

Evaluating English Textbooks: A Cultural Matter

Ximena Bonilla Medina

Universidad de la Salle
Ximenabvonilla@gmail.com

Globalization has brought about many changes in the concept of culture. One of those changes has been directly reflected in the way language is seen in the contexts of foreign language teaching. This article explores how culture has been represented in an English textbook and the way this conception may build students' perceptions about English speaking countries. The argumentation of this study is supported by the analysis of some excerpts taken from a recognized English textbook currently used in several institutions in Bogotá, a survey that shows some teachers' opinions about textbooks and the book under discussion, and the way they evidence culture in them. This reflection searches for a general understanding of the ways teachers can critically evaluate culture in textbooks, therefore, discovering stereotyped visions of culture.

Key words: Textbooks, culture, multiculturalism, cultural representations

La globalización ha traído muchos cambios al concepto de cultura. Uno de esos cambios se ha reflejado directamente en la forma como se ve el lenguaje en el contexto de la enseñanza de lengua extranjera. Este artículo explora cómo se ha representado el concepto de cultura en un libro de inglés y la forma como esa concepción puede construir las percepciones sobre los países de habla inglesa en los estudiantes. La mayor evidencia de este estudio se basa en el análisis algunos fragmentos tomados del reconocido libro de inglés que se usa en varias instituciones de Bogotá, una encuesta que muestra algunas opiniones de los docentes sobre los libros, el texto objeto de análisis y la forma como se evidencia en ellos el tema de cultura. Se busca entender cómo pueden los docentes evaluar la cultura en los textos de una manera crítica y descubran visiones estereotipadas de la misma.

Palabras clave: Libros de texto, cultura, multiculturalidad, representaciones culturales

Introduction

Many times teachers are the responsible professionals who decide which book is best for the context they are working in. An overview of studies in textbooks evaluation focuses on the way they must be appropriate to certain populations, cover certain needs

and objectives and, in general, be suitable for certain students' ages and institutional needs. When teachers have to evaluate the textbook to be chosen, little attention is given to aspects of culture. Teachers limit their evaluations to features such as the kind of visual aids, teachers' resources, organization, attractiveness to students and the like. Although publishers have worked on taking into account those aspects lately, the studies have focused on taking examples of English speaking cultures in order to highlight the stereotypes each culture is well known for. Some of them have broadened their view and shown other cultures more than the ones representative of the English speaking cultures. In this way, to show other lifestyles and get learners involved in the dynamics of behavioural patterns common in various cultures. Some others have tried to involve the Colombian contexts, behaviours and artefacts to make it more familiar to the Colombian culture. However, these perspectives seem to be still insufficient to give account of general implications of culture. Since textbooks constitute one of the main sources for English teachers in the development of their classes and are a source for students' input, it is necessary to analyze the way books display contents, topics and activities, and how they work as representations of realities. In this nature, they are vehicles for images people construct about foreign cultures and personal identities. This article attempts to show an analysis done on an English textbook in order to find out the way it represents culture. The analysis will be focused on the discourse presented in this book including pictures, graphs and the book's organization; also, this analysis will try to answer two core questions: What is the concept of culture displayed in this EFL textbook? and What and how is culture represented in that book?

The Process of Conceptualizing About Culture in Textbooks

In order to start the process of the analysis of the textbook it was necessary to develop three stages: the first stage had to do with conceptualizing what culture means and implies. The second, the way teachers evaluate culture in English textbooks in general and, particularly, in the book under study. The last stage was the examination I made specifically on the textbook.

The Idea of Culture

There have been several assumptions of culture and the concept has suffered transformations over time. There is a record that demonstrates that culture was first

seen as a privilege of the elite. In this sense, Storey (1996) explains that culture is related to intellectual growing from the works and practices of intellectual and special artistic activity. This position states that culture is tied to the idea of educated individuals. In other words, people who have the opportunity to participate in formal education. In this case, only the persons who access a school or a university are cult. However, this vision has changed since it has been judged as narrow when aspects such as costumes and traditions of poor societies are taken into consideration. For instance, lifestyles developed in small communities like Indian tribes might not be classified as culture.

In order to expand that narrow view of culture, a preoccupation for studying popular cultures started to grow. In this fashion, Hebdige (as cited in Strinati, 1995, p. 15) defines popular culture as “a set of generally available artefacts: films, records, clothes, TV programmes, modes of transport, etc. or a list of behaviours and products that are part of the identity of a group of people”. This definition tried to include other dimensions that were excluded from the previous concept of culture which was linked to the study of civilization. However, this second tendency also overlooked intrinsic elements of culture because its attention was focused on cultural products or artefacts. The way to study a culture is directly related to the inquiry about materials that are produced by the members of that culture. For example, food and handicrafts created inside a culture were constructions of their identity, consequently of their culture. Then, they needed to pay attention to other implicit expressions of cultures that were not essentially physical or observable and it was there, when the next type emerged.

Goode, Sockalingam, Brown, and Jones (2000) agree in proposing a definition of culture which embraces a broader perspective. They say that culture is an integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviours of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group. Also, it is the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations. Within this definition, several ideas that were not taken into account in the latter concept are included which amplifies the way a culture can be analysed. The process of observing a culture cannot be limited to viewing superficial elements that are a product of their interaction; the interaction itself is a sense of analysing a culture.

In the same frame, from an anthropological view, culture has been defined as the way of life of a people, the social constructs that evolve within a group, the ways of

thinking, feeling, believing and behaving that are imparted to members of a group in the socialization process (Hinkel, 1999, p. 2). Therefore, the importance given to culture resides in the idea of ways of life which people develop in a group and how these lifestyles become part of the interaction within the members belonging to that society. This conception was stated in the first half of the XX century.

Sequentially, in the second half of the XX century, sociolinguists based their idea of culture on the statement that culture is "...membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings" (Kramersch, 1998, p. 10). In this view, culture is a social construction that deals with a community that shares common features like the language, a place and social imaginings or ideas about reality. As has been explained, culture has multiple views and in order to keep understanding what could be involved in an English textbook in regard to culture, it was also necessary to inquire about the ways culture in EFL classrooms has been perceived. Then, the following section will be dedicated to discussing several of those visions.

Culture Views in the EFL Classrooms

In the case of the English class in our context, culture has been approached basically through the description and comparison of the native language and target language communities. In this sense, appealing to the concepts of culture before World War I when culture was considered as the study of history, geography and institutions of a country. This approach was complemented with the literature of the country and included studying the great accomplishments of the target community in arts, music, drama, as well as scientific discoveries; that was called Culture with a capital C (Stern, 1992). Therefore, in the English class, teachers that worked under these principles tended to interpret culture through the study of historical events, places of interest and organizations that identified the native culture and compared it with the target culture as reported by Gonzales (1990). In this fashion, it is also important to consider the description of cultural artefacts representative for each cultural group. Moving towards understanding culture, then, implied elucidation of those cultural representations in both cultures. Culture with capital C means culture as civilization or culture for the elite.

In contrast with a culture with Capital C, a culture with small c is also stated by Halverson (1985, as cited in Moran, 2001) when referring to the behaviours and ways of life of the people of the target community (Adaskou, Britten & Fahsi, 1990;

Halliday, 1978; Kramersch, 1991). In this line of thought, the study of culture is focused on the way people of the target culture usually behave in social situations. For instance, teachers, according to this view, give relevance to the description, observation and even imitation of models of life from people of the target community. These teachers include descriptions of passages in social events that teach students the way they should behave when they are exposed to similar situations or when they interact with someone who belongs to the target community.

Moreover, culture is also seen as communication. This position involves an understanding of culture as a group of people who share the same language. In this case, a group of native speakers are part of a culture, while the target community is another different culture. Sharing the language means more than having the ability to communicate with each other; it has to do with sharing symbols, conventions and ideas built in the language use. Hall (1959, as cited in Merrill, 1986) affirms that when culture is seen as communication, it is all that is embedded in the geographical context and refers to all that people use to communicate among members of a community. This means that each cultural group creates codes that become materialized in the language and these codes create a net of communication among the members. As a consequence, only people from that community can decipher those codes and people from the outside need either experience or “training” in order to understand them. Teachers who work under this view of culture believe that it is fundamental to learn and understand colloquial expressions, idioms or vocabulary that is specifically used by the target community.

In a more holistic view of culture, Galloway (1985), Nostrand (1967), Pfister and Borzilleri (1977), and Seelye (1984) agree on what culture has to embrace. They consider some elements that are crucial in order to understand what culture means. They are (a) the sense of functionality of culturally conditioned behaviour; (b) interaction of language and social variables; (c) conventional behaviour in common situations that demand different ways of behaving; (d) cultural connotations of words and phrases; (e) evaluative statements about society; and (f) attitudes toward other cultures.

The first element, the sense of functionality, has to do with how behaviours have logic of functionality. In other words, how it is necessary to be aware of the purposes of behaviours in order to attend the social situations in which they are used. The second one makes reference to the relation of language and culture and their social interchange. The third one is related to the conventions created by the conditions of

the environment which indirectly model the way people act under certain conditions. The fourth is related to the concept of culture as communication since the main consideration takes local uses of the language as a core. The fifth one has to do with the way people from one culture evaluate another culture depending on the ideas they have about the observed culture, and the last one is related to how these ideas or preconceptions also model attitudes towards the target culture. Each community builds conceptions of what is good or bad about other communities.

Since attitude towards other cultures is an important aspect to be considered when studying culture, some other ideas on culture have become important in this sphere. Nowadays people not only talk about culture but interculturality, multiculturalism, pluriculturalism and so on. In this case, studying the concept of multiculturalism becomes an important issue because many English textbooks strive to include these aspects as an innovation. Subsequently, to explore the way this concept is also taken as regards the social interaction provided by English textbooks becomes the core of this paper.

Multiculturalism and English Textbooks

Globalization has impacted the field of language teaching in economical terms. As a result, a great variety of textbooks appear on the Colombian market every year as well as in other places around the world. In this respect, Alvarez (2008) points out:

During the last decade teachers, institutions, administrators and the Colombian academic community in general have witnessed the unveiling of a broad offering of educational materials. Due to the implementation of the program “Colombia Bilingue”, corporate publishers have strengthened their efforts in order to capture the recent and promising market that English has opened in our country. This trend aligns with what Crystal (1997) as well as Graddol (2006) have posited that ELT business has become one of the major growth industries around the world in the past half century. (p. 7)

In this running speed for sales, publishing houses have changed models and offered new styles, strategies and layouts according to people’s expectations. Within the boom of cultural worries regarding these new approaches of language teaching, publishers have tried to please customers in many senses. One of the latest approaches has promoted the idea of taking multicultural perspectives for the development of the textbook contents. Nowadays the world attempts to be multicultural, so English textbooks are in demand. Consequently, it is necessary to

check the concept of multiculturalism and see how the publishing houses are covering this demand in the production of textbooks.

Multiculturalism has the idea of multitude and because of that it has also been called cultural pluralism. However, saying that multiculturalism means having different cultures together in the same place would be a shallow definition because it would not assume features of behaviour required for these cultures to interrelate. In terms of Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey and Russell (2004), multiculturalism has to do with a society of many cultures living equally and side-by-side. In this sense, the concept implies empowering inhabitants of that shared piece of land to claim their rights in relation to the decision making as regards their own living and the people living with them who may or may not share the same customs or beliefs but who deserve to have the same rights. Part of those decisions are related to social and economical aspects for common living; then, a political sense is a general axe to talk about Multiculturalism. In education, multiculturalism matches the idea of equality in the classroom by engrossing socio-political context and cultural diversity (Nieto, 2002).

According to the description given above, there are two aspects which must be tied to the inclusion of multiculturalism in textbooks. The first one has to do with the way equality is evidenced in the inclusion of groups representing cultures as part of the context in the textbooks and the second deals with the way their views and lifestyles are revealed and respected as part of their rights belonging to a plausibility in socio-political and cultural diversity.

How is Culture Taught in Foreign Language Teaching?

Based on the latest tendencies proclaiming that the teaching of the language should go further than teaching the language itself, culture has taken a relevant place and some authors have stated that it had to be explicitly taught. Along these lines, to get students aware of other cultures, teachers started to include different ways of teaching culture in foreign language instruction. In this regard Peterson and Coltrane (2003) cite the National Standards in Foreign Language Education of the United States which asserts that “students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs”. Galloway (1985) describes four approaches that were identified when teaching culture in the EFL classrooms. The first one is called the four f approach; the second one, tour guide; the third one, the by the way approach; and the last one, the Frankenstein approach.

Teachers following the four f approach are the teachers worried about folk dances, festivals, fairs and foods when referring to culture. Beliefs of those educators go around culture understood as celebrations and traditions in a general view. In the case of the teachers classified in the tour guide approach it can be said that their behaviours are similar to the ones of the professional tour guides; in other words, these teachers are interested in providing students the tourist information of the English speaking countries. Then, sightseeing is the main objective of the target culture learning. In the third case, the teachers that use the by the way approach can be described as the ones who give sporadic treatment to behavioural issues. That means that teachers in this view place a crucial emphasis on the description of appropriate behaviours that describe the target culture. These teachers are characterized by their concentration on helping students learn or become aware of the patterns of behaviour produced by the target culture in order to simulate them when interacting with natives. At last, the Frankenstein approach has an eclectic perspective in which teachers take information from everywhere, combining all the latest approaches just described. These perspectives give a general view on how teaching culture has been shaped by teachers' emphasis on their lessons and, of course, also evidence their beliefs on what culture means. These beliefs have been studied by publishing houses in order to present culture in their production of books and have marked a general intention in the edition of what must be included and must not be included as content to learn about the target culture.

The Textbook as Discourse

In order to understand what a textbook means, it is defined here as discourse. Why as a discourse? Because talking about discourse grips the symbolism that is spread in multiple languages used in the books. In other words, the use of language, artefacts, graphics, being organized and including general contents imply certain conveyed meanings that are directly or indirectly transmitted to the learners and teachers who use the textbooks. Indeed, textbooks as discourse symbolize individual intentions which, most of the time, are not clearly perceived. In the same line, Ken Hyland and Fiona Hyland (2006) affirm that texts are actually forms of social action designed to accomplish socially recognized purposes with some hope for success and these purposes are influenced by personal ambition, private intentions or individual experience.

Then, students implicitly accept the power enclosed in the books because they have little knowledge and experience to judge and they are not challenged to do it in the academic context either. As a cultural belief, there exist warnings for the consequences if someone dares to challenge the “power” books possess. When interacting with a textbook, there is an intercultural exchange, a dialogue between cultures as the students belonging to a certain culture need to accommodate what they believe in order to understand what the other cultures represented in the book mean. In this sense, Ron Scollon and Suzanne Scollon (1995) say that students are second language writers from a culture which tends to place a certain emphasis on respect for authority. Cortazzi and Jin (1999, p. 200) support this statement by saying: “A textbook is thus seen as an authority: it is reliable, valid and written by experts. The cultural content is therefore taken at face value and often unjustifiably considered as correct, or even as the only interpretation.” That is why students prefer to keep a low profile and accept what the book contains and keeps it as a general truth. This assumption implies that cultural contents, as other aspects involved in the textbooks, are not questioned by users and the social representations acquired from them print images in people’s minds and cause tremendous effects that can influence not only the learning of the language but basically the conditions of an individual to feel positive or negative about the foreign cultures.

Methodology

Background

At Universidad de la Salle a cross-curricular project called “PAC” (Proyecto de Alfabetización Cultural) has been created in order to explore issues related to culture in all the areas of teaching in Spanish, English, or French. From this perspective, different actions have been developed in the program as regards the PAC. This article originates from the reflections made in this project, specifically the reflections about culture and its implications in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

In general, one of the duties English teachers have is to evaluate the most appropriate textbook for the course they are teaching. In this task, it is common that textbooks are such important tools that many times they become the program itself. As such, if a textbook is such a crucial tool in the teacher’s lessons, reflecting on how English books comprise the concept of culture was necessary to take into account

when evaluating them. This also became a worry for the PAC. According to Dohrer (1998), until the late 1960's bias of curricular materials, textbooks, and teaching practices was seldom questioned. In the following decade changes were made and the multiculturalist movement attempted to answer bias. Today the current debates are once again questioning the issue of content. As a result, this study confronts the issue in terms of culture and analyzing the content of a book will guide the study presented here to uncover meanings that could probably be not so evident for book users.

The main purpose of this small scale project purported to explore the cultural representations that were presented in an English textbook, the methodology was anchored in the qualitative research approach, mainly a descriptive methodology (Sandín, 2003). The process was followed in two stages. The first stage had as its purpose to identify common approaches that teachers consider important when teaching culture and within this stage there were two components: (a) how those approaches are taken as criteria in order to evaluate the textbooks they acquire; and (b) how they perceive cultural aspects in the specific book that was analyzed here. The second stage included the analysis of the chosen book. That was in order to identify cultural representations that were observed according to patterns identified.

The corpus was information from the textbook and was organized in six criteria which were the guidelines to organize it into recognizable possible patterns. The first criterion had to do with *semantic fields* which meant the general topics that the book had; the second was *references to the multicultural world*, which were references to cultural groups from different parts of the world. The third was *references to the social world* related to details providing information about social behaviours of cultural groups. The fourth criterion was *characters and characterization* considered as a careful observation of the people introduced in the text along with their personalities to establish the dialogues and interventions and how they were portrayed. The fifth one was related to the *icons presented in the book*, such as photos, pictures, graphs and the like. And the last one was *lexical choice and expressions*, which had to do with specific vocabulary that showed special patterns of repetition or singular characteristics of frequency.

After grouping the data collected from the textbook in the six criteria described above, it was found that *semantic fields* represented in geographical and local inclusions was inspired basically by entertainment topics. In the second criterion, *references to the multicultural world*, there was information mainly addressed to the “American” culture. In the second place, were developed countries such as Great Britain, Germany,

France or Spain. The third place was given to other countries, including Latin American countries, but there were no references to Colombia. In the next criteria, *references to the social world*, there was an apparent worry about observing good manners of behaviour as regards other cultures.

In the *characters and characterization*, it was found that people integrated in the book are rather “neutral” due to the fact that they suddenly appear in each chapter without long interventions in the conversations. Then, they do not have time to pose a defined personality and no relevant data were taken from that. In the icons, such as flags and symbols presented in the book, American and English speaking countries were emphasized. In the case of the *lexical choice*, there was a predominant use of adjectives referring to comfort. Furthermore, *reference to the multicultural world* was overlapping this criterion in the sense that names of countries as well as implicit nominations in recognized elements were used. Then, these references were counted in order to determine their use along the book and it was set up that 25 mentions for an American country against a range of 4-9 mentions was evidently presented in the book. From this, it was concluded that adjectives denoted an environment of consumerism and there was a lot of impact in giving importance to the USA.

Book Description

The book in this analysis was chosen from the ones that are most used in language institutions in Bogotá and, as was mentioned at the beginning, it is used in many of the courses as the core for organizing contents. The book states it is explicitly oriented to American culture and is commercialized by an international publishing house. In this case, the book analysed was the student’s book on a basic level.

Findings

In the first stage of this project, teachers answered a survey (see Appendix A) to give the ideas they usually take into account when they evaluate English textbooks in terms of culture. From those answers several aspects were mentioned by them, to wit: local contextualization, cultural linguistic-semantic features, multiculturalism, daily life, social behaviour, cultural products, and critical aspects to discuss; but the ones most frequently mentioned were: real communicative situations and culture comparison, which some of them label as interculturality. Being more specific with

the book analyzed here, teachers mentioned “cultural semantic features” and gave importance to real communicative situations. The information obtained from this survey helped to visualize that teachers consider one of the most important features to evaluate an English textbook positively entails attention to a by-the-way approach or a Frankenstein approach in the classification proposed by Galloway (1985). In the case of the book that was the object of this study, teachers expressed that they detected a Frankenstein approach. According to their opinions, this was appealing to what they considered relevant to teach in that field, a reason why the book was good for teaching culture.

Going back to the definitions of culture, Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) present a model that displays culture in three different dimensions:



Figure 1. The dimensions of culture.

The first dimension is about behaviours in which customs, habits, clothing, foods and recreation are included. The second dimension is about products in which representative tangible symbols of the culture are present and the last dimension, which is beliefs, takes into account the ideas, values and institutions contained in each culture. According to the information taken from the teachers’ surveys, it was clear that teachers focused their attention on the first two dimensions more than on the last one. Then, the study of the textbook purported to keep attention concentrated on the analysis of that last dimension more than the others.

As a result of the analysis made according to the criteria, two main categories emerged in order to answer the core questions stated at the beginning of the study:

What is the concept of culture displayed in EFL textbooks? How is culture represented in textbooks? Then, the first category was 1. Subject representation through stereotyping with two related subcategories: (a) social group representation and (b) individual roles, male vs. female and 2. Lifestyle, also with two subcategories: (a) consumerism and (b) cult to body.


Table 1. Categories Found in the Analysis.


Categories	Subcategories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject representation through stereotyping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social group representation • Individual roles: Male Vs Female
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifestyle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumerism • Cult to body

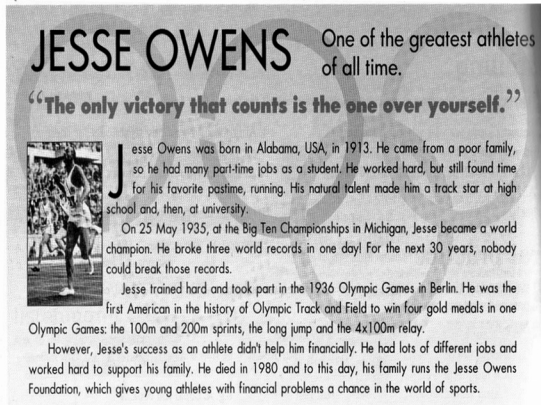
Subject Representation through Stereotyping

The first main category was characterized by the general statements that were implied in the contents of the book, which uncovered patterns of stereotypes about different groups representing different cultures. This category was seen in two dimensions representing the cultures at the collective and the individual level. These two levels are shown separated into the two different subcategories: *social group representation* and *individual roles*. In the *social group representation category*, which was probably the most important in this study, there was a prevalent tendency to show American culture as a “needless” world where people are leaders, successful and can overcome any kind of difficulty. It can be said that in this case, culture focuses on making some cultures great and somehow it takes Stern’s (1992) ideas about culture as civilization. These ideas and assumptions involve lifestyles that are still tied to make people think that there is a need to admire an elite group. In this case, although students are not forced to memorize the topics of culture, they are seduced by them and without conscious realization; the knowledge of those great achievements may lead to an understanding of the target community. The following is an excerpt taken from the book where there is a reading showing the evidence of this argument:

reading 


1  Read the heading and look at the picture. What do you know about Jesse Owens?

2  Read and compare the information in the text with your answers.



JESSE OWENS One of the greatest athletes of all time.

“The only victory that counts is the one over yourself.”

 Jesse Owens was born in Alabama, USA, in 1913. He came from a poor family, so he had many part-time jobs as a student. He worked hard, but still found time for his favorite pastime, running. His natural talent made him a track star at high school and, then, at university.

On 25 May 1935, at the Big Ten Championships in Michigan, Jesse became a world champion. He broke three world records in one day! For the next 30 years, nobody could break those records.

Jesse trained hard and took part in the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. He was the first American in the history of Olympic Track and Field to win four gold medals in one Olympic Games: the 100m and 200m sprints, the long jump and the 4x100m relay.


However, Jesse's success as an athlete didn't help him financially. He had lots of different jobs and worked hard to support his family. He died in 1980 and to this day, his family runs the Jesse Owens Foundation, which gives young athletes with financial problems a chance in the world of sports.


Figure 2. Reading Jesse Owens, a leader. Taken from Mitchell and Scott (2004).


This excerpt, as many others in the book, shows a special idolatry given to a person who worked hard in order to succeed. The fact that this insertion is made does not sound weird at the beginning, but the frequency of inclusion of American heroes is the striking point. About 90% of the references to heroes in the book are American and, as important information, these details are included at the beginning of each reading. Notice how that is done in the first line of the reading. Furthermore, even if the title is “the only victory that counts is the one over yourself”, there is a little subtitle next to it including an additional message: “one of the greatest athletes of all time”. We can understand here that there is an intention to elevate the man’s strength as an individual and as an American. He becomes an honoured representative of his culture.

Another element taken as a pattern in this category is the way places and locations are characterized as well as the frequency they are cited. For instance, in the following excerpt there is proof of how Americans take again the first place to represent cultures. The picture shows places that refer mainly to entertainment, where more than learning from the culture itself, learners are acquiring information in the form of advertisement to create an internal need to visit those places. We can see how phrases like “come and discover”, “don’t miss our famous animal shows”, “are you hungry? There are nine restaurants”, etc. and the pictures are provoking viewers to think that

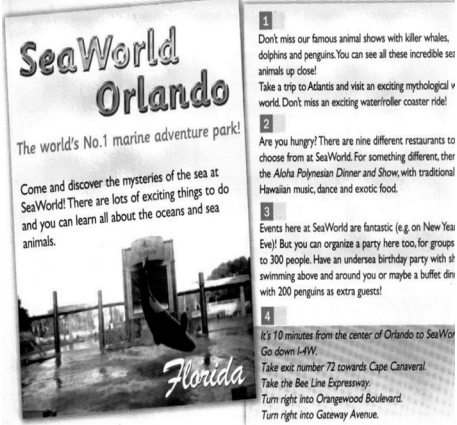
this fantastic world can not be missed. The concern related to this situation comes to evaluate how successful “advertisement” can be in terms of language learning. Probably it is very successful since students are not really aware of those messages because they are learning a language; however, these unconscious messages are the ones that create more “necessities”.

reading 

1  Look at the picture and read the heading. What do you think you can do at SeaWorld Orlando?

2  Read the text and match the headings a-d with the paragraphs 1-4.

a Where to eat b Special events c How do you get there? d Things to see and do



SeaWorld Orlando
The world's No.1 marine adventure park!

Come and discover the mysteries of the sea at SeaWorld! There are lots of exciting things to do and you can learn all about the oceans and sea animals.

1 Don't miss our famous animal shows with killer whales, dolphins and penguins. You can see all these incredible sea animals up close!
Take a trip to Atlantis and visit an exciting mythological world. Don't miss an exciting water/roller coaster ride!

2 Are you hungry? There are nine different restaurants to choose from at SeaWorld. For something different, try the Aloha Polynesian Dinner and Show, with traditional Hawaiian music, dance and exotic food.

3 Events here at SeaWorld are fantastic (e.g. on New Year Eve)! But you can organize a party here too, for groups to 300 people. Have an undersea birthday party with it swimming above and around you or maybe a buffet dinner with 200 penguins as extra guests!

4 It's 10 minutes from the center of Orlando to SeaWorld. Go down I-4/W.
Take exit, number 72 towards Cape Canaveral.
Take the Bee Line Expressway.
Turn right into Orangewood Boulevard.
Turn right into Gateway Avenue.

Figure 3. Reading Sea World, advertisement strategy. Taken from Mitchell and Scott (2004).


Another characteristic presented in this category has to do with superficial multiculturalism. Remembering that the concept of multiculturalism seeks equality and political participation (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey & Russell, 2004), there were several aspects found in the text symbols that avoided this characterization. The subsequent sample shows how this characteristic is displayed in different excerpts presented in the book.

In Figure 4 it can be observed that multiculturalism is rather superficial since dominant cultures are the ones prevailing. In this excerpt American eating habits are described and the pictures are so attractive that even if they are showing junk food, which everybody knows is unhealthy, viewers may not feel so. Reinforcing this idea is an American flag in the background presenting another message highlighting the Americans' image again. In Figure 5 there is a reference in a reading section about Vietnam, a country different from the ones in the orb of dominance. Then, one can

Listening

A radio presenter is interviewing a specialist about the average American's eating habits. Listen and complete the chart.

RESULTS OF A STUDY OF THE AVERAGE AMERICAN'S EATING HABITS



coffee	_____ cups per day
_____	320 glasses per year
_____	220 _____ per year
ice-cream	_____ gallons per year
_____	576 _____ per year

Figure 4. Listening Eating habits, stereotypes. Taken from Mitchell and Scott (2004).

Figure 5. Reading Vietnam and Cornwall, superficial equality. Taken from Mitchell and Scott (2004).

THUNG THU
A special festival in Vietnam

Thung Thu, the Vietnamese "Moon Festival", takes place every year on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month, in the middle of fall.

This festival celebrates the beauty of the October full moon and is a chance for everybody, especially children, to have some fun. Families get together and eat traditional moon cakes. Then, the children put on masks, put candles inside their star lanterns and light them. The lanterns represent the brightness of the moon. Everybody goes out into the dark night and follows the parade through the streets. Unicorn dancers often dance in the crowded streets.

On almost every street corner there are stands selling colorful lanterns, masks and fish- or flower-shaped moon

Cornwall
May Day
festival

Let's celebrate the coming of spring together

There are going to be lots of exciting events, as well as music and dancing. Don't miss this year's May Day for anything!

- Watch the Morris dancers welcome the spring with their famous folk dances!
- Take part in the competition for the best spring flower hoop!




think these different ones were also taken into account; however, that expectation is reduced by another reading referencing one of the dominant cultures next to it: Cornwall, a city in England. Soler (2006) affirms that one way to discriminate is represented not only in how many times references are included but also in how they are included. In this sense, even if the reference to a third world country is included

presentation

1 Listen and read.

Liv Hi, how are you?
Scott I'm fine, thanks. And you?
Liv Very well, thank you.
Scott Hey, look! Harold and Wendy are here.
Liv Who are they?
Scott They're my new colleagues.
Brian Excuse me, I'm Brian. I'm your new neighbor.
Bryan My name's Bryan, too.
Brian Really? How do you spell that, with an I?
Bryan No, it's B-R-Y-A-N.
Anna How's Pam?
Bob Oh, she's just fine.
Anna What's her new address?
Bob 63 Richmond Street.
Anna And what's her phone number?
Bob It's 020 433 2190, sorry, 3190.



2 Read again and write the correct names.

Sadie Good morning, Rob.
Rob Hello, Sadie. This is John. He's my new roommate. John, this is Sadie, my best friend.
Sadie Nice to meet you.
John Sorry. What's your name again?
 a. _____: "Brian is my new neighbor."
 b. _____: "My phone number is 020 433 3190"
 c. _____: "Rob is my new roommate."
 d. _____: "My address is 63 Richmond Street."
 e. _____ and _____: "Scott is our new colleague."

Figure 6. Conversation, superficial multiculturalism. Taken from Mitchell and Scott (2004).

reading

1 Look at the title of the text and guess what it is about.

2 Read the text and check your answers.

What's in a name?

All names mean something. Some last names, for example, tell you about the history of a family. In Scotland many last names begin with 'Mac'. This means 'son of', so John MacDonald is John, the son of Donald. In Ireland, 'O' means 'of', so O'Brien is the son of Brien. Other last names describe occupation or people. Fisher, for example, means fisherman and Armstrong means a person with strong arms.

First names mean something, too. For example, the English name 'Henry' means 'head of the house' in Teutonic. But the name 'Henry' is different in other languages. So, Henry is Henri in French, Heinrich in German, Enrique in Spanish and Enrico in Italian.

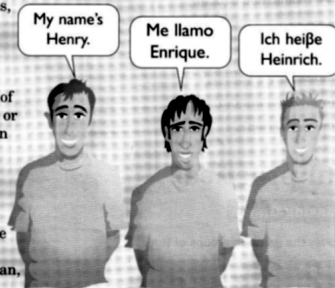


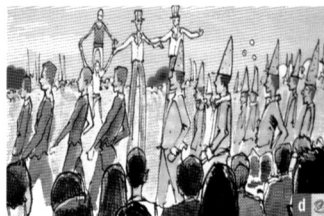
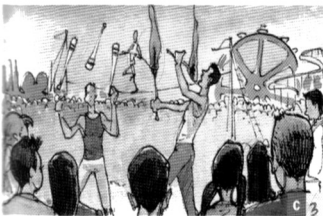
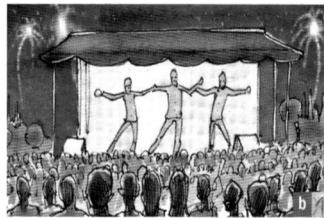
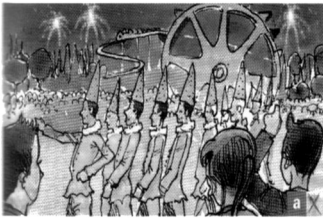
Figure 7. Reading what's in a name, avoidance of mentioning countries variety. Taken from Mitchell and Scott (2004).

when it is posted next to one of the dominant culture, it shows that discrimination is still there and obviously equality as the essence of multiculturalism is fairly lost.

In Figure 6 there is also more evidence of superficial multiculturalism due to the fact that pictures of persons with different physical characteristics are part of this corpus; nevertheless, there are no elements that can guide the reader to identify which culture they belong to. As observed in the picture, some of them are black and some white with black or blond hair but the dialogues do not give you any idea or information where one can understand the origin of these people. Then, a picture is insufficient information to say that multiculturalism was given a place in the textbook. Figure 7 shows another inclusion of this type because a short reading includes a picture of three people with different physical characteristics and there is no allusion to the kind of cultures they belong to. We can only assume they are from different origins because their names are translated into four languages. In addition, the reading is about the origin of names contextualized in two countries, Scotland and Ireland, which are, again, part of the dominant cultures.

listening

 Listen to three short extracts about festivals and match them with the pictures a-d. There is one extra picture.



NO context identified for this kind of celebration, no labels. No commitment with any cultural group.

Figure 8. Listening festival, unknown context. Taken from Mitchell and Scott (2004).

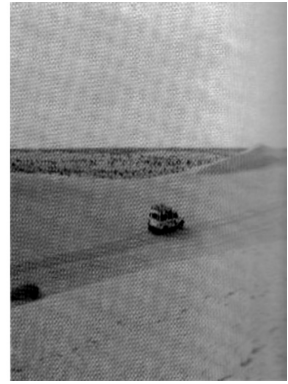
The tour guide approach reflected when including material from other countries.



Niagara Falls, on the border between the USA and Canada, is probably the world's most famous waterfall. It's very big and about 1.5 million gallons of water fall every second. But it isn't the highest waterfall. The Angel Falls, in Venezuela, is the highest waterfall in the world. It's 3,230 feet high!



The Nile is the longest river in the world. Most of you probably know it. It's 4,100 miles long. But which river has the shortest name? It's a river in Scotland and its name is just one letter. It's called 'E'.



The Sahara is the largest desert in the world. It's about 3,500,000 square miles and is getting bigger every year. However, it's not the driest desert in the world. In the Atacama Desert in Chile, it didn't rain for a period of 400 years in the past! Now, that's dry!


Figure 9. Tour guide approach. Taken from Mitchell and Scott (2004).

Another, maybe more simulated, feature of multicultural superficiality deals with the way places are identified. The first aspect is what I called unknown or limited contextualization, which means the lack to include true-life information to identify the places they include from around the world. The following listening exercise can show an example of that.

The second subcategory "*individual roles, male vs. female*" was mainly characterized by the representation of subjects not at the level of groups but at the individual level. In this sense, the criteria of characters and characterization helped in order to determine that there was an unbalanced characterization of women's and men's roles in the situations and contexts in which they were participating. There is a stigma that keeps women in the limited field of a light lifestyle. After observing the contents of the book, it was clear that the bias in the topics involving shopping, consumerism and

light activities was more addressed to women while more intellectual work was addressed to men. Let's observe the following pictures which can confirm a visual impact.

3 Complete the dialogue with the correct form of the adjectives in parentheses.



A: Do you like my new dress?
B: It's nice, but didn't you buy a dress last week?
A: Yes, but this one is (1) _____ (modern) than that one.
B: How much was it?
A: Well, it was (2) _____ (expensive) than the other one. In fact, it was the (3) _____ (expensive) dress in the store. It cost \$275, but I like it.

presentation

1 Look at the picture. Do you think that the woman in the picture will buy the blouse? Why? Why not?

2 Listen, read and check your answers.

Sales assistant: Hello. Can I help you?
Maria: Yes, please. I'm looking for a blouse to match with a gray suit. It's for a job interview.
Sales assistant: Let me show you a few. How about this purple one?
Maria: Oh, I don't think so. It's too fancy for me.
Sales assistant: Well, it comes in other colors, too.
Maria: Actually, I prefer this one. Do you have it in light blue?
Sales assistant: Just a minute. What size are you?
Maria: Medium.
Sales assistant: Here you are.
Maria: It's beautiful. Can I try it on?
Sales assistant: Certainly. The fitting rooms are over there.

Sales assistant: So, how do you like it?
Maria: It's a really nice blouse and it fits me very well. How much is it?
Sales assistant: It's on sale, 20% discount. It's only \$79.95.
Maria: Well, _____
Sales assistant: Would you like to pay in cash or by credit card?
Maria: For ahead, it's still too expensive.
Sales assistant: Thank you, anyway.
Maria: You're welcome.

presentation

1 Look at the picture. The girl on the left (Freda) is going to a party tonight. Which of the following do you think she should wear?

2 Listen and read. What does Freda's friend, Janice, suggest that Freda should wear?

Freda: It's Ken's party tonight and I don't know what to wear. Please help me!
Janice: Calm down, Freda. You have that fabulous black dress, remember?
Freda: The long one? That's formal. I want to wear something casual.
Janice: All right. What about your blue pants, then?
Freda: No, they're awful. Besides, I'd like to wear a dress.
Janice: You're right. Dresses really suit you. Let's have a look in your closet. Well, this lovely red dress is just perfect!
Freda: Do you think so?
Janice: I'm positive. It looks great on you!
Freda: Yes, but is it OK for a party?
Janice: Yes, of course it is. Now, let's find a pair of shoes to match.
Freda: How do you like those red shoes?
Janice: Which ones? Those high-heeled ones? No! They're old-fashioned. I prefer the black ones. They're trendy!
Freda: Do you mean these?
Janice: Yes, they're perfect.
Freda: Oh! Janice, you're the best. I owe you one.

3 Read again and find adjectives which Janice and Freda use to describe the items of clothing in 1.

Figure 10. Women stereotyped. Taken from Mitchell and Scott (2004).

These pictures were taken from different chapters of the book and they always followed the same pattern: women involved in simple activities of consumerism. As a matter of fact, the dialogues involve anxious women in simple problems like uncertain about what to wear to a party, doubt about selecting something cheaper than something more attractive, but more expensive, or buying new clothes for a job interview. This sample is also connected with the idea of consumerism. It shows how women are perceived and these contents form an image of women that are indirectly making women act the same way.

The next category **lifestyle** overlaps this last description because the analysis shows how a lifestyle is evident in the contents presented in the book. The characters presented in the book are catalysts for textbook users to behave and act in certain ways and, consequently, to adopt a lifestyle which can be understood as one of common sense or general truth.

The first subcategory, *consumerism*, is present not only in the aspects mentioned before in the subcategory of women's and men's roles but also in the lexical choice of most of the dialogues. As a case in point, let us observe the following extract in which words or expressions were circled in order to visualize better how the meaning of comfort is used to involve students in the idea of a perfect world.

presentation

1 Listen What are the women in the picture talking about? Listen, read and find out.

- Liz** So many wedding dresses! I love them all! What am I going to do? I can't choose.
- Fay** Don't worry, Liz. There's lots of time. The wedding's in July.
- Liz** Yes, that's true, it's in three months, but there are so many things to arrange. There's the reception, the flowers, the invitations...
- Fay** Wait a minute. Isn't Nick going to help?
- Liz** He is, but...
- Fay** Then, calm down. The wedding's on the twenty-first, right?
- Liz** Yes.
- Fay** Right in the middle of summer. That's great! Where are you going on your honeymoon?
- Liz** To Portugal.
- Fay** Portugal! I'm jealous! And how long are you going to stay there?
- Liz** Ten days. We're coming back on August 2nd. And believe it or not, we aren't going to stay in a five-star hotel, but in a cottage in a little fishing village.
- Fay** But you both enjoy luxury...
- Liz** I know, but it was Nick's idea.
- Fay** Wow! People chance when they get married, after all!



presentation

1 Listen Look at the picture. Why do you think the people are smiling?

2 Listen Listen, read and check your answers.

- Jeff** I can't believe it's almost New Year's Eve! Are we going to do anything special this year?
- Chris** Well, we're definitely not going to Times Square again!
- Jeff** I agree! It was so cold last year!
- Chris** And we were sick for days after that... How about going to a party at a fancy hotel? Good food, great music ...
- Jeff** Yeah—and a few hours after "Happy New Year!" an expensive check and a wallet with nothing in it! No, thanks...
- Chris** You're right. We're short of cash at the moment. So, does that mean we aren't going anywhere this year?
- Jeff** I didn't say that. Maybe we...
- Chris** Hey, Babs sent us an e-mail. Great news and right on time! Listen...



From: barbara@govmnet.com
 To: Christine.Lewis@ireland.com
 Subject: Happy New Year!

Hello guys!
 What's up? What are your plans for New Year's Eve? Hope you're free 'cos I'm going to have a big party and I'm inviting everybody! Let me know ASAP!
 Babs

Figure 11. Semantic fields show degree of comfort. Taken from Mitchell and Scott (2004).

The contents in these dialogues had recurrent vocabulary and expressions that represented well-being and power of acquisition. It seems that these cultures do not suffer from the same problems other cultures do.

The last subcategory *cult to body* involves inclusive advice on how to take care of people's bodies, how to dress and the like. This also overlaps the other categories described before, eating habits and working out. The following reading illustrates how pictures, vocabulary, contents and topic are suggesting the reader figure out that taking care of her/his body is a valuable matter. Finally the Americans are the protagonists giving this piece of advice.

reading 

1  Read the text quickly and match the questions a-c with the paragraphs 1-3.


a. What kind of music do you like? b. Do you like being famous? c. What do you like doing in your free time?

WATCH OUT! HERE COMES B-ZARR

1 **Zak:** Well, we travel a lot so we don't have much free time. But when I have some, I love going to clubs and dancing all night long.
Mo-Riss: I enjoy going to the movies. In fact, I watch a movie every week. I love action films and my favorite movie is *Gangs of New York*. Martin Scorsese is a great director. Oh! And, of course, I love listening to music.

2 **Mo-Riss:** We're a hip hop group so we listen to a lot of hip hop music, but I like listening to rock music, too.
Anna-B: Rock music is a bit boring. I enjoy listening to classical music but the boys can't stand it. So I listen to it alone.

3 **Zak:** It's great! I really enjoy appearing on TV. But we're only famous in England at the moment. We want to be famous all over the world.
Anna-B: Very much. We have a lot of fans. They send e-mails to the group and I always reply. It's great fun!



www.americanfit.com
 All you need to do is to choose a style and material, then complete the form on our fitting page (click here). Give us your measurements, so we can make the exact clothes you want...

Figure 12. Life and life styles. Taken from Mitchell and Scott (2004).

Conclusions and Implications

Culture is a matter that must be revised more carefully to understand the way it is presented in English textbooks. Cultural bias is present in textbooks and needs to be discovered since learners and teachers are getting those ideas unconsciously and are including messages of how to understand other cultures as well as how they must behave.

British or American culture could be understood as logical inclusions in the English textbooks because their language is the target. However, it is necessary that teachers not only rely on textbooks, but support their teaching practice with other kinds of materials that can also show more cultures and less stereotyped images of minority and dominant groups. This activity can help students to have a more neutral idea of what cultures embed in their customs. At the same time, when students understand those elements in other cultures they can understand themselves as well and avoid receptive-like passive attitudes towards textbook contents in which only one vision is highlighted and many times attuned to commercialism more than learning.

Aspects of culture should be given more attention in teachers' responsibility when evaluating materials because they can influence students' lifestyle and develop false images of other cultures. In this sense, students can perceive the target culture as being comprised of spaces where the world is perfect and whose reality is very different from the one they live. Due to the intentional advertisement included, problems observed in students' context are not part of the information presented in the books. Then, teachers need to be more aware of cultural topics to be evaluated in the books.

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The Author

Ximena Bonilla Medina, holds a Master in Applied Linguistics to TEFL from Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. She is a full time professor in the School of Languages at Universidad de La Salle and works part time at Universidad Distrital, in Bogotá. Her research interests are culture and teaching and critical pedagogy in foreign language teaching.

Appendix A

Survey for Teachers

This survey has the purpose of collecting information about the cultural issues teachers take into account when evaluating and choosing material.

Please answer the following questions trying to give as much information as you can.

1. What do you expect that an English textbook should include as cultural aspects?
2. How do you consider whether an English textbook is worthy or not in terms of culture?
3. Did you or your institution take into account culture in the evaluation of the material acquired? If yes, what specifically did they ask for in this selection?
4. In the book you are using at the moment, how do you see the management that is given cultural aspects? How do you qualify it? Provide examples, please.