

Investigating the cultural component in EFL textbooks: texts and illustrations

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Abstract

The article analyzes the cultural component in three prominent English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks which are employed in the language programmes of higher school of Kazakhstan via intercultural communicative approach as a method. The findings indicate that the textbooks contain primarily topics of surface culture and omit invisible forms of culture which are crucial for understanding the target language culture. In conclusion, in Kazakhstani FL educational context there has risen an urgent need for developing EFL textbooks which will be oriented not only to the target and international culture but students' native culture as well.

Key words: Textbooks, EFL Learners, Cultural Content.

Investigando el componente cultural en los libros de texto de EFL: textos e ilustraciones

Resumen

El artículo analiza el componente cultural en tres importantes libros de texto de inglés como idioma extranjero (EFL) que se emplean en los programas de idiomas de la escuela superior de Kazajstán a través del enfoque comunicativo intercultural como método. Los hallazgos indican que los libros de texto contienen principalmente temas de cultura de superficie y omiten formas invisibles de cultura que son cruciales para comprender la cultura de la lengua meta. En conclusión, en el contexto educativo de Kazakhstani FL, ha aumentado la necesidad urgente de desarrollar libros de texto de EFL que estén orientados no solo a la cultura objetiva e internacional, sino también a la cultura nativa de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: libros de texto, aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera, contenido cultural.

1. Introduction

In contemporary foreign language education, it is an acknowledged fact that teaching and learning a foreign language cannot be reduced to the developing of only linguistic skills like vocabulary, syntax, morphology, and phonology. As underlined by Chlopek, “To learn a language well requires knowing something about the culture of that language” (Chlopek, 2008: 10). Communication which is realized without cultural grounds can be a source of serious mistakes leading to a misunderstanding between communication partners. Consequently, language learning much depends on a careful selection of culture related materials included in textbooks. According to Gómezrodríguez (2015a), textbooks play a crucial role in EFL context because they serve as a basis for helping learners develop communicative competence and many teachers, thus, depend on them.

EFL textbook material aims at facilitating language learners’ ability to functionally use language and convey messages in the process of socio-cultural communication. To accomplish this task, textbooks include various activities to practice functional language skills and grammar forms. Additionally, they tend to present real-life communicative situations displaying norms of speech behavior of native speakers. However, little attention has been given to exploring the question whether EFL textbooks incorporate a sufficient amount of material to help learners to overcome the cultural gap and develop intercultural communicative competence (Fasih & Narcycombes, 2011). A substantial body of literature exploring the cultural component of FL textbooks puts the emphasis mainly on investigating how these textbooks are thematically organized, or how target and international cultures are presented in them, with scant attention devoted to analyzing how these textbooks represent cultural elements as well as whether information incorporated in the textual and non-textual material can be considered sufficient enough for learners to overcome their cultural unfamiliarity and become more culturally competent in relation both to their native culture and the one which is being learned. Such an examination would be of interest and would provide language instructors with insights into the cultural layout of EFL textbooks as well as it will give understanding whether these textbooks offer rich content about the target culture.

The present study sets out to examine how EFL textbooks are organized in relation to the surface and deep levels of culture, and how the cultural component is reflected in illustrations included in EFL textbooks. The analysis was supported by theoretical views related to the definition of culture, the distinction between deep and surface culture, as well as various researches devoted to the exploration of the cultural component in EFL textbooks laid the basis for it.

2. Theoretical Views on Culture

2.1 What is Culture?

In recent decades, the teaching of culture and intercultural competence has been recognized as a priority in educational outcomes. Current research in the dimension of FL education approaches the notion of culture through its application to social norms, values, and beliefs that may affect many issues of FL use, teaching and learning. Language plays a significant role in the construction of culture and in the emergence of cultural change (Kramsch, 1995), and many researchers underline the inseparable connection between language and culture (Byram & Risager, 1999; Kramsch, 2012; Kunanbayeva, 2017). The report of the Modern Language Association (2007) covering issues on

teaching culture at the higher educational level in the context of globalization states that language and culture are closely related: “Language is a complex multifunctional phenomenon that links an individual to other individuals, to communities, and to national cultures” (Gómezrodríguez, 2015a: 236), and “Culture is represented not only in events, texts, buildings, artwork, cuisines, and many other artifacts but also in language itself” (Gómezrodríguez, 2015b: 236). As underscored by Gómezrodríguez (2015b), “the cultural background of a society is a significant factor that influences human activities and it also shapes the society members interpretations of the world around them” (Gómezrodríguez, 2015a: 4). Mao (2009) points out that culture connects people, for results of work of a human being can be employed by other people, and the process of transmitting experience from one generation to another is based on transmitting and sharing knowledge, experience and products of culture. Robinson states that culture should be viewed from four definitions: the behavioral definition (patterns shared by a social group which can be observed in terms of actions), the functionalist definition (social rules governing and explaining events), the cognitive definition (the knowledge shared by cultural actors, which helps them to interpret the world), and the symbolic definition (system of symbols used by the individual to assign meanings to different elements and events).

Mao (2009) has examined different factors that necessitate the teaching of culture in FL classrooms. The researcher states that cultural factors are of paramount importance in the FL classroom and teaching culture within and beyond language leads students to a better understanding of the foreign language they study and ensures an effective cross-cultural communication in real situations. As the learners adopt different perspectives to the ways of reaching goals and satisfying needs, they become able to see their own culture from multiple viewpoints. This enables them to adapt and develop their native culture further as well as tolerate the otherness, since their belief and value system is less likely to be taken as absolute truth and the best solution to the challenges of the world.

Mao (2009) states that in the process of comparing cultures students learn to see both the differences and similarities of their native and the target language culture, to accept differences of cultures as a norm in the modern world, to form active life position directed against cultural inequality and cultural discrimination. When being introduced to various facts of FL culture, students come to a deeper understanding of how the target language is used to achieve the explicit and implicit cultural goals of the foreign language community and start to reflect on the ways in which their own language and community function. Students improve their perception of a foreign culture and their own culture by gaining awareness of a foreign language. The importance of the cultural component in FL classroom is undeniable. In fact, it is believed that “the person who learns a language without learning a culture risks becoming a fluent fool” (Bennett et al., 2003: 237).

2.2 Deep Culture vs. Surface Culture

The notions of surface and deep levels of culture are essential for this study, and Edward Hall’s cultural iceberg analogy can help conceptualize them. The analogy illustrates differences between what we readily see when we start learning a new culture (the tip of the iceberg) and the submerged aspects of culture not readily visible (the hidden part of the iceberg). Examples of surface culture elements include national costumes, music, literature, and specific holidays. These surface forms

only accumulate the general information which is fixed and static, and the knowledge of such is not sufficient for students to understand the new culture they are entering.

In contrast, deep culture includes unconscious values, beliefs, sociocultural norms of behavior, and invisible meanings associated with a certain region or a group of people. These deep forms of culture may be the most difficult for language learners to identify because they are intricate and hidden and may have a multifaceted nature as they do not necessarily reflect the fixed social and cultural standards. The examples of deep culture relate to the concepts of food, friendship and love, lie and truth, the nature of family relations, etc.

The EFL field has generally concentrated on teaching those forms of culture which are easily observable, whereas a study of underlying values, attitudes, and beliefs constituting the deep culture is often not considered. This fact can result in the emerging of hazardous stereotypes which are conceived as labels relating to a certain community based on prejudgment and exaggeration which hinder seeing the individualities of the people belonging to this group (Gómezrodríguez, 2015b). For example, the ideas that Americans eat only fast food, British have polite manners but cold nature, Australians drink Fosters, and Canadians love to play only ice-hockey are generalized stereotypes about these cultures. As Mao underlines, “teachers’ interest in creating cultural awareness in the EFL classroom has involuntarily caused the spread of these stereotypical labels in their attempt to study the visible elements of the target culture only” (Mao, 2009: 44). Students may learn a lot about the surface culture, they may even succeed in achieving near native communicative competence, but this will not help them overcome misunderstandings in situations of intercultural communication (Lange, 2011).

2.3 Culture and EFL Textbooks

The issue of textbook selection is one of the demanding problems of today’s FL education. A number of researchers devoted their attention to investigating FL textbooks, pointing out at their benefits and deficiencies in relation to different aspects. It is commonly acknowledged that textbook analysis should serve as a basis for choosing the material which can be considered appropriate to reach the learning objectives set within the programme.

The textbook analysis is of crucial importance in FL education and education in general for several reasons. First, it is one of the main strategic decisions, as teachers usually do not prefer to change textbooks in the educational process and employ this or that textbook for a longer period of time. Furthermore, students’ language proficiency level may be influenced which, consequently, may affect their future professional life. In addition, it can be confusing for students to get accustomed to a new textbook if a teacher prefers to change the previous one within the same programme (Cunningsworth, 1995). These reasons bring forth the idea that before choosing a textbook teachers should pay considerably more attention to its analysis. But the problem which lies behind is that teachers still lack the necessary skills to choose the most appropriate textbook and they often have to decide under the pressure of time. Additionally, one can feel completely confused due to the overwhelming variety of EFL textbooks present in the book market.

Mao (2009) underscore that EFL textbooks supply a route into the target culture learning. One cannot but agree with the statement: very often a textbook is one of the main means of providing language learners with the opportunity to enter the culture which is being learned. The same viewpoint is expressed by Böcü & Razi who underline that EFL textbooks have become “a

significant source in presenting cultural information to FL learners systematically, especially when it is not possible to provide them with real-life environments” (Böcü & Razi, 2016: 222).

A number of researches are devoted to investigating FL textbooks and their reflection of the cultural component. For instance, Jiang (2006) brings forth the category of contextual sensitivity in his analysis of EFL textbooks. He suggests that language structures should be incorporated into the textbook contents in combination with socio-cultural contexts. The results of the study conducted by Mao (2009) indicated that the analyzed EFL textbook presented mainly the target culture, particularly British and American. Furthermore, analyzing the topics of Big C culture and little c culture it was found that the top three themes in the textbook belonged in the Big C category. On the basis of this study, Mao (2009) concluded that the EFL textbook ignored the significance of little c in building learners’ ICC.

Gómezrodríguez (2015a) examined three EFL textbooks to detect those activities in which culture was incorporated. Each topic was classified into two categories: deep culture and surface culture. The researcher came to the conclusion that the topics in the analyzed EFL textbooks do not provide language learners with the basic skills to become intercultural competent, which is a significant disadvantage of the influential textbooks designed by prestigious publishing houses. Mao (2009) examined the corpus of EFL textbooks and the ways by means of which incorporated cultural elements were represented in them (simple mention, display, and depiction). Additionally, the authors conducted a careful examination of the textbook to identify the cultural elements of the inner circle countries (the UK, the USA, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand). The results of this research illustrate that despite the varying level of the course books, ‘a simple mention’ remained the most frequently detected category in the presentation of the target culture. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the majority of cultural elements presented in the course books belonged to the UK and the USA. Earlier researches undertaken by Lund (2006) displayed the same observation.

Abbasian & Biria (2017) attempted to identify how much national, international and target culturally familiar content is included in the analyzed EFL books used in Iran. The findings of this study showed that the students’ requirements are not met in the modern world of communication, as the textbooks under analysis paid little attention to the national, social and regional identity of students. According to the authors, “...students have a weak understanding of the whole aspects of their own cultural background to confront with foreigners in different types of communication” (Böcü & Razi, 2016: 62). Mao (2009) come up to the analysis of EFL textbook by introducing semiotic principles and focusing on the formal dimensions of the meaning-making process, on how things can mean, rather than on empirical classroom data. The authors argue that texts and images should be treated in combination because “it is their interplay that facilitates learning and creates opportunities for cultural messages to surface in the lesson” (Mao, 2009: 696)

To sum up, there can be traced some common findings in the analysis of EFL textbooks. The textbooks were found to be either insufficient in relation to the reflection of the cultural component or weak in fostering learners’ ICC. The current study presents an analysis of the EFL textbooks used in the FL classroom of Kazakhstan at a university level in relation to their incorporation of the cultural component, which might encourage EFL teachers to reflect on how to help language students overcome the cultural gap as well as on how to adapt and, if possible, to design culture-based materials including both students’ native culture and the one which is being taught.

3 English Textbooks Analysis

3.1 Criteria for the Selection of the Textbooks

Led by the previous insights, the present study examines three EFL textbooks used at a university level in Kazakhstan. The analysis attempts to identify the content reflecting the levels of surface and deep culture included in the material of the textbooks and to detect how illustrations incorporated in them reflect the cultural component. The textbooks selected for the analysis were compiled by prominent British publishing houses. They have been used in the language programmes at Kazakhstani universities for a number of years to train future teachers of English. The names of the textbooks are not revealed because the main aim of the analysis is not to create prejudice about the reputation of the textbooks but rather to encourage EFL teachers reflect on whether the teaching material incorporated in them is sufficient to help learners facilitate their cultural literacy and cultural awareness and become better communicators on the intercultural level as well as to give a basis for the critical analysis on how to address culture as it is presented in the textbooks referred to in the FL classroom.

The three textbooks are compiled for intermediate level students, and focus on the communicative approach to language teaching. Textbook 1 includes twelve units, each one consisting of sections such as Grammar, Vocabulary, Functional language, Pronunciation, Reading and Listening, Speaking and Writing. Moreover, each unit has one did you know? The section presenting short texts which contain cultural information about the English-speaking world. The texts in this section are interesting and rather informative, and provide further opportunities for speaking. Textbook 2 includes twelve units consisting of the following sections: Speaking and Writing; Reading and Listening, Grammar; Vocabulary and Pronunciation. Each unit presents a number of extended tasks for developing student speaking skills called Anecdotes. These tasks are based on personal issues and give students a chance to tackle a longer piece of discourse. Textbook 3 contains seven units having the following sections: Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Practical English, Writing, Revise and Check. The visible advantage of Textbook 1 in relation to incorporation of the cultural component is a cultural section for reading and discussing which the other two textbooks do not have.

It was important to analyze how the EFL textbooks incorporate the cultural component and whether they help learners of English develop intercultural communicative competence. The research fails to find any study which analyzes the EFL textbooks used in Kazakhstani higher school regarding the cultural presentation. To fill the existing gap of such studies in the country, the current study attempts to compare three EFL textbooks widely employed in the language programmes of Kazakhstani higher school in terms of presentation of surface and deep culture topics in them as well as the employment of culture related visual materials supporting the texts or presented as separate textbook elements. In line with the ideas of Mao (2009), texts and images have been selected as the main units of observation.

3.2 Research questions

The purpose is to investigate the cultural content embedded in the written texts and illustrations of the EFL textbooks. The EFL textbooks were analyzed guided by the following questions:

- How much of the written texts in the EFL textbooks integrate the cultural component?

- Which surface or deep cultural elements do the EFL communicative textbooks contain?
- How much of the illustrative material of the EFL textbooks is culture related?
- What functions do culture related illustrations realize in the EFL textbooks: demonstrative or instructional?

3.3 Analysis Procedure

To answer the research questions, every text and illustration of the textbooks was carefully examined to detect those incorporating the cultural component. Each text was classified into two categories: culture related and not culture-related with the further distribution of culture related texts into topics reflecting the levels of either surface or deep culture. A careful examination of the illustrative material which is an important non-textual component of FL textbooks was further conducted to identify whether it reflected the cultural component or not.

A quantitative content analysis was employed in the process of the EFL textbook analysis. In a broader context this type of analysis refers to the process of summarizing 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. Mao (2009) conceives content analysis as a method of summarizing and analyzing messages quantitatively in terms of objectivity-intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, reliability, and hypothesis testing. Cohen et al. (2007) defines content analysis as the process of four Cs, i.e. coding, categorizing, comparing and concluding, where coding is used to simplify the specific features of the analyzed data and connect them to broader concepts; categorizing refers to developing categories into which the units of analysis (words, texts, etc.) can be classified; comparing is employed to make connections between the categories, and concluding means drawing theoretical findings on the basis of the results of the analysis. Furthermore, Cohen et al. (2007) distinguish essential features of the process of content analysis: 1. breaking down text into units of analysis; 2. undertaking a statistical analysis of the units; 3. presenting the analysis in as economical a form as possible. Thus, the mentioned stages of quantitative content analysis as described by Cohen et al. (2007) were referred to in the current research.

4. Findings

In this section, the results of the study have been presented in tables and figures with further interpretation of the statistic data presented in them.

4.1 Textual information of the EFL textbooks

The first research question is aimed at identifying culture related information of the textbooks reflected in the written texts and tape scripts. The analysis showed that the three EFL textbooks contain a different number of texts referring to various aspects of the target culture (see Figure 1). Textbook 1 contains a larger number of texts (53 %) in comparison with the other two (35 % and 36 % for Textbook 2 and Textbook 3), and the largest number of culture related texts as well. In the process of EFL textbook selection, the number of culture oriented texts may be one of the decisive aspects. Modern EFL textbooks may contain an overwhelming range of texts and communicative activities enhancing student level of language proficiency but lack cultural issues.

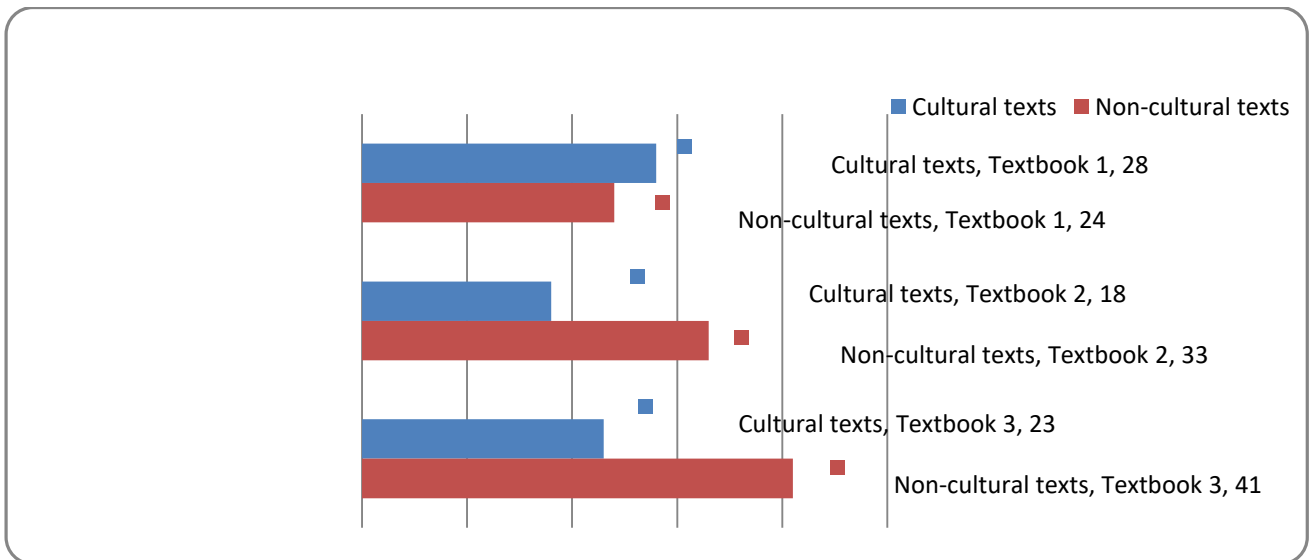
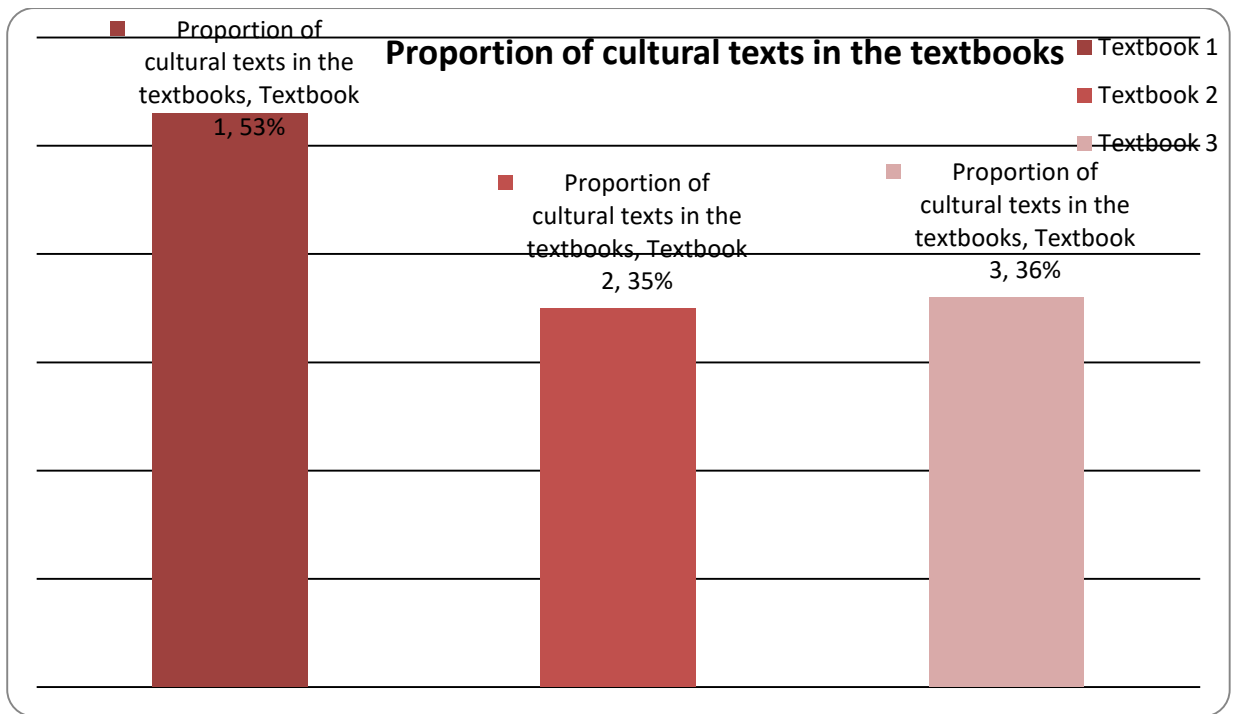


Figure 1. Proportion of cultural texts in textbooks. Distribution of Texts into Cultural vs. Non-cultural Categories

The topics of the texts were further classified into two categories: surface and deep culture. The static aspects of culture such as geographical and tourist sites, holiday, food, significant personalities were placed under the category of surface culture, whereas all the implicit, or invisible aspects, were classified as a deep culture. The following tables illustrate the distribution of the topics of the texts into the categories of surface and deep levels of culture as they appear in the analyzed textbooks (See Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3).

Aspect	Surface Culture	Deep Culture
Geographical sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From our Dublin correspondent • Lawyer gives up a job to cycle around South Africa • Nerina Klein's travel weblog • Welcome to Edinburgh • Paradise ridge • London's Mayfair district • Our top resorts in Jamaica • Emerald Tours • King's Park Holiday village • Did you know? Cork – European capital of culture • Glastonbury 	None
Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Portillo • Lottery winners and losers • JK Rowling • Rupert Murdoch • The return of Martin Guerre • The sporting year • New York & London taxis 	None
General information about culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you British enough? • Catch them young • The British royal family & charity 	None
Historical facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 things you probably did not know about beds and bedrooms • The US Congressional Gold Medal 	None
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food in Britain • Checking in checking out 	None
Political institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British political parties 	None
Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Da Vinci Code 	None
Beliefs/ worldview/ superstitions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superstitions in Britain

Table 1. Cultural Topics Found in Textbook 1

The analysis of Textbook 1 shows that almost all its themes belong to the level of explicit culture presenting seven neutral aspects: geographical sites, food, entertainment, historical facts, political institutions, literature and general information about the TL culture. Neutral aspects emphasize the most celebratory and positive elements of culture. As a result, learners encounter safe opinions of the target culture because they are never taught that defects in and deviations from the models of the correct cultural behavior also exist (GómezRodríguez, 2015a: 169). The only theme which may be referred to the level of deep culture is that of superstitions in Britain. The text belonging in the category presents brief information on how 'a black cat' is treated in British culture.

Aspect	Surface Culture	Deep Culture
Geographical sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bondi Beach, Australia 	None
Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Schwimmer • Mr Nice Guy • Rolling Stones 	None

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How I get dressed p.104 • Listening Conversations about books, films and music • Listening Two friends talking about a famous TV programme 	
Beliefs/ worldview/ superstitions		•
Holidays/ festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Las Fallas • Two festivals • Mardi Gras • Listening An Interview with someone about Chinese New Year 	None
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memories of food • Listening An Interview with someone who has eaten unusual food 	None
Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride and Prejudice • Poem If • Extract from the novel Come together 	None

Table 2. Cultural Topics Found in Textbook 2

Similarly, Textbook 2 is concerned primarily with topics of surface culture, with those of entertainment and holidays/ festivals being the largest. In order to be relevant and capture the interest of students, the textbook is loaded with references to celebrities, modern TV programmes, music, fashion and holidays. However, whereas Textbook 1 includes traditions, historical facts and political institutions as part of its topics, Textbook 2 lacks these and instead includes one topic not registered in Textbook 1, holidays. The themes are mainly celebratory because they present emblematic symbols featuring different cultures and concentrate, to a larger extent, around entertainment and holidays/ festivals. For instance, the articles about festivals describe Las Fallas in Spain, the Mardi gras in the USA, the Midsummer festival in Sweden, the Galway International Oyster festival in Ireland. The mentioned texts provide positive descriptions of what people traditionally do, what they eat, what they drink, what they wear during these festivals. The only topic in Textbook 2 which can be referred to the level of deep culture is the one depicting the concept of white lies. The text does not contain a direct explanation for this idiom; its meaning is implicit in it. However, after reading the text, English language students can easily guess that the idiom white lies correspond to the idiom sweet lies in the Russian culture. If in the Russian language the lie is metaphorically similar to sweets, in English this idiom is based on the color designation.

Aspect	Surface Culture	Deep Culture
Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Famous (cheating) moments in sport • When you hear the final whistle • We are family • Ka-Ching • The best day in my life • We do not need no education • Famous films that moved us • What do you know about Che? • Must-have DVD's 	None

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening The series That'll teach them • Listening Shindler's List • Jack the Ripper –Case closed? • Listening: Interview with a flamenco guitarist living in Britain 	
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening: Interview with an English restaurant chef • Do you eat slow food? • Listening A Japanese man telling about food in Japan • Listening –about English dishes in Chile 	None
Traditions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening Politeness of British people • Listening Interview with an English teacher living in Beirut • Culture shock
Geographical sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houses you'll never forget • Listening Travelling to France from England by car 	None
Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extract from the novel A Venetian reckoning 	None

Table 3. Cultural Topics Found in Textbook 3

Textbook 3 equally distributes topics of surface culture; the most prominent topic appearing throughout the textbook is that of entertainment. The textbook includes five main topics: entertainment, food, geographical sites, traditions and literature (see Table 3). It is primarily concerned with universal topics about our daily lives, including keeping diets, traveling, driving a car, using cash machines, and others. The manifestation of deep culture can be observed in only three texts displaying the cultural differences. The first text entitled Culture shock compares the differences in speech behavior acceptable in the Russian and British linguocultural communities. In particular, the author of the article emphasizes the differences in expressing the request: if in Russian culture it is quite acceptable to omit the word please when communicating with close people (for instance, Pour me some tea), in Britain this form of request will sound rude and impolite, as the communication rules in the British culture require to add the so called politeness phrases (Could you...? and please). Furthermore, Russian communicants are often reserved and unsmiling, whereas in British communicative culture a smile is an obligatory communicative signal.

The information contained in the text is valuable for language learners: after reading it they come to the understanding that there are a number of differences in communicative behavior across cultures. Two other examples of deep culture elements in Textbook 3 are interviews in the listening section: the first one is an interview with four people belonging to different nationalities who discuss the phenomenon of British politeness and the other is an interview with an English teacher living in Beirut and sharing her experience of encountering differences between the Western and Asian cultures. Thus, the analysis of the topics incorporated in the textbooks illustrates that they provide language learners primarily with elements of surface culture leaving deep culture behind, which is a significant problem. Fragmentary manifestations of deep culture fail to promote critical ICC. Without being exposed to elements of deep culture learners will find themselves unaware of complex intricacies underlying the target culture.

4.2 Illustrative material of the EFL textbooks

Illustrative material can be conceived as a specific type of text which performs a number of functions in EFL textbooks. Apart from stimulating learners' cognitive activity, illustrations make the process of language learning more entertaining and emotional. Illustrations support the textual information presented in EFL textbooks and accompany various activities. The use of various illustrations may engage more visually oriented students in the EFL classroom. According to Mao (2009), visual elements have an important influence on conveying information; a text accompanied with illustrations is far better comprehended than a text devoid of any images, photos, etc. Presenting textual information in combination with illustrations fosters student motivation and leads to a more efficient learning. As underscored by Çakır (2015), In order to create a meaningful learning atmosphere and to offer a comprehensible input, word and pictures need to be presented simultaneously.

Evaluating EFL illustrative material has been a concern of some researchers in the field. For instance, Hill (2003) conducted a study on the role of illustrations in EFL materials; he analyzed images in two EFL textbooks and classified them into either decorative or useful. Mao (2009) in the analysis of English Business textbooks categorized illustrations as either instructional or decorative. By instructional images, they conceived those which were accompanied by written instructions for either the students or the teacher to do something with them. Gómezrodríguez (2015a) focused on the balance of illustrations found in the analyzed textbooks and examined to what extent they were used for decorative purpose. Although in the literature area there can be found a number of books and research articles covering the significance of illustrative material in the FL class and textbooks, there still exists little research on the analysis of the cultural component incorporated in EFL textbook images. The present step of the study is an attempt to look into the issue.

All the illustrations in the three textbooks are colored and presented mainly either by photos or drawings. As Figure 2 demonstrates, Textbook 2 contains a significantly larger number of illustrations than the other two (341 in comparison with 144 for Textbook 1 and 209 for Textbook 3). Culture related illustrations in all three textbooks are primarily connected with the topics of the written texts and realize, thus, the function of supporting textual information. However, the evidence from this study suggests that the analyzed textbooks do not contain much of culture related visual elements, Textbook 1 having a larger number of illustrations of this type with 34 % in comparison with the other two (14 % and 22 %, respectively). To move further, in order to see what functions these illustrations perform in the textbooks, they were classified into two categories: demonstrative and instructional. By demonstrative culture related illustrations we conceive those which illustrate some element or phenomenon of the target culture, whereas to instructional culture related illustrations we refer visual elements encouraging language students to do something with them. We suppose that in order to get a better understanding of the target culture and to better remember the studied cultural element by means of illustrations, the latter type of visual elements, i.e. instructional, should be involved in various speech activities. The visual presentation of cultural information in combination with its further implication in student cognitive activity might ignite the process of target culture learning and make it more effective and encouraging. This could help

students memorize cultural issues, clarify abstract concept or ideas, organize the information presented in the textbook and make it easier to understand.

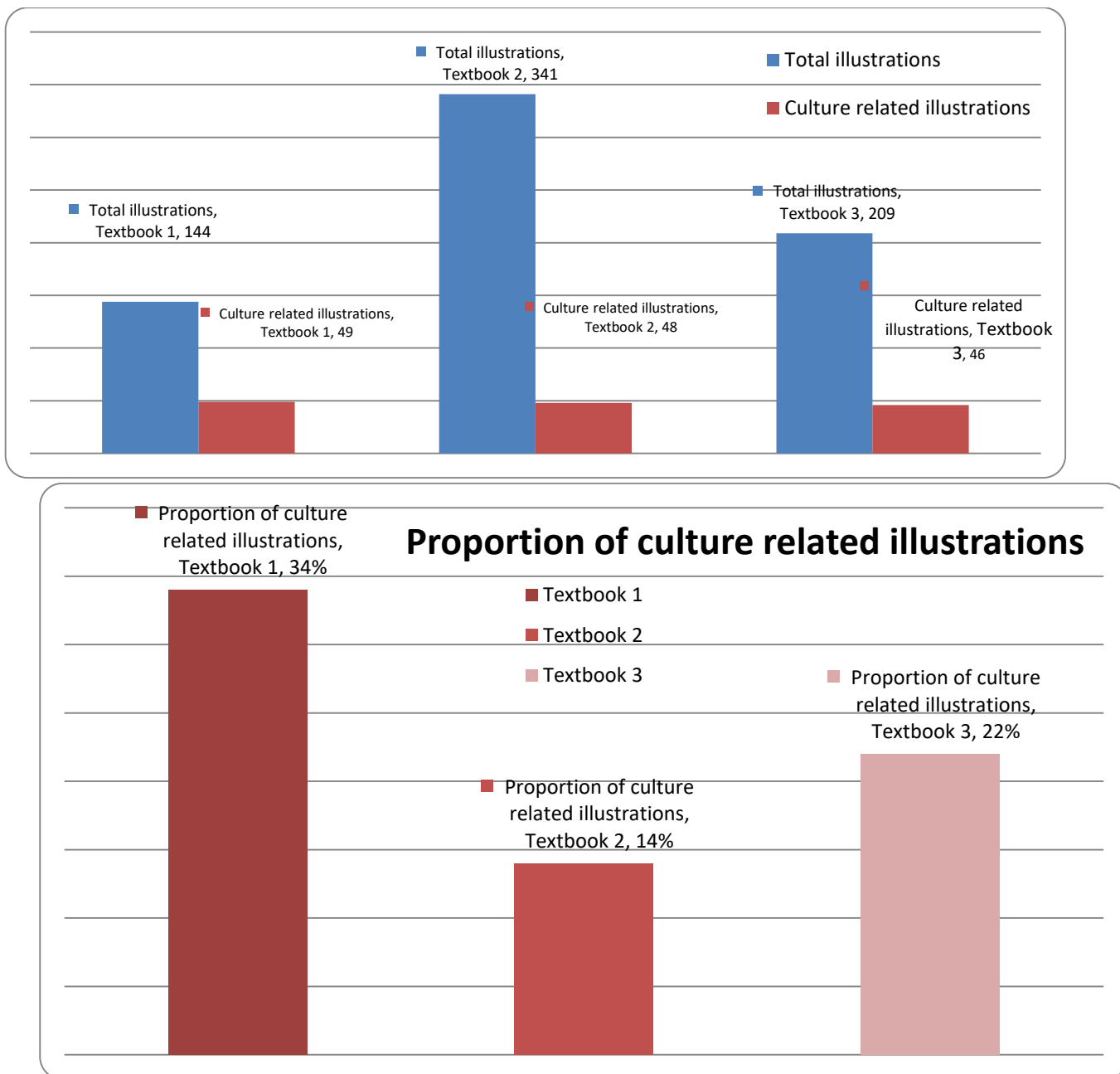


Figure 2. Proportion of culture related illustrations in the EFL textbooks

The findings indicate that in the analyzed Textbook 1 and Textbook 2 there is not much evidence of instructional culture related illustrations (See Figure 3). The largest part of the images depicting the target culture is primarily used in them with a demonstrative function. For instance, in Textbook 2 the information about the Mardi Gras festival is accompanied by photos of people wearing carnival dresses. Or for example, in Textbook 1 the text about two American presidents go together with their photos. In contrast, Textbook 3 contains more than 50 % of culture related illustrations accompanied with further instructions. For instance, presenting the issue of British people being polite Textbook 3 contains a humorous postcard illustrating a man drowning in the

river and crying for help in an excessively polite manner. The instruction relating to the postcard asks learners to look at it and discuss what it says about the British. Through this illustration students are encouraged to express what they know about British politeness and what they think about it. The topic of good and bad manners is succeeded by more illustrations demonstrating different situations such as greeting people, visiting people, in a restaurant, driving and a man's role. The instructions to the pictures offer learners to remember if people in their country do this or that thing and ask to share opinions. Instructional visual elements, thus, aim at making language learners comprehend cultural issues by discussing and contrasting them to their native culture. However, as the previous results of the study demonstrated, Textbook 3 contains a small proportion of culture related illustrations – only 22% of the total number of illustrations.

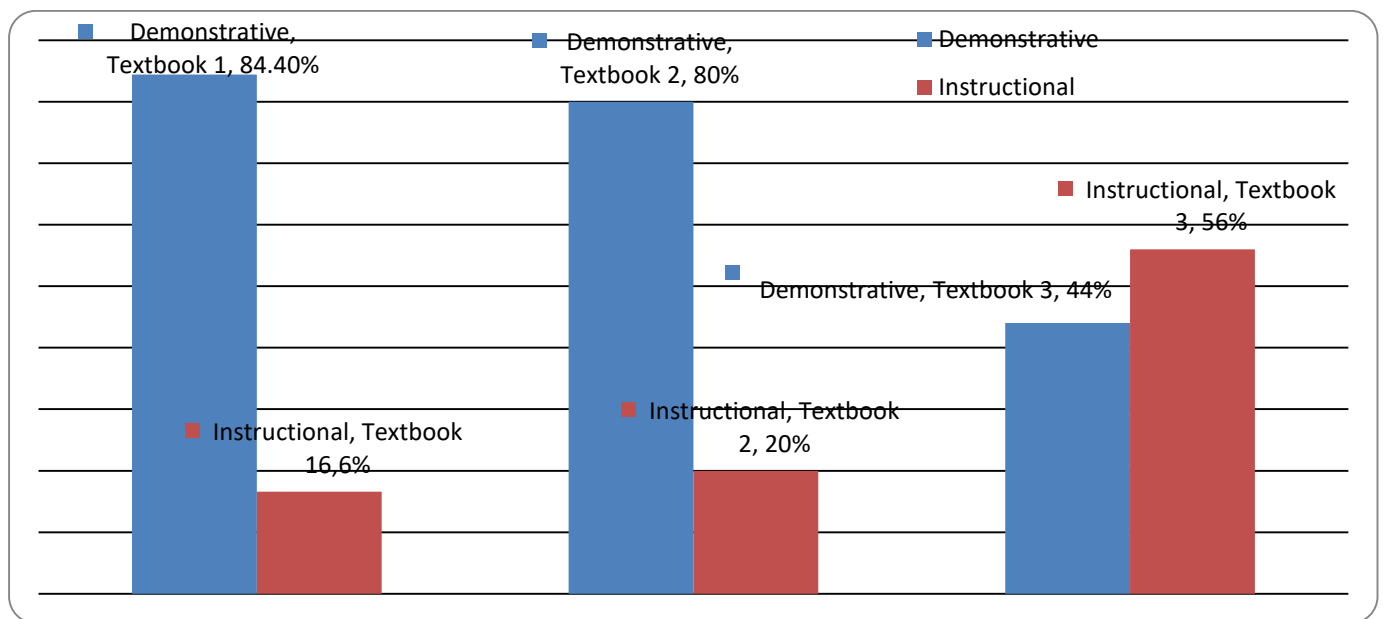


Figure 3. Categories of culture related illustrations in the EFL textbooks

5 Limitation of the study

This is a small scale study with just three prominent EFL textbooks taken as samples. Therefore, the study does not aim at generalizing its findings. The scope of the analysis is confined to the written texts and tape scripts, and culture related illustrations incorporated in these textbooks. The study, thus, does not consider activities included in the textbooks which can be a good basis for a separate study.

6 Conclusions

Nowadays intercultural interaction takes a crucial role, and FL teachers need to be teachers of culture and serve as a bridge between students' native culture and the target language culture. As

Deardorff (2004) points out, one of the main tasks for teachers in the FL class is to transfer not only the linguistic items but also the cultural evidence that is adhered in the target language itself. In this sense, the cultural component cannot be disregarded in educational programmes design; either it cannot be neglected in the design of FL textbooks. This article has shown that the EFL textbooks which are used in the language programmes at some universities of Kazakhstan contain a different number of cultural texts, which cannot be treated as sufficient for fostering students' ICC. Furthermore, the three analyzed EFL textbooks concentrate mainly on the topics of surface level culture. The issues of more complicated cultural topics, for instance, attitudes and perceptions in relation to various concepts such as education, friendship, religion, injustice, honesty, etc. which might help learners develop ICC lack in them. This can result in the formation of superficial, received and non-critical vision of the target language culture. Additionally, the analysis of the illustrations suggests that the EFL textbooks do not contain much of culture related illustrations. The illustrations are mainly connected with the topics of the written texts and realize a demonstrative function rather than an instructional one.

The significant disadvantage of the three textbooks is that they do not include elements of language learners' native culture. It is acknowledged that native culture elements present an obligatory part in the FL learning context, since native culture is a way to foster ICC by developing students' ability to present their culture in the target language. Without being exposed to their native culture in the FL classroom, students will find it complicated to speak about it in the language they learn. Thus, in Kazakhstani FL educational context there has risen an urgent need for developing EFL textbooks which will be oriented not only to the target and international culture but students' native culture as well. This objective might be approached through the collaboration and cooperation of Kazakhstani teachers of English with foreign instructors and teachers, for whom English is their native language.

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