Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning

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11 Cultural mirrors

Materials and methods in the EFL classroom

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Introduction

In this chapter, we examine some ways in which culture is reflected in textbooks used for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL). We distinguish *cultural content* from *cultural medium,* or, as we will call it, *culture of learning.* We analyze a variety of English-language teaching materials from around the world to show a range of ways in which culture figures in textbooks. We show that there are several paradoxes arising from the cultural mirrors found in materials and methods used in language classrooms. To resolve problems associated with these paradoxes, we suggest a broader definition of the cultural content of texts. Further, we propose that teachers and learners take a more reflective and ethnographic stance when tackling the cultural content and cultural processes involved in learning a foreign language.

It is generally expected that second or foreign language textbooks should include elements of the target culture. The extent and quality of inclusion are sometimes assessed using textbook evaluation checklists. However, we will examine a range of textbooks from different parts of the world to show that this is by no means always the case: a target culture is not always represented; some books include, appropriately, a range of English-speaking cultures; others include non-English-speaking cultures, stressing more international uses of the language. The representation of culture is more complex than the kind of portrayal implied by many evaluation checklists.

Culture, we shall argue, is not only content, but also a series of dynamic processes, including those involved in learning. The medium for learning about target cultures in the classroom is therefore itself part of a culture of learning. From an early age, students (and teachers) are socialized into expectations about what kinds of interaction are appropriate in class, about how texts should be used, about how they should engage in teaching and learning processes. The expectations arising from a culture of learning can be powerful determinants of what happens in classroom interaction. This can lead to possible mismatches between those cultures portrayed in textbooks and the cultures of learning used by teachers or students to acquire appropriate knowledge, skills, or attitudes about the target cultures. When there are such mismatches, it will not be a solution to include more representative elements of target cultures in texts. It is necessary to go beyond this, to reflect on ways of using the human resources of the classroom more effectively for intercultural education.

Language teaching and intercultural competence

It is now broadly accepted in most parts of the world that learning a foreign language is not simply mastering an object of academic study but is more appropriately focused on learning a means of communication. Communication in real situations is never out of context, and because culture is part of most contexts, communication is rarely culture-free. Thus, it is now increasingly recognized that language learning and learning about target cultures cannot realistically be separated (Valdes, 1986; Robinson, 1988; Byram, 1989; Harrison, 1990; Kramsch, 1993a). In Britain, for example, many documents about foreign language teaching show three broad aims, as analyzed by Byram (1993b, p. 15):

- the development of communicative competence for use in situations the learner might expect to encounter
- the development of an awareness of the nature of language and language learning
- the development of insight into the foreign culture and positive attitudes toward foreign people

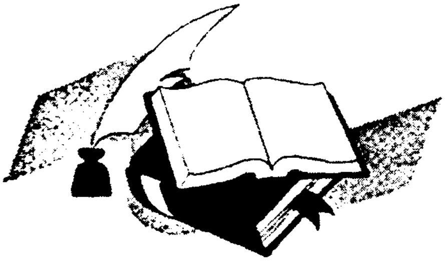
But, as Byram shows, these three aims must be integrated.

The term *culture* can, of course, have different meanings. Some language teachers use the term to refer to cultural products (e.g., literary works or works of art). Others use it to refer to background information (e.g., facts about the history or geography of countries where the target language is spoken). Here, the term *culture* includes such aspects, but it also includes behavior and attitudes, and the social knowledge that people use to interpret experience. Moerman's definition (1988, p. 4) is useful: "Culture is a set – perhaps a system – of principles of interpretation, together with the products of that system." In this way, culture can be seen as the framework of assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that are used to interpret other people's actions, words, and patterns of thinking. This framework is necessarily subjective and is commonly taken for granted. However, it is crucial that foreign language learners should become aware of differing cultural frameworks, both their own and those of others; otherwise they will use their own cultural system to interpret target-language messages whose intended meaning may well be predicated on quite different cultural assumptions.

Following this line of thinking, it can be argued that even to integrate communicative competence and learning about target cultures is insufficient. Indeed, *communicative competence* can be too general a term. In one well-known analysis, communicative competence is divided into the four aspects of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983), but this list can be extended by adding *intercultural competence.* This concept has been widely used in social psychology and studies of communication (Dinges, 1983; Hammer, 1989; Martin, 1989; Kim, 1991; Wiseman & Koester, 1993). In these fields, intercultural competence is seen in social effectiveness (i.e., the ability to achieve instrumental and social goals) and appropriateness (i.e., suitable communication in a given situation in a particular culture) (Martin, 1993). It has been defined in foreign language learning as "the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures" (Meyer, 1991, p. 137).

It is not difficult to see strong arguments for developing students' intercultural competence, given the increasingly international nature of the work of many professions. In the contemporary world, a person does not need to travel to encounter representatives of other cultures: popular music, the media, large population movements, tourism, and the multicultural nature of many societies combine to ensure that sooner or later students will encounter members of other cultural groups. Developing students' skills in intercultural communication is therefore appropriate as a part of language teaching. It is, moreover, a worthy aim of education in general. Damen (1987, p. xvi) summarizes this point forcefully: "The current dedication to the development of the communicative competence of language learners mandates the development of intercultural communicative skills and an understanding of the processes of culture learning on the part of students and teachers alike."

With these points in mind, one would expect EFL or ESL textbooks to reflect a range of cultural contexts and to include intercultural elements. One would expect materials that raise learners' awareness of intercultural issues and enable them to communicate effectively and appropriately in a variety of communicative contexts. One would expect English-language teaching (ELT) curriculum design and evaluation, including textbook evaluation, to include consideration of culture and intercultural communication. Surprisingly, none of these are necessarily what happens. In the case of curriculum evaluation, for instance, "culture" is not even indexed in some of the most widely used – and otherwise excellent – current texts on second language curriculum development and evaluation (White, 1988; Johnson, 1989; Alderson & Beretta, 1992; Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1992; Brown, 1995; Lynch, 1996).



The textbook can be . . .

- a teacher
- a map
- a resource
- a trainer
- an authority
- a de-skiller
- an ideology

Figure 1 Roles of the textbook.

Evaluating textbooks for cultural elements

EFL textbooks can be analyzed as having important functions on several levels. The levels shown in Figure 1 seem a minimal framework for analysis. A textbook can be a *teacher,* in the sense that it contains material that is intended to instruct students directly about English-speaking cultures. A textbook is also a *map* that gives an overview of a structured program of linguistic and cultural elements, showing teachers and learners the ground to be covered and summarizing the route taken in previous lessons. Many textbooks show the cultural topics in the outlines of their contents.

Although some teachers – and many students – expect to cover everything in a textbook, most EFL training courses emphasize that the textbook is a *resource:* a set of materials and activities from which the most appropriate or useful items will be chosen. Other parts may be briefly dealt with or ignored, and supplementary material will often be brought in by the teacher, because the textbook is unlikely to cover everything. However, for many teachers the textbook remains the major source of cultural content, because in their situation supplementary materials on target cultures are simply not available.

A textbook is also a *trainer:* for inexperienced or untrained teachers, the explanations and guidance, the step-by-step instructions of a teacher's guidebook, can be very useful. Textbooks are seen as embodying current research and theory. Teachers can learn from them, not least about culture.

A textbook is thus seen as an *authority:* it is reliable, valid, and written by experts. The cultural content is therefore taken at face value and often unjustifiably considered as correct, or even as the only interpretation. Views that books are accepted as facts, as true and indisputable documents in some cultures, are themselves culture-bound. Less experienced teachers, and perhaps some whose native language is not English, may understandably reify textbooks in this way and fail to look at them critically. Often a textbook carries the authorization of important publishers or ministries of education, together with the further authority that many EFL teachers have no choice as to which text to use: a school administrator, or the ministry itself, may take such decisions on behalf of all teachers within their purview.

Even more experienced teachers can, however, become overdependent on textbooks (Shannon, 1987; Richards, 1993). The textbook may then become a *de-skiller;* teachers may not use a more creative, interpretative or critical approach to using materials, as they were trained to do. The textbook does it for them. Their role becomes marginalized to that of merely "going over" the cultural content, rather than engaging with it in a cognitive, interactive process of teaching.

Finally, the textbook can be seen as *ideology,* in the sense that it reflects a worldview or cultural system, a social construction that may be imposed on teachers and students and that indirectly constructs their view of a culture. This aspect often passes unrecognized. On analysis, there may be an identifiably interest-based perspective, revealed by such questions as "In whose interests is this text written and why?" English textbooks can function as a form of cultural politics by inclusion (or exclusion) of aspects of social, economic, political, or cultural reality (De Castell, Luke, & Luke, 1989; Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991). The country of origin, commercial interests, and the views or interests of decision makers who choose a book can be important factors leading to changes in cultural content. This is shown in the efforts of newly independent countries to produce their own textbooks. It is also seen in countries in Eastern Europe that have chosen to use different ("democratic") textbooks in a post-Soviet society. The role of textbooks as cultural commodities has been demonstrated by Kwong's (1985) study of language textbooks in China, showing how they reflect a changing political and moral culture, and by Stray's (1994) analysis of the influential processes of cultural transmission of Latin grammars in nineteenth-century England.

This ideological level can be considered in another important aspect: the beliefs, attitudes, and values of the users concerning what textbooks are for and how they should be used. This level has been substantially researched regarding textbooks for the development of native-language reading (Garner & Alexander, 1994), but not for EFL. It makes a difference whether the book is seen in transmission terms ("the book will give us knowledge") or in a more dialogic, interactive, or interpretative manner ("we will discuss the content, debate and argue with it to develop our own knowledge and interpretation"). The book may become a cultural icon or symbol, but what that symbol represents varies from culture to culture. We would think of this level as part of a culture of learning (see the section titled "Textbooks Based on Target Culture").

Richards (1993, p. 49) clearly articulates the more reflective, resource-based view of the use of textbooks: "I see textbooks as sourcebooks rather than coursebooks. I see their role as facilitating teaching, rather than restricting it. However in order to be able to serve as sources for creative teaching, teachers need to develop skills in evaluating and adapting published materials."

To learn to evaluate materials is now a normal part of EFL or ESL teacher training. The usual way to do this is by getting the teachers to analyze a course book against the points in an evaluative checklist.

Textbook evaluation checklists

Some published checklists do not mention culture (e.g., Dwyer, 1984; Brown, 1995, pp. 146–150, 159–166, 176–177). In others, evaluation of cultural content is only present by implication in such questions as, "In what ways do the materials involve your learners' values, attitudes and feelings?" (Breen & Candlin, 1987, pp. 13–28).

Some checklists simply (but importantly) draw attention to possible stereotypes of races and cultures in textbooks (e.g., Harmer, 1991, pp. 281–284; McDough & Shaw, 1993, pp. 63–79). Others alert teachers to possible varieties of target cultures, but actually only mention Britain or the United States (Savignon, 1983, pp. 169–175). The portrayal of cultural variation is important; otherwise learners will be led to see only a unified, monolithic culture. Both inter- and intra-cultural variation need to be represented.

Slightly more thorough is Cunningsworth's list (1984), which asks whether a cultural setting is acceptable to learners, and whether culture is only a setting for the linguistic material. Skierso (1991, pp. 432–453) queries the extent to which cultural content is integrated in the texts, dialogues, and exercises. Cunningsworth (1984) also asks whether the cultural contexts help learners in perceiving and categorizing social situations they may find themselves in; that is, he draws attention to cultural skills as well as to cultural knowledge. This point is elaborated by Skierso (1991, pp. 432–453) and Snow (1996, pp. 231–250), who distinguish cultural recognition from cultural production. Students may need to recognize the meaning of target group behavior but they may not wish to follow it. Some may have mixed feelings about "Western" cultures and such cultures therefore need to be presented in an objective and sensitive manner. Cunningsworth (1995) encourages teachers to ask whether the social and cultural contexts are, in fact, interpretable by students. He further argues (ibid., p. 90) that language textbooks are bound to express some social and cultural values. These are often not explicit and are unstated. Any detailed evaluation should therefore aim to detect and examine such unstated values. This would go beyond looking out for stereotypes.

It is clear that current checklists differ widely in the emphasis and detail given to the role of culture in EFL textbooks. Few mention historical dimensions, or comparative frames of reference in which several target cultures might be discussed, or the development of intercultural communicative skills (Damen, 1987 is one exception). Few ask whether the cultural content is presented with evaluative comment or clear author (or other) viewpoints (Damen does so). Few ask whether uncomfortable social realities – such as unemployment, poverty, racism – are omitted from textbooks. Sheldon (1988, pp. 237–246) includes this point. One can conclude that items presented in checklists reflect their authors' interest and awareness in culture. It is noticeable that questions about culture, if present, are nearly always placed at the end of a checklist, almost as an afterthought.

Among the more thorough lists of criteria for textbook evaluation is Byram's (1993a) list, which focuses on cultural content. Byram examines the extent and manner in which a textbook includes a focus on each of the areas shown in Figure 2. He includes a comparative element (e.g., British students might compare their stereotypes of Germans with German stereotypes of the British as a step to recognizing the nature of stereotypes and transcending them, or at least putting them into perspective).

Byram (1989, p. 72–74) cites Huhn's useful criteria (1978) for evaluating the treatment of the cultural content in language textbooks, shown in Figure 3.

Risager (1991) has used similar criteria to examine elementary EFL textbooks used in Scandinavia. She indicates that her analysis shows tendencies that seem generalizable to the whole of Western Europe. She shows that in the social and geographic definition of textbook characters, the people featured are predominantly middle-class, young people, isolated individuals (rather than family members) who are often tourists or visitors to urban centers. They engage in rather trivial linguistic interaction in mainly leisure activities or consumer situations. They reveal few feelings or opinions and never engage in social, moral, or philosophical problems. Most cultural information is bland. There is little historical

Criteria for textbook evaluation

Focus on *cultural content:*

- **social identity and social groups**
  (social class, regional identity, ethnic minorities)
- **social interaction**
  (differing levels of formality; as outsider and insider)
- **belief and behavior**
  (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)

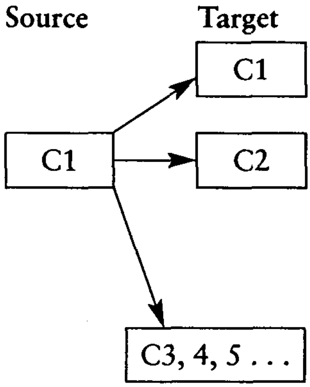
Figure 2 Criteria for textbook evaluation (after Byram, 1993a).

Evaluating treatment of cultural content in textbooks

- 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 as isolated facts
- explicitly relating historical material to contemporary society
- making it clear how personalities are products of their age

Figure 3 Evaluating the treatment of cultural content of textbooks (after Huhn, 1978; cited in Byram, 1989).

Textbooks and culture



Perceived benefit

- talk to visitors
- directly reinforce own identity

- talk to visitors
- be a visitor
- develop knowledge, awareness of other cultures
- indirectly reinforce own identity

- talk to others
- develop knowledge, awareness, skills of other cultures
- develop intercultural skills
- indirectly reinforce own identity

Figure 4 Textbooks and culture.

background or cultural comparison – target countries are considered in isolation. There is an avoidance of indication of the authors' attitude and no invitation to critical analysis.

In order to see whether such a depressing picture applies more generally around the world, we have examined a range of ELT textbooks.

Textbooks based on source cultures

Our examination of textbooks reveals gaps in the evaluation checklists considered so far. They are predicated on the notion that the cultures mirrored in EFL textbooks will be target cultures, that questions of cultural identity are unproblematic, and that for the most part culture will be construed in terms of declarative knowledge (knowing that) rather than as procedural knowledge (knowing how) or the development of intercultural skills. Yet, there are English-language textbooks for which none of these are the case. This presents English teachers with several paradoxes.

Figure 4 shows three patterns in English textbooks reflecting cultures. C1 refers to learners' own culture, the *source culture.* C2 refers to a *target culture* where the target language is used as a first language (there may be many, of course, as with English). C3, 4, 5 refer to cultures that are neither a source culture nor a target culture; these are a variety of cultures in English- or non-English-speaking countries around the world, using

English as an international language. These might be termed *international target cultures.*

There are EFL textbooks, produced at a national level for particular countries, that mirror the source culture, rather than target cultures, so that the source and target cultures are identical. A textbook for Venezuela, *El libro de inglés* (Nuñez, 1988), for example, has a text describing the country's chief geographic features – yet this can hardly be new content information for the Venezuelan ninth grade students with whom the book is used. The book gives details of a major national hero, Simón Bolívar, but again the content is very familiar to these students. When students practice asking for and giving directions, the setting is in Caracas, or other major Venezuelan cities. Places outside Venezuela are mentioned, but prime attention is given to the source culture, that of the learners, rather than to target cultures.

Similarly, the cultural content of an EFL textbook for Turkey, *Spotlight on English* (Dede & Emre, 1988), is primarily Turkish rather than a target culture. It is about Turkish food, Turkish history, and Turkish weather, discussed in English. When the textbook characters travel, they travel exclusively inside Turkey, although some characters are English-speaking visitors to Turkey. The implication is that students learn English to talk to visitors who come to their country, but they are not expected to travel to target countries or to learn about target cultures. If they do talk to visitors, they can only do so from within their Turkish cultural frameworks because they have not encountered cultural alternatives and are therefore likely to carry their home culture with them in their use of English. Thus, paradoxically, unless an English-speaking visitor is already familiar with Turkish culture, the visitor may not understand; visitor and host will speak English but communicate on different cultural wavelengths, unaware of the other's cultural view – a classic setup for miscommunication.

A third example is *English for Saudi Arabia* (Al-Quraishi, Watson, Hafseth, & Hickman, 1988), in which virtually every setting is located in the source culture. When the textbook characters greet one another, talk about professions, make Arabian coffee, or talk about going on pilgrimage to Mecca, they are predominantly Saudi Arabians performing culturally familiar activities in their own country with their own citizens (in English). All the maps in the book are maps of the home country. When there is a text about currency, it discusses only the Saudi riyal. In such textbooks, learners see members of their own culture, in their own context, who are not different from themselves, except that they all speak English.

There are reasons why it is the source culture that features so strongly in such textbooks. There is a need for learners to talk about their culture with visitors. A deeper reason is that such materials are usually designed to help students become aware of their own cultural identity. Thus, in many

African countries it was important for ELT textbooks to reflect local cultures in postcolonial times. Both these aims are unlikely to be realized, however, unless teachers and students have a degree of reflection on the nature of culture, and have some idea of cultural contrasts (as well as cultural aspects likely to be held in common).

Regarding identity, there is an argument that until learners' first cultural identity is established, it may be harmful to learn about other cultures. In this view, it is acceptable for younger students to learn EFL but not for them to learn about English-speaking cultures. This argument depends on the separability of language and culture, yet, as stated earlier, many scholars in the field (e.g., Byram, 1989) maintain that such separation is impossible (and undesirable) if communicative competence is the goal.

There are also counterexamples that demonstrate how widespread inclusion of foreign culture elements in textbooks does not necessarily threaten ethnic identity. Lebanon is one example. Lebanese people, like other groups, have their own personal and social identities, and perhaps different loyalties to different groups within the country. They suffered 16 years of war (1975–1991) but there is a strong feeling among the Lebanese that their cultural identity is Lebanese. At every level of schooling, students learn two languages: Arabic (the official language and native language of nearly all students) and French (75% of students) or English (25%). Many learn to use a third or fourth language. Most school textbooks (not only the foreign language ones) are in French or English, largely imported from Europe or the United States. The cultural content of these textbooks is that of the country of their origin, not Lebanese. As a result, more than half of the Lebanese are bilingual; they are familiar with other cultures and are generally regarded as very cosmopolitan, yet very few think of themselves as French, or American, or British; their ethnic identity as Lebanese is basically not in question, nor felt to be under threat – certainly not from source culture textbooks.

A more theoretical argument can be developed, which relates cultural identity to intercultural competence. This argument reveals a paradox with the use of EFL materials that predominantly mirror source cultures.

Identity can be seen (Ting-Toomey, 1993, p. 74) as the "mosaic sense" of ways in which people identify themselves along various dimensions: nationality, ethnic group, native language, occupation, age, gender, and so on. How a person thinks of his or her identity varies in intensity and in the salience of any of these dimensions, according to different contexts. Although people have some stable sense of a generalized self, major aspects of identity are dynamic and are "framed, negotiated, modified, confirmed, and challenged through communication and contact with others" (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 112). In this view, identity is negotiated in communication in different contexts. Hence, in intercultural contexts, cultural identity is also negotiated. As a further step, *intercultural* *communication competence* can be defined as an "effective identity negotiation process in novel communication episodes" (ibid., p. 73) or as "the demonstrated ability to negotiate mutual meanings, rules, and positive outcomes . . . the most important of which is confirmation of the preferred identity" (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 108). The paradox with the use of EFL materials containing largely source cultures is that, although the reason often given for their use is that this will help students to develop their own cultural identity, it effectively deprives the learners of realizing that identity. Since the materials mirror mainly their own culture, students have little opportunity to engage in intercultural negotiation with a text portraying another culture, and so they are unable to engage in a dialogue with the text to identify and confirm their own cultural identity, or to ascertain its similarities and differences with that of another cultural group.

A dialogue from a Malagasy EFL textbook, *English Third Steps* (n.a., 1978, pp. 11–12) shows how the paradox of using source cultures can, on occasion, operate:

> Koffi: Is circumcision practised in Madagascar?
> Baly: Yes. It's practised all over the country. If you're not circumcised you'll never be considered a true man.
> Koffi: It's exactly the same in our tribe. When does it take place in your country?
> Baly: Well, usually from June to September. It's generally a family celebration. But in some regions it's a communal festivity which is performed every eleven years. . . . Our boys are usually circumcised at the age of three, four or five. (*Koffi laughs*) Why are you laughing?
> Koffi: Well, in our tribe, the "candidate" for circumcision visits his relatives and friends. He declares he's made up his mind to become a "man." He invites them to attend the operation which will be carried out at the village place. You know, we are circumcised at the age of twenty-five. . . .
> Baly: Good heavens! What if the boy cries?
> Koffi: If he cries? If he cries, I'm telling you, man, no girl will marry him.

Students are told that Baly is Malagasy and Koffi is from Africa. The text is accompanied by a photograph illustrating the operation that is being discussed. If this dialogue is intended as a model of how to talk about local customs in the source culture, then it is not difficult to imagine that it could be a cause of some embarrassment if shared with others from the wider English-speaking world: visitors to the country might receive unexpected explanations or be asked awkward questions.

There is a resolution to this kind of paradox: The teacher can mediate the textbook in classroom interaction, indicating which aspects of the source culture would be interesting or problematic for target language speakers. Such compensatory action would, however, demand a measure of intercultural knowledge, skills, and awareness from the teacher.

Textbooks based on target culture

There are a large number of EFL textbooks that focus on target cultures. Many conform closely to Risager's (1991) analysis, outlined earlier, and some deserve Brumfit's description of being "Masses of rubbish that is skilfully marketed" (1980, p. 30). Commercial values clearly influence the design and content of textbooks, but there are changes. Social and environmental issues are now selling points. Thus, not only do recent EFL textbooks include materials designed to promote awareness of race, gender, and environmental issues, but these points are highlighted in the publishers' promotional materials.

An effective example of this contemporary approach to social cultural realism in elementary-level textbooks is *Success – Communicating in English* (Walker, 1994), which is set in the United States but marketed worldwide. The multicultural nature of American society is portrayed by including members of minority groups, shown positively in responsible positions or professional roles. By providing information in simple graphic formats, issues concerning health, crime, the environment, and the role of women are raised. In a typical explicit move to counter stereotypes, some texts feature husbands as being responsible for child care and housework, while their wives are breadwinners.

Another page (Book 2, p. 109), under the heading "What are you concerned about?" gives details of contemporary social, moral, or economic issues (e.g., child abuse). The text delineates aspects of such problems but – an important point – does not provide solutions. Students are asked to share their own opinions and concerns.

Parts of this textbook exemplify Luke's (1989) distinction between "closed" and "open" texts. A *closed* text shows an unproblematic world that confirms or reinforces learners' views and beliefs. The text seems to be complete already, so there is no need for student response or interpretation. An *open* text, in contrast, invites a range of possible interpretations, elaborations, and learner responses. It is (deliberately) incomplete to encourage the students to interact with the text in ways that go beyond simple manipulation of text language. An open text encourages cognitive or emotional involvement and draws on what students bring to the text. The page in Walker (1994) referred to in the preceding paragraph can be seen as an open text.

A second example of a more realistic, open textbook is *English G* (Hennig, 1991). This is intended for advanced-level German EFL students. The target culture focus is the United States. The book has units tackling most aspects of culture mentioned in Byram's list (1993a), quoted earlier. One theme is "Blacks in America." This theme is set in a detailed historical framework covering times of slavery to the more recent elections of black men and women to the U.S. Senate and state governorships. Students are invited to construe alternative interpretations of progress made by black Americans through examining data comparing black and white income groups and percentages of college graduates, managers and professionals, or elected officials. Further alternative perspectives are offered in the interviews with black families of differing social backgrounds, the collective interviews being juxtaposed with factual information. On the whole, these texts are open, offering more complex, in-depth versions of the target culture.

A third example, which again has marked open qualities, is *Learning English, Topline* (Bülow, Forman, & Vettel, 1992), an advanced reader and workbook for German EFL students. The cultural focus is balanced between seven units on the United States, six on the United Kingdom, one on India, and one on Ireland. This textbook has an enormous variety of cultural coverage, focusing on modern history and social, political, technological, religious, and artistic topics. It includes extracts from more than one hundred authors, representing a wide range of voices. Students are encouraged to analyze authors' points of view. The book is amply illustrated with factual material, contemporary illustrations, and explanatory graphics. It is, of course, much easier to introduce this richness of material to advanced learners.

It is easy to assume that textbooks should reflect a target culture. However, a survey of Greek students by Prodromou (1992) reveals that some students have mixed views on the cultural focus of their English lessons. Among 300 students, 60% wanted to focus on British culture (C2), 26% on American culture (C2), 36% on "the culture of other countries" (either C2 or C3, C4, C5), and 27% on Greek culture (C1).

Textbooks aimed at international target cultures

A third category of cultural content in EFL textbooks involves those books that include a wide variety of cultures set in English-speaking countries or in other countries where English is not a first or second language, but is used as an international language. The rationale for such *international target cultures* is that English is frequently used in international situations by speakers who do not speak it as a first language. An example of such a situation is when Belgian teachers have taught English in China to Chinese factory technicians who need English to speak to Italian and German engineers; English is not the first language of any of these groups.

A preintermediate EFL textbook that aims at international target cultures is *One World, Secondary English* (Priesack & Tomscha, 1993), which is accompanied by cassettes featuring not only a range of native-speaker accents but also some from nonnative speakers from around the world. Book 3 has units focusing on British history, Australian geography, Spanish tourism, the Chinese New Year, a Canadian story, Greek mythology, and other topics. However, these are fragmented topics, in Risager's terms (1991). Each is restricted to a single unit. There is no cultural thread to link the topics together.

This difficulty is avoided in *Panorama* (Potter, 1990), an elementary to intermediate series, by the use of themes. One theme of an American family living in Rio de Janeiro allows some focus on Brazilian culture compared with American culture, spread over three books. A second theme of visits allows a linked focus on Istanbul, Marrakech, Seoul, and Buenos Aires, with further comparisons with Bangkok and Tokyo. Elsewhere, the themes of job applications for a job in Milan, and of an international conference in Nairobi, extend such international targets over a number of units. This seems to avoid fragmentation.

While such textbooks offer interesting cultural mirrors, the learning of culture and the development of intercultural skills depend in large part on how the textbooks are used in the classroom, that is, on the quality of interaction between students, texts, and teachers. Beyond textbooks, what is required is a methodology of cultural learning. Allwright's point (1981, p. 9) was not made about cultural aspects of textbooks, but it surely applies to these aspects: "The whole business of the management of language learning is far too complex to be satisfactorily catered for by a pre-packaged set of decisions embodied in teaching materials." What is needed are appropriate methods for teaching and learning culture in the EFL classroom that will facilitate a reflective use of the best available materials.

Culture learning as dialogue

As we have argued, intercultural competence takes place in situations of negotiating meaning and identity in the context of other cultures. Culture learning through textbooks might also be seen as a process of dialogue in which students negotiate meaning and identity vicariously with the author of the textbook and its cultural content. However, this is mediated in the classroom with a teacher who manages the way in which the students see the culture mirrored in the textbook. The teacher may also thereby mediate ways in which students see themselves. Teachers are thus "ambassadors of culture" (Nayar, 1986; quoted in Nelson, 1995 p. 30).

There is, then, a three-party dialogue with the culture content when the textbook is used in classroom interaction, as shown in Figure 5. In this dialogue, neither the teacher nor the students are blank slates regarding the target culture. They may have some previous knowledge of it (e.g., the teacher may be a native-speaking participant).

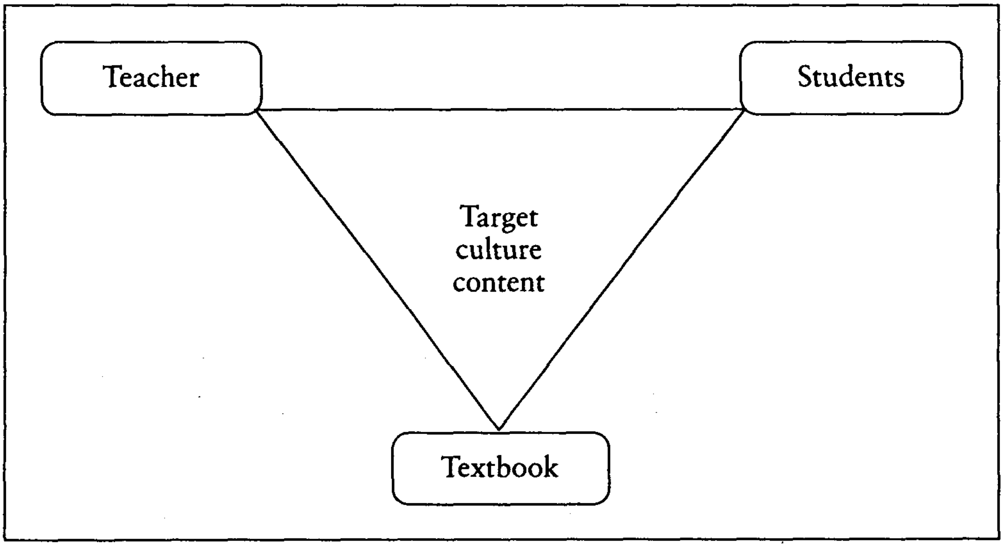

Teacher
Students
Target culture content
Textbook

Figure 5 A three-party dialogue with culture content.

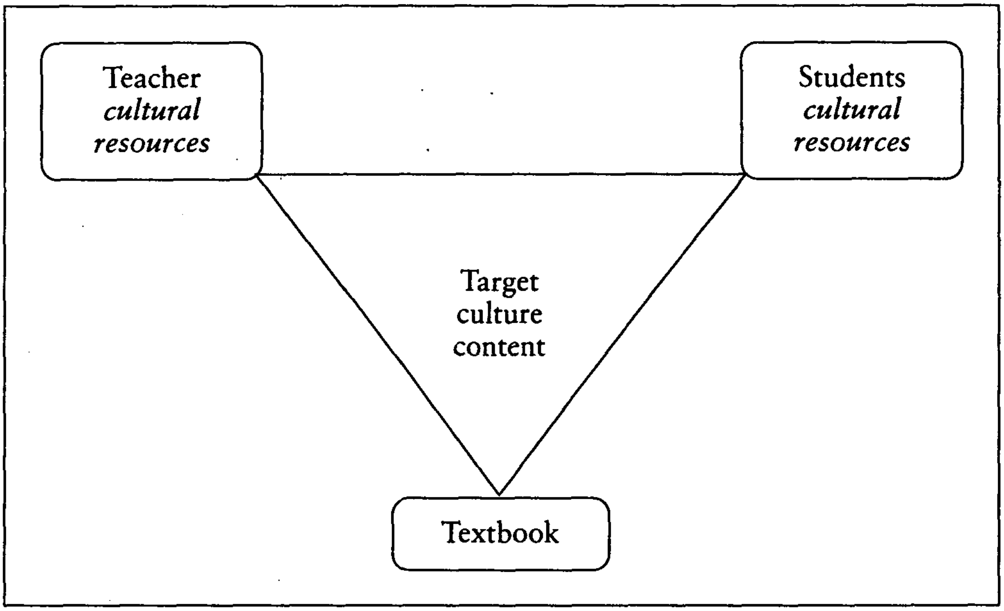

Teacher *cultural resources*
Students *cultural resources*
Target culture content
Textbook

Figure 6 Teacher and students bring cultural resources to the textbook.

If they do not have much knowledge of the target culture, we can still recognize that they bring cultural resources to the dialogue with the textbook, shown in Figure 6. These resources are their understanding of their own source culture, which can be exploited in an ethnographic or reflective approach.

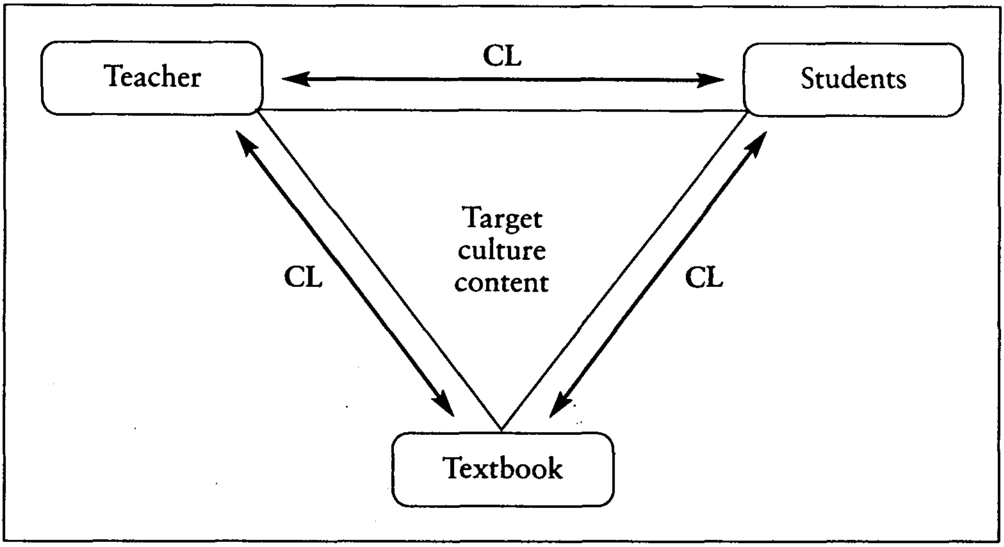


Figure 7 Cultures of learning mediating the learning of target culture content (CL = culture of learning).

Further, in an EFL classroom, culture learning is not only a *content-based dialogue,* it is also a *medium-based dialogue* of learning. Students learn about target cultures, but their way of learning is part of their own culture, acquired in most cases long before entering a foreign language classroom. Similarly, teachers may teach about target cultures, but their way of teaching is not solely influenced by their professional training. It is also influenced by their culture of learning. The *culture of learning* that students and teachers bring to the classroom is a taken-for-granted framework of expectations, attitudes, values, and beliefs about what constitutes good learning (Jin & Cortazzi, 1993, 1995; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). It is acquired in early socialization patterns and through the internalization of roles and expectations that students learn at school. It influences teachers through the imprint of years of being a student, prior to teacher training, and years of apprenticeship observing others teaching. Such a culture of learning becomes a framework of cultural interpretation that is unconsciously employed in later teaching. It becomes an invisible yardstick for judgments about how to teach or learn, about whether and how to ask questions, and about what textbooks are for. When textbooks are written, they are also predicated on a culture of learning (see Figure 7).

A culture of learning not only mediates the learning of target culture content – it may also deny such learning by creating barriers of differences of interpretation.

The problem is that the students' and their teacher's culture of learning may not be consonant with each other, and either could be out of synchronization with the target culture. Source cultures then dominate the interaction so that the culture content becomes filtered or distorted by the participants' approach to interaction with the text.

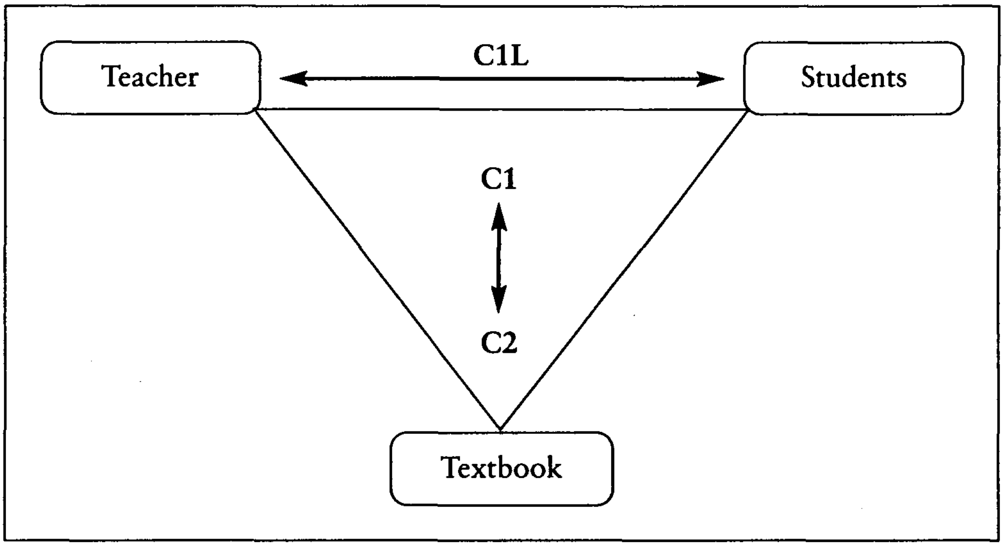


Figure 8 Teacher and students share the same culture of learning. C1L = source culture of learning; C1 = source culture; C2 = target culture.

One paradox that emerges is the possibility that teacher and students may share the same culture of learning but use an EFL textbook based on a quite different culture of learning. Although the teacher-student interaction shows a congruence of cultures of learning, this cultural medium does not, perhaps, match the cultural content of the textbook; nor does it match the medium expected to be used by its authors. It is possible, even probable, that the source culture will, in fact, dominate the dialogic exploitation of the text, as shown in Figure 8. This is a paradox because the teacher is in an ideal position to understand the students' approach to the text, by being familiar with their culture of learning. However, precisely because the teacher shares this culture of learning it is difficult for him or her to transcend it in order to match the target culture with a target culture of learning. Another paradox may arise from a different situation, shown in Figure 9, where the teacher may be a native speaker of English, using his or her own culture of learning to teach EFL. This is apparently a better opportunity for students – they can learn the target culture with a native speaker using a target culture methodology. However, there is still a mismatch which can create barriers: students may expect a different culture of learning from the teacher, and, not seeing evidence of it, they may conclude that the teacher is a poor teacher because he or she is not teaching in expected ways. This situation can be improved if the teacher understands the students' culture of learning.

However, the paradox is that the more the teacher moves toward the students' expectations, the greater the distance he or she is from the target culture. Also, some students – and some teachers – may well feel that to change their culture of learning is to change their culture, which raises the problems of identity discussed earlier. There is a further problem

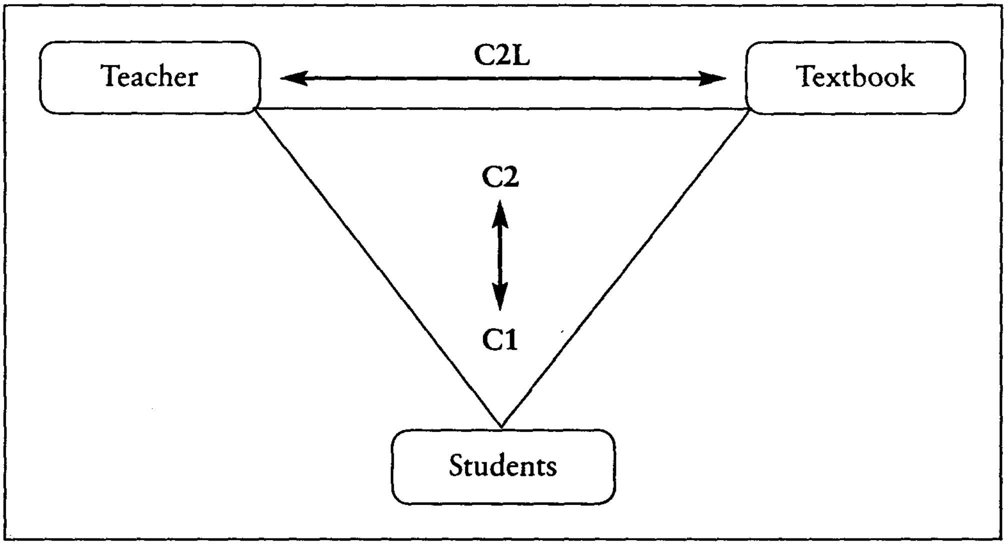


Figure 9 Teacher and textbook share the same culture of learning. C2L = target culture of learning; C2 = target culture; C1 = source culture.

because it is likely that teachers (in Figure 8) and students (in Figures 8 and 9) have successfully employed their cultures of learning in other subjects in the curriculum.

A third situation, shown in Figure 10, has already been discussed in earlier sections. In this situation, students and the textbook share the same culture, which is the source culture; but the teacher may come from another culture, with another culture of learning. This pattern may cause a failure of teaching and learning, unless the teacher is familiar with the students' culture of learning.

The possibilities mentioned above are simplifications. As we have shown, there is not a single target culture; rather, there are target cultures (C2), source culture (C1), and international target cultures (C3, C4, C5 . . .). Furthermore, there are many EFL or ESL situations where students do not come from a single cultural background. They may represent many cultures and many cultures of learning. In these ways, the dialogue of cultures of learning is a multiparty one, and it takes place on several levels. The cultural mirror in the EFL materials and methods is many-faceted.

Western teachers and Chinese students

Some of these points can be illustrated by looking at the situation of Western teachers (i.e., from the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Western Europe) interacting with Chinese university students in China (Jin & Cortazzi, 1993, 1995; Cor-

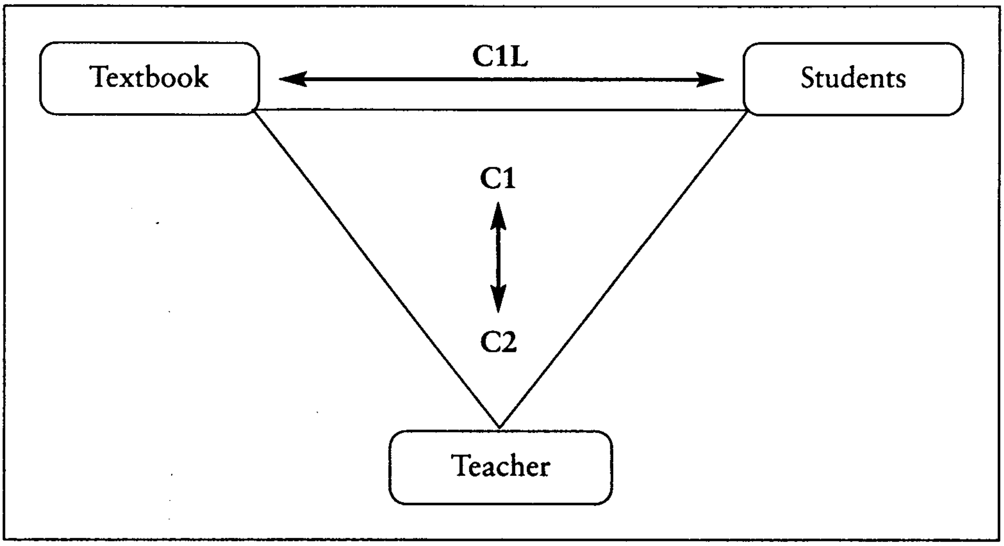


Figure 10 Students and textbook share the source culture of learning.

tazzi & Jin, 1996). The following account presents only tendencies, which will not apply to all individuals.

The Western teachers, in general, approach the classroom use of textbooks as a resource (see Figure 1) that they exploit selectively, attempting to involve students in active discussion. They expect students' participation which will include a critical evaluation of texts, revealing students' independent thinking.

Many Chinese students, however, approach textbooks as teachers and authorities (see Figure 1). They expect the teacher to expound the book – they will learn through attentive listening, because the teacher is also an authority and provider of knowledge. They apparently accept this knowledge from the textbook uncritically, but in their minds they have their own thinking. They hesitate to express this thinking because their culture of learning includes the notion that one cannot really create or contribute something new until one has mastered the field or relevant techniques – that is, after long apprenticeship. Also, they reflect carefully before participating, in order to be sure their point is valid and useful. Further, they incorporate their care for social relationships into their learning environment, which includes their respect for teacher and fellow students, their concern for "face" issues, for not "showing off," for group harmony, and so on.

These contrasting cultures of learning lead to variant interpretations of the classroom interaction that accompanies the use of textbooks. For example, asking questions about the cultural content of the textbook seems, for the teacher, very useful. The teacher will ask questions and encourage students to do so, in the belief that this reflects student activity and learning. Many Chinese students, however, believe that if they ask questions, there is a high risk of wasting time or being thought foolish. The teacher should, as part of lesson preparation and teaching, predict learners' questions, so some students feel no need to ask, but will wait for the anticipated explanation. If no explanation comes, then they conclude that this aspect is not important or that they may find answers from the textbook and materials if they read them again and try to solve the problem themselves. Other students reflect carefully before they ask – they have good questions, but they ask the teacher individually after class in order not to disturb the class. Others ask after class in order to minimize the loss of face if the question seems foolish – their classmates will not hear them ask if they ask alone. This frustrates some Western teachers, who find their time after class taken up with questions, that, in their view, should have been asked during class, especially if they are good questions. Similarly, the Western teachers encourage students to volunteer comments in class – this will show interest and the speaker will be considered active. In the students' perspective, however, this is showing off. It also prevents the teacher from talking and thus it is negatively evaluated, because it is the teacher, not other students, who should be transmitting knowledge.

These mismatches in cultures of learning can affect participants' interpretations of one another: perceptions of others' behavior are attributed to the cultural categorization of the others' group and conclusions are drawn about their general status and ability – sometimes quite mistakenly.

Western teachers agree that Chinese students are hardworking, well motivated, and friendly. However, the students seem unwilling to speak; they are passive and rather resistant to pair or group work. They seem oriented to exams and memorization, but not to the processes of learning.

The Chinese students like to have Western teachers. They are good models for pronunciation and have the authority of being native speakers and sources of cultural knowledge. However, these teachers are seen as less knowledgeable and helpful for learning grammar and vocabulary than Chinese teachers, perhaps because the Western teachers emphasize communication rather than linguistic knowledge and mental activity. Some Western teachers are thought to be poor at teaching, because they stress pair and group discussion instead of teaching the students themselves.

Some current reforms in the EFL national curriculum in China are movements in the direction of a Western-oriented style of learning (Han, Lu, & Doug, 1995); how far these are successful remains to be seen. The situation of Western teachers and Chinese students has, of course, other complexities, other variations, and contemporary developments (see Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). However, we hope that the above analysis, which is based on research in China, demonstrates that paying heed to cultural materials and methods is insufficient. Attention also needs to be given to teachers' and students' ways of learning, and, by extension, each side needs to pay attention to the other side's culture of learning. Yet, it is important to emphasize that in language classrooms there are not inevitably cultural problems. All around the world, there are teachers and students who successfully engage in cultural learning.

Teaching culture

There seem to be several broad solutions to the kinds of problems we have identified. First, a broader definition of the cultural content of texts is called for, and a corresponding requirement is that textbook evaluation lists have greater sophistication about cultural elements, as discussed earlier. Second, we believe that teachers and students should take a more reflective or ethnographic stance toward cultural content and methodology, in order to raise their awareness of intercultural issues. Third, it would be a useful development if more textbooks included explicit intercultural elements and if teachers were more conscious of intercultural competence, in the way that many are now conscious of communicative competence. We will elaborate on the second and third points below.

For EFL teachers to develop a reflective stance toward classroom experience is now regarded as a major path to professional development (Wallace, 1991; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). It has also been argued that teachers must become colearners, along with their students, in a cooperative approach to classroom interaction (Wenham, 1991). This idea is also a part of Confucian philosophy of education: "Jiao xue xiang zhang" (Teaching and learning influence and improve each other). (Confucius). These developments suit the need for language teachers and students to construct an interpretative approach to learning culture in which, as is likely, the teacher may be learning. This would mean that the development of cultural awareness (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993) is a priority.

Developing cultural awareness means being aware of members of another cultural group: their behavior, their expectations, their perspectives and values. It also means attempting to understand their reasons for their actions and beliefs. Ultimately, this needs to be translated into skill in communicating across cultures and about cultures. This can be encouraged by developing an ethnographic stance toward cultural learning. This is following the approach demonstrated for the ethnography of communication (Saville-Troike, 1989) and for ethnography in language classroom research (van Lier, 1988), but extended explicitly to help students (and teachers) to understand the process of understanding culture, both their own and target cultures (Zarate, 1991, 1995). For example, Zarate suggests presenting learners with photographs of different tennis clubs. Students are given the task of ranking the clubs (e.g., formal-informal; public-private) through detailed attention to interpreting what they see. The teacher then helps them to understand (and extend) the cultural frameworks they use on the task. With encouragement, students can realize *how* to learn about cultures, and such learning skills may include learning how to learn from one another, particularly in multicultural groups (Nelson, 1995, p. 33).

More explicit teaching is being developed in several countries. In an elementary-level textbook, *English for China* (Alexander, Grant, & Liu, 1992), there is a text comparing British, Chinese, American, and Australian take-out food. Another, on the topic "Good Manners," includes the following passage (Book 4, p. 89):

> Ideas of what are good manners are not always the same in different countries. For example, in Britain or America it is not polite to ask people how much money they get in their jobs. People don't like talking about the cost of things around the home, though in America they don't mind so much. But both in Britain and America it is not polite to ask people how old they are.
>
> There are other interesting differences between China and foreign countries. In China, if someone says something good about you, it is polite to answer, 'No, not at all!' In Britain or America, a person answers 'Thank-you', with a big smile. This may be bad manners in China, but good manners in Britain or America.

This is a constructive attempt to be explicit about intercultural behavior and communication, especially in view of the limited language available at this level. The text might be made more open by asking students how target culture members might interpret the Chinese examples mentioned (and vice versa). This would help students into an interpretative framework rather than simply teaching cultural rules.

Further examples are textbooks whose entire content is focused on cross-cultural communication (Genzel & Cummings, 1986; Levine, Baxter, & McNulty, 1987; Hartmann, 1989; Levine & Adelman, 1993). These include culture assimilators that present situations in which students must make choices. They are then given feedback on the cultural consequences of their choices. The setting in these books is predominantly American, which may constrain their international use. However, there are difficulties in designing international target culture materials, as shown in photo dictionaries. An example is Rosenthal and Freeman (1994), which has an excellent range of photographs for vocabulary learning, intended for Chinese learners of English as well as for English learners of Chinese. However, this book is not a two-way cultural mirror: All the photographs illustrate American and Canadian or British culture; there are none portraying anything Chinese.

Conclusions

EFL textbooks reflect not only the target cultures, but also source cultures and international cultures. EFL methods also reflect cultures, sometimes in ways that are overlooked, as cultures of learning. Cultural mismatches can occur, but knowledge and awareness of cultural approaches may alleviate problems. Ethnographic stances and explicit teaching may develop both students' and teachers' cultural knowledge.

The participants in classroom interaction are also major cultural resources; on them ultimately depends the full realization of the cultural content of textbooks. In this way, the method determines the use of the medium; medium and method are culturally interdependent. They reflect each other in a hall-of-mirrors effect.

A cultural focus on intercultural competence has communicative ends, but there are further important advantages: It may not only encourage the development of identity, but also encourage the awareness of others' identities and an element of stabilization in a world of rapid change. As Meyer (1991, p. 137) says, "Intercultural competence includes the capacity of stabilising one's self-identity in the process of cross-cultural mediation, and of helping other people to stabilise their self-identity."

Whatever the appearance to the contrary, few EFL materials are culturally neutral. Textbook evaluation checklists have their cultural slants, too. Even definitions of intercultural competence vary cross-culturally, as does its enactment (Martin, 1993, p. 20). Inevitably, then, our account will also have its cultural twists and turns, but we hope that we have woven together a few useful threads.