THE ANALYSIS OF EFL COURSEBOOKS FOR THE PRESENCE OF CULTURALLY-MARKED ELEMENTS - IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING PROCESS

The article reports on the results of the investigation into the effectiveness of English foreign language coursebooks in developing a student’s L2 cultural competence. All in all, they present a very broad picture of the target culture as far as the most important cultural aspects are concerned. They are successful in showing people in everyday situations, in typical places, celebrating festivals, tracing lifestyles of famous people. Nevertheless, there are a number of issues worth addressing while assessing the value of cultural input of EFL coursebooks.

Following Brown and Rodgers (2002), the author of the present study would like to emphasise the significance of evaluation studies, pointing out three areas of benefits evaluation research can bring: first, it is needed for educational planning; second, it uses both qualitative and quantitative research techniques; finally, its results can be immediately applied in school reality - the producers of the materials used for educational purposes can immediately take advantage of evaluation research findings and introduce the changes into newly published coursebooks.

With the above ideas in mind, the author would like to suggest a number of possible applications of her investigation to make the process of developing a student's L2 cultural competence more efficient. The recommendations concern mainly the content of English foreign language coursebooks as far as cultural elements are concerned, but the suggestions also touch upon the issues of educational policies and teacher training practices.

As far as English foreign language coursebooks are concerned, the author strongly supports Wendt's (2003) view that 'language is learnt in context and any approach to research on language learning needs to take this fully into account' (Wendt 2003: 92). Thus, finding an answer to the question how to broaden the context of learning is a key to make the process of developing cultural competence more effective.

Since 'contexts and their interpretations are usually understood as being culturally determined' (Wendt 2003: 95), developing diverse learning environments (e.g. computer software and internet sources) contributes to a globalization of learning contexts (Wendt 2003:93). The learning context for a foreign language student comprises both classroom situation (e.g. coursebook, teacher, other students) and external context, understood as stimuli from outside classroom (e.g. TV, radio, press, books, the Internet). The role of the external context in developing cultural competence, however, is different for various students. For many, classroom remains the main educational context either because they have limited
access to other sources or their proficiency in the foreign language is not high enough to use the sources available. The problem concerns mainly beginners for whom the information available on TV or the Internet is too difficult to be processed. For them, coursebooks remain the main source of knowledge.

The most significant changes recommended by the author of the present report concern the content of all the components of the teaching materials set. Nowadays, most foreign language courses consist of the following components: Student's Book, Workbook, cassettes or audio CDs and Teacher’s Book. English foreign language Student's books analysed by the author proved to contain numerous cultural elements whose aim is to develop a student's L2 cultural competence. However, the results of the analysis show that some aspects of cultural competence remain untouched, e.g. elements of non-verbal behaviour, and some others have only a limited coverage in the books under analysis, e.g. art or literature. The reason for this could be the difficulty in including non-static aspects in a paper form (non-verbal behaviour) and a limited number of pages a coursebook can have (art, literature or history).

The author's suggestion to solve the problem is publishing the coursebooks in the form of CD-ROMs or increasing the significance of the ones published already. Many courses are advertised as student-friendly resource books, accompanied by modern technology. In fact, teachers often use all the material included in a Student Book to make things clear, which shows that the idea of a coursebook as a resource does not work. In order to make it effective, coursebooks should offer much more extensive material than the students can use in the classroom, leaving some areas of interest to students' individual learning. A coursebook published in a paper form for obvious reasons cannot satisfy the above needs. That is why the author suggests intensive use of CD-ROMs, which are able to hold much more material without the need to make the books heavier or more expensive. It would be the teacher's role to choose the obligatory part of the material for classroom education and to guide students through the remaining part of the CD-ROM.

The idea of using CD-ROMs for foreign language education is not a new one. Many publishers are currently introducing CD-ROMs or MULTI-ROMs as helpful course components. However, apart from including additional grammar or vocabulary exercises, the authors of foreign language courses could also take advantage of the technological possibilities CD-ROMs offer: they are able to present native speakers in real-life situations. The author of the present report finds it a good idea to use CD-ROMs for such purposes that paper coursebooks fail at (e.g. presenting the elements of non-verbal behaviour). When students read a dialogue included in the book, the result is far from reflecting real-life situation: students use English words but at the same time they employ their own pronunciation and intonation patterns, pause where they think it is necessary and use their own body language. CD-ROMs could help students to develop cultural competence by enabling them to participate in real-life situations. In this way two educational priorities of the 21st century – foreign languages and computers – could combine for students to achieve best results.

The ideas for CD-ROMs presented above could make the learning process more individual, adjusted to the needs and interests of students. They could be beneficial for teaching mixed-ability classes or working with multiple intelligences techniques. Using CD-ROMs, apart from learning a foreign language through formal instruction, students could experience some elements of second language acquisition being submerged in L2 culture. The changes that affected foreign language coursebooks in the past forty years (since the first globally used English foreign coursebook First Things First was published in 1967) can be considered
significant in some fields (e.g. layout) but merely superficial in some others (e.g. teaching language and culture). Together with the advances in technology, the financial support of the European Union in developing educational programmes and the wide recognition of the importance of teaching foreign language in the context of culture, educators and coursebooks writers currently face the challenge of producing a new generation of teaching materials. The author of the present article hopes her ideas could be of some help.

As far as the content of cultural elements in English foreign coursebooks is concerned, the author advocates keeping the balance between various categories. Most of the coursebooks under analysis focus on everyday culture, providing a very limited coverage of the elements of high culture. Instead of getting into one of the two extremes, it is advisable to provide the material covering both aspects in a balanced way. Similarly, the amount of explicit and implicit cultural input provided by foreign language coursebooks should be comparable.

Cultural topics included in foreign language coursebooks can motivate students to undertake individual investigations into comparing cultures and encourage them to observe, analyse, contrast and think independently. Many coursebooks now take advantage of cultural issues and include them explicitly in the form of Culture pages. There is a danger, however, that overusing cultural elements without introducing other topics, such as animal world, technology or science, may bring boredom to a foreign language classroom. In the author's opinion, a coursebook Interaction is quite monotonous in this respect since in each unit Polish authors focus on cultural aspects, disregarding non-cultural topics. On the other hand, coursebooks introducing English for professionals (e.g. English for Medicine or English for Engineering) avoid cultural issues to emphasise the global nature of English for Science. However, the professionals not only work inside their laboratories but travel for international conferences as well, which makes them use English appropriately in various everyday situations. That is why the author suggests keeping the balance between the elements of the course content.

However, the most important suggestion concerning the cultural content of EFL coursebooks is that they could be less stereotypical. In the author's opinion, it is not only London that students are interested in but a variety of places as well. And even if London is the main focus of a given unit, the topic could be covered from a multicultural perspective of people living there rather than resemble a stereotypical guidebook for tourists. Similarly, the authors of foreign language coursebooks could avoid stereotypes covering other cultural aspects. What is more, they could reconsider the idea of introducing so many names of top actors and musicians or titles of films and songs. Since it is only a stereotypical teenager who is interested solely in such issues, coursebooks should be interesting and challenging for all the students, not only the mainstream ones. One of their basic roles, apart from being an instruction manual, is to educate students - not only in foreign languages but in values and attitudes as well.

Taking all the above suggestions on coursebooks cultural content into consideration, it is also necessary to redefine the teacher's role in foreign language education. To be able to cope with such complex tasks and still keep high standards, teachers need regular in-service training. Currently, coursebook publishers organize workshops for foreign language teachers; however, even if disguised as methodological training, their main aim is to advertise a given coursebook, which – needless to say – can be regarded as their obvious drawback.

To develop a student's L2 cultural competence teachers themselves must be culturally competent. At present, many teachers are reluctant to teach language in the context of culture
because they lack both the knowledge and the necessary techniques. If cultural aspects were to find an important place in foreign language teaching as many researchers and educators suggest, teachers would need additional help in upgrading their abilities. In the foreign language teaching/learning process a teacher, apart from having a traditional position of a language instructor, would take the role of a leader or a guide who, knowing both the coursebook-resource and the student's interests, could navigate students through culturally significant material. Thus, not only students but non-native teachers as well would require systematic development of L2 cultural competence. *Teacher's Book*, as a component of every foreign language course, can be helpful in providing teachers with both cultural knowledge and the techniques that can be used in teaching culture. Teaching culture is a challenging task, especially when teachers have limited time (e.g. two or three lessons a week) but may become a powerful motivating factor (e.g. for mixed ability classes, bored students, or the ones who cannot achieve success in learning grammar).

The issues discussed above included the author's suggestions for the content of cultural elements in EFL coursebooks as well as the regular in-service cultural training that teachers of English should have the possibility to participate in. Now, the author will try to compare her findings with the European Union policy on languages. Breidbach (2003) states that in the field of language politics, educators and politicians agree that European integration needs linguistic diversity to succeed. The national languages of the member states and the many regional languages within the EU need to play - as they actually do for many individuals in the many contexts – an active role in people's lives. Any form of linguistic dominance through other languages or negligence of one's own language is regarded as a serious obstruction of the path towards integration. (Breidbach 2003:81)

Teaching English language and culture, many EFL coursebooks frequently refer to Polish culture as well. This procedure seems to be consistent with the European policy on languages which encourages comprehension of what is diverse and different through the medium of one common language. *Socrates*, the European Union educational programme, promotes language diversity on one the hand and using English for communication on the other hand. Breidbach (2003) notices that the integration paradox is also at work in the field of language policy and foreign language education. While the widespread use of English points towards increasing linguistic unity, multilingual education is considered necessary to preserve cultural diversity. (Breidbach 2003:82)

Polish educational policy reflects European policy on teaching foreign languages. The number of classes of a foreign language per week has already been increased in Polish schools and since learning languages is a priority at the beginning of the 21st century it can be expected to be further increased in the future. It is the task of teachers, educators and coursebook writers to make the change qualitatively and not only quantitatively significant.

As Tomalin and Stempleski (1993:3) claim, 'it remains doubtful whether culture, high or low, can really be taught, though generations of learners have been taught about culture'. They designed a resource book *Cultural awareness* to show what teachers can do to raise student's awareness of cultural factors. The aim of the activities included in the book is 'to sharpen observation, encourage critical thinking about cultural stereotypes, and develop tolerance.' (Tomalin and Stempleski 1993:3)
The author of the article, describing the aspects of developing students' L2 cultural competence, shares Tomalin and Stempleski's (1993) views on teaching culture by raising students' cultural awareness. This cultural awareness may contribute to the learner's being more open, tolerant and sensitive towards other people. It will also promote better communication and understanding between the speakers of two different languages and cultures.

When children start their school education many of them have primarily egocentric point of view on life in general. They believe that they are the most important members in their family since parents take care of them and satisfy their basic needs. Children can also infer from their own family model that other families are similar, if not exactly the same. Starting school education, they meet other egocentric children and learn how to cooperate with them and, with time, to respect them. In a similar way, a foreign language lesson can open students' eyes on other cultures and teach them tolerance by developing their multicultural awareness.

The author of the present study strongly supports this direction in which teaching language and culture goes where a foreign language coursebook educates not by imposing ideologies but by developing students' attitudes of sensitivity and tolerance. Being open, ready to explore, compare, contrast, analyse, and finally understand are the qualities which are invaluable in adult life. Since it is school's main goal to prepare students for living and working in multicultural contexts of the 21st century, raising their cultural awareness is an important element of foreign language education. Providing students with cultural knowledge, on the other hand, will help to avoid building stereotypes and prejudice since frequently prejudice results from lack of knowledge.

The last issue the author of the present report would like to address is the choice of culture to be taught together with a foreign language. Apart from many aspects of culture commonly recognized as important in foreign language education (Byram 2003, Tomalin and Stempleski 1993) the question remains which culture or cultures should be taught in English foreign language classes: English, American, the cultures of English-speaking cultures or the cultures of the world.

In this respect, the author shares Wandel's (2003) opinion that recognizing English as a 'world language',

EFL-teaching must enhance its geographical scope and include non-mainstream cultures. ... Thus areas / countries, so far neglected, will play an increasingly more relevant role. On the other hand, educating students to make use of English as a lingua franca also means to accustom them to being interculturally sensitive. In this context we have to decide whether we should focus on teaching national target cultures or whether an intercultural approach should be applied in which general cultural patterns and structures are introduced. (Wandel 2003:72)

The author of the report tends to adopt the multicultural approach in foreign language teaching but without neglecting L2 national culture. As always, keeping the balance seems to be a profitable solution.

The analysis of EFL coursebooks reveals that there are many English culture elements included in Student's Books, both explicitly and implicitly, whereas multicultural aspects are covered less frequently. Many coursebooks state that Great Britain and the United States of America are multinational countries, but very few explore the issue further. The topics of world cultures are introduced by showing foreigners visiting England rather than minorities.
living and working there. The author of the present study would strongly recommend changing this distorted picture.

The above ideas concerning the application of the findings of the study into culturally-marked elements in EFL coursebooks are the suggestions for the future. Although they cannot be implemented immediately (it takes time to produce a new coursebook), the results of the evaluation could serve as a springboard for further discussion on the role of teaching foreign language in the context of culture. The recognition of the importance of teaching cultural aspects is already visible, since many coursebooks started incorporating culture into their syllabus. The changes, however, need to be deeper.

LITERATURA


THE ANALYSIS OF EFL COURSEBOOKS FOR THE PRESENCE OF CULTURALLY-MARKED ELEMENTS - IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING PROCESS

Summary. The article presents the report on the analysis of English foreign language coursebooks for the presence of culture elements. The author discusses both explicit and implicit ways of developing a student’s L2 cultural competence, focusing on the possible applications of the results of the investigation in EFL teaching.
The paper presents the findings from an examination of selected ESL textbooks for stereotypes and other cultural biases and discusses the potential impact of these biases on students. It posits that instructional materials that do not integrate students' diverse life experiences in the teaching and learning process fail to empower them to identify the missing, misconstrued and misrepresented voices. The methods of analyses used range from content analysis (quantitative and qualitative), multimodal analysis, to CDA. The analysis highlights the marked differences between the schools depicted in the books and the actual schooling worlds of the children. For this, we examined state recommended English course books used in institutions of the Turkish Ministry of Education. As a result of our evaluation, we found that the outer circle (+expanding circle) characteristics occupied a significant place in the content of material designed targeting learners of English. And, this was duly attributed to writers who similarly come from an outer circle (+expanding circle) culture. The course books were selected from a list of EFL text books authorized by. the Ministry of Turkish National Education. The main reason for selecting this. Total Inner and Outer Frequencies of Cultural Elements. From our analysis above, we can observe that the outer circle themes significantly outnumbered their inner circle counterparts. Teaching.materials.and.the.roles.of.EFL-ESL.teachers Practice.and.Theory 2013 - Free ebook download as PDF File (.pdf), Text File (.txt) or read book online for free. Teaching - Materials.and - The.roles - of.EFL-ESL -Teachers Practice - And.theory 2013. Uploaded by. 2ygbk7. 100%(6)100% found this document useful (6 votes). 1K views. 252 pages. Document Information. What are the image-language relations involved in the construction of cultural content? The project involves an analysis of nine course books currently used in teaching English to young learners in Polish primary schools. The data will be collected during the evaluation studies, which here are both quantitative and qualitative in nature. The study is based on a set of universal, content-specific, multimodal and intermodal criteria. It is hoped that the results from the research project will enrich the process of ELT materials design in terms of multimodality. The ELT Course Book as Cultural Artefact: How Teachers Censor and Adapt. In: ELT Journal, vol. 54/3. pp.274-283. Gray, J. 2013. This TG covers the EFL course objectives in different forms: what the students are to learn and to do, what the teachers are to teach and to do, what language skills are to be practised, and what language items are to be learnt. Furthermore, this TG seeks to guide the teachers' practice without being dogmatic. Having these points in mind, it is now appropriate to describe the TG. The Iranian high school TG states that the objective of the EFL course is to help the students acquire communicative competence as well as linguistic competence: "The acquisition of communicative competence is as necessary for foreign language learners as the acquisition of linguistic competence." (Teachers' Guide, Page 70).