

Content Analysis as a Research Method in Investigating the Cultural Components in Foreign Language Textbooks

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Abstract

In a broader context, the paper deals with content analysis as one of the most frequently applied research methods in the field of education; in a narrower sense it is concerned with the analysis of the cultural content in foreign language (FL) textbooks. The first part of the paper sheds light on the basic principles of content analysis. First of all, the meaning of the term is discussed through different definitions. This is followed by the comparison of the qualitative content analysis to its quantitative counterpart. In addition, considerable attention is paid to the process of content analysis. Furthermore, the issues of reliability and validity are discussed. Last, but not least, a summary of the theoretical background of FL textbook analysis and suggested checklists are provided.

The second half of the paper provides the methodology, the description and analysis of ten studies that applied content analysis in the process of investigating the cultural content of FL textbooks. The summary outlines the basic features of the examined studies.

Keywords

content analysis, cultural content, foreign language

Introduction

Content analysis – originally used in communication, journalism, sociology, psychology, and business (Neuendorf, 2002) – is today considered to be one of the main methods of educational research and it is also frequently applied in areas such as law and health care. In order to shed light on the principles of conducting this research method, the following part will be devoted to the definition of the concept of “content analysis” and the differences between its qualitative and quantitative approaches. Furthermore, we will also pay attention to the procedure of its application in practice, as well as the aspects of reliability and variability.

What is content analysis?

As Weber (1990, p. 117) puts it “content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text”, and it has several advantages in comparison with other research methods. First of all, content analysis is applied directly to texts or transcripts, i.e. the products of human

communication, which is the core of social interaction. Secondly, high quality studies combine both qualitative and quantitative analysis of texts and mixing methods is generally acknowledged as an effective way to ensure the trustworthiness of the research in terms of validity and reliability. Furthermore, documents of different kinds provide a reliable source of information for a long period of time, as they can have a “lifespan” of several decades or even centuries. Last but not least, the unobtrusive feature of this method ensures that neither partner of the communicational situation is being analysed; therefore, there is little risk that they will behave according to certain expectations, which could consequently modify the nature of the data (Weber, 1990; Cohen et al., 2007; Stemler, 2001).

According to Cohen et al. (2007), content analysis in a broader sense refers to the process of summarising and interpreting written data, whereas, in a narrower context, it is “a strict and systematic set of procedures for rigorous analysis, examination and verification of the contents of written data” (ibid., p. 475). One of the fundamental features of content analysis is that a vast amount of written data is reduced to smaller groups of information (ibid.), or as put by Weber (1990), long texts with loads of words are represented by fewer words or expressions. In addition, content analysis can be conducted with any written material, from documents to interview transcriptions and can be applied to examine large amounts of text (Cohen et al., 2007).

Neuendorf (2002, p. 10) considers content analysis, as a summarising method of analysing messages quantitatively, to be scientific, in terms of “objectivity-intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalisability, replicability, and hypothesis testing”; without being limited to the measurable types of variables or the context of the messages.

As it can be seen in the above perceptions of this research method, two fundamental approaches to content analysis exist: a qualitative and a quantitative one. Therefore, we will look at the meaning of these terms and the aspects in which they differ from each other.

Qualitative or quantitative analysis?

Qualitative content analysis, compared against quantitative content analysis, is often referred to as “latent level analysis, because it concerns a second-level, interpretative analysis of the underlying deeper meaning of the data” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 246); whilst the latter is usually described as “manifest level analysis”, providing an objective and descriptive overview of the “surface meaning of the data” (ibid.).

A similar definition and differentiation is also provided by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009, p. 308) outlining that “qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text”. In fact, according to the authors, the differences between these two fundamental types of content analysis can be divided from several points of view.

One of them is the fields of research from which they have developed; quantitative content analysis has been mainly applied in mass communication and related areas, while its qualitative version was originally used in anthropology, qualitative sociology, and psychology. Secondly, quantitative content analysis is considered to be deductive, aimed at testing hypotheses or finding answers to questions based upon theories or previous empirical research. On the contrary, qualitative content analysis is mainly inductive, as it draws inferences from the examination of topics and themes and data. Furthermore, the techniques of data sampling are different, as the quantitative approach requires random sampling or other techniques of probability to ensure validity, while qualitative analysis uses intentionally chosen texts. Last, but not least, there are different products of the two approaches; while quantitative analysis caters for statistical methods and numerical results, the qualitative approach brings descriptions. In addition, it draws attention to unique themes that depict the variety of the perceptions of the phenomenon, rather than statistical importance of the frequency of particular concepts.

Despite of these differences, it has been highlighted by numerous scholars that, in research practice, the two approaches are often applied in combination (Dörnyei, 2007; Flick, 2007; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). In fact, mixing qualitative and quantitative methods is known as one of the ways of using triangulation, which, according to Flick (2010, p. 405), is “used as a strategy of improving the quality of qualitative research ...”. Indeed, they mutually support each other’s advantages and strengthen the validity of the findings, thus both contribute to obtain a broader, holistic knowledge about the examined field of study (Dörnyei, 2007; Flick, 2007).

As we are primarily concerned with the analysis of cultural content of textbooks, it is noteworthy to mention that even this specific type of investigation can be performed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Therefore, the second part of this paper is also aimed at finding out whether the selected studies opted for the qualitative or quantitative approach to conduct content analysis. However, prior to proceeding to this stage, we pay attention to the procedures that need to be undertaken when carrying out this type of method, i.e. how

content analysis works in practice. In addition, definitions of the basic terminology connected with the given issue will also be provided.

The process of content analysis

Cohen et al. (2007) define content analysis simply, as the process of four “C”s, i.e. coding, categorising, comparing and concluding. According to Dörnyei (2007), coding is used to reduce or simplify the data while emphasising their specific features in order to connect them to broader concepts, e.g. categories, whereas “code” is simply a label attached to a chunk of text intended to make the particular piece of information manageable and malleable” (ibid., p. 250). In addition, categorising refers to developing meaningful categories into which words, phrases, sentences, etc. as the units of analysis can be grouped, while comparing means making connections between categories. Finally, concluding stands for drawing theoretical considerations on the basis of the text and the results of the analysis (Cohen et al, 2007).

Cohen et al. goes further; stating the following “essential features of the process of content analysis:

1. breaking down text into units of analysis;
2. undertaking statistical analysis of the units;
3. presenting the analysis in as economical a form as possible” (ibid., p. 476).

However, these three phases also cover some other important features, so the whole procedure of content analysis can be further divided into several steps. The number of the phases is perceived by various scholars differently, although the steps, to a greater or lesser extent, share the same focus.

Neunendorf (2002, p. 50-51) defines nine stages, as following:

1. “Theory and rationale” which is about giving answers to questions such as what will be analysed and why it will be analysed, what the research questions are, and alike;
2. “Conceptualisations” caters for defining the variables;
3. “Operationalisations” stands for determining the units of data collection, as well as the aspects of measurement, i.e. internal validity;
4. “Coding schemes” which both in human and computer coding means creating a “codebook” (containing an explanation of all variable measures); in addition, in the case of human coding, a “coding form” is also required;
5. “Sampling” which could be done by different subsets, e.g. by issue, by pages, etc.

6. "Training and pilot reliability" refers to the agreement of different coders on codes and noting the reliability of each variable when piloting the an independent test;
7. "Coding" – in case of human coding in order to ensure "intercoder reliability", the use of at least two coders is required, whereas computer coding should apply dictionaries;
8. "Final reliability" is concerned with calculating a reliability figure;
9. "Tabulation and reporting" stands for the (statistical) presentation of the results in tables or figures, as well as their interpretation.

Numerous scholars (Dörnyei, 2007; Flick, 2007; Weber, 1990; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009) emphasise the step of creating and applying a coding scheme and considers it to be of crucial importance amongst the phases of content analysis, as it influences the outcomes of the whole study to the largest extent. Hence, Weber (1990) provides an eight-step framework of developing and using a coding scheme that draws on the following issues: determining the units of analysis, defining the categories, piloting coding on a small sample of text, assessing accuracy and reliability, revising the rules of coding (in case of a poor reliability), returning to step three, i.e. testing the scheme on a sample. This cycle will be repeated until a relatively high reliability is achieved. The last two phases involve the coding of the whole text and finally assessing reliability and accuracy of human coders.

As we are primarily concerned with content analysis in the field of education, we will pay considerably more attention to the model drawn by Cohen et al. (2007) consisting of eleven steps.

1. At first, similarly to Neuendorf (2002), the *formulation of the research questions* – derived from the theory to be tested – is required to be done.
2. Secondly, the *population* – from which samples are to be selected – *must be defined*. This does not refer only to people, but rather to texts, such as newspapers, textbooks, emails and so on.
3. The third step is to decide which *sampling strategy* to choose, i.e. whether to apply stratified sampling, random sampling, cluster sampling, etc. with regard to the key aspects of sampling that include "representativeness, access, size of the sample and generalisability of the results" (ibid, p. 477).
4. The next stage is connected with answering the questions about the *generation of the document*, such as how it was created, where it comes from, how it was recorded and so on.
5. *Establishing the units of analysis*, e.g. words, sentences, paragraphs or the whole text, people or themes, etc. should be the fifth step of the analysis. Two

types of units must be distinguished here, the *coding* and *contextual* units, the former standing for the smallest analysable element of the material, while the latter meaning “the largest textual unit that may appear in a single category” (ibid., p. 477).

6. The next step focuses on the *development of codes* to be used in the analysis. Codes can be very general, or more specific. It can have a form of a word or abbreviation, which is then ascribed to each piece of datum; hence, it must clearly represent what it stands for. This way, the frequency and the patterns of codes can be easily detected.
7. Stage seven is concerned with the *establishing of the categories for the analysis*. They can be defined as “the main groupings of constructs or key features of the text, showing links between units of analysis” (ibid., p. 478). In fact, categories can be formed by using one, a few, or plenty of terms. The notion “category” can stand for words, phrases, sentences or other units of text sharing similar meanings. According to the aim of the research, words can be presumed as similar in terms either of their accurate, denotational or their connotational meaning (Weber, 1990). Several aspects have to be decided upon, such as whether to develop mutually exclusive, broader or narrower, general or more specific categories. In order to ensure content validity, they need to be exhaustive (Stemler, 2001). One of the differences between codes and categories is that the former is usually more specific than the latter, which is also referred to as a “node”. Thus, while “a code is a label for a piece of text; a node is a category into which different codes fall or are collected” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 479). Or in other words “whereas codes describe specific textual moments, nodes draw together codes into a categorical framework, making connections between coded segments and concepts” (ibid.). In these terms a node can be understood as a concept, an idea, a place, a group of people, etc.
8. Step number eight is the process of *coding and categorising of the data*, which deals with the ascription of codes and categories to each piece of data. Codes and categories can be decided upon in advance (as written in the previous stages), or retrospectively, i.e. “in response to the data that have been collected” (ibid., p. 480). Pre-coding of several questions during the preceding phases of the analysis enables an objective and immediate conversion of each data into a score. Examples of pre-coded questions can be rating scales and checklists. In addition, “it is important to decide whether to code simply for the existence or the incidence of the concept” (ibid.), as, in the case of the former, the aspect of frequency would be lost, which could indicate the significance of the examined concept in the text. It is also noteworthy to

mention that a number of computer software products exist to help the work of the coder, just to mention some of them, without attempting to be comprehensive, are for example ETHNOGRAPH, N-Vivo, Code-AText and many others (Cohen et al., 2007; Stemler, 2001; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

9. Having performed the process of coding and categorising, *data analysis* can be conducted, e.g. the researcher can count the number of occurrences of each code or word in the text, as well as the number of words in each category. Some words can be ranked in more than one category, for instance when a category is subsumed by another category. Having calculated the frequencies, statistical analysis can be performed, such as tabulation, graphical representation, regression, etc. In a less quantitative version of analysis, connections between concepts and categories, their strength and direction will be established.
10. The penultimate step is concerned with *summarising*, i.e. identifying the key features, such issues, factors or areas of the investigation.
11. Finally, the whole process of content analysis is completed by *making speculative inferences*, i.e. by drawing conclusions on the basis of the summarised results of the research.

Reliability and validity in content analysis

In the process of content analysis, investigators are most often challenged with difficulties arising from aspects of reliability and validity.

In case of content analysis, *reliability* is commonly associated with notions of stability, reproducibility, and accuracy. Stability is considered to be the weakest form of reliability, as it is coded only by one coder and can be understood as the persistence over time of the rules of the coding scheme. Reproducibility, also referred to as intercoder reliability, means the same results of coding, when the same text is coded by two or more coders. Accuracy, being the strongest feature of reliability, stands for “the extent to which the classification of text corresponds to a standard or norm” (Weber, 1990, p. 120).

Scholars distinguish between three fundamental forms of *validity* in content analysis. Face validity represents the extent to which a category measures what it is intended to measure and, as single-variable validity, it is considered to be the weakest of all the forms. External validity is “obtained by comparing content-analytic data with some external criterion” (ibid., p. 121), hence, it is perceived as much stronger than other types of validity. Semantic validity means the agreement between persons on the meanings or connotations of words they are examining.

To put it simply, in order to make valid conclusions, the procedure of coding and classification is of crucial importance and must be reliable. This primarily means that the same text should be coded in the same way by different investigators. In addition, the variables developed in this process must be valid as well, which means that it represents what is attempted to measure by the researcher (Weber, 1990; Neuendorf, 2002; Stemler, 2001; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

As pointed out, problems of both reliability and validity usually arise from the “ambiguity of word meanings, category definitions, or other coding rules” (Weber, 1990, p. 118). Hence, it is advisable to start work on small units of text to pilot the coding and categorisation, and make changes where necessary.

Analysis of FL textbooks

It is commonly acknowledged that textbook analysis should primarily serve for teachers in the process of choosing the most appropriate material, which is of particular importance for several reasons. First of all, it is one of the main strategic decisions in FL education and in education in general, as teachers usually do not choose course-books for a short period of time; furthermore, if used for several years, a large amount of money is going to be spent. In addition, the learning experience and language proficiency level of a large group of students is going to be influenced which, consequently, can have an impact on their professional future. Finally, from a student’s point of view, it can be confusing and demanding to get accustomed to a new set of materials if we decide to change the previous package within the same programme (Cunningsworth, 1995).

A number of scholars agree that textbook selection is one of the key problems of today’s EFL education and at the same time one of the most demanding tasks (Cunningsworth, 1995; Straková, 2001). On one hand, the reasons which lay behind it include the fact that one can feel completely lost, due to the overwhelming and confusing range of EFL products. On the other hand, teachers still lack the necessary skills to choose the most appropriate course-books and they often decide under the pressure of time or other circumstances (Ansary & Babaii, 2002).

It would be naïve to think that there is a course-book which could fulfil one’s overall expectations (Cunningsworth, 1995; Gadušová & Hartánská, 1995), “but the aim is to find the best possible fit, together with potential for adapting or supplementing parts of the material where it is inadequate or unsuitable” (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 5). Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the selected

textbooks must be undertaken, in which we actively look for information in the material according to the agenda we have decided on prior to it.

Two fundamental approaches to assessing textbooks can be differentiated; being analysis for potential and analysis for suitability. Whilst the former refers to textbook analysis in general, without any specific use in mind, the latter stands for “matching the course-books against a specific requirement” (ibid., p. 15).

General FL textbook analysis

It must be noted that different educational realities require different criteria, so, what is important, is to identify one’s own priorities and to draw up a range of categories according to them. These criteria can also comprise some parts of the commonly acknowledged checklists used for course-books evaluation in general and provided by numerous experts in the field that focus on more or less the same attributes of materials, as follows: financial affordability, physical availability, visual appearance, methodology and methodological guidance, interesting topics and appropriate handling of skills and stereotyping, correspondence with the syllabus, etc. (Ansary & Babaii, 2002; Cunningsworth, 1995; Harmer, 1998; Ur, 1999).

In connection to the principles of content analysis, checklists are examples of pre-coded questions formed prior to the phase of coding and categorising data. They are also of crucial importance with regard to content analysis of textbooks, as they help the objective and systematic transformation of each data into a score (Cohen et al., 2007). The content and the length of the check-sheet will depend on a lot of factors, as already mentioned, except for the circumstances in which the textbooks are going to be used, whether one evaluates teaching material for general purposes or looking for a specific feature. “However, it is important to limit the number of criteria used and, the number of questions asked, to manageable proportions. Otherwise, we risk being swamped in a sea of detail” (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 2).

Textbook analysis for suitability

As previously stated, there are situations when one analyses a FL course-book to determine whether it is suitable from one particular point of view. In such cases, we are limited by the number of criteria that, on one hand, can be considered to be an advantage, because we are not overwhelmed with a huge amount of categories. On the other hand, the careful construction of a useful checklist gains extreme importance, as inappropriately set guidelines might negatively affect the whole process of analysis and consequently the results of the investigation, too.

As we are primarily concerned with the analysis of the cultural content in textbooks, we will draw attention to checklists suggested in this area. However, it must be noted that our examination of numerous lists of criteria for general analysis indicated that majority of them did not include cultural aspects of the target language at all. In fact, there are not many checklists focusing specifically on the cultural dimension in FL courses (Byram, 1989; Saluveer, 2004). In the following part of the study, without attempting to be comprehensive, we provide a summary of some of the guidelines for evaluating FL course-books proposed by different authors with regard to the given perspective.

Criteria for analysing cultural content in FL textbooks

As cited in Byram (1989), Huhn (1978) distinguishes seven criteria dealing with the cultural content of FL textbooks as follows:

- Cultural information must be accurate and contemporary;
- The question of stereotypes must be handled critically;
- It must provide a realistic picture of the foreign society;
- It must be free from ideologies;
- Facts should not be presented in isolation;
- The historical material should be presented explicitly.

Another classification of criteria is provided by Risager (1991, p. 182-183):

1. The micro level – phenomena of social and cultural anthropology:
 - a. The social and geographical definition of characters
 - b. Material environment
 - c. Situations of interaction
 - d. Interaction and subjectivity of the characters: feelings, attitudes, values, and perceived problems.
2. The macro level – social, political, and historical matters:
 - a. Broad social facts about contemporary society (geographical, economic, political, etc.)
 - b. Broad socio-political problems (unemployment, pollution, etc.)
 - c. Historical background
3. International and intercultural issues
 - a. Comparisons between the foreign country and the pupils' own
 - b. Mutual representations, images, stereotypes
 - c. Mutual relations: cultural power and dominance, co-operation and conflict
4. Point of view and style of the author

Continuing with Cunningsworth (1995), the social and cultural context in the FL course must be comprehensible to the students and they should be able to interpret “the relationships, behaviour, intentions, etc. of the characters portrayed in the book” (ibid., p. 92). His checklist pays special attention to gender differences. For instance, it is important to examine whether women are treated equally to men, what inner qualities and physical attributes women are given, or the professional and social status women occupy. Other aspects involved in the list focus on the inner lives of the characters portrayed in the course and the social background in which they exist.

According to Kilickaya (2004), prior to using FL textbooks with students, teachers should take into consideration such factors as “socio-cultural information, learners' needs, stereotypes, generalisations and intercultural communication”.

A further model for analysing the cultural content in FL textbooks was presented by Hatoss (2004). It was drawn up based upon a pilot study that was carried out as a content analysis of textbooks used for business communication in produced in the English language, but with a European context. It focuses on the evaluation of three dimensions: text and visual input, methods used to teach the cultural content and aims set by the author/s or publisher/s of a particular textbook for developing learners' cultural competence. Input factors include sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences, sociocultural knowledge, as well as paralinguistic and semiotic input. The aspect of methods is concerned with implicit versus explicit as well as cognitive versus experiential teaching of the cultural input. The criterion of the authors/publishers' aims deals with the issue of assimilation.

Having drawn the most fundamental principles of content analysis in terms of investigating cultural content in FL textbooks, we proceed to the second part of this paper, which is focused on the analyses of studies conducted in the examined area. The diversity of the randomly chosen studies in terms of the investigated issues, methodology, size and character of the samples etc. was intentional. In fact, we primarily wanted to find out, which aspects of the guidelines presented above had been examined in the studies, how the analysis had been carried out, and whether there are any similarities or differences with regard to these viewpoints. In addition, we also provide our personal opinion about the analysed studies, their benefits or deficiencies, as well as a summary of our findings.

Content analysis of the cultural content in FL textbooks

The second part of this paper focuses on applying the method of content analysis in FL textbook evaluation. As we are primarily interested in examining

the cultural content of FL textbooks, a sample of ten studies dealing with at least one aspect of the given perspective is presented and analysed. The provided examples of cultural content analysis in FL textbooks were retrieved from different sources, involving printed and online versions of various publications, regardless of the date of publishing. The common feature of the studies is that they investigated one or more aspects of the cultural dimension in FL course-books, as one of our basic intentions was to learn about the types of cultural issues that researchers seek, using the method of content analysis. The studies were selected from sources, the majority of which is specialised in language pedagogy or applied linguistics, such as journals, a conference proceeding, a printed volume of studies and a monograph, as follows: *Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics* (Japan, conference proceeding), *Bulletin of Niigata Institute of Technology* (Japan, journal), *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching* (Singapore, journal), *Canadian Social Science* (Canada, journal), *Hawaii Pacific University TESOL Working Paper Series* (USA, journal) *International Journal of English Language Education* (Macrothink Institute, USA, journal), *Cultural Studies in Foreign Language Education* (Byram, monograph), *Mediating Languages and Cultures: Towards an Intercultural Theory of Foreign Language Education* (England, volume of studies), *Ibérica* (Spain, journal) and *SAGE Open* (England, journal).

The main objectives of the present study were as follows:

1. To learn about the diversity of different issues investigated in FL textbooks;
2. To find out whether the qualitative or the quantitative approach was preferred by the researchers;
3. To find out whether content analysis was supplemented by other methods of research;
4. To learn about selected aspects of research methodology applied in the studies, i.e. sampling, units of analysis, checklists, categories, etc.
5. To learn about the results of the studies;

With regard to the research aims, we have formulated the following research questions:

1. What cultural issues are investigated in the selected FL textbooks, i.e. what was the focus of the studies?
2. Did the researchers conduct qualitative content analysis or its quantitative counterpart? Are there any studies combining the two approaches?
3. Were the examples of the content analysis supplemented by other research methods?

4. What information is provided about the sample and the units of analysis? Did the researchers use suggested checklist/s? If yes, which one/s?
5. What were the conclusions of the researchers based upon the results? Did the selected materials adequately represent the investigated issue?

As to the data processing, firstly, the content of the studies was summarised, then they were examined from the point of view of the given questions. The results of the investigation were recorded in a table according to which conclusions were drawn up. The summary of the results also provides some interesting viewpoints outlined by the researchers of the studies.

Examples of cultural content analysis in FL textbooks

As we have arranged the selected studies in chronological order, we will start with the research conducted by Byram in 1989. The reason why we opted for this study was that Byram is considered to be one of the most prominent scholars, emphasising the importance of introducing the intercultural element to FL and he has developed a model for intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The aim of the presented study was to investigate the extent to which issues such as cultural knowledge and cultural information played role in language teaching. It comprised analysis of a 'French as foreign language' textbook, as well as interviews and observations of teachers and students. The research was carried out in two English comprehensive schools over three years. Findings revealed that the cultural content of the lessons was deeply influenced by the textbooks. The observation of teachers; and interviews with them, indicated that the cultural content of the books had been complemented by the teachers. Moreover, the interviews with students revealed that the majority of them enjoyed the culture component.

Concerning the textbook analysis, the research sample consisted of the first three volumes of the textbook titled "Action! Graded French", published in the 1980s. It was intended for teaching French as a foreign language to 11 to 16 year olds. Units of the textbook demonstrated different aspects of the life of French people. As to the research procedure, the coding system for the purpose of the analysis covered several different aspects. The data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

As far as the analysis by theme was concerned, the results implied a thematic and pragmatic approach to intercultural language teaching, as all the three volumes were full of a wide range of different topics, connected mainly to a visit in France and using services. Regarding the second category, which was concerned with the image of the target country, a positive view of the French society and culture was portrayed in the textbooks. Furthermore, when it came

to the aspect of stereotypes, the findings of the analysis indicated that in general, neither French people nor their country was stereotyped. Finally, concerning the realistic view or authenticity of the information, two controversial groups of results were found. One of them was connected with the previously mentioned superficial, exclusively positive image of the target culture, where the author apparently failed to provide a realistic picture. On the other side, places, especially when supplemented with photos or pictures, proved a realistic approach of conveying information.

Based upon these findings, Byram assumed that some aspects of the French culture in the analysed textbooks reflected the reality (e.g. places, situations); however others appeared to be less real (e.g. characters). According to the researcher, the examined materials could only lead to a superficial understanding of French, mainly for the reasons that they lacked less attractive realities of the target culture, a more genuine picture of French people and their lifestyle, as well as some other sociocultural issues, such as religion or politics.

As for our second example, we have chosen a textbook analysis carried out by another famous scholar and researcher, who claims that one of the roles FL textbooks should gradually acquire is the role of mediator between the home and the target culture, i.e. the role of “presenting the country in a nut-shell” (Risager, 1991, p. 191). Risager is also known for developing a list of criteria dealing with the cultural content of FL textbooks (refer to the theoretical part of the study). Her research, conducted in 1991, aimed at mapping the development of incorporating the intercultural component in FL textbooks. As for the coding scheme, she applied the model of four categories presented above. The data were processed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The research sample included textbooks used for the elementary level in Scandinavia since the 1950s, the majority of which were produced in Sweden. Yet, the researcher considered the results of the analysis to be generalisable to other western countries of Europe.

Based on the findings of the analysis, Risager claimed that textbooks shared some features regardless of the time of production. First of all, the sociocultural focus consisted of the same elements in all examined materials, e.g. characters living in urban environment came from the middle-class, their age distribution was close to that of the intended learners, the linguistic interaction between them appeared to be trivial and focused mainly on situations of free time and consumption. The researcher highlighted that the tendency to focus on average learners needed a shift towards a more heterogeneous group of students in terms of both their age and social status.

The second type of common features was connected with the under-presented emotions and subjectivity of characters; thus providing a picture of so called “half-persons”, which questioned the authenticity of the heroes and situations. The following feature referred to the objective, neutral style commonly shared by all the investigated textbooks. It was reflected mainly in avoiding provocative and controversial issues that, in fact, could hinder discussion and engagement.

On the other side, results of the analysis at the micro-level demonstrated some shifts in the development of EFL textbooks throughout the examined period of time. One of them is the tendency to individualisation and weak social network of the characters. In addition, gender stereotypes seemed to become less apparent, trying to establish an egalitarian representation of both sexes. Other changes could be related to the replacement of the unrealistic drawings of early textbooks by more authentic pictures and photos.

As far as the macro-level analysis was concerned, changes were traced in terms of geographical information and socio-political problems, as newer textbooks paid more attention to these issues. However, whatever the time of publishing, textbooks lacked information on historical background.

Within the category of “International and Intercultural Issues”, the tendency to confront the target culture with the learners’ own in the latest materials was mentioned. In addition, they were also concerned with national stereotypes to a greater extent than earlier textbooks.

Apparently, the two studies that were presented do not share a lot of common features, mainly as far as their focus, research sample and methodology are concerned. However, it was not our objective to investigate identical studies, as we primarily aimed at looking for the type of cultural issues analysed in FL textbooks. Yet, what these two examples do have in common is that they both could serve as a model for researchers when analysing the cultural content of FL textbooks; due to the thoroughly designed and conducted research, as well as the objective interpretation of the results using the method of triangulation. Hence, apart from looking for the answers to the predefined questions, we will also provide our opinion about the advantages or the limitations of the following studies at the end of each of them.

The next study conducted by Aliakbari (2005) and dealing with the cultural content of current ELT textbooks in Iran, attempted to find the answers to two sorts of questions. One of them was interested in whose culture and, to what extent, is represented in ELT textbooks. The other tried to find out whether the given teaching materials provided sufficient support to develop learners’ ICC.

Based on Cortazzi and Jin's model (1999), he also examined whether the particular ELT textbook reflected the source culture, i.e. Iranian, the target culture (the culture of English-speaking countries), the international target cultures (countries where English is not used as first language) or remained neutral, i.e. focusing merely on learners' linguistic competence. In both cases the data were analysed quantitatively.

As to the research sample, Aliakbari chose the four levels of a nationally developed textbook, called "English book", used in Iranian upper secondary schools. Each of the levels consisted of a vocabulary building section, a reading comprehension part, listening comprehension and pronunciation practice, a grammar builder and a conversation practice part. However, the study investigated only the vocabulary and reading section as, during the process of investigation, they turned out to be the core of each unit and of every level.

With regard to the different nature of the two investigated parts, two different schemes of categories were developed for the purpose of the content analysis. In the vocabulary section, sentences following the particular word or phrase were classified into four categories. Thus, sentences without any cultural information belonged to the so-called "No Reference, Culture Free Statements" (NRCFS). The second category, labelled as "No Reference, Culture Specific Statements" (NRCSS) comprised examples with unidentifiable cultural content. "Sentences with Culture General References" (SCGR) contained cultural information that could not be restricted only to one nation or country. The fourth category, however, included references to a particular culture or country; hence the name "Sentences with Culture Specific References" (SCSR). Finally, to make the analysis easier, the categories were further marked as A, B, C and D.

For the analysis of the reading passages, Aliakbari established eight categories as follows: "reference to English speaking countries (H), reference to non-English speaking western countries (I), reference to eastern countries (L), cross-national comparison (M), reference to Iran (N), reference to Islam and Islamic traditions (O)" (ibid., p. 8). Categories (J) and (K) were also added, the former referring to texts with a general content, such as science, history and alike; whilst the latter included unidentifiable references.

According to Aliakbari, findings of the analysis demonstrated that the investigated textbook did not provide sufficient support for fostering learners' ICC, as only 11 % of the sentences of the vocabulary sections could be classified as SCSR. As far as the content of reading passages was concerned, it primarily focused on science and references to issues, such as literature and arts, were almost missing. As 28% of the cultural information in reading comprehension sections could not be connected to any culture or country, it was considered to be

a further disadvantage of the examined textbooks. In addition, the range of different references appeared to be limited and insufficient.

Based upon these results, Aliakbari assumed that the analysed Iranian textbook failed to develop ICC; therefore, a shift in the ideology of ELT and thus also in developing textbooks would be necessary. However, in our opinion the conclusion that the investigated course-book did not provide sufficient support to build one's intercultural competence seems to be overstating. Certainly, the equal representation of home, target and international target culture can broaden students' horizons and contribute to their cultural understanding; yet ICC also comprises other components, such as sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences, which the present study did not pay attention to.

Another example, carried out by Mineshima (2008), is an investigation about how genders were portrayed in a Japanese upper secondary-school English textbook. The examined material, titled *Birdland Oral Communication I*, used for teaching oral communication was written by a group of 9 authors, consisting of both native (2) and non-native Japanese (7) speakers of English.

As far as the procedure of the research is concerned, both quantitative and qualitative analysis was carried out focusing mainly on the language of the textbooks; although pictures were also examined where appropriate. Quantitative analysis was conducted in order to examine two aspects of sexism, which were the representation of genders and character traits. The former took into account the number of female/male characters in the whole textbook and in each lesson as well, the number of their utterances and it also checked which of the genders appeared first when mentioned together. On the other hand, the latter investigated the differences between the two genders in terms of school subjects and occupations, interests and lifestyle, as well as the division of household chores. Qualitative analysis was carried out to get a holistic view of the gender representation in the given textbook. For this purpose, five dialogues were chosen and analysed from the point of view of gender portrayal. Furthermore, some illustrations were also investigated, with a special focus on occasions when females and males wore aprons.

Findings of the quantitative analysis implied that female and male characters were almost equally present both in the textbook as a whole, as well as in each of its lessons. Similarly, the number of their utterances shared a balanced value and so did the frequency of their first appearances. Regarding personality traits, both genders were provided with approximately the same number of school subjects, professions, leisure activities and household duties.

In spite of the egalitarian approach demonstrated through the results of the quantitative analysis, the qualitative investigation, on the contrary, brought more controversial results. On one hand, the unequal distribution of household chores in favour of men appeared in various contexts; however, males working in aprons and ambitious female characters were also equally present in the textbook.

Based on the majority of the findings, Mineshima concluded that the examined textbook contributed to an egalitarian and broad-minded manifestation of both genders, strengthening their equal position in different fields of life. In addition, he suggested two pedagogical implications. Firstly, he emphasised the preventive role of the teachers with regard to gender discrimination, i.e. they should treat the unequal representation of the genders in textbooks as pedagogical opportunities. Secondly, teachers should avoid attributing any prescribed roles to either of the genders, e.g. to practise various roles demonstrated in the dialogues of the textbook, regardless of the students' gender.

Amongst the limitations of the study, Mineshima mentioned the small number of the analysed pictures while conducting qualitative analysis; hence, more samples could contribute to a more precise picture of the examined issue. Furthermore, as the investigation focused only on one textbook, a comparison of different textbooks would be necessary for the purpose of making generalisations. Despite the limitations of the study, Mineshima believed that it could serve as a source of criteria for teachers, when selecting and choosing textbooks.

Si Thang Kiet Ho (2009) analysed the aspects of intercultural communication in two EFL textbook units currently used in a Vietnamese university. Furthermore, according to the principles of intercultural language learning a cultural component of each unit was developed. Through a variety of interactive language tasks and activities the proposed framework aimed at raising learners' cultural awareness and fostering culture learning cognitively, behaviourally and affectively.

As for the research sample, Si Thang Kiet Ho chose a unit dealing with the topic of family in a Speaking course titled "Let's Talk 2" (Jones, 2002) and another lesson focused on food and drinks in a textbook titled "British Culture" (Thai & Duong, 1998). As far as the analysis of the cultural content was concerned, Si Thang Kiet Ho evaluated separately two different aspects within each unit. Firstly, the analysis focused on how culture was incorporated in the given unit, i.e. the types of activities through which cultural issues were introduced. In

addition, the treatment of culture in terms of language-culture relationship was also examined, i.e. whether the textbook taught culture explicitly or implicitly. The collected data were analysed qualitatively.

Regarding the results of the analysis, the unit dealing with the issue of families involved two main activities. One of them was to describe family relationships using the target language through vocabulary building tasks. The other one focused on discussion about learners' family life in their home country. The activities were introduced mainly through pair work, group work and individual work. Concerning the second aspect, the unit taught culture exclusively in a static-cognitive way, as it did not provide opportunities for active and dynamic culture learning, i.e. did not expose learners to the exploration of the target culture, to its confrontation with the home culture and the reflection on the similarities and differences of these two entities.

In the lesson concerned with food and drinks, reading comprehension and post-reading activities were applied. In addition, a glossary of cultural terms related to the topic was provided. Similarly to the unit of families, learners were not enhanced to actively build their ICC, as the culture-related issues were represented merely as facts.

Based on the findings of the analysis, Si Thang Kiet Ho made several suggestions how to use the cultural elements presented in the units more efficiently in order to develop learners' intercultural competences. The proposed model was developed with regard to the basic principles of intercultural learning. One of them is the aspect of "exploring self", which according to Si Thang Kiet Ho could be realised through groups discussions about the cultural differences and similarities, or through cultural connotations of vocabulary, for instance by drawing pictures. Secondly, cultural awareness could be developed by creating an authentic environment, a so-called "cultural island", through decorating the classroom with authentic picture, drawings, and so on. The cultural behaviours of people of the target culture could be further observed by watching videos. In addition, cultural exploration might be also fostered through conducting ethnographic interviews with native speakers, cultural simulations, identifying and reflecting on cultural stereotypes. Furthermore, comparing cultures and reflecting on the differences and similarities is another effective tool for enhancing cultural awareness. Finally, Si Thang Kiet Ho ranked problem-solving activities among the effective ways of mediating between cultures, i.e. avoiding or solving intercultural misunderstandings.

Apparently, Si Thang Kiet Ho provided a wide range of interactive tasks to effectively exploit the cultural content of the analysed units and to enhance students' ICC. However, what we miss is the critical analysis of the underlying

assumptions about culture in the given materials what he primarily aimed at. Except for the method of teaching the cultural content, the study obviously failed to provide a broader picture of the cultural input in the two selected units. In addition, even if an analysis of the cultural content was provided, the sample of two units, i.e. one unit per textbook, seems to be too small to make conclusions about “the under-lying assumptions about culture in two traditional EFL textbooks”.

The cultural content of EFL textbooks used in higher education in China was examined by Juan (2010). Her study aimed at finding out what kinds of cultural information the college EFL textbooks contained. It also tried to answer the question of the typical features the cultural content had. In addition, the purpose of the research was to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of the cultural references.

Regarding the research methodology, the sample comprised the first four volumes of *New College English* (Yinhua et al., 2001), published in Shanghai and used at the Tianjin Polytechnic University. Each of the levels consisted of eight lessons of different focus reflected in two texts and the supplementing parts. Hence, the content analysis focused on the evaluation of the two texts in each unit, as well as the proceeding and following tasks, such as the pre-reading and post-reading activities. In addition, it also examined the preface of the books. The data were gathered at two levels: on one hand – similar to the technique of skimming – the analysis tried to identify the gist of the whole unit, i.e. the main topic; on the other hand it also scanned the particular parts of the units for more detailed and specific information. For these purposes, the strategies of both quantitative and qualitative research were combined. Concerning the evaluation criteria, she reached for Byram’s model to analyse the given materials.

The results were discussed within several sections. As to the preface of the textbooks, Juan claimed that it completely lacked the aspect of developing learners’ communicative competence. She considered it to be disappointing as, according to her, the preface is the representation of the ideology and the framework of the textbook in a nutshell.

As to the content of the texts, they mostly focused on issues of the contemporary society covering a great variety of topics, e.g. unemployment, terrorism, friendship, etc. and using mostly up-to-date sources. Concerning the leading topic of the units, i.e. the analysis for a gist, except for the category of “social and political institutions”, all the other criteria of Byram’s model were represented. When it came to the search for details, the largest proportion of information was provided on “national geography” and “socialisation and the life

phrase”; however, the criteria of “stereo types and national identity” was almost completely neglected.

Regarding pre-reading activities, with one exception, the results of the analysis for a gist and that of details corresponded with each other, showing that 72.22% of the pre-reading passages contained information on “social identity and social groups”. Post-reading tasks, except for the “points for discussion”, lacked cultural issues and were mainly concerned with improving students’ language proficiency.

Based on the findings mentioned above, Juan made some conclusions, which she referred to as advantages and disadvantages of the *New College English* textbook. Amongst the pros of the investigated material, she ranked the diverse range of topics, the realistic view of the target community, the large number of literary works, the authors’ explanations and attitudes. On the other hand, she also drew the attention to some drawbacks of the analysed textbook. One of them was the prevailing focus on the American culture and neglecting other English-speaking countries. In addition, the representation of international cultures and the learners’ home culture, i.e. Chinese, was limited. It also lacked the confrontation of various cultures, which is important in order to raise students’ awareness of the differences. Last, but not least, the primary emphasis on language proficiency did not foster the students’ cultural awareness. Therefore, Juan suggested that the future, improved version of the given textbook should include the confrontation of as many English-speaking and international cultures with the home culture as possible. In addition, the integration of cultural elements in all sections of the textbooks should be another necessary step.

In our opinion, based on Byram’s criteria, Juan managed to provide a clear view of the cultural content of the analysed textbooks. In addition, the above listed benefits and drawbacks of the investigated materials and the offered suggestions could contribute to the implementation of the cultural element in the college English teaching in China and thus to the development of intercultural language teaching.

In another study, Korean EFL textbooks were investigated from the point of view of cultural and social biases by Kim (2012). The researcher attempted to find out what social identities and social stereotypes were present in the analysed textbooks. In addition, he also investigated the representations of gender identity and gender stereotypes. Finally, he aimed at examining whether the given textbooks contained elements of multiculturalism, global community, creativity, multi-cultural society and global etiquette.

The research sample included three of the English textbooks that were most commonly used in secondary schools across South Korea. All the books were titled *Middle school English 1*; however, one of them was written by Lee et al. (2009) and published by Doosan Dong-A B., another one was developed by J. Lee et al. (2009) and published by Chunjae Education, while the third one was written by Jang et al. (2009) and the publisher was Neungyule Education.

As to the research method, quantitative and qualitative content analysis was applied. Both the visible and invisible elements of culture were examined in the three textbooks. Categories for social identification involved factors, such as gender, age, race, social class, and disability.

Races were further analysed based on various features, e.g. hair colour, skin colour, etc. and were classified as Asian, Caucasian, and African American. Genders were divided into males and females. Pictures included in the textbooks were examined from the point of view of professions and activities.

Summarising the findings of the study, it is noteworthy that women were often represented as housewives. In addition, there were almost twice more images depicting males playing sports than those featuring sporting women. The types of sports were also biased, as team sports, especially ball games were connected to men, while non-team sports were more characteristic for women. Moreover, some activities and occupations were also limited to a particular gender. Hence, these results, according to Kim, indicated that textbooks do stereotype certain gender roles and so could have a negative impact on the development of the learners' personality.

The analysis of racial bias revealed that there were a prevailing proportion of Caucasian teachers in comparison to those of Asian origin or to those of other parts of the world. Kim understood this fact as the preference of the Korean society for Caucasian teachers of English.

We appreciate that based on the findings of the research and on the suggestions of Triyoda (2010), the author of the study recommended some changes to be taken into consideration. Firstly, images in EFL textbooks should support ethnic and social diversity of both the home and target country, which should also be reflected in the names and personalities of characters. Furthermore, both genders and different age groups should be equally represented in terms of different leisure activities, occupations or family roles. Finally, appearance and emotions of the genders should not be stereotyped either. However, the study did not give an answer to the third research question, i.e. whether the analysed textbooks "contained elements of multiculturalism, global community, creativity, multi-cultural society and global etiquette based on the addition of the 7th English National Curriculum" (ibid., p. 32). Therefore, we

consider the findings of the research to be only partial and insufficient to provide a holistic view of the cultural content of the investigated materials.

In the last example of Asian studies, Liu (2012) investigated textbooks in order to identify which type and what kind of culture was present in Chinese EFL university textbooks. The materials investigated in the study consisted of eight widely used Chinese College English textbooks (four students' books and four teachers' manuals), namely *Listening and Speaking 1-4 of New Horizon College English* (NHCE), compiled by Chinese authors. However, it must be noted that the analysis focused primarily on the teachers' books, while students' books of NHCE served only as a reference, as according to the researcher the latter was not as informative as the former. Regarding the structure of the teacher's manual (similar to the student's book) it contained a sum of forty lessons, each consisting of five parts: "Audio Scripts" for listening activities, "Notes for Teachers" for language work, "Culture Notes" providing cultural information, "Key to answer" and "Key for reference" for extra information. The collected data were analysed quantitatively.

As far as the research procedure was concerned, for the purpose of the analysis, Cortazzi and Jin (1999)'s framework was applied, according to which the source of culture could be distinguished as target, international target or source culture. However, as the given model did not cater for the case of unidentifiable, non-reference origins, another category of "unidentified sources of culture" was added.

Apart from the perspective of the source of culture, the aspect of big "C" and little "c" culture was taken into consideration. The researcher established the codes for this perspective based on Chen (2004) and Lee (2009)'s concepts on the cultural themes under Big "C" and little "c", as follows:

1. Big "C" culture (12 themes): Politic, Economy, History, Geography, Literature/Art, Social norms, Education, Architecture, Sports, Music, Movie, and Science.
2. Little "c" culture category (7 themes): Food, Holiday, lifestyles, Customs, Values, Hobbies and Gestures / body language" (ibid., p.87).

The results of the analysis revealed that the cultural content in more than half of the examined textbooks fell into the category of unidentifiable sources. In addition, identified cultural content was dominated by the target culture, while international target culture and home culture were present in a very small proportion. Furthermore, the findings also demonstrated that the pre-pondering theme was little "c" of "values", whilst common little "c" topics such as food, holidays, hobbies, etc. were missing. Hence, Liu considered the lack of

information on the source of culture and the imbalanced range of cultural themes to be insufficient to foster students' ICCs; thus causing problems in situations of intercultural communication. However, we cannot completely agree on this statement, as the information on the target and home culture, as well as the range of cultural topics, i.e. the sociocultural knowledge is just one of the aspects that attention must be paid to when developing ICC. Hence, in our opinion, in order to find out whether a textbook contributes to the improvement of ICC, other issues such as the sociolinguistic and paralinguistic input must also be analysed.

On the basis of the research findings, the researcher suggested that, apart from materials focused on the target culture, NHCE textbooks should include international target culture and source culture. Also, teaching materials should comprise a large variety of both big "C" and little "c" culture themes. Moreover, according to Liu, it was advisable for the teacher's manuals to include rich cultural information and adequate methodological guidance on how to teach culture.

In spite of the thorough analysis of the given aspects and the researcher's recommendations, amongst the limitations of the study, we would mention the research sample chosen for the analysis. Even though according to the researcher, the student's books were not as informative as teacher's manuals, we do not consider the choice of the latter as the research sample to be rational; since the aim of the research was to investigate the given cultural issues in Chinese EFL university textbooks.

A current study was conducted by two Spanish researchers, Oñate and Amador (2013) who examined what role the intercultural component had played in Business English textbooks since the 1960s. In the selected materials, they studied the presence of the aspect of intercultural communication, the attention given to this concept in whole units, and how it had been taught within the lessons. Furthermore, the range of chosen cultural issues and business contexts in which they appeared were also studied. Last, but not least, the paper also investigated which cultures had been mentioned in the chosen textbooks and whether they contained any national stereotypes.

To track the development of the given aspects, a number of 67 general Business English textbooks published between 1963 and 2009 were analysed. The selected teaching materials catered for different levels of English proficiency, from beginner to upper intermediate. Categories and codes for the purpose of the analysis were established with regard to the viewpoints mentioned above. The textbooks were divided into four main groups according to the date of publishing. Thus, the first category included seven books published between 1963 and 1979.

The remaining three groups included a ratio of 20 textbooks per decade, i.e. the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s. The collected data were processed quantitatively.

Oñate and Amador interpreted the findings of the research and divided them into different sections. In the first group, i.e. books published between 1963 and 1979, cultural issues were almost completely neglected; hence, the analysis of the further aspects was impossible. As to the analysis of the second group, i.e. books from the 1980s, almost half contained some kind of intercultural element which were taught through a range of activities including reading, listening and conversational tasks. Some of the examined books even put an emphasis on paralinguistic issues related to the world of business, e.g. negotiations or meetings. The books focused mainly on the culture in the UK and the USA, but some Asian and European countries got also some attention. However, information on South America, Canada and Africa was almost completely missing.

The third group of the investigated materials, i.e. that of the books published in the 1990s proved a larger proportion of intercultural component not only in whole textbooks, but also within the units. Similar to the previous category, the intercultural aspect was fostered through the activities of reading, listening and communication. Non-verbal communication, business-related issues and principles of socialising were also dealt with. Among the countries mentioned, the UK and the USA still played a leading role; however, countries on the other continents appeared to a lesser or greater extent as well.

As to the last group of the analysed books, the 2000s could be characterised with a boom of incorporating the aspects of intercultural communication. Regarding activities through which cultural issues were introduced, no sharp differences could be highlighted in comparison with the previous groups. In addition, emphasis placed on non-verbal communication reached a similar conclusion. On the other hand, business-related issues, together with socialising, got considerable attention. Apart from the UK and the USA, Germany, Japan and China became prominent; countries, such as Poland or Sweden were also introduced, though.

Obviously, due to the considerable research sample, Oñate and Amador managed to provide a broad overview of the development of the intercultural component in Business English textbooks since the 1960s. With regard to the results that showed a significant development in integrating culture to Business English language teaching, their conclusion that current Business English textbooks increase student's cultural awareness and lead them to a respectful as well as sensitive attitude toward other cultures, seems to be relevant.

Another example of the latest studies, done by a Tunisian researcher, Melliti (2013), focused on exploring the issue of “globality” in global EFL textbooks, in terms of connectedness, inappropriacy and inclusivity. “The study raised questions about the suitability of global course-books to globally diverse learners” (ibid, p. 1). For this purpose, the methods of content analysis and questionnaire were applied. As to the research sample, the former focused on the analysis of a widely used course-book, which is known worldwide, *Headway Intermediate* (H/I), whilst the latter investigated the perception of 251 of its users at Institute Bourguiba for Living Languages (IBLV) in Tunisia. As the purpose of this study is to analyse studies focused on content analysis of the cultural content in EFL textbooks, the following part will draw attention mainly to the first phase of the research, i.e. to the analysis of H/I course-book.

Regarding the research procedures, words and pictures in the lessons of H/I “was discussed in terms of its treatment of the principles of preserving inclusivity, avoiding inappropriacy and investing in connectedness” (ibid., p. 5); these aspects actually represented the categories of the coding scheme. Within the aspect of inclusivity of minorities, codes were developed to cater for “the numbers, the roles, and the topics related to women, men, Whites, Blacks, and other diverse characters” (ibid.). The concept of inappropriacy was investigated in terms of the next issues: sex (overt mention), narcotics, isms, pork, anarchy, AIDS, Israel and six-pointed stars, racism, genetic engineering, terrorism, politics, violence, alcohol, out of marriage relationships (i.e. relations with someone other than ones’ spouse such as cohabitation, dating, boy/girlfriend), glorifying some dangers in some countries, religion, ideological icons and revealing clothes” (ibid). With regard to connectedness “leisure activities, the issue of language and global locations” were determined as codes. It is noteworthy that only apparent examples representing the given codes were taken into consideration. The collected data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

As far as the aspect of inclusivity was concerned, findings revealed that females were mentioned less frequently than males and portrayed as women of Western cultures. In addition, some stereotypical representations appeared as well. Furthermore, in terms of numbers, roles and topics, Whites were preferred over other groups, such as Blacks, Asians, Native Americans, etc. Based on these results, Melliti assumed that global course-books failed to support the principle of inclusivity of different minorities living in today’s world.

Regarding the prospective of inappropriacy, results of the study demonstrated that controversial issues such as “sex, narcotics, anarchy, Israel and six-pointed stars, racism, genetic engineering, terrorism, isms and pork” were avoided. However, according to Melliti, the given topics could provide a

motivating source for fostering the skills argumentation. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that the three topics politics, violence and AIDS were treated with caution. The researcher explained this fact by the general aim of publishers not to lose markets, thus hindering cultural awareness of the learners from different parts of the world. On the other side, H/I did cater for controversial topics, such as alcoholic beverages, revealing clothes, out of marriage relationships like dating and cohabitation, dealing with some dangers in particular countries, religion and celebrating specific ideological icons.

Within the category of connectedness, the researcher interpreted the following results. The majority of the leisure activities was connected with travelling and sports that, according to Melliti, could be considered as an attitude of the publishers towards safe topics; yet, reading between the lines, the signs of ethnocentric orientation could be noticed. Examining the issue of the language variety, H/I could be characterised by the pre-dominant position of Standard British English and everyday English, neglecting other geographical and social varieties, including American English. In addition, the obvious dominance of the Western locations, such as Europe, Australia and America in H/I also manifests – consciously or unconsciously – the idea of ethnocentricity.

Based on the findings of the content analysis, supported by the results of the questionnaire, Melliti's conclusion seems to be realistic; for he considered H/I to be global in terms of connectedness, inappropriacy, but only partially global with regard to inclusivity. Furthermore, the researcher's recommendation to produce locally designed course-books corresponds with the idea that "the intercultural element" in FL education draws the attention to the home culture and the home language, and therefore it must be also reflected in the materials used for language teaching (Corbett, 2003; Kramsch, 1998).

Summary

We have drawn our conclusions based upon the findings displayed in Tables 1 - 2. However, it must be noted that during the process of the analysis, we decided not to include the examples of categories set by the researchers as there was not enough place in the chart to involve them due to their extensive character. Therefore, they are provided within the description of the studies.

To summarise the principal features of the analysed studies, we have decided to answer the research questions one by one.

1. What cultural issues are investigated in the selected FL textbooks, i.e. what was the focus of the analysis?

Looking at the list of cultural issues in Table 1, we can claim that the selected studies focused on a range of different aspects. The most frequently examined

perspectives include “gender representation and stereotypes” (4 studies), “social identification and stereotypes” (3 studies). Issues, such as “type of culture”, “developing ICC”, range of cultural topics, “development of integrating cultural aspect in FL textbooks” were present in two studies each. Individually examined topics involved “methods of teaching culture”, “image of the target country”, “big C and little c culture” and “globality”.

2. *Did the researchers conduct qualitative content analysis or its quantitative counterpart? Are there any studies combining the two approaches?*

Based upon the findings, we can state that the majority, i.e. six of the examined studies, used a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis; however, exclusively quantitative approach was applied in three cases and in one example the data were analysed only qualitatively.

3. *Were the examples of the content analyses supplemented by other research methods?*

Despite the recommendation of numerous researchers, only two studies tried to verify the results of the content analysis by using other research methods as well. One of them was the research focusing on the “globality” of Headway Intermediate, with the researchers opting for a questionnaire, which was answered by 251 of its users. Byram (1989) investigated the diversity of topics, image of the target country and stereotypes by the triangulation of content analysis, observation and interviews.

4. *What information is provided about the sample and the units of analysis? Did the researchers use suggested checklist/s? If yes, which one/s?*

We can assume that the majority of the studies (eight) analysed FL textbooks used by adolescents and young adults, as four of them investigated upper-secondary school textbooks, three examined university or college books and one was concerned with business textbooks, which can be also ranked among materials for more mature learners. Only two of the examples focused on FL textbooks used at lower levels, one at elementary and one at lower-secondary education.

Apart from the aspect of learners’ age, eight studies investigated the cultural content in English as foreign language textbooks. The remaining two conducted analysis of a ‘French as foreign language’ textbook and another one focused on the development of the cultural aspect in textbooks of different languages.

As to the units of analysis, the units of analysis included words, sentences, dialogues, illustrations, sections of the units, units as a whole, and each textbook as a whole.

As far as the use of checklists is concerned, eight researchers developed their own coding scheme according to the aspect they were investigating. In two cases, the model of source, target and international target cultures suggested by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) was applied. In addition, Byram's model (1993) and Risager's checklist (1991) were also used.

5. *What were the conclusions of the researchers based upon the results? Did the selected materials adequately represent the investigated issue?*

In the majority of the studies, researchers expressed their complete or partial dissatisfaction and disappointment about the results of the analysis. Only in one case was the content of the textbook evaluated positively with regard to the research aim, as the Japanese upper secondary-school English textbook, titled "Birdland Oral Communication I" catered for an equal representation of genders. The other optimistic view was expressed by the Spanish researchers, Oñate and Amador (2013), concerning the significant development in integrating culture to Business English textbooks.

The most frequently mentioned deficiencies included the insufficient support of improving learners' intercultural competences, the dominant and almost exclusive focus on the target culture, usually American, gender and social stereotyping, passive and only cognitive learning of culture, etc.

To sum up, based upon the negative opinions expressed by the researchers, we have the impression that there is still a lot to do in the field of textbook development, to which analysis of the cultural content of currently used textbooks can contribute to a large extent. However, in order to come up with relevant suggestions and recommendations, the carefully planned and conducted process of content analysis, as well as the objective interpretation of the results, is of particular significance. Drawing on the limitations found during the analysis of the presented studies, researchers should pay attention mostly to the selection of the appropriate research sample and the establishing of the units of analysis, as well as the development of categories and codes. No less important is to avoid exaggerating statements and overgeneralisations in case of analysing only a few aspects of the particular area.

As to the diversity of the investigated issues, it would be advisable to focus on aspects of the ICC, which are less frequently investigated; for instance, none of the ten studies investigated the paralinguistic or sociolinguistic input in FL textbooks. Furthermore, it would be important to pay attention to the cultural content used at nursery, primary and lower secondary schools. As recommended by numerous scholars (Dörnyei, 2007; Flick, 2010) the results of the content analysis should be contrasted to the findings of other methods, such observation,

interviews or questionnaires addressed to the users of the given textbook. Finally, despite the dominance of English language as “lingua franca”, textbooks of other languages should be investigated to a larger extent.

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APPENDIX

Table 1 Principal features of the analysed studies 1

Name of the researcher/ country of the research	Cultural Issue/ Focus	Quan	Qual	Other methods	Sample
Byram/England	range of topics, image of the target country, stereotyping	✓	✓	interviews and observations of teachers and pupils	first three volumes of lower secondary French textbook titled "Action! Graded French"
Risager /Sweden	development of incorporating the intercultural component in FL textbooks	✓	✓	X	textbooks used for the elementary level in Sweden since the 1950s (different languages)
Aliakbari /Iran	type of culture/developin g ICC	✓	X	X	four levels of Iranian upper- secondary textbook "English book"
Mineshima/ Japan	sexism	✓	✓	X	Japanese upper secondary-school English textbook, "Birdland Oral Communication I"
Si Thang Kiet Ho /Vietnam	the way of teaching culture	X	✓	X	a unit dealing with the topic of family (Jones, 2002) in a Speaking course and lesson focused on food and drinks (Thai & Duong, 1998) in a British Culture course
Juan /China	range of cultural topics/developin g ICC	✓	✓	X	the first four volumes of "New College English" used Tianjin Polytechnic University
Kim/South Korea	social identification and stereotypes(gend er, age, race, social class, and disability)	✓	✓	X	three English textbooks most commonly used in South Korean secondary schools

Liu/China	type of culture/big “C” and little “c” culture	✓	X	X	8 (4students’ books and 4 teachers’ manuals), Listening and Speaking 1-4 of New Horizon College English (NHCE).
Oñate and Amador /Spain	the development of the cultural aspect in FL textbooks	✓	X	X	67 general Business English textbooks published between 1963 and 2009
Melliti/Tunis	“globality”: connectedness, inappropriacy and inclusivity	✓	✓	questionnaire251 of H/l users	Headway Intermediate

Table 2 Principal features of the analysed studies 2

Name of the researcher/ country of the research	Units of analysis	Checklist/models	Conclusions/implications
Byram/England	sections of the units of the textbook, the whole textbook	X	wide range of topics, too positive, unrealistic image, no stereotypes;
Risager /Sweden	the whole textbook	Risager´s model (1991)	common features: same elements of the sociocultural focus, under-presented emotions and subjectivity of characters, objective, neutral style; development: egalitarian representation of both sexes, individualisation, more authentic pictures, more diverse topics;
Aliakbari /Iran	sentences in the vocabulary and reading sections in each unit	Cortazzi and Jin´s model (1999)	insufficient support of developing ICC
Mineshima/ Japan	sections of the units of the textbook, the whole textbook, dialogues	X	equal manifestation of genders

Si Thang Kiet Ho /Vietnam	sections of the units of the textbook, the whole unit	X	teaching culture passively; a model to efficiently develop learners' intercultural competences was proposed by the researcher.
Juan /China	sections of the units of the textbook, the whole textbook	Byram's model (1993)	insufficient support of developing ICC, wide range of cultural topics, dominance of the American culture, lack of source and other cultures;
Kim/South Korea	sections of the units of the textbook, the whole textbook	X	textbooks do stereotype certain gender roles and prefer Caucasian teachers of English
Liu/China	sections of the units of the textbook, the whole textbook	Cortazzi and Jin (1999)'s model	lack of information on the source of culture, insufficient international target culture imbalanced range of cultural themes;
Oñate and Amador /Spain	sections of the units of the textbook, the whole textbook	X	significant development in integrating culture to Business English language teaching
Melliti/Tunis	words and pictures in the lessons of the units of the textbook, the whole textbook	X	only partial globality, production of locally designed course-books suggested by the author;