contribute to mutual enrichment. According to Nizegorodcew (2010, 2011), those who agree with the theory of enrichment, compare the exchange of cultures with agora conversation, where different people and cultures meet, sharing their life stories, and use a unique language, English as *Lingua Franca*, that facilitates their communication. On the contrary, there are those who argue against it, claiming that English as *Lingua Franca* has caused a decrease in cultural diversity and over-accessibility.

Hence, a large number of non-native English speakers use English as *Lingua Franca* for international communication. As Nizegorodcew (2011) thinks, English has become an important factor in creating various cultural contexts and identities of its users who can be considered as a kind of cultural mediators. Knowledge of the English language is obviously more and more required in many areas. Balla (2017: 112, 113) mentions 'various branches of science, engineering, medicine, agriculture, economy, tourism' with the special emphasize on the communication of the

business world where ‘it has become almost a necessity for people to talk in English if they want to join the working forces.’

Given the important role of the English language in today’s society if briefly described, it is time to point out what both, learning a language and culture, can bring to the learners.

#### ***2.2.4. Advantages of learning culture in EFL lessons***

Numerous researchers have studied the connection between language and culture in the learning process of any foreign language. The situation with the English language is somewhat specific because we have seen its importance and usage in today’s world communication. In this case, as Otwinowska – Kasztelanic (2011) says, it is still unclear how much time in English language lessons should be devoted to learning culture, which culture to taught, what topics to choose, and, finally, how to avoid possible stereotyping and prejudice among learners. While many try to find appropriate answers, Otwinowska – Kasztelanic (2011) concludes that all learners, together with the knowledge of language (syntax, vocabulary, grammar), should have a certain knowledge about their own and other cultures. It also implies awareness of possible differences in cultural identity and tolerance to all, especially minorities.

This part describes the useful and positive consequences that all learners of English as foreign language can have only if they are given access to the cultural component of the language. Firstly, Genc and Bada (2005: 75) think that classes that involve culture related topics have ‘a humanizing and a motivating effect on the language learner and a learning process’ because ‘they help learners observe similarities and differences among various cultural groups.’ Sun (2013) mentions teachers, in order to emphasize their role in culture related classes. Namely, motivated teachers have the power to motivate their students, and only motivated students have the opportunity to develop a thinking habit, which is, actually, one of the goals of teaching.

As far as the classes related to the culture of target foreign language are concerned, it is believed that the cultural content itself shown in textbooks, workbooks, or some other teaching materials is not sufficient because their mere observation, and possible filling up of space when it comes to images, makes no sense and has no effect on learners. Therefore, Cakir (2006) advocates longer retention on cultural content and its thorough study, with the aim of developing cultural awareness and critical thinking. This is precisely where the connection to semiotics can be seen. Namely, what is visible at first glance is not important. What is crucial for learners is what they can do with

it, how they can utilize the potential in cultural content and develop the ability to observe, comment, and conclude something based on the given information. Only in that case, Cakir (2006) says, cultural diversities are understood and not underestimated.

Learning a foreign language can sometimes be a challenging experience so learners have to be motivated enough to overcome any possible problems. According to Sun (2013), one of the most common problems that language learners deal with in their process of studying is not grammar or vocabulary, as many think, but the cultural difference. Genc and Bada (2005) claim that majority of EFL learners live in monolingual and monocultural environments. Due to the cultural gap, there is a greater possibility for them to start making wrong judgements about other cultures. Consequently, it is possible that learners begin to perceive other cultures as unusual, strange, and very different from their own, which is quite demotivating for the language learning process. In order to prevent such situations, Genc and Bada (2005: 80) recommend that ‘studying English culture is not an arbitrary, but a necessary activity.’ Moreover, they consider that classes that involve cultural content increase learners’ curiosity, interest, and imagination while giving an appropriate context and cultural background for understanding different behaviours from the perspective of members of other cultures. Ziebka (2011) as well agrees and adds that students of EFL become more open in various situations because they go through a process of acculturation when learning not only grammar and vocabulary, but also culture and its aspects. Besides this, Ziebka (2011: 264) lists additional advantages of learning culture in EFL classes:

While learning a foreign language, students should (...) improve the communicative skills, acquire intercultural competence, become more open in understanding the reality, become aware of the existence of different social variables (age, sex, religion, social class) that influence communication, and have mental desire to know more about the target culture.

The goal, therefore, is to teach EFL learners self-reflection and judgement to be able to participate successfully in intercultural communication with other, different groups. Accordingly, Sun (2013) talks about what all learners need to adopt when learning a foreign language. Firstly, learners have to produce grammatically correct and psychologically acceptable sentences. Also, they have to use correct linguistic forms, and last, but not least, learners have to know how to adjust their language to the socio-cultural context of a particular situation. All this is possible only with the simultaneous inclusion of cultural content in EFL lessons, because, as it has been said, language learning is not only the knowledge of the linguistic theories and grammar, but also the ability to adapt to situations that can be often demanding and unusual due to cultural differences. Cultural component in EFL



classes is the only thing that prevents learners from becoming *fluent fools*, a term that was coined back in 1993 by M. J. Bennet. What is important for moving away from the status of a fluent fool is gradually getting acquainted with the cultural content, but, as Baltaci and Tanis (2018: 268) say, ‘without bombarding students with cultural values’, but through meaningful activities, conversation, and reflection that will serve the development of cultural awareness.

### **2.3. Textbooks in EFL classrooms**

At the very end of the theoretical part of this paper, it is necessary to say more about the textbooks themselves and their application in EFL teaching and learning. Many scholars have researched and written about the importance of textbooks, so it is best to point out some of their views and reflections on the topic. In comparison to other materials, textbooks are considered as the most important source of knowledge and the best and the most organized tool for achieving the goals of a specific foreign language curriculum. O’Keeffe (2013) thinks that textbooks can help in shaping teachers’ and students’ views on subject. In addition, they are the only constant that has been adapted incessantly according to the challenging demands of learning any subject, especially a foreign language. The changes were obviously extremely positive because, according to many experts, textbooks have been improved drastically in recent years, enabling students to gain more knowledge and develop their abilities and skills faster (Wen-Cheng et al., 2011).

Radić-Bojanić and Topalov (2016) think that EFL textbooks nowadays combine traditional and contemporary approaches, but their aim is still the same as it was. Namely, textbooks provide ‘learners with necessary knowledge, language skills and information about English speaking countries’ and prepare them ‘for interaction with people from foreign countries and of different cultural background’ (Radić-Bojanić, Topalov, 2016: 138). According to Cortazi and Jin (1999, as cited in Radić-Bojanić, Topalov, 2016), textbooks can serve as a map because it gives guidelines to students and teachers. In addition, they can be observed as a resource of materials and activities. Furthermore, textbooks are compared with teachers because they give relevant information about vocabulary and grammar. Finally, textbooks can be observed as trainers for novice teachers and they are considered an authority because of the experts and renowned publishers involved in their creation.

When reflecting on this topic, it is impossible not to wonder if all the textbooks used in EFL classrooms are good and suitable for achieving the main objectives of learning English. According to Radić-Bojanić and Topalov (2016) and Wen-Cheng et al (2011), there are textbooks that are an

obvious result of the current policy, and it is increasingly common to notice the attitudes and deliberation of the authors themselves, which can sometimes influence formation of opinion, especially in the case of younger learners. As far as teaching a foreign language is concerned, the fact is that it varies depending on the age of the learners, so it is necessary to adapt the teaching method, as well as the materials and textbooks. Furthermore, it is crucial that teachers and students do not consider EFL textbooks as an end product, but rather a start that directs and encourages further motivation, improvisation, and realization of all potentials (Radić-Bojanić and Topalov, 2016).

### ***2.3.1. Cultural elements in EFL textbooks***

Following the previous chapter, the aims of learning English, and the potentials that can be achieved, it is necessary to briefly mention the experts who have dealt with this topic and their views on cultural content in EFL textbooks in general. It has been mentioned before that culture is an integral part of the language, so inclusion of cultural elements in the EFL syllabus, and thus in textbooks, is essential. Let us first point out the categories of culture in textbooks. Cortazzi and Jin (1999, as cited in Abbasian and Biria, 2017) divided cultural content in three categories, which are:

1. Target cultural materials that mostly imply culture of the USA and/ or the UK,
2. Local cultural materials that consist of display of learners' culture and subculture,
3. International cultural materials that depict culture and cultural specificities around the world, not exclusively in English-speaking countries.

Textbooks as a 'primary and imperative teaching aide for language learning' help learners to 'extend familiarity with the target culture' which results in creating awareness and shaping social and cultural attitude towards differences (Ahmad and Shah, 2014: 12-13). Since English as Lingua Franca is used mainly for intercultural communication, textbooks and teaching materials in general should not be focused only on culture of English speaking countries, rather they should enable learners to develop their intercultural competence (Raigon-Rodriguez, 2018).

### 3. Previous research

In recent years, quite a lot of research have been done on the topic of culture and cultural content represented in EFL textbooks. Lee (2011) studied secondary school textbooks, Yuen (2011) dealt with the analysis of Hong Kong textbooks for secondary school, Rajabi and Ketabi (2012) examined cultural elements in English textbooks used in Iran, Raigon Rodriguez (2018) analysed cultural aspects in EFL textbooks in Spain, and Mayangsari et al (2018) studied cultural content in EFL textbooks in Indonesia.

One of the major problems that has been identified while analysing is the selection of the culture that is presented in the textbooks. Specifically, it has become very delicate to decide why one culture and its aspects should be represented and the other ignored. The answer seems to lie in the context in which the foreign language will be used. Namely, in today's modern society, English is a medium for the intercultural communication, which implies diverse cultural content in textbooks and other teaching materials. Of course, before learning about someone else's culture, each student should develop an awareness of his or her own, as this is the only way to create healthy foundations for the respect and consideration of others (Saville-Troike, 2003, Yuen, 2011, as cited in Raigon-Rodriguez, 2018). Therefore, in order to fully master the component of culture in EFL classrooms, categories of target, local, and international culture should be included, and activities must be carried out in such a way that culture is not only mentioned, but discussed and thought about.

The most relevant studies for this paper are the one conducted by Csilla Wenninger and Tamara Kiss (2013) and Anja Sovič and Vlasta Hus (2016).

Wenninger and Kiss (2013) problematized quantitative approach to the analysis of culture and used mainly qualitative approach to analyse excerpts from two EFL textbooks written by Hungarians and used in Hungarian secondary schools. After emphasizing the importance of teaching culture in EFL textbooks, the authors explained the role of textbooks in language teaching and learning and the semiotic approach used in the research. The main aim was to analyse a cultural meaning potential within the relationship between task, text and image, pointing to the importance of so-called *guided semiosis*, which we will have the opportunity to see in the example in the second part of this paper. The reason behind the selection of secondary school textbooks, lies in the fact that the learners must be familiar with the concept and the meaning of culture. Namely, older learners should understand the term *culture* regardless of its abstractness. In addition, they should be capable to learn more detailed information that include cultural specificities, values, and behavioural patterns (Mihalczyk, 1976, as cited in Deneme et al, 2011).

In the light of all the above, some of the authors' findings are as follows:

1. Semiotic relationship between text, image, and tasks are mainly indexical,
2. The emphasis is on denotations,
3. Some of the examples may lead to cultural stereotyping,
4. *Both* textbooks have many segments of culture included, but
5. Texts, images and tasks have mainly linguistic purpose so that cultural components and connotations are unexamined and their potential is not utilized.

Sovič and Hus also conducted semiotic analysis of English textbooks in 2016, but their specificity was dealing with textbooks for younger learners. Unlike Wenninger and Kiss's study, focusing solely on the cultural component, Sovič and Hus analysed the illustrations in the textbooks intended for children aged 5 or 6. Their research was also qualitative and mainly descriptive. During the research, the authors noticed and showed by example that some illustrations are pointless because young learners cannot decode them. Also, illustrations containing motion devices have a better effect on a learner's brain activity so the authors suggest greater use of them. Finally, all examined textbooks have similar deficiencies and there is still room for progress to make the textbooks more suitable for young learners.

## **4. The present study**

The research unit of the paper consists of two parts. The first part deals with the amount of cultural content in textbooks, while the second part contains semiotic analysis of specific sections that display the cultural content.

### **4.1. Aims and research questions**

Culture is nowadays considered a process, not just a product, so purely quantitative analysis is insufficient for the overall cultural content of a textbook. Therefore, the first part of the research is quantitative and the second part is qualitative. Accordingly, the first aim is to isolate the cultural content found in the textbooks and classify it according to its respective dimensions. The analysis demonstrates how much the textbooks (and the authors) pay attention to the cultural content and what the dominant cultural dimensions are. Secondly, the aim is to exemplify the dynamics of culture and possible ways of interpretation in accordance with some minor changes of tasks. Thirdly, the goal is to show that text, image and task are not three isolated units, but rather one common entity that contains cultural potential. Also, the purpose is to indicate *how* cultural content

can *mean*, or in other words, how text, image, and task can lead the process of interpretation in different directions. Lastly, the intention is to show how good and useful the specific cultural content is in terms of fostering cultural awareness and knowledge.

The classification of cultural content, as well as the description and analysis of excerpts were conducted with the following questions in mind:

1. In what dimension and aspect of culture can the displayed content be classified?
2. How are linguistic and visual meaning-making resources deployed in EFL textbook discourse?
3. What is the basic relationship between the text and the image?
4. Does the semiosis of text, image and task has a cultural meaning-making potential?
5. In what way are text, image and task related to culture represented?
6. Does the semiosis of text, image and task help in building students' cultural awareness?
7. Is the semiosis of text, image and task useful for students' cultural knowledge?

#### **4.2. Sample**

Three different EFL textbooks were analysed. They are as follows:

Soars, L., Soars, J. (2000) *New Headway*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Gilić, M., Pavlović, I., Škarica Mital, I., Tomlinson, A. (2013) *TUNE UP! 2*. Profil International, Zagreb.

McKinlay, S., Hastings, B. (2014) *New Success*. Pearson Education, Harlow.

The first reason why these textbooks were chosen is that they are among most frequently used EFL textbooks for secondary schools in Croatia, which was initially checked and confirmed in the bookstores. All three textbooks are intended for secondary school students, more precisely, the second graders. That is a period when the understanding of culture should already be far different from pure knowledge of some cultural facts and should move towards a critical reflection and perception of culture in its entirety. In addition, during school practice, many of my colleagues and I came in contact with numerous textbooks and noticed the difference in cultural content which varied depending on the time of publication and the authors themselves. Therefore, for the purpose of analysis and comparison, the *TUNE UP! 2* was selected as a textbook written by Croatians and

published in Croatia, while *New Headway* and *New Success*, one old and one new edition, were selected as textbooks written by native speakers of English and published in the United Kingdom.

### 4.3. Criteria and procedure

The main criterion for the first part of the research is an adaptation taken from Mayangsari et al (2018) and exemplified in *Table 2* below, which shows a table with five cultural dimensions and 16 aspects of culture within the dimensions. Each textbook is thoroughly studied through its units, page by page, and then the displayed cultural content is entered in the table, depending on the cultural dimension it belongs to. The results are presented in tables and pie charts by using percentages obtained through *Microsoft Office Excel*. Also, there is a short analysis of the results concerning the representation of the cultural content for each textbook.

No.	Culture Dimension	Aspects
1.	Products	<i>Artefacts</i> : name, food, document, language, money, tool, good/ things, jewellery and hobby. <i>Places</i> : buildings, cities, houses. <i>Institutions</i> : family, law, economy, religion, education, politics, occupation, media, entertainment and conventional institutions. <i>Art forms</i> : instrument, music, clothes, dancing, painting, movie, literature and architecture.
2.	Practices	<i>Operation</i> : manipulation of cultural products, how to use or make the product of culture. <i>Acts</i> : ritualized communicative practices such as eating habit, table manner, behave, and celebration. <i>Scenario</i> : extended communicative practices <i>Lives</i> : stories of culture's members.
3.	Perspective	<i>Intellectual values</i> : thoughts, habits, perceptions, beliefs, traditional values, etiquette, attitudes, ethnics, and ideas. <i>Behaviours</i> : non-verbal behaviour patterns, verbal behaviour patterns, other behaviour patterns, means of communication, and reactions to particular situations. <i>Minor values</i> : public holiday, weather conditions, traffic rules, and travel habits. <i>Major values</i> : history, geography, and philosophy. <i>Formal values</i> : legal system, politics, and the economy.
4.	Communities	<i>Specific social contexts</i> such as national culture, circumstances (e. g. religious ceremonies) and groups (e. g.

		different social clubs, organizations) in which members carry out cultural practices.
5.	Persons	<i>Personal identity and life history.</i>

*Table 2. The constructs of cultural dimension (Mayangsari et al, 2018: 193, 194)*

The entire cultural content and culture related topics in the textbooks are classified in the table. Then, some parts are isolated and semiotically analysed, in order to indicate their quality or lack of quality and possible cultural potential. Consequently, the table contains the cultural content found in the textbooks, while the semiotic analysis includes only some parts with text, image, and task that create one whole. The excerpts that include cultural content, text, image, and task are randomly selected, and then qualitatively analysed and described by using some of the Peirce's semiotic principles. Therefore, the emphasis is on the triadic connection of sign, object, and interpreter. In addition, there is also the division of signs into icons, indexes, and symbols, and the process of semiosis that unites all of the above and forms the meaning.

Five examples form five cultural dimensions were extracted from each textbook. In addition to the examples, there is an analysis and possible direction(s) in interpretation.

#### **4.4. Results 1**

##### ***4.4.1. New Headway***

*New Headway* has got twelve units which are as follows: What a wonderful world!, Happiness!, Telling tales, Doing the right thing, On the move, Likes and dislikes, The world of work, Imagine!; Relationships, Obsessions, Tell me about it!, Two weddings, a birth, and a funeral!. Each unit has got 7 parts intended to give an appropriate language input or develop a certain skill. The parts are divided as following: Grammar, Vocabulary, Postscript, Reading, Speaking, Listening, Writing. As far as content is concerned, it is important to emphasize that the textbook does not have one unit that deals only with culture. In accordance with all the above, the cultural content in *New Headway* is shown in *Table 3* and the graphical representation of cultural dimensions is given below the table (*Figure 6*).

No.	Culture Dimension	Aspects
1.	Products	<p><b>Artefacts:</b> sushi, photographs, the Glockenspiel, Indian food, English food, typical meals of different countries.</p> <p><b>Places:</b> Great Britain, the British Isles, the Bristol Channel, The Wash, Paris, London, Pisa, Venice, Munich, Hotel Plaza, Amsterdam, New York, Columbia, Oxford, Madam Tussauds Museum.</p> <p><b>Institutions:</b> Olympic Games, Buddhism, The Times, family relationships, relatives, education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, zoo, business newspapers, graduation, The National Lottery in Britain, partying, science magazine, radio programmes.</p> <p><b>Art forms:</b> The Seven Wonders of the World, <i>The Bald Knight</i>, <i>The Farmer and His Sons</i>, <i>The Mousetrap</i>, <i>Death on the Nile</i>, <i>The Murder at the Vicarage</i>, <i>Guernica</i>, <i>The Entertainer</i>, <i>The Man Who Planted Trees</i></p>
2.	Practices	<p><b>Operation:</b></p> <p><b>Acts:</b> gambling, taking drugs, smoking cigarettes, gardening, collecting things, sports, leisure activities.</p> <p><b>Scenario:</b> traffic signs, newspaper headlines.</p> <p><b>Lives:</b> nanny, cook, servant, students' exchange, retirement.</p>
3.	Perspective	<p><b>Intellectual values:</b> happiness, stereotypes, good travelling manners, giving money to charitable causes, people's traits, driving habits.</p> <p><b>Behaviours:</b> social expressions, business conversation, arranging a meeting, sending a fax, writing a letter, writing job applications, telephoning, Russian roulette.</p> <p><b>Minor values:</b> winter holidays, weather conditions, travelling habits of Americans, means of transport, driving tests.</p> <p><b>Major values:</b> the Pennines, the Welsh Mountains, the Scottish Highlands, the River Thames.</p> <p><b>Formal values:</b> money, jobs, banks, economy.</p>
4.	Communities	<p><b>Specific social contexts:</b> life of a nun, Americans, French, Japanese, Italian, German, British, hosts vs. guests in different countries, job interview, prisons, life one hundred years ago, relationships, marriage, siblings, life in the city, life in the country, the marriage proposal, birth, death</p>



5.	Persons	<b>Personal identity and life history:</b> Neil Armstrong, Abraham Lincoln, Aesop, Agatha Christie, Scott Joplin, Pablo Picasso, Jean Giono, Madame Tussauds, David Copperfield
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Table 3. Cultural content in New Headway

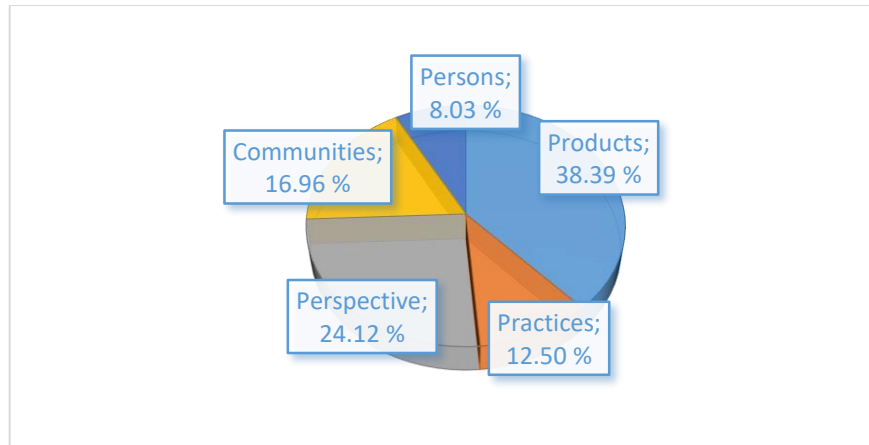


Figure 6. Dimensions of culture in New Headway

Of all the five dimensions of culture, it is evident that the most prevalent dimension is the one involving cultural products. Although the largest in percentage, it still does not take up more than the half of the cultural content in the textbook. The dimension with the cultural perspective is the second most prevalent, followed by dimensions of communities and practices. The least represented dimension is the dimension of persons that does not even make one tenth of the total cultural content in *New Headway*. The dimension of products is was expectedly the most common, mainly because cultural products can be found all around us and are quite easy to display. What is important to point out are the dimensions of perspectives and communities. Namely, their good representation may allude to the authors' attempt to foster cultural reflection, which is always advisable. Thus, cultural knowledge is not only based on pure facts and students are provided with a deeper insight into culture, just as it should be.

#### 4.4.2. TUNE UP! 2

*TUNE UP! 2*, like *New Headway*, does not contain one entirely cultural unit but it has got 6 units which are as follows: Not Just Another Brick in the Wall, Stories From the Past and Present, Our Changing World, Selling Dreams, Right or Wrong?, Bitten by the Travel Bug. Each unit has got 7 parts (A-G) with different topics and with the different aim of developing certain skills, depending on a particular unit. The parts are divided into: A Warming up, B Reading and vocabulary, C Grammar, D Listening and speaking, E Writing, F Bits of..., G Wrapping it up. Also, there are five lessons that are marked as 'Across the curriculum' lessons and they are: 1. From seed to a cup of coffee, 2. A company structure, 3. A profit and loss account, 4. Telephoning, 5. Business correspondence. As far as cultural-related content is concerned, all the findings are outlined in *Table 4* and a graphical representation is given below (*Figure 7*).

No.	Culture Dimension	Aspects
1.	<b>Products</b>	<p><b>Artefacts:</b> food in the Elizabethan Era, fashion and clothing in the Elizabethan Era, clay tablets, cuneiform script, hieroglyphs, wooden tablets, papyrus, parchment, the printing press</p> <p><b>Places:</b> Van Gogh Museum (Amsterdam), Archaeological Museum (Zagreb), Science Museum (London), The Grammy Museum (Los Angeles), The Museum of Broken Relationships (Zagreb), The Egyptian Museum (Cairo), Tate Modern (London), Museum of Musical Instruments (Berlin), The Natural History Museum (London), PEEK &amp; POKE (Rijeka), The Uffizi Gallery (Florence), Prado Museum (Madrid), Louvre Museum, Musee d'Orsay (Paris), American Museum of Natural History (New York), Museum of Bad Art (Pittsburgh), MoMA (New York), Guggenheim, the Shire, the Middle-earth, Lake Balaton, Great Lakes, Canada, Croatia, Dublin, Ireland, the Emerald Isle, Australia</p> <p><b>Institutions:</b> alternative schools, education in the USA, schools in Dublin, Schools in the UK, schools in the USA, boarding schools, the UK schools system vs. the USA school system, school system in Croatia, adverts, commercials</p> <p><b>Art forms:</b> <i>The Hobbit, the Lord of the Rings, Catch Me If You Can, Spider-Man, Hunger Games, Ace Ventura, Shattered Glass, True Tales of American Life</i></p>
2.	<b>Practices</b>	<b>Operation:</b>

		<p><b>Acts:</b> different households (chores), shopping, cheating, plagiarism, drinking habits, moral behaviour, moral decisions, telephoning, business correspondence</p> <p><b>Scenario:</b> signs, notices</p> <p><b>Lives:</b> a victim of racism, Croatian school exchange students</p>
3.	<b>Perspective</b>	<p><b>Intellectual values:</b> racism</p> <p><b>Behaviours:</b> new technology</p> <p><b>Minor values:</b> travelling habits, holidays, means of transport</p> <p><b>Major values:</b> history of the Elizabethan Era, history of the UK</p> <p><b>Formal values:</b> World War I, World War II, the Rocky Mountains, sectors of the economy, companies, costs</p>
4.	<b>Communities</b>	<p><b>Specific social contexts :</b> the Elizabethan Era, Great Britain - monarchy, Woodstock, Glastonbury Festival</p>
5.	<b>Persons</b>	<p><b>Personal identity and life history:</b> Tutankhamun, Elizabeth I, Elizabeth II, Henry VIII, J. R. R. Tolkien, Roald Dahl, Walt Disney, Aung An Suu Kyi, Coco Chanel, Gutenberg, John Lennon, Elvis Presley, Santa Claus, Steven Spielberg</p>

Table 4. Cultural content in TUNE UP! 2

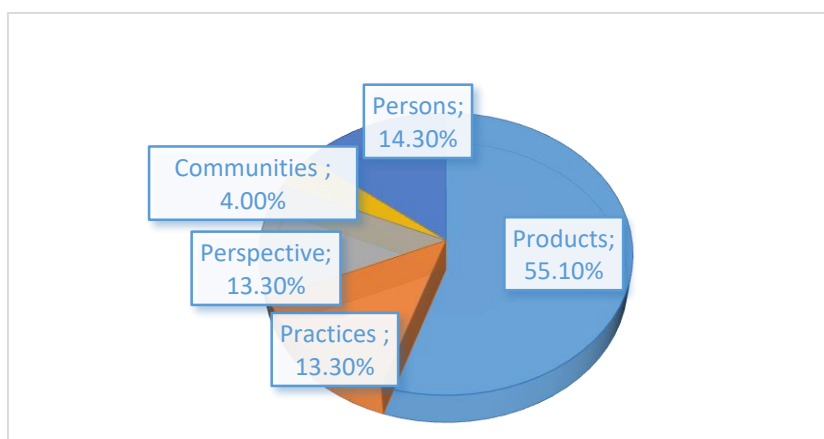


Chart 7. Dimensions of culture in TUNE UP! 2

It is obvious that, in more than 50 % cases, the authors of the textbook based the cultural content on parts that involve different cultural products. Then, the second most common dimension of culture is the one involving politicians, celebrities, scientists, and others whose names associate them with their achievements, culture, and fame in various fields. The dimensions of cultural perspective and cultural practices are equally represented. The fact that these dimensions are represented in only 13,3 % of the cases can indirectly indicate the attitude of the authors who

probably see culture more through its products rather than through, for instance, behaviours, habits, customs, politics, or geography. The last and least represented cultural dimension is related to communities. That may also indicate that the authors have somewhat neglected the social part of the culture, despite the fact that it is very relevant, especially in modern times where social and cultural diversities are more and more emphasized.

#### 4.4.3. *New Success*

*New Success* has got twelve units: One of the gang, Keep in touch, Outside the law?, His and hers, What a disaster!, Animal magic, Nobody’s perfect, Getting away, Feelings, True art, Looking good, and The hard shell. Each unit has got six parts that are divided into: Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing. The textbook does not have one cultural unit, but it has three lessons called Culture shock that are dedicated to Great Britain. Culture shock 1 is named *British things to say* and it deals with the most common British phrases and language in general. Culture shock 2 is called *Budget London* and the main topic is London with its famous sights, museum, galleries, and tourist information. Culture shock 3 is named *British sports around the world* and it deals with sports like football, tennis, cricket, rugby, golf, and hockey. All the findings of cultural content are listed in the table below (*Table 5*) and the graphical representation is given in *Figure 8*.

No.	Culture Dimension	Aspects
1.	Products	<p><b>Artefacts:</b> teen fashion, computers, gadgets, hi-fi systems, clothing, beauty, fashion, tattoos, burgers</p> <p><b>Places:</b> youth hostels, Carbisdale castle, the Chain Bridge, Budapest, Saint Stephen’s Basilica, The Parliament, Margaret Island, the Castle District, Szechenyi Baths, Japanese Garden, Taj Mahal, Europe, Science Museum, Natural History Museum, British Museum, Museum of London, Fashion and Textile Museum, Sherlock Homes Museum, Design Museum, National Gallery, TATE Modern, ICA, Courtauld Institute Art Gallery, Royal Academy, Greenwich, Tower Bridge, St. Paul’s Cathedral, HMS Belfast, Westminster Abbey, Tower of London,</p>

		<p>Buckingham Palace, London Eye, London Aquarium, London Dungeon, Madame Tussauds, holiday homes</p> <p><b>Institutions:</b> science, boarding schools, high schools, single-sex schools, day schools, coeducational schools, zoo, independent schools, state schools, trends in education, advertising</p> <p><b>Art forms:</b> classical music, photo exhibition, Wonders of the World, <i>Unknown woman, Mona Lisa, Anna Karenina</i>, opera, classical music, pop music, <i>Alice in Wonderland</i></p>
2.	Practices	<p><b>Operation:</b></p> <p><b>Acts:</b> vandalization, shop lifting, music piracy, household, exciting sport activities, chores, marriage proposal, hygiene, exercise, shopping, football, rugby, cricket, tennis, golf, hockey</p> <p><b>Scenario:</b></p> <p><b>Lives:</b> freshmen, gangs, family life, having pets</p>
3.	Perspective	<p><b>Intellectual values:</b> gender differences, relationship between personality and colours, gender stereotypes, thoughts about human civilization, emotions, shopaholism</p> <p><b>Behaviours:</b> means of modern communication, writing personal letters, teenage behaviours, British things to say</p> <p><b>Minor values:</b> travelling by plane - instructions, means of transport</p> <p><b>Major values:</b> environment pollution, natural disasters, history of life on Earth, seas and oceans, Danube</p> <p><b>Formal values:</b> crime, punishment, trials, jail, fine, jobs, career</p>
4.	Communities	<p><b>Specific social contexts:</b> the Middle Ages, the Renaissance</p>
5.	Persons	<p><b>Personal identity and life history:</b> Ivan Kramskoi, Leo Tolstoy, Henry Moore, Simon Starling, Austin O'Malley, George Constanza, Mark Twain, Lewis Carroll, Queen Elizabeth the First, Coco Chanel, David Beckham, Victoria Beckham</p>

Table 5. Cultural content in New Success

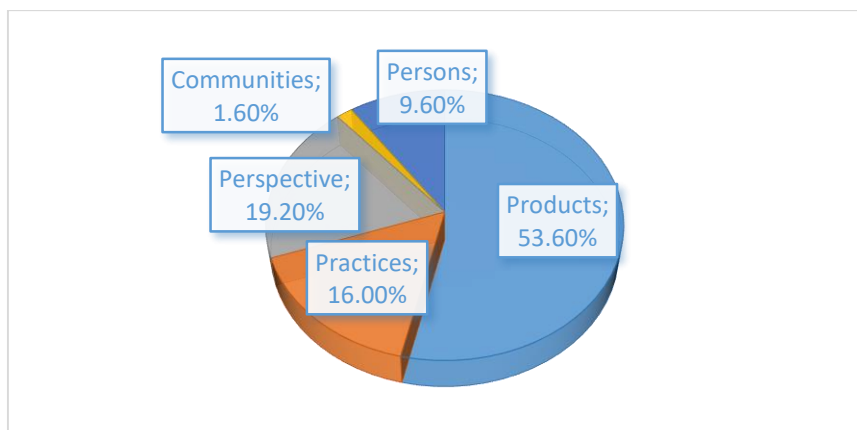


Figure 8. Dimensions of culture in *New Success*

As is the case in the previous two textbooks, the cultural dimension of products dominates the rest. Then, the second most represented dimension is the dimension of perspective, followed by the dimension of practices. The dimension of persons is not even 10 %, which is quite small compared to *TUNE UP!*. In addition, there is a surprisingly low representation of the dimension of communities, especially when compared to *New Headway*. This textbook, and above all its authors, clearly had the greatest need for highlighting the cultural products, and only later they pointed to the cultural content of perspectives and established practices. So, although a recent edition, *New Success* over-emphasizes only one dimension of culture, the same as *TUNE UP!*. In spite of the fact that this is the only textbook that has separated lessons devoted specifically to culture, the centralization of cultural content to only one major dimension does not contribute much to the utilization of its cultural potential.

#### 4.5. Results 2


Previous analysis in Section 4.4. has found that cultural content in chosen textbooks exists and that it appears across different cultural dimensions. This research sets out to determine the quality of cultural content by using a semiotic approach. The qualitative analysis of the selected examples is conducted and the results are presented below. The examples are shown first and the analysis follows afterwards.

### 4.5.1. New Headway

**Test your grammar**

1 Make questions with *you* from the sentences.

Example  
I come from Australia. (*Where?*)



a I live in a flat near the centre of town. (*Where?*)  
b I speak three languages. (*How many?*)  
c I'm learning English because I need it for my job. (*Why?*)  
d I've been to France, Germany, Sweden, and the United States. (*Which countries?*)  
e I was born in Dublin in 1961. (*Where? When?*)  
f I've been learning English for three years. (*How long?*)  
g I have two brothers and a sister. (*How many?*)  
h I've got £10 in my pocket. (*How much?*)  
i I went to the cinema last night. (*Where?*)  
j I'm wearing jeans and a jumper. (*What?*)

In pairs, ask and answer the questions about *you*.  
Tell the class about your partner.

#### Example 1. New Headway, page 6, task 1

The first example from *New Headway* is found in Unit 1, called *What a wonderful world!* (Example 1). It can be seen that the instructions go solely in the direction of practicing grammar and asking questions. Therefore, grammar testing can be considered the only aim of this task. What, then, is the purpose of the illustration and can it have any meaning? Firstly, it is necessary to describe what is shown. At first glance, a kangaroo and two people. The people ask a kangaroo question in the way students should form their own. It is easy to see the proximity of the illustration to the word *Australia*, which is not a coincidence. As one of the symbols of Australia, the kangaroo is presented to fit the context of the example sentence 'I come from Australia'. Do text, illustration, and task help in gaining cultural knowledge or encourage students to explore Australian culture? Probably not, especially because the illustration itself restricts students and their connotations related to Australia only to kangaroos. Hence, cultural meaning of kangaroos for Australia is completely suppressed and ignored by the task. What cannot be disputed is the fact that the illustration certainly catches the attention of students because it is between a large amount of text, but that is all it really serves for. Would students know how to form questions and answer them without the illustration? Yes, it can be argued with great likelihood that the illustration is not necessary for students to complete the task. Namely, this is the first task that students should be confronted with at the

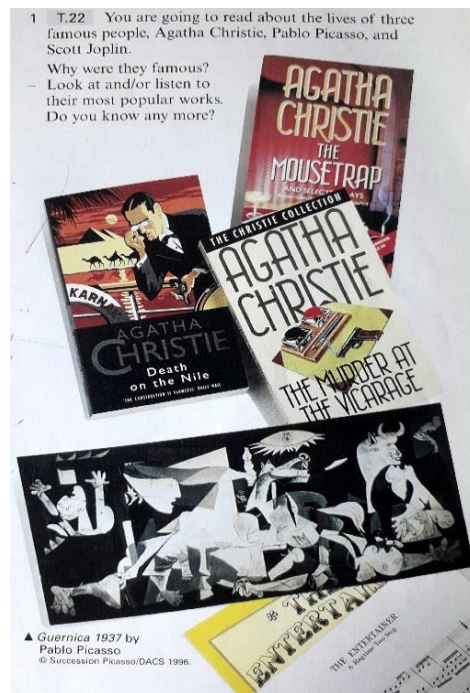
beginning of the school year, and it should be used as an introduction and revision. Accordingly, this illustration is only an interesting space filler and it cannot be interpreted differently.



Example 2. New Headway, page 22, task 1

The second example is from the Unit 2, called *Happiness* (Example 2). The illustrations shows different sports and leisure activities and the same is literally written in the task, which emphasizes denotational meaning. Moreover, the words *sports* and *leisure activities* are somewhat in indexical relation with the illustrations because one points to the other. The task itself does not lead to the expansion of students' cultural knowledge, but hypothetically, with some spare time for research, it could be a great starting point for finding some interesting information about the origin of sports or popularity in certain countries. In this case, the illustration itself does not motivate students to explore cultural interpretations, but a teacher can have an important role by recognizing the importance of sport for the culture of particular country and adding some additional questions. Therefore, the cultural potential is not visible at first, but that is precisely what is being sought through this work. With a different ways of interpretation and some minor changes, this task can serve to develop the students' cultural knowledge of sport. The assumption is that the students could solve the task without the illustration, but in this case, it serves them as a help, not just as an example to look at. Therefore, it is good that it exists, especially as a starting point that students can refer to when solving a task.





Example 3. New Headway, page 29, task 1

The next chosen example can be found in Unit 3, entitled *Telling tales* (Example 3). It is marked as pre-reading task with two parts. In first part that is presented here, famous people from the world of literature, painting, and music are mentioned (Agatha Christie, Pablo Picasso, Scott Joplin). They are very famous artists and most of the students should be familiar with them. Still, photos of their works are placed in close proximity, according to the order in which they appear in the task. It can only be argued to some extent that the relationship between the words and the photos purposefully reinforces denotational meaning. Namely, the task does not indicate the interest of these famous people, but rather leaves it up to the students to find out for themselves with the help of photos. Therefore, the photos are there for a reason, but the assumption is that some students with broader general knowledge would be able to complete the task without them. In addition to the photos, there are several questions that allow students to express their previous knowledge and develop additional connotations. Obviously, this is a great example of task, text, and photos that have got sufficient cultural potential to allow students to talk and develop their cultural awareness. The fact that the second part of the example, which is not shown here, encourages a discussion about the nationalities of the artists and period they lived in, indicates that this is a task made for cultural, rather than the linguistic purposes.



*Example 4. New Headway, page 36, task 2*

The next example is found in Unit 4, entitled *Doing the right thing (Example 4)*. It deals with different signs and their meanings. One can notice all three types of Peirce's sign classification which are probably not theoretically known to the students, but can be seen in daily life, and students have certainly encountered them at least once. The signs are as follows: smoking, photographing, parking and fire prohibition, information about the passport control, a welcoming sign, signs with information about the prices and the about the skateboarding prohibition, 'fasten your seat belts' sign, and black cherry yoghurt cover. As far as cultural potential is concerned, this example certainly has it, especially since the signs often differ depending on the culture. The most of those signs are actually symbols, where there is no resemblance between the signifier and the signified because their relation is culturally conditioned and learned. This example is certainly interesting for students and the images are necessary to complete the task. The fact is that word *sign* and images are indexically related and that the task at the beginning reinforces denotational meaning, but it does not diminish the possibility of creating new connotations while finding the meaning of each individual sign.

Work in pairs.

1 Look at the cartoons. What nationalities are the people? What makes it easy for you to identify them?

2 What is the stereotype English man or woman? What do you think is the stereotype for your nationality? Do you believe in stereotypes?

3 Which adjectives in the box do you think go with the nationalities below? Use your dictionary to check new words.

hard-working	easy-going	punctual	friendly
reserved	emotional	lazy	outgoing
hospitable	sociable	formal	casual
enthusiastic	quiet	tolerant	talkative
sophisticated	well-dressed	fun-loving	respectful
humorous	serious	nationalistic	romantic

<b>American</b>	<b>Japanese</b>	<b>German</b>
<b>French</b>	<b>Italian</b>	<b>British</b>

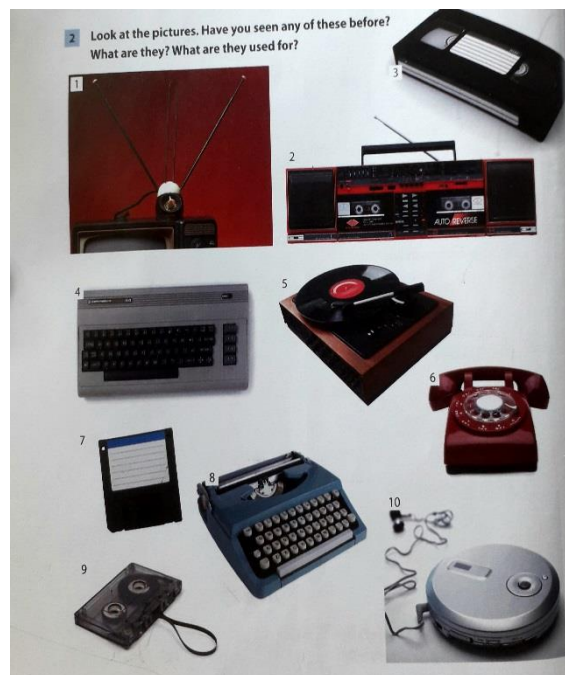
Is your nationality one of those above? If so, which adjectives did you choose? If not, choose some adjectives which you think go with your nationality.

*Example 5. New Headway, page 39, task 1*

The last example from *New Headway* is from Unit 4, *Doing the right thing* (Example 5). It deals with different nationalities which immediately indicates cultural component. There are four images, or as written in the task, cartoons depicting people of different nationalities. First of all, it is noticeable that words in task and images are indexically related, one point to the other. What is the sign and what is the object depends on the students and their recognition abilities. In view of the above, some nationalities are easier to identify, such as the Germans, who are shown in the first image, wearing typical Bavarian clothing. For the rest of the images, there are little things (like *The Times*, eating pasta, or French poodle) that reveal nationality, but they may not be known to all students. In this case, all three tasks related to the images are intentionally shown because they must be viewed as a whole and not as separate parts. It can be noticed that the images attract attention so it is likely that students will make their own interpretation before looking at the instructions in the task. There is also an explicit reference to the images in the task so it can be assumed that students would not be able to carry out the task if the images were not present. On the other hand, students could solve task number three without the images, but it is difficult to determine would it be their own opinion or the influence of other factors. Namely, it is possible that students' personal experience would play a big role, while there is also a great influence of

history and media that represent nationalities differently, which can lead to even greater emergence of stereotypes. If, in this case, stereotypes are seen as a possibility of creating connotations, then this example is moving in a positive direction. However, it seems that the text, images, and task subconsciously reinforce cultural stereotypes, rather than serve as base for classroom discussion regarding different cultures, habits, and life-styles.

#### 4.5.2. TUNE UP! 2



Example 6. TUNE UP! 2, page 48, task 2

The first example for *TUNE UP!* is from the Unit 2, called *Stories from the past and present* (Example 6). What is shown are various artefacts typical for a particular culture, nationality or historical period. It is interesting that at the beginning of the task there is no mention of artefacts, therefore words and images are not indexically related, allowing students to create their own connotations or maybe metaphors and metonymies on the subject. Obviously, this is an example with sufficient cultural potential. All the objects presented in pictures are of great cultural significance and students are immediately instructed and motivated to explore it. The task prompts a brief conversation, which can result in broadening of cultural awareness, especially for students who would not recognize all the artefacts. This task is intended as an introduction, so it is a favourable hypothetical scenario that some students share their experiences in case they had the opportunity to see some artefacts in person, especially those in Croatia. There is an explicit

reference to the visual material in the task, so it is a good base for reinforcement of cultural knowledge and a stimulus for potential further research or class projects.

**A** reading and speaking

## ON DISPLAY

1 What is in the pictures? What do objects in the pictures have in common?

1 2 3 4  
5  
6 7 8 9 10

**VOCABULARY STOP!**

An **artefact** is an object that was made by a person and is historically important, for example the burial mask of Tutankhamun, or the archeological findings from the ancient city of Salona, near Split. When an artefact becomes part of an exhibition, it is called an **exhibit**.

*Example 7. TUNE UP! 2, page 28, task 1*

The next example is from Unit 3, entitled *Our changing world* (Example 7). It contains 10 photos of different technological items and gadgets popular in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The items are: television antenna, VHS cassette, a radio, a turntable, a typewriter and an old computer, floppy disk, radio cassette, landline telephone, and discman. First of all, it is important to notice that words in task and items represented in photos are not indexically related. Indeed, the items are not even named, which makes the whole task much more interesting, especially from the cultural point of view. The assumption is that students might be immediately drawn to the photos, which gives them enough space to create their own connotations and interpretations of given objects. This task is primarily about building vocabulary, but definitely has got cultural potential. A situation that is possible, perhaps even inevitable, is the emergence of a pronounced cultural and generational gap while commenting on photos and items, primarily because the textbook is used by a generation of students who were not even born when these items were part of everyday's life. In view of the above, this example can be a great starting point for conversation about life or practices, and can motivate students to explore and learn more even within their own families.



Example 8. TUNE UP! 2, page 76, task 1

The example from Unit 4, *Selling dreams* (Example 8), shows pictures of shopping malls, shopping, and discount notices. At first glance, this example has got cultural potential, since shopping habits certainly fit into the culture of a particular nation, and they also greatly vary from nation to nation. It is visible from the beginning that words and images are indexically related, which means that the purpose is to reinforce denotational meaning. Considering that there is an explicit reference to the visual material, it is possible that students would be able to identify the pictures by themselves. In addition, they could develop connotative meanings depending on their own experiences. In this case, they are literally told that the pictures represent shopping places and what is required is only their description and nothing else. Therefore, the full utilization of cultural potential may also depend on the teacher, additional questions and task. Without additional activities, cultural potential is not utilized, although the topic is close to students, especially because of modern cultures of consumerism, sales, and shopping.




Example 9. TUNE UP! 2, page 82, task 1

Another example is found in the Unit 4 (*Example 9*) and it shows four posters that serve different purposes. Such posters are extremely important in advertising, so it is not surprising that the word *advertising* is in the close proximity to all four photos. Given that there is no direct and literal mention of posters in task, words and photos are not indexically related, while pointing to the visual materials allows different interpretations, connotations, and metaphors. This task, along with other that follow, is actually intended for cultural, rather than linguistic purposes, and there are many hypothetical scenarios to utilize its potential. Questions motivate students to further explore the meaning of the posters and compare them to their own culture and advertisements. The semiosis of text, task, and image certainly helps in building cultural awareness and is useful for building cultural knowledge. Namely, these are world-renowned posters and the assumption is that second-year high school students would know some information about them. After all, even if all students are not familiar with the cultural background and the importance of the posters, this example makes a good opportunity for conversation and interpretation.

**3** Look at the three photos of people travelling. Compare and contrast them using the following ideas:

- » the means of transport (price, comfort, speed)
- » type of people (age, what they do, personality traits)



*Example 10. TUNE UP! 2, page 104, task 3*

The last example from *TUNE UP!* is in Unit 5, called *Bitten by the travel bug* (*Example 10*). It shows three photos of people travelling by different means of transport and in different circumstances. Given that instructions at the beginning clearly mention people and travelling, there is no place for further connotations and the purpose is to reinforce denotational meaning, again. However, additional sentences below the photos that should encourage students to reflect on what is presented can also be the beginning of a conversation that touches the cultural aspect. Because, indeed, travel habits are a great part of the culture and can vary depending on age, occupations, financial abilities and other similar aspects. Therefore, the semiosis of text, photos, and task has got cultural potential and can contribute to the spread of cultural awareness, especially if students have time to share their own experience. Namely, some of them have probably traveled

abroad so their anecdotes or advice how to behave in a particular country would certainly make this example more culturally accessible.

#### 4.5.3. *New Success*



**SPEAKING AND LISTENING**

1 In pairs, describe the photos and answer the questions.

- 1 What do you think meal times are like in the two families? Say what the children can/can't do and what they have to/don't have to do.
- 2 Which family is more similar to your own?

#### *Example 11. New Success, page 36, task 1*

The first example for the analysis from *New Success* is found in in Unit 4, *His and hers* (*Example 11*). There are two photos showing two families, parents and children, having meal. The photos are quite different, especially according to the time of day and the way of eating. Right in the beginning, the instructions in task point to observing the photos so they are the basis for further conversation. Words and images are not indexically related so the purpose is not to reinforce denotational meaning. On the contrary, the task encourages connotations and self-interpretations of the photos, which is evident through the fact that students are asked to compare the represented families with their own. Given the cultural differences are certainly depicted, it can be concluded that this task is intended for more cultural, than linguistic purposes, and serves as an introduction to conversation about families, family time, and important meals in the day that vary from one nation to another. The task, therefore, has cultural potential and helps to spread cultural awareness, but it is necessary to warn of a possible counter-effect. Namely, students might create prejudices about particular nations, but that can also be the basis for further research of the culture of dining in various parts of the world.



**1** In pairs, look at the photos and answer the questions.

**1** What can you say about the schools? Use the words below.  
 comprehensive/high school boarding school/day school  
 single-sex/coeducational free/fee-paying independent/state

**2** What sort of school is more popular in your country?  
**3** Do you think that girls or boys should go to different schools or not? Why?



*Example 12. New Success, page 38, task 1*

This example (*Example 12*) is also from Unit 4 and it deals with different kinds of schools around the world. So, the two photos show two types of schools, single-sex and coeducational school. The task explicitly mentions schools as the main topic, while the same is quite noticeable from the photos. Thus, it can be concluded that the words and photos are indexically related, and it depends on the students what they will first notice as an object, words or photos. This is also an introductory task, but it has tremendous cultural potential. Students may be drawn to the photos before they read the task above them, probably because it is an environment familiar to them. This example serves to develop vocabulary and disseminate knowledge about other people's culture and education. What is particularly interesting is the fact that this task encourages and motivates students to share their opinions and make arguments, which ultimately results in understanding of other views and acceptance of diversity. Hence, the semiosis of text, photos, and task triggers many interpretations and serves as a starting point for critical discussion.

**6** In small groups, look at the photos and give your opinions on the works of art. Use the expressions below.

It looks like ... It could be ... I don't get it.  
 I think the artist is saying that ...  
 I really like the ... It's absolutely amazing.  
 I'm not sure what it is. It reminds me of ...

A What do you think of the sculpture by Henry Moore?  
 B I think it's fantastic!  
 A What do you think it means?

**1** Henry Moore

**2** Simon Starling

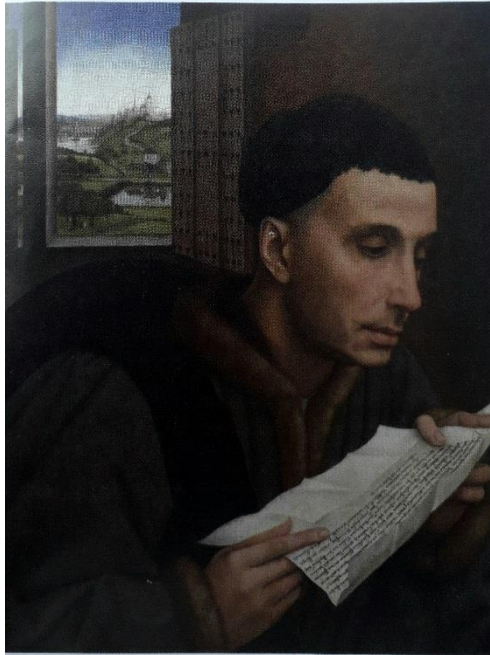
*Example 13. New Success, page 88, task 6*

In the example found in Unit 10, *True art (Example 13)*, there are two photos of two works of art. Students are instructed to look at the photos and give their opinion on the subject by using the given expressions. In the beginning, there is also indexical relation focused on denotation. The photos serve as a basis for conversation, and it is obvious that they represent the dimension of culture that involves works of art, but apart from works being shown and their authors being named, there is no incentive for students to find out more proven facts. There is an explicit reference to the photos in the activity, so it is assumed that students would not be able to carry out the task if the visual material was not present. However, the fact is that it does not need to be material that represents the arts, since students at this level of learning should be able to express their opinions regarding anything offered and displayed. The shown works of art are unusual and will certainly attract the attention of students, but the example itself is more intended for linguistic rather than cultural purpose, so the deeper cultural meaning is suppressed and ignored.

GD4.1 Look at the picture. In pairs, answer the questions using modal verbs and the ideas below. Listen and check your ideas.

- When do you think the picture was painted?
- Which country do you think it shows?
- How old is the man?
- What's his job?
- What do you think the paper is?
- Why do you think he looks so serious?

painted in 1450/1900 be a lawyer/artist  
show the USA/the Netherlands  
be 35/50 years old  
be a love letter/business letter  
received some interesting news/  
forgotten his glasses




*Example 14. New Success, page 121, task 9*

One more example from Unit 10 (*Example 14*), contains a picture together with ideas and question for students to think about and give their answers. Right in the beginning, students are instructed to draw attention to the picture, which indicates the indexical relation of words and image displayed. Thereafter, students are asked to come up with different associations prompted by the questions. This example is actually an introductory part of the listening activity and, although at first glance it has got cultural potential, it is not utilized at all because the task serves for linguistic purposes and practice of modal verbs, as seen in the instructions. The semiosis of presented content does not particularly help the acquisition of cultural knowledge. Aside from the given ideas that display some simple facts about the picture, it does not motivate students to find more information. Of course, this introductory activity could not be done without the picture, but much more than a few facts is required to prevent the cultural content being suppressed and ignored. A possible scenario that could utilize cultural potential of this example to some extent would be a task that

follows afterwards in which students would have time to learn more about the picture and its author, or compare it with other works of art.

**8** Read the article and complete the text. Match sentences a–f with gaps 1–4. There are two extra sentences.



## URBAN GYM

- Are you bored with weight-training in crowded, smelly gyms? <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_ If so, our urban gym classes are the answer!
- Inspired by *parkour* (or free-running), urban gym is an exciting way to exercise in the open air. During a typical class we run, climb, jump, hang, crawl and roll using everything from walls and steps to street signs and lampposts as exercise tools. <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_
- Urban gym is an unusual but very effective way of keeping fit. <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_ No special clothing or equipment is required – just some comfortable trainers, a T-shirt and tracksuit trousers.
- Our classes take place on three evenings a week and cost as little as £7 a session.
- Why not come and see for yourself? <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_

a Do you prefer exercising in the comfort of your own home?  
 b In fact, the city centre itself becomes our gym!  
 c It's a fantastic opportunity to see some beautiful countryside.  
 d Do you enjoy jogging but sometimes wish it wasn't such a lonely way of keeping fit?  
 e It's also a great chance to meet people and discover parts of the city you never knew existed.  
 f New members are always welcome

*Example 15. New Success, page 113, task 8*

The last example is from Unit 12, *The hard sell* (Example 15), and contains an article about urban gyms, a photograph with its representation and questions regarding exercising that should be put in gaps within the article. The instructions at the beginning of the task do not point directly to the topic, but rather it is learned from the title, which leaves enough space for students to create their own connotations. The photo shows people using street signs and city area for exercising. The semiosis of text, photo, and task indicates a new trend, which belongs to one part of the culture of

a particular community. Therefore, this example has cultural content and potential, but it serves for linguistic purposes and does not motivate students to find more about new trends in exercising. Also, it does not help in building cultural awareness because the cultural meaning of urban gyms for different urban areas is completely ignored. Finally, there is no explicit reference to the visual material so it can be concluded that the students would be able to carry out the task even without the photo which is, by all accounts, put only as a space filler.

#### **4.6. Discussion**

This study showed that the most common dimension of culture presented in the chosen EFL textbooks for secondary school learners is the dimension of products. In two of the three textbooks, the dimension of products makes more than 50% of the total cultural content. The cultural content varies depending on the authors and place of publication. Namely, it is evident that *TUNE UP! 2*, published in Zagreb, contains parts of Croatian culture and civilization, so the assumption is that it is much more accessible to students in Croatia. In all three textbooks, as seen from the quantitative analysis, the greatest emphasis is on cultural facts so it seems that it is important to mention culture (or some culture-related information), but not to allow students to reflect on it. Therefore, while it may be possible to think that Croatian students who use *TUNE UP! 2* are at an advantage over others, a mere mention of cultural facts does not lead them into an enviable situation. Moreover, if students are unable to express themselves and reflect on the culture and its impact, it does not matter if their own culture is mentioned or anyone else's. But, what does the qualitative analysis show?

When it comes to semiotic analysis of randomly chosen examples, the results of this study do not differ from the study conducted by Wenninger and Kiss (2013). It is revealed that EFL textbooks for secondary school learners in Croatia mostly contain indexical relationships between texts, images, and tasks which indicates an emphasis on denotative meanings. All three textbooks contain cultural content, but it is not fully utilized because it does not allow students to create their own associations and interpretations. Thus, students are also limited in logical thinking, which can eventually lead to entrenched attitudes and stereotyping. In order to avoid this and to make some examples more culturally oriented, teachers can play a big role. From the perspective of a future English teacher, one considers it necessary to emphasize the importance of fostering independence and expressing one's own views when discussing topics related to cultural content. Of course, it is clear that not all examples are intended to teach culture, and it has been shown that most of them

serve purely linguistic purposes, but if they contain cultural elements, then the activities should be directed towards their utilization for the benefit of the students. As far as images are concerned, since they are indexically related with texts, most of them are necessary, but some have been proven to be space fillers and do not serve their purpose. That is one of the proofs that teaching materials, especially textbooks, should never be chosen solely by visual elements but by the synthesis of all the elements that fully perform their functions.

Looking at the results of semiotic analysis, one can determine the following: a total of 15 randomly selected examples were analysed. Indexical relationship of text and image that implies denotative meaning was found in 8 examples. Taking into account that in 2 examples shown images serve solely as an interesting space fillers, it can be concluded that only 5 examples do not emphasize the semiotic indexical relationship of text, task, and images. Of all the examples selected, space fillers were not found only in *TUNE UP! 2* and only 2 examples contain indexical relationship and the emphasis of denotational meaning. Also, it can be concluded that *TUNE UP! 2* has multiple examples with direct cultural content that has the potential to be utilized, with or without teacher's influence. As mentioned several times throughout the paper, this study was based on the analysis of cultural potential and impact on students, their cultural awareness and knowledge. Accordingly, the comparison of quantitative and qualitative analysis of selected examples is not in line with the expected results. Namely, it was assumed that textbooks with the highest cultural dimension of products have the lowest cultural potential, but it turned out to actually have the greatest. The most possible reason for this could be tasks and activities provided for the particular cultural content. Therefore, it has been found that *TUNE UP! 2* has assignments that can motivate students to do further research and allow them to talk, express their views, and reflect on cultural topics. Consequently, this paper demonstrates the value and the role of text, image, task and other envisaged activities. Also, it emphasises that text, image and task should not be studied separately, at least not in terms of cultural content, but in semiosis, with all the common functions and meanings.

#### **4.7. Conclusion**

This study is conducted with the aim of exploring and revealing cultural potential of chosen examples in EFL textbook for secondary school learners in Croatia. The analysis is based on the principles of semiotics. The paper thematically focuses on semiotics, cultural content and textbooks, and the results of the assessment revealed the following.

It has been shown that EFL textbooks for secondary school learners in Croatia have a sufficient amount of cultural content. Depending on the cultural dimensions, the dimension of products is most represented in all three textbooks, followed by the dimensions of perspective and/or persons. Other dimensions are represented in smaller number. Related to semiotic analysis, this study has shown that majority of examples contain an indexical relationship between text and images and thus promote a denotative meaning. It is also concluded that most examples do not stimulate students' cultural awareness or motivate them for further research and cultural cognition. The examples are mainly linguistically oriented, so there is no place for cultural connotations and utilization of potentials. What is shown are possible meaning-making processes and hypothetical situations in which specific examples could better use cultural potential, with minor modifications of tasks and activities and with additional teacher engagement. It was also noticed that quantitative and qualitative analysis do not necessarily support one another, so experts should not rely on just one, especially when studying such a complex concept as culture. Ultimately, it is advisable to study the semiosis of all the elements and their functions in order to get the insights that would not be possible if text, image, and task were studied as separate units.

## **5. Pedagogical implications**

Teaching and learning English as a foreign language is very important in Croatia. As Prpić (2009) says, since 2003, one foreign language has become mandatory from the first grade of primary school education. Therefore, pupils learn first foreign language, mostly English, for eight years of primary school and through their secondary school education.

Learning English is considered important for students' development and maturation, and some of the effects that learning has are the following: intellectual development, development of critical thinking, broadening perspectives about cultures, and shaping students' personality. In addition to understanding, reading, speaking, and writing in English, there are other aims to be achieved according to the curriculum. Specifically, when learning English, students should get 'acquainted with elements of culture and civilization of the Anglo-Saxon world (as part of language skills) with the aim of understanding linguistic and cultural messages and developing tolerance among cultures (Prpić, 2009: 286).' Judging from the studied examples, secondary school students certainly have the opportunity to get acquainted with cultural elements, and what is particularly significant is that they do not learn only about the English-speaking culture, but about different

cultures of countries around the world. What is not fully achieved is allowing students to develop logical reasoning and a critical attitude towards some elements of culture. Also, the semiosis of text, image, and task rarely encourages students to discover new cultural facts independently. The textbooks have sufficient cultural content, but its potential often cannot be utilized, especially if there is no change of tasks or teacher's intervention that could lead the example toward better cultural exploitation. Accordingly, the textbook should not be the only teaching material in English lessons and tasks should be expanded and related to the cultural content. Finally, given the examples shown, it is highly recommended that EFL teachers do not choose textbooks based on the appeal of the visual elements, as some of them do not fulfill their purpose.

## **6. Further research**

Further research concerning this topic is certainly advisable, especially since the semiotic analysis offers many other different approaches and interpretations. More textbooks from different publishers should be included in the analysis to further highlight potential differences. It would also be useful and informative to compare textbooks of all four secondary school grades in more schools in Croatia to obtain more accurate and comprehensive data. What should be emphasized is the semiosis of texts, images, and tasks, which can be explored through some of the more accurate approaches, especially in the case of a large number of examples. Lastly, in order to fully explore and understand the cultural potential of EFL textbooks in Croatia, descriptive approach in the analysis cannot be neglected because, as shown, quality is still more relevant than quantity.



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