



Cultural elements in textbooks for learning English as a foreign language in higher grades of primary schools in Serbia

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper, which is part of the author's master thesis, is to analyse elements of culture in two textbook series for grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 in primary schools in Serbia, which are used in teaching English as a foreign language. Textbooks *Enjoying English* (Zavod za udžbenike) and *Project* (Oxford University Press) are analysed. The aim is to trace elements of culture, to inspect a teacher's role in presenting those elements, analyse the way they are represented and compare and contrast Serbian and English publishers' perspective on culture in the textbooks.

Key words: *culture, foreign language, English language, evaluation, textbook, cultural element*

Apstrakt:

Cilj ovog rada, koji je deo autorkinog master rada, je da se analiziraju elementi kulture u dva udžbenika za 5., 6., 7., i 8. razred u osnovnim školama u Srbiji, koji se koriste u nastavi engleskog jezika kao stranog. Analiziraju se udžbenici *Enjoying English* (Zavod za udžbenike) i *Project* (Oxford University Press). Cilj je naći elemente kulture, ispitati ulogu nastavnika u predstavljanju tih elemenata, analizirati na koji način su oni predstavljeni i uporediti stavove srpskih i engleskih izdavača po pitanju kulture u udžbenicima.

Ključne reči: *kultura, strani jezik, engleski jezik, ocena, udžbenik, elementi kulture*

1. Introduction

With the development of language learning methodology, many experts involved in teaching theory and practice have become interested in non-linguistic elements which have a significant place in the language learning process. If we disregard the situational or cultural context in which a language is used, we only get a bundle of elements organised by specific grammar rules. If we do so, the language is simplified to the level of groups of elements interconnected by a certain linguistic formula, which results in pure memorising of dull grammar rules. In that case, it can be difficult for students to use a language and it can be very hard for them to understand the deeper meaning of communication and subjective meaning as well. This often results in the form of difficulties or lack of communication, therefore various problems or violating suitable patterns of behaviour may occur. By mere deciphering language codes devoid of context, speakers cannot communicate in such vastness and amplitude as

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they would if they were aware of the cultural background. Pure decoding of messages is not enough for communication and inevitably makes interaction with others e.g. participants in communication more difficult. (Byram, M., Morgan, C. et al. 1994).

Ubiquitous multiculturalism (mixture of various cultural influences on a global level) points to a very significant role that knowledge of cultural patterns and codes has had on raising awareness and preparation of a future foreign language speaker for numerous specific situations that they can find themselves in while being in a foreign surrounding. This knowledge is more than useful for disclosure of stereotypes and their accompanying elements (whether positive or negative). Therefore, the aim of introducing culture into language learning is precisely to raise the cultural awareness to a higher level so that it can provoke or motivate students to observe the world through a different prism and not only the one that has been imposed by the culture of their native surrounding. Some authors point out that it is very important to make a difference between cultural awareness and cultural knowledge. According to this interpretation, cultural knowledge represents a sum of information about a target culture, which is demonstrated in a form of behavioural and attitude patterns. According to Tomlinson and Masuhara (in Broady, 2004: 68), cultural knowledge is not gained through experience, but through transferred information. On the other hand, cultural awareness is an approach which does not focus solely on the transferred information about culture, but it focuses on developing various skills dealing with research, observing and attempting to compare sameness and differences among cultures.

2. Awareness of non-linguistic elements in foreign language learning

For students it is very important to be aware that there are different cultural frames, their own (native one), as well as the one coming from a target language. Without this awareness they would probably use their own cultural system in order to understand messages coming from a target language, whose meanings can be founded on completely different cultural assumptions (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). If enough time is not devoted to raising cultural awareness in language learning lessons, there is always a risk of non-native speakers making faux pas while communicating, i.e. they are more likely to use language patterns considered inappropriate in a certain situation.

The biggest problem lies in the fact that a non-native speaker will not be aware of a gaff. Therefore, according to Thomas (1983) a sociopragmatic failure is likely to occur, such as the interruption of communication, the creation of stereotypes about non-native speakers and violation of cultural norms which regulate what is appropriate in interaction with native speakers. Bennett (1998: 2-3) states that: "By definition, cultures are different in their languages, behaviour patterns, and values. So an attempt to use one's self as a predictor of shared assumptions and responses to messages is unlikely to work."

Although cultural factor is recognised as important, teaching about culture has not been much represented in practice. Teaching about culture has in great deal of situations been neglected in

lessons and the advantage has been given to the language learning methodology. One of the problems is that it has not been clearly determined what teaching about culture should include and what it precisely means.

In what amount are language and culture of one or more nations related? Should we learn about culture in a separate lesson or should cultural elements be an integral part of a regular lesson? These are a few questions that can be asked regarding cultural learning. If we observe a language as a system of communication (written, spoken or sign) which is used to transfer specific ideas, thoughts, feelings (regarding that in any human community or social group ideas, thoughts and feelings cannot be devoid of elements that represent customs, beliefs, art or way of living same as rules of behaviour of a certain social community or group), a logical conclusion is that learning of one people's language cannot be devoid of or isolated from the representation of and learning about culture of that community.

3. Methodological problems following introduction of culture in teaching

Teaching about culture can be organised in the form of a separate course (such as cultural extension), but it can be conducted at the same time as language teaching in a narrow sense (integrated approach). There are many of those who advocate the first method, pointing the faults of the second method. As Dimitrijević (1982) observes there are many methodological problems that occur when it comes to introducing culture into classrooms. There is a doubt whether cultural elements should be integrated in language material or taught separately. According to Dimitrijević the first method seems methodologically complex, but linguistically more adequate.

If we take into consideration that values and beliefs of a culture are reflected in the language that culture uses, we can draw the conclusion that language learning implicitly involved learning about the culture of a given language. It is impossible to fully acquire a language unless we acquire cultural context as well. Therefore, it is very important to teach language and culture at the same time (Matić, 2004).

Introducing cultural factor is not a large problem if we talk about a language spoken in one country or a relatively small geographic area. What is to be done when it comes to languages such as the English language, which is spoken by 400 million speakers (using it as the first language) and billions of those who use it as the second language or a means of international communication? What is to be done if a language is spoken in a large number of countries as the first language? Aggravating circumstances are that those countries differ to a great extent culturally, socially, psychologically, geopolitically... Which elements of culture should we take into consideration? From which country? English language learning textbooks' authors may find themselves facing a dilemma whether to introduce cultural elements of a large speaking area or to focus on the culture of a single nation or country. Another question that can be raised is: What is the culture of a nation? Does it (i.e. culture) entail works of art or literature? Or perhaps its geography or history? Politics or economics? Or

patterns of common everyday behaviour or the ones under specific circumstances? All these questions lead to a conclusion that culture cannot be considered as a one-dimensional issue. Nevertheless, the culture of a nation is not and cannot be one element, but it is comprised of all the aforementioned elements.

Bennett (1998) makes a difference between two cultural sub-levels, i.e. two of its aspects: objective and subjective culture. Objective culture is the one concerning systems whether they are social, economic, political or linguistic, i.e. those cultural aspects which have been institutionalised. On the other hand, the things that Bennett calls subjective culture reflect psychological characteristics of a group of people, their everyday life and the way of thinking and behaving. By pure act of interaction these psychological aspects are transferred to others by learning and by common patterns of behaviour, beliefs and values of a group.

4. Awareness of native culture and culture of a target language

At the age in which students of higher grades of primary school are (11-15) the awareness of other cultures is developed, but the elements of their native culture are not completely familiar to them either. Native (source) culture is not acquired on a conscious level, while a target culture is acquired consciously, with a clear aim. According to some theorists' "native speakers have stored conscious knowledge gained through the process of formal education, through numerous informal media channels and by social interaction." (Byram, M., Morgan, C. et al. 1994: 48).

On the other hand, non-native speakers are devoid of target language exposure in this way, so they need to be deliberately exposed to the influences of the other non-native culture, i.e. they need to cognitively acquire knowledge about it. Statements that "on basic level students have not got enough language skills to notice or use such a knowledge because they have been struggling with the language itself" (Ronowicz & Yallop, 1999: 2) lead us to the conclusion that the role of teachers is equally important as the role of a textbook and any didactic material.

5. Choice of cultural elements in textbooks and their usage

According to Ronowicz and Yallop (1999) some of the cultural elements are related to specific communicative situations, while the majority of them are related to many different situations and communicative strategies including the usage of different vocabulary and grammar structures.

One of the important elements is whether a textbook is focused on the culture of a source language (C1), the culture of a target language (C2) or some other culture (C3) aiming at global international culture. That mostly depends on the author's goal, i.e. for whom the textbook was written. If it is a textbook teaching students a foreign language so that they could use it in their country, the author will most certainly use C1, but if the goal is to introduce the student with a foreign country they are

planning to visit, the author will choose C2. If the author bears in mind that the language will be used as an international means of communication, then C3 is the logical choice (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999).

6. Evaluating textbooks with focus on cultural content

Taking into consideration the importance of cultural factors and the way they are represented, by reviewing two textbook series used in Serbia for English language learning for higher grades of primary schools, I have tried to extract cultural elements, to specify which country they are related to, which culture is dominant and to compare points of views of the Serbian and the foreign publisher. I chose textbook series *Project* (*Project 2, Project 3, Project 4 and Project 5*), third edition. The author is Tom Hutchinson and these textbooks were published by OUP. The textbooks were not designed for Serbian students. When it comes to the Serbian publisher, I decided to use *Enjoying English* textbook series (*Enjoying English 5, Enjoying English 6, Enjoying English 7 and Enjoying English 8*), published by Zavod za udžbenike. The authors are Jonathan Pendlebury, Katarina Kovačević, Zorana Nenezić and Ida Dobrijević. The textbook series was designed for Serbian students. I used both series because by thorough analysis I saw that they provide a lot of material (texts, pictures, dialogues) for creating a corpus that was to be analysed. I had had a chance to use these two sets in classroom and I wanted to see how they differed in terms of cultural elements they analyse. I created a chart consisting of several categories that I considered relevant for the systematization of cultural elements from the textbooks, such as:

- food and drink,
- clothes and fashion,
- transport,
- family life, daily routine and pets,
- school, school life,
- art, literature and languages
- geography, geopolitical features, weather, regions and wild animals,
- history,
- customs and holidays,
- state government and state emblems,
- popular songs, rhymes, riddles, jokes, music, film, series,
- sports,
- correlation with other (school) subjects,
- other,
- cultural extension (additional lessons about culture, not incorporated into grammar exercises).

I also wanted to ascertain to what extent these cultural features are related to English-speaking countries or non-English speaking countries. To that effect, I introduced several divisions which could help me determine whether I was dealing with cultural elements:

- 1) referring to the UK
- 2) referring to the USA
- 3) referring to other English-speaking countries (English as L1 or the dominant language)
- 4) referring to other countries and areas of the world (non-English speaking countries)
- 5) referring to English-speaking countries (English as L1 or the dominant language) and non-English speaking countries

I gathered the corpus made of words, phrases, titles from these textbook series that could be put into these abovementioned categories and marked them according to the country they refer to. I did not use accompanying workbooks because, in my opinion, they are much more focused on grammar than culture. During the comparative analysis of the textbooks I used Byram's criteria for textbook evaluation with the focus on cultural content (as cited in Cortazzi & Jin, 1999: 203) and Huhn's evaluating treatment of cultural content in textbooks (as cited in Cortazzi & Jin, 1999: 203).

According to the model given by Byram (as cited in Cortazzi & Jin, 1999: 203) there are several criteria for evaluating textbooks with the focus on cultural content. This model includes:

- social identity and social groups (social class, regional identity, ethnic minorities)
- social interaction (differing levels of formality; as outsider and insider)
- belief and behaviour (moral, religious beliefs, daily routines)
- social and political institutions (state institutions, health care, law and order, social security, local government)
- socialization and the life cycle (families, schools, employment, rites of passage)
- national history (historical and contemporary events seen as markers of national identity)
- national geography (geographic factors seen as being significant by members)
- stereotypes and national identity (what is "typical", symbols of national stereotypes)

Huhn's evaluating treatment of cultural content in textbooks (as cited in Cortazzi & Jin, 1999: 203) includes:

- giving factually accurate and up-to-date information
- avoiding or (relativizing) stereotypes by raising awareness
- presenting a realistic picture
- being free from (or questioning) ideological tendencies
- presenting phenomena in context rather than isolated facts
- explicitly relating historical material to contemporary society
- making it clear how personalities are products of their age

6.1. Review of the *Project* textbook series

If we analyse the elements of culture, according to Byram's model, we come to a conclusion that *Project* is not prone to a specific social identity, meaning that although the plot of all analysed lessons

is situated somewhere in England (London, Oxford, and in most cases it is not quite clear where it is situated) there are no obvious aspirations to highlight a certain social group or class. Daily routine is thoroughly represented, but neutrally (it does not lean towards a specific region, it does not explain the term 'English' or 'British').

Main characters are children of different ages (11-15), chosen so as to ensure easier identification of students with the characters. Different characters are represented in textbooks for different levels, it is not the same group that students can follow through primary school. There are no distinctive features which can lead us to the conclusion that the children described in the textbook might be from other regions of the UK (besides England), ethnical minorities are not mentioned, the main characters are middle-class, white children. We can conclude this by the way they are dressed, which school they go to, places they live. They have typical British names (George, Alice, Karen, Mike, etc.), they wear average clothes. In the textbook for grade 6 (*Project 3*) one of the characters is an African-American boy. This is the first time the book introduces a member of a different race, and for the first time, we learn that, apart from the white race, members of other races live in the UK. It would be interesting to mention that a student of English language who has no previous knowledge of the United Kingdom features, could be under a completely wrong impression that only white, middle-class people live in this country, people who live in suburbs and who travel to the countryside only on school trips. This kind of interpretation results in creating stereotypes, i.e. distorted images about the British society as monolith, devoid of other races except white, which is far from the truth. Students' native culture is not mentioned (Serbian culture is not represented at all), but I have to mention that the *Project* series is not specifically designed for Serbian students.

Different levels of social interaction are represented in isolated exercises (role-play) where students have the chance to simulate certain situations and use certain phrases (greetings, personal information, titles, shopping, writing letters). Useful expressions and phrases are given.

Different levels of formality are not represented in mere exercises, but in writing letters. It leads us to the conclusion that it is all up to English teachers to explain ways of behaving in various situations or the difference between formal and informal addressing.

Different kinds of religious beliefs and behavioural patterns are represented to a large extent. Generally speaking, religion can potentially be a slippery field because it can provide enough material for creating potential stereotypes. Not only are Christian festivals celebrated by the whole Christian community (Christmas, Easter) are mentioned, but also the ones characteristic of only some parts of the Christian world (Valentine's Day). All in all, the majority of festivals (Christmas, Boxing Day, New Year, Easter, Pancake Day, Easter egg hunt) are represented in a manner they are celebrated in Great Britain. There is no mention of other ethnical groups' festivals or people living in the UK (Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis...). The moral of stories is given only in traditional stories 'Stone soup' and 'Tailor of Swaffham'.

Although we can see the explanation of what traditional English breakfast consists of, it is represented quite neutrally, with a note that habits keep changing. Represented topics are suitable for students' age, they are popular with teenagers (family, school, growing up issues). Many elements of popular culture are also included (popular songs from the UK and the USA).

Social and political institutions are given from specific and familiar heading to more general (to begin with the King and the United Kingdom's name, the Queen, Prime Minister, titles currently used in the UK, all the way to global institutions). Detailed description is not given but it is left to teachers to explain these new features according to their students' age or background knowledge. We can find short explanations about the most important social services (uniforms, emergency numbers and the way the services function) in the textbook for grade 6 (*Project 3*). This is very useful. The terms 'Great Britain' and 'the UK' are explained (what they stand for). A common mistake of using the term England instead of the UK or Great Britain is pointed out. Students get to know what flags look like and the way the regions are created and allied, everything is adapted to the students' age and their level of language knowledge. Texts are developed from specific towards general (from basic concepts about England, over explanation of terms Great Britain and the UK to the European Union and the United Nations). Students have the chance to see different state and social systems, and to compare them to the ones in their own country. In grade 8 (*Project 5*), the global level is represented. Students have a chance to see different types of protests, and learn about the US government. Money (currency, spending, wages) is also mentioned and so is the problem of child labour in the Third World countries. The consciousness is raised to a higher level when it comes to their society or the other societies, not only the ones from their surrounding areas, but also those existing on other continents.

When it comes to socialising and the life cycle, family members (in general) are introduced in grade 6 (*Project 6*), and so is the issue of divorce and a typical modern British family's structure. This is the ideal chance for students to compare family words in English and Serbian. The names and number of words referring to family members express the relation and level of closeness between close and distant relatives in Britain. This is the chance for a teacher to introduce the notion of society in which individuality is very appreciated, as opposed to traditional Serbian society (which prefers collectivism) where family ties are valued in a different way (of course, with cultural generalisation we should be aware of stereotypes and avoid them as much as possible). In one of the texts single-parent families are mentioned and there is a chance to compare their functioning in foreign and native society. Students can discuss habits from their own society, what attitude is popular when it comes to old people's homes, to compare the common structure of homes in the UK with the one from their native country.

Apart from family life, school life plays a significant role. The author presents the UK and the USA educational systems. Education in the USA is explained in a short text in the textbook for grade 8 (*Project 5*), while the education in the UK has been presented in textbooks for grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 (*Project 2, Project 3, Project 4 and Project 5*) through dialogues given and texts, it is not explained in

a single text. In grade 8 (*Project 5*) students can compare educational systems of the UK and the USA with the one in their own country. Some specificities of the systems are mentioned (raising money for those in need, volunteering for the benefit of society, marks, uniforms, the way of assessing students, bullying and fashion terror in higher grades, because only then students have enough language competence to compare their own experience to the things they hear or read about in texts).

History is most certainly one of the key factors when it comes to a certain culture, but in *Project* textbooks the focus is not on the national history of a specific country. It is mentioned through the stories of regions and through the analysis of the USA structure, but it is more directed towards international history which includes not only Britain and the UK but also the rest of Europe and the world. Through the stories of history of transport, the Greek theatre, origin of various products (ballpoint pen, jeans...), trading in the past (Silk Road), the Romans, materials from prehistoric times and their use and all the way to the Industrial revolution, cinematography and famous people coming from scientific, cultural and literary worlds, as well as the events that were turning points for human race (the plague) students can find out about the things that represent markers in history of human society.

When it comes to national geography, great deal of terms referring to Great Britain are given, and so are the ones from the rest of the world. In most cases London is mentioned with its sights (from specific and familiar to general), then regions of England, very little of Scotland (Wales and Northern Ireland are almost excluded). The term 'the USA' is introduced from grade 5 and is mentioned through textbooks over school years (education, government), but not to such an extent as British culture. There is almost no notion of other English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, etc.). Not before grade 8 is Australia given space in any of the textbooks (a short text in the textbook for grade 8 exists). Elements of culture related to these countries are mentioned within exercises, they are rarely thoroughly explained, so it is up to the teacher to present and explain them. Animals which are specific for this area might pass unnoticed (koala, kangaroo, etc.).

One of the first traps for authors of textbooks to avoid are stereotypes. They can be directly related to the way national identity is represented. As it has been previously mentioned, *Project* could be fertile soil for stereotypes, whether positive (people in English-speaking countries are clean, nicely dressed, they have very liberal parents, they live in nice houses and they have enough money to spend their holidays abroad) or negative (there are no other races, so if we meet people of other races or religious beliefs in the streets of Great Britain, who use languages other than English, we can be in a misconception that something is very wrong). One of the stereotypes which can be formed is that the people are reserved, cold, judging from the way they are engaged in conversation. Issues of colonisation and slavery are skilfully omitted. If it is up to a student to make a conclusion of the UK or the USA history upon this textbook, they can draw a conclusion that these societies have never been connected to slavery. Only in textbook for grade 8 we can find a text on segregation in the USA (the story of Rosa Parks).

6.2. Evaluating the treatment of cultural content in *Project* textbooks

By analysing the material according to Huhn's model we can draw a deeper conclusion of cultural elements given. There are seven criteria given.

- giving factually accurate and up-to-date information

Given information are accurate and up-to-date (characters from films, actors), they are in accordance with interest and age of students.

- avoiding or (relativizing) stereotypes by raising awareness

The *Project* textbooks are fertile soil for growing stereotypes, they offer one-dimensional image of beautiful, young and successful people. Although they mention problems, protests, these are always somewhere else.

- presenting a realistic picture

There is a realistic representation of a working society and a demanding educational system. The problems lies in the fact that there is no notion of other cultures or societies that have certainly been in contact with the UK society.

- being free from (or questioning) ideological tendencies

The textbooks are to a large extent devoid of ideological tendencies, but not fully. We can read a positive text about the EU which shows us the tendency aiming towards the international culture and cohabitation with other nations (but in a specific union).

- presenting phenomena in context rather than isolated facts

Phenomena are presented in context and out of it. Some concepts are presented within language exercises, without additional explanations, so it is up to the teachers to pay attention to them. Some concepts have been presented in special 'culture extension'.

- explicitly relating historical material to contemporary society

Quite a good revision of history of social phenomena, but history, in sense of national history, is weakly, fragmentarily represented.

- making it clear how personalities are products of their age

There is a large range of topics concerning young people (age 11-15), from family life, school life, interpersonal relationships, body care and the care of others, social engagement and environmental

care. Main characters are boys and girls who live there, and people coming from other countries who have come there to attend schools have rarely been mentioned. We could sense a mild touch of American culture. Content focus is on developing cultural awareness.

Although there are some data and facts presented in the form of precise information, the focus is not on knowledge of culture. Subjective culture, concerning everyday life and the psychological aspect of society is dominant. Objective or institutionalised culture has been represented moderately, only in fragments.

6.3. Review of Enjoying English textbook series

If we analyse the data according to abovementioned Byram's model, we can say that *Enjoying English* textbooks include a very large number of elements of British and American culture which have been taken into consideration together as well as individually. Special attention is given to regional identities, and students have the chance to find out about different areas of the United Kingdom (focus is not on England exclusively). Since both the British and American society are multicultural environments great interest is shown in elements within those countries and in the elements that interact with other cultures (intercultural elements) as well. The authors mention a great number of nations living in London, there is information about 250 languages that are spoken in this city. Main characters are children who lead us through the world and present customs, food, geography. The children are white, African-American, red-haired. Not only British names are represented, but also other nations' names. In order to develop skills for understanding native culture (which is as important as understanding other cultures), numerous elements of Serbian culture are incorporated. In that way students practise using language even when they host foreigners (they have the chance to present their own culture to foreigners, to learn names for elements of native culture in English), and to meet elements of foreign culture as well.

Storyline of these textbooks is set all over the world, from Great Britain (*Enjoying English 5*), over the USA, Europe, Asia (*Enjoying English 6*). Children from England, Scotland, Serbia, the USA lead us through stories, they are natives or the second or the third generation of immigrants, they have grandparents all over the world (in China, India...). A wide range of topics streams from general and well-known issues towards less known, from London and the UK, all the way to Australia and the USA.

If we pay attention to social interaction, we notice that participants are majorly engaged in informal conversation with friends or parents, they often send text messages and emails. There is no distinctive line between formal and informal way of speaking, but there are many useful phrases, and it is the teachers' role to explain the difference. Students have the chance to learn more about exchange of students and travelling to foreign countries (Serbian family in the USA), intercultural communication is represented in a positive way (pen friends, children in contact with children from other countries). In a comic, which is given in the textbook for grade 6 (*Enjoying English 6*), two

children, a boy and a girl, travel around the world and solve the riddle and in that way they introduce different countries (China, India, Russia, Serbia, the USA...).

Religions and customs such as religious festivals and ceremonies are presented in the form of Christian festivals, but the Chinese New Year is also mentioned. The authors also talk about superstition in different parts of the world, celebration of slava in Serbia, celebrating holidays, stories of haunted castles, the legend of Robin Hood and King Arthur. Texts go deeply into folklore storytelling and at the same time, attention is drawn to traditional and popular children's songs, sayings, proverbs, tongue twisters and all those elements which are a part of native background. Students have the chance to compare experiences they have from their native surrounding to the one they gained from textbooks.

Social and political institutions have not been directly represented (in the form of longer texts), they are described through presenting flags, coats of arms, patron Saints of regions in the UK, the Queen, Prime Minister, prince Charles (*Enjoying English 5*).

When it comes to socialisation and the life cycle there are some peculiarities such as dropping out of school at sixteen, marriage, family (single parents), shopping habits, traditional food. A lot of space is provided to compare different perceptions on various continents. There is a lot of space for drawing a comparison between the structures of Serbian and British family (individualism in contrast to collectivism).

When it comes to national history we cannot say that that it is strictly represented, but there is more of it than in *Project* textbooks. Historically important characters are mentioned, people who influenced British history (William the Conqueror, Columbus, Mary, the Queen of Scots, etc.). History is presented through the New Year's story, inhabiting Australia, it is mentioned that Aborigines were the natives. Colonisation is mentioned and it is told that Aborigines suffered because of it. At first glance we could say that responsibility has been taken for the deeds in the past but there is no notion of colonisation of other parts of the world. Speaking of national history, texts and pictures covered a large deal of geographic areas from the UK, over the USA and Australia. A myriad of information about regions and peculiarities of terrains can be a valuable source of geographical distinctions of the countries. Data vary from those referring to countries and larger areas, to those specific for cities or related to sights and streets.

Through the analysis of images and texts, we can find traces of stereotypes. In the textbook for grade 6 we can spot negative stereotypes about other European nations (French people do not speak English, insolent in conversation, Italian people are bad drivers, etc.). The expression Native Americans is translated as *амерички домороци*, which could have a negative connotation in Serbian, alluding to something primitive. The comparison of Serbian, American and British culture is constant.

The British tradition of tea drinking at five o'clock is mentioned. Ceaseless comparison of Serbian, American and British culture and customs causes thinking about other people, similarities and differences when it comes to patterns of behaviour.

Elements of culture are so deeply incorporated in texts that it is hard to avoid them. There are many pieces of information about language, packing food in the UK, working hours of shops. Students are additionally informed about details which only seem irrelevant but which are very important if you stay in a foreign country.

6.4. Evaluating the treatment of cultural content in Enjoying English textbooks

By analysing material according to Huhn's model we use seven criteria given.

- giving factually accurate and up-to-date information

Textbooks are not focused on celebrities from show-business, but sports, art and history. Lives of people from these areas are presented to students. While comparing Serbian school subjects and school holidays, there are some not quite accurate pieces of information given. Not all subjects taught in Serbian schools are listed, some data related to the Serbian school year are given as strict, but they are not, because they change from year to year.

- avoiding or (relativizing) stereotypes by raising awareness

As is mentioned, a great number of multicultural elements, meeting of cultures, the situation in Serbia and outside of it are beneficiary to culture knowledge, however, there are some stereotypes in the textbook for grade 6 (French people do not speak foreign languages, Italian people are bad drivers, their roads are crammed, British people drink tea at five o'clock). Although it is tradition in Britain to drink tea at five o'clock, students might get the impression that in Britain everything stops at five o'clock, because everyone in the country drinks tea. More time and space should be devoted to that phenomenon. It should be explained that society changes. In the textbook these pieces of information are given as the permanent truth.

- presenting a realistic picture

There is a very realistic image of British and American society, even Australian (food peculiarities, slang, geography). In the textbooks the real image of Britain is introduced including the second and third generation of immigrants, different languages, customs, skin colour and habits.

- being free from (or questioning) ideological tendencies

There is no explicit ideological tendency to show that everything British or American person is good, and that everything coming from foreign countries is bad or primitive.

- presenting phenomena in context rather than isolated facts

Phenomena are given within texts or isolated as fun facts (or within linguistic exercises).

- explicitly relating historical material to contemporary society

There is no perpetual explicit connection between historical material and contemporary situation, the focus is on general. There is no mention of the current political situation, but there are some hints about the way countries function (the Queen, Prime Minister, state emblems).

- making it clear how personalities are products of their age

Main characters are typical teenagers in typical situations, represented in photos or as cartoons, they have typical problems (school, relationship with their parents, growing up). Age is taken into consideration, so topics are convenient for the students' age. Elements of subjective culture are represented in a larger number than elements of objective culture.

7. Conclusion

While Tom Hutchinson in *Project* textbooks uses the 'open' text, with focus on comparison and drawing conclusions by students, Jonathan Pendlebury, Katarina Kovačević, Zorana Nenezić and Ida Dobrijević in *Enjoying English* textbooks give us information in the form of interesting and engaging facts. The focus is not on mere raising awareness of culture. They show that knowledge of culture is equally important. A teacher's role is important, but not crucial in learning the elements of culture. On the contrary, in Hutchinson's textbooks, the teacher's role is to explain and develop many elements, which are only superficially mentioned but not explained in a detailed way. Foreign publisher and author work in favour of international culture, not pointing out British or American too much. Textbooks are not adapted to the students' native culture since there are no elements of Serbian culture in them.

The Serbian publisher brings together a native English speaker (Pendlebury J.) and Serbian authors (Kovačević K., Nenezić, Z. and Dobrijević I.). They take into consideration problems of acquiring a foreign language. They manage to avoid observing elements of foreign culture from the perspective of competent adults, they do it from the students' perspective. Special attention is paid to certain culture and grammar segments, which could potentially be problematic to students in the process of language acquisition. Elements of foreign culture or cultures that do not exist in the Serbian culture are carefully explained. In grade 5 and grade 6 comparison is constant; during grade 7 and grade 8 the focus is on grammar, there are not many elements of culture. Both textbook series present content from the specific and known towards universal and general issues, from things that should be familiar to students to universal world problems. *Project* paints a better picture of global problems, while *Enjoying English* gives a wider range of various multicultural elements. *Project* also presents elements from the specific towards general, but specifies problems (child labour, Third World countries), information is more up-to-date. Through analysis and comparison of textbooks of domestic

and foreign publishers, we can say that the focus of the Serbian publisher was on creating a textbook that could make students become aware of their own national identity, but to become familiar with other systems as well (by introducing C1 and C2). On the other hand, the foreign publisher focuses on international language use aiming towards universal, general culture (C2 with traces of C3).

Taking all this previously mentioned into consideration, we could say that both publishers have respect for similarities and differences among cultures, and give students a chance to identify with their peers and their experience. In this way, by comparing and identifying, students develop empathy and understanding for other people and cultures, developing skills necessary for critical and non-judgemental conceiving and analysing of all those things that make us alike or different.

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