

# Toward intercultural communicative competence: representation of culture in the EFL textbooks for early primary education in Croatia

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Sveučilište u Splitu  
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*Toward intercultural communicative competence: representation of culture in  
the EFL textbooks for early primary education in Croatia*

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University of Split  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
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MA thesis

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Split, 2023

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# 1. Introduction

More than half a century ago, Chomsky (1965) introduced the concept of linguistic competence as the ideal model of language knowledge for any native speaker of a language. However, it has been widely recognised that more than linguistic competence is needed to ensure successful communication. In 1972, Hymes proposed a new concept, communicative competence, which complemented and added to Chomsky's model of linguistic competence. Namely, Hymes's model emphasized the ability to use grammatical (linguistic) competence in various communicative situations across different contexts. Both models referred to speakers' abilities in their first language. The notion of communicative competence was, therefore, further reworked within foreign language (FL) teaching, and new dimensions were added to the original idea (sociolinguistic and strategic competences as proposed by Canale and Swain in 1980). Following the growing realisation that foreign language learners are not limited to contact with speakers of the target language or the countries where it is spoken, van Ek (1986) emphasized that foreign language teaching is not concerned merely with communication skills, but must also involve personal and social development. Foreign language learners are often involved in situations where they are mediators between different languages and cultures, and they have to interpret the world from different points of view. Consequently, the model of communicative competence as proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) has been further developed and adapted to the new demands of foreign language teaching.

In accordance with the abovementioned developments, Byram (1997) proposed a new model, intercultural communicative competence (ICC). It was further described in the publication entitled "Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching-A Practical Introduction for Teachers" (Council of Europe, Language Policy Division, 2002). The notion of ICC has thus become a relatively recent constituent of different national curricula, including the Croatian National Curriculum (2019).

This thesis examines how the representation of culture in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks for early primary education in Croatia contributes to fostering the development of ICC among young foreign language students. The theoretical framework of the thesis includes the concepts of culture and the relationship between language and culture,

followed by a brief historical overview of the role of culture within foreign language teaching. The notion of intercultural communicative competence is discussed, along with the influence of the Council of Europe and its recommendations on the contents of the Croatian National Curriculum (2019). The focus is on the explicit requirements and guidelines, namely learning outcomes, that the subject curriculum for English as a foreign language (*Kurikulum nastavnog predmeta Engleski jezik za osnovne škole i gimnazije*, 2019) provides for EFL teaching. The role of textbooks in the Croatian EFL setting is further discussed, accompanied by an overview of previous studies. The practical part of the thesis describes the research into the representation of culture in EFL textbooks for early foreign language learning. The research methodology is described, including the research aim and research questions, corpus selected for the present study and the method of analysis. The results and discussion section contains the analysis of examples found in the textbooks. Some conclusions are made regarding the representations of cultural elements in the EFL textbooks and their links to learning outcomes and the development of intercultural communicative competence. The concluding section outlines the limitations and suggestions for further research on developing intercultural communicative competence through foreign language teaching.

## 2. Culture and foreign language teaching

### 2.1. Language and culture

It is undeniable that language is an inseparable part of culture in the same way that culture is an inseparable part of language. Sapir (1921, p. 100) claims that “language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives.” Language is shaped by culture, and, naturally, language is the very means used to describe culture. To start with, the Oxford Dictionary ([www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com)) portrays the notion of culture as:

- 1) the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group of people,
- 2) a country, group, with its own beliefs,
- 3) art, music, literature, thought of as a group beliefs/attitude,
- 4) the beliefs and attitudes about something that people in a particular group or organization share.

Cambridge Dictionary ([www.dictionary.cambridge.org](http://www.dictionary.cambridge.org)) uses similar expressions to define culture:

- 1) the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a particular time,
- 2) the attitudes, behaviour, opinions of a particular group of people within society,
- 3) music, art, theatre, literature.

These definitions have a lot in common: they describe culture as the way of life, a set of shared beliefs and attitudes and cultural artefacts contained in music, art and literature. The definitions also emphasize that abovementioned features are shared by a specific group of people. The reason for choosing these two dictionaries lies in the preferences adopted at school. Namely, most of my English teachers opted for Oxford and/or Cambridge dictionaries while introducing unknown words into our EFL classes and also used the teaching materials provided by these publishers. The notion of acquiring what others consider appropriate could, therefore, best summarise what culture means to each one of us - as members of particular

groups of people with our ways of life, beliefs and attitudes. Our own cultural background influences many of our inclinations toward perceiving and defining different concepts.

Definitions of culture provided by individual linguists differ somewhat from dictionary definitions because some linguists emphasize that culture, as a notion and actual experience, continually changes. For example, definitions proposed by Seelye (1976, in Paige et al., 1999), Kramersch (1981), and Paige et al. (2003), describe culture as dynamic and variable, that is, these authors claim that culture constantly changes, while its members display a great range of behaviours. Earlier models (Nostrand, 1974; Brooks, 1975) viewed culture as a relatively static entity (similarly to dictionary definitions proposed above), which consists of accumulated, classifiable, observable, and thus teachable “facts” (Paige et al., 2003). This perspective did not recognize the variability of behaviour within culture, the participative role of the individual in the creation of culture, or the interaction of language and culture in the making of meaning (Moore, 1991 in Paige et al., 2003).

Seelye (1976, in Paige et al., 2003) emphasizes the interaction of language and culture, asserting that learning a foreign language in isolation of its cultural roots prevents learners from becoming socialized into its contextual use. Kramersch (1981, p. 17) describes dynamic interrelationship between language, culture and the participative role of the individual, stating that “by entering a foreign-language classroom, students leave behind the social reality created by their native tongue and start constructing a new reality.” Therefore, learning a language without learning its culture and constructing a new set of values and perceptions of the world is nearly impossible. Paige et al. (2003, p. 177) also emphasize the relatedness of culture and language by describing culture learning as “a dynamic, developmental, and ongoing process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviourally, and affectively.”

While learning a foreign language, learners are actually exposed to different types of culture. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) propose three different types of culture: target culture which belongs to the native speakers of a certain language, in this case, English, and refers to all the countries where English is spoken as the first language (including Great Britain, the USA, Canada, Ireland, Australia); international target culture which refers to all other cultures where English is spoken as a second language (L2); and, finally, source culture which refers to the culture of the foreign language learners, in this case, Croatian culture. Learners should, therefore, be able to use a foreign language to discuss their homeland and its culture (Vickov,



2016), and also use this target language (in this case, English) to learn about the target and international cultures. This thesis aims to establish whether EFL textbooks expose young learners to such a diversity of cultures, since “in early language learning in primary school (the first four grades), the main goal is to develop an awareness of the language and sensitivity of students to other language systems or the knowledge that there are many languages and cultures other than the mother tongue” (Bilić Štefan, 2008, p. 233).

## **2.2. The role of culture in the EFL classroom – a brief historical overview**

As Hennebry (2014, p. 135) observes, “it has been argued that culture is the marginalized sister of language.” A brief historical overview of foreign language teaching methods is outlined in this section to show whether this observation has its roots in the role culture had in foreign language teaching in the past and whether this claim is still relevant today. The brief historical overview is based on the chapter *O razvoju međukulturne kompetencije u nastavi stranog jezika* (Andraka, 2019, in Vrhovac, 2019) from the book entitled *Izazovi učenja stranog jezika u osnovnoj školi* (Vrhovac et al., 2019).

To start with, the grammar-translation method, which was a dominant foreign language teaching method in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued to be dominant in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, based many of its teaching practices and tasks on great works of literature, that is, novels that are usually described as the classics. Culture (with a big ‘C’) was introduced through literature chosen for the analysis. Learners acquired knowledge about different civilizations exclusively based on the written passages from the books read in class (the oral component was neglected). Access to the great literary works of specific cultures presented the utmost goal of EFL teaching at the time, and only the educated elite “possessed” the culture (Andraka, 2019 in Vrhovac, 2019, p. 292).

The end of the 19th century was marked by teaching reforms. Methods developed at that time in Europe represented a contrasting view to the grammar-translation method and are known as direct methods. By emphasizing speaking and language of everyday situations, culture was presented through different ways of life, customs, and traditions, daily routines accompanied by the themes related to the history and geography of foreign language countries.

In the mid-20th century, the audiolingual (AL) method was introduced. Culture was incorporated as a constituent part of dialogues chosen to depict the everyday life of the target

language community. The English language was presented through the cultural context of the UK or the USA. However, cultural content was often superficial since this method prioritized language structures, that is, learning grammatical patterns by heart.

In the 1970s, communicative language teaching gave culture a more prominent position. At the same time, methodological manuals for teachers dedicated specific chapters to teaching culture as a part of EFL teaching practices, emphasizing the utmost objective: communication within the framework of the target language cultural context. Textbooks followed the basic scheme: target language was presented through dialogues and interactions (doctor–patient; tourist–policeman; for example); situations were portrayed as scenarios: city tours, and hotel admission/check-in, to name a few. Nonetheless, the main critique of the communicative approach was that the cultural content was actually not prioritized. Characters portrayed in textbooks were involved in everyday interactions; they went to school or work in London or Manchester, but the same characters could have been depicted in Zagreb or Paris. Therefore, the situations meant to be authentic were often not authentic (Andraka, 2019 in Vrhovac, 2019).

The intercultural approach to language teaching developed in the 1990s. This approach was based on the notion of intercultural communicative competence as one of the main goals of language learning. It enriched the communicative approach by observing the learning process and the teaching materials from the perspective of both the self and the other. Some important features of intercultural discourse are sensibility, empathy, awareness of the self, and tolerance in the multicultural world. To operationalize these concepts, it was essential to develop certain “sub-competences”, as described in various models of intercultural communicative competence developed in the last two decades (Andraka, 2019 in Vrhovac, 2019, p. 294). Different models have been proposed aiming to provide the best solution for the development of intercultural communicative competence; these models emphasize the fact that its development is a gradual, delicate and lifelong learning process (Andraka, 2019 in Vrhovac, 2019). Some of the most prominent models of intercultural communicative competence that influenced the curriculum design are presented in the next section.

### **3. Intercultural communicative competence (ICC)**

First, it is necessary to distinguish between intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence (ICC). According to Byram (1997), the first refers to people's "ability to interact in their language with the people from another country and culture", while ICC takes into account language teaching and focuses on "the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language" (p. 71). Byram (1997) views ICC as the learner's ability to interact with people of different backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures in a foreign language, reacting appropriately to given cultural contexts. Therefore, intercultural communicative competence revolves around "behaving adequately and in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes, and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures" (Lund, 2006, p. 93). This ability implies highly developed social, linguistic, and cultural awareness in various communicative situations.

#### **3.1. Overview of the models of intercultural communicative competence**

The three models of intercultural communicative competence presented here are the following: Byram et al. (2002); Deardorff (2006), and Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (1986, revised in 2013).

Byram (1997, p. 3) was the first to introduce the model of intercultural communicative competence in his book "Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence", as a concept that "expands the concept of communicative competence in significant ways". In the booklet entitled "Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching - A Practical Introduction for Teachers", Byram et al. (2002) explored the notion in more detail and this model is presented here. They describe the following five components of intercultural competence:

1. Intercultural attitudes – curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures, and belief about oneself.
2. Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and the target culture and the general processes of societal and individual interaction.
3. Skills of interpreting and relating – the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, explain it, and relate it to documents or events from one's own.

4. Skills of discovery and interaction – acquiring new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and operating knowledge, attitudes, and skills under real-time communication and interaction constraints.

5. Critical cultural awareness – an ability to evaluate critically and based on explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.

Given these points, the language teacher's role is to develop skills, attitudes, and awareness of values just as much as to develop knowledge of a particular culture or country (Byram et al., 2002).

The Intercultural Competence Model (Deardorff, 2006) is based on five elements: attitude, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes. Since the first three features overlap with the model proposed by Byram et al. (2002), the last two components are presented here – internal and external outcomes. Attitudes, knowledge, and skills lead to an internal outcome of flexibility, adaptability, and empathy. These abilities allow individuals to achieve intercultural competence to some degree. At this point, one begins to see from others' perspectives and respond to others according to how the other desires to be treated. Finally, an individual's effective and appropriate behaviour based on his/her attitudes, knowledge, skills, and internal outcomes is the visible external outcome of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006).

All the definitions presented above have some features in common: to communicate, to understand ourselves, the situation, and others, to cooperate, and finally, to act. In order to act, or rather to react to different cultural backgrounds, the overview concludes with the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), devised by Bennett in 1986 and revised in 2013. His model outlines six developmental stages of sensitivity to cultural differences, which form a continuum of possible reactions toward cultural experience:

1) Denial → suppressing the awareness of cultural diversity and failing to understand its relevance.

2) Defence → enforcing a negative critical attitude towards other cultures and using stereotypes in a negative way to widen the gap between “us” and “them”;

3) Minimisation → focusing on experiences, worldviews, and similarities shared cross-culturally but disregarding the equally important deeper cultural differences;

4) Acceptance → developing a tolerance for other cultures and striving towards inclusivity, yet still falling into the pitfalls of superficial acceptance;

5) Adaptation → taking “the other” perspective, developing empathy for other cultures, and shifting between different cultures but struggling to define authenticity due to so many different cultural contexts that surround us;

6) Integration → full ability of cross-cultural mediation and constructing cultural bridges (Bennett, 2017: 3-5).

As shown above, accepting other cultures is not the final stage; it takes more than acknowledging and tolerating other cultures to become truly interculturally competent. Understanding the culture, adapting to it, and integrating it into one’s own perception of the world is important. As Bennett et al. (2003: 37) put it, “the person who learns a language without learning culture risks becoming a fluent fool.”

However, meeting new people and coming across unexpected beliefs, values, and behaviours can shock and disturb those deeply embedded identities and values, however open, tolerant, and flexible one wishes to be (Byram et al., 2002). That is why cultural topics and the notion of “other” should be introduced gradually, paying attention to learners’ cognitive and developmental stages. This is an especially delicate issue regarding early foreign language teaching; one cannot expect to equip learners with all the abilities all at once, nor can one expect that denial or defence will not make way into learners’ personal development toward acceptance or, preferably, integration. In dealing with these sensitive issues, foreign language teachers need a framework to consult in terms of learning outcomes and suggested topics from which to draw actual activities for fostering the development of learners’ intercultural communicative competence. The next subsection thus describes the role of the Council of Europe and its influence on the framework for fostering learners’ intercultural communicative competence as proposed by the subject curriculum for English as a foreign language, which is a constituent part of the Croatian National Curriculum (2019).

### **3.2. European documents leading to the implementation of ICC in curricula**

Globalization has highlighted the need to integrate intercultural elements into the foreign language curricula. Within the European context, foreign language teaching has been influenced by the decisions and recommendations given by the Council of Europe, a European authority advocating language diversity and language learning within educational systems. Over 70 years of cooperation with member states have resulted in a wide range of resources, from policy guides to different descriptors developed in response to evolving needs in the field of plurilingual and intercultural education ([www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy](http://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy)). This thesis explores two documents that played a significant role in defining the Croatian National Curriculum (2019). The first refers to “The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment - Companion volume with new descriptors” (2018), and the second refers to the Education Policy Division’s “Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education” (2016).

The CEFR promotes cultural and linguistic diversity at the individual level, emphasizing the learner’s role as a “social agent” who participates in social and educational contexts. As the CEFR states: “... the plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person’s experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples, he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact” (CEFR Section 1.3, p. 157). While building on pluricultural repertoire (in the three broad areas: knowledge, attitudes, and skills), the following descriptors for intercultural communicative competence are included in the CEFR (2018):

- ▶ the capacity to deal with ‘otherness’ to identify similarities and differences to build on known and unknown cultural features in order to enable communication and collaboration;
- ▶ the willingness to act as an intercultural mediator; a readiness and capacity to expand linguistic/plurilinguistic and cultural/pluricultural awareness through an attitude of openness and curiosity, among others. (CEFR, 2018, p. 157-158)

As for the “Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education” (2016), it is a document aimed at offering additional guidance to all those involved in teaching foreign languages, particularly those responsible for curriculum planning. It is divided into three parts: Chapter 1 provides a general picture of the components of plurilingual and intercultural education, while Chapter 2 discusses the content of a curriculum focused on plurilingual and intercultural education, and the distribution of this content with the help of curriculum scenarios, as described in Chapter 3.

The Guide uses a very broad term to describe a curriculum, namely a “tool for organising learning” (p.18). Interculturality is defined as “the ability to experience otherness and diversity, analyse that experience and derive benefit from it. Active discovery of one or more other cultures may help learners to develop intercultural competence” (pp.18-19).

However, the curriculum scenarios, as proposed in the Guide, do not refer to the descriptions of activities that could be used directly in the classroom. They offer models for the chronological division of the “experiences” (a term meant to represent “competences”, when referring to the beginners’ levels – level 0). Level 1 is concerned with primary school education, which is in most national systems focused on developing literacy, and making learners aware of the functions, power and constraints of the language; a first foreign language is generally introduced in this stage. The foreign languages domain is described as going through the first stages of learning to speak and write a foreign language and experiencing culture-specific phenomena. The content becomes more complex as learners advance to upper levels. Some aspects of intercultural competence are linked to knowledge of a particular social group, while others are general and transferable. The notion of transferability becomes quite important; subjects become “decompartmentalised and brought together in subject areas” (The Guide, p. 24). Overall linguistic and intercultural education is characterised by participating in activities which foster language awareness and openness to languages; becoming aware of differences/similarities between languages, and participating in activities which encourage comparison of phenomena specific to various cultures (p. 82).

When putting a curriculum together, it is important to ask the following question: “How and with what activities can language lessons be made to serve the aims of intercultural education?” (The Guide, 2016, p. 93). The next section introduces the Croatian National Curriculum, that is, the subject curriculum for English as a foreign language, and its possible response to this question.

### **3.3. Subject curriculum for English as a foreign language (*Kurikulum nastavnog predmeta Engleski jezik za osnovne škole i gimnazije, 2019*)**

Following the experimental program implemented by Croatia's Ministry of Science and Education (MSE), “School for Life”, and based on the recommendations mentioned above, a new subject curriculum for English as a foreign language was developed and adopted in 2019.

The subject curriculum (*Kurikulum nastavnog predmeta Engleski jezik za osnovne škole i gimnazije, 2019*) describes the processes of English language learning and teaching via three main domains: Communicative Language Competence (A), Intercultural Communicative Competence (B), and Learning to Learn (Autonomy - C). Each domain includes learning outcomes (Cro. *ishodi*), contents and recommendations for each year of study and each domain. Intercultural communicative competence is defined as a domain aiming to develop the right attitude toward living in a multilingual and multicultural world. Just like other two domains, this domain is described or operationalized through different learning outcomes across different grades and levels of competence. Since the corpus chosen for the analysis includes the second-grade and the fourth-grade EFL textbooks, the learning outcomes for these grades are enumerated (as translated by the author of this thesis).

First, the second-grade learning outcomes for domain B (intercultural communicative competence) are summarised as follows:

- 1) Students will be able to recognize the interconnection between the language and culture in a familiar context and acquire some basic knowledge of the target language countries.
- 2) Students will be able to switch between different registers in simulated or real intercultural encounters and react to examples of intercultural experiences in physical or digital surroundings.
- 3) Students will be able to readily react to foreign and not easily understandable content with openness and curiosity.
- 4) Students will be able to recognize concrete examples of positive reactions upon encounters with foreign culture members in different contexts.

The influence of the documents proposed by the Council of Europe is quite obvious in the learning outcomes as described by the subject curriculum for English. Namely, the CEFR



Companion Volume (2018) (as well as Byram et al. (2002) and Bennett (2017) in their models) incorporates the notions of willingness, readiness, openness, and curiosity. The Guide (2016) additionally emphasizes that the active discovery of one or more other cultures may help learners to develop intercultural competence, which is evident in the expression “readily react” in the third learning outcome of the subject curriculum.

The fourth-grade learning outcomes contain some additional features related to fostering intercultural communicative competence and are summarised as follows:

- 1) Students will be able to support the facts with concrete examples of target language countries and recognize intercultural similarities.
- 2) Students will be able to describe what they have learned about the self and the other based on intercultural encounters.
- 3) Students will be able to apply the basic politeness conventions in intercultural encounters and seek explanations to understand culture-specific content.
- 4) Students will be able to recognize and differentiate between misunderstandings provoked by cultural differences and examples of accepting or refusing the other in a familiar context, becoming aware of the importance of learning a foreign language.

As the content becomes more complex, intercultural skills become more than just ‘recognizing’ (the predominant skill in the second-grade learning outcomes). The fourth-grade learning outcomes describe additional skills, which may be viewed in light of the appropriate behaviour as the visible external outcome (Deardorff, 2006), namely the skills of supporting (the facts with examples), applying (politeness conventions), differentiating (between reasons for misunderstandings), accepting (the other) and refusing (the other).

Specific topics aimed at developing intercultural communicative competence are not explicitly suggested in the subject curriculum for English. However, below the list of outcomes for this domain, there is a note to teachers stating that the content for the development of ICC is the same as for communicative language competence (*Kurikulum nastavnog predmeta Engleski jezik za osnovne škole i gimnazije*, 2019).

While searching for possible ways to incorporate content covering intercultural topics, teachers usually consult textbooks. It could be claimed that, at least partially, textbooks serve as sources for achieving learning outcomes determined by the subject curriculum as

explained above. The content and structure of the textbook must enable students to independently learn and acquire different levels and types of competencies, including intercultural communicative competence. However, textbook content may be approached differently by different teachers since teaching in primary schools in Croatia, as per the new curriculum, is based on the autonomy of planning and organization.

Some previous studies that dealt with the notion of interculturalism, school education and the role of textbooks in the EFL setting are further introduced and serve as an introduction to the present study.

### **3.4. Previous studies**

The collection of papers entitled “Interculturalism in Croatian Education: Literature Review” (Sablić et al., 2021) included papers in the field of interculturalism in Croatian education from 2000 to 2020. Most studies presented in the review were conducted in higher education. Ivanković (2017, in Sablić et al., 2021) examined the notion of intercultural awareness among high-school students in Croatia; Drandić (2013, in Sablić et al., 2021) and Bedeković and Zrilić (2014, in Sablić et al., 2021) analysed the issue of intercultural competence of teachers.

Blažević and Blažević (2023) conducted a quantitative analysis of culture, race, and gender representations in nine English language textbooks for first-year secondary school students used in 2020/2021 in Croatia to investigate the relations between different social groups in Anglophone settings. The results showed that English language textbooks are characterised by preferences toward English-speaking countries, i.e., the cultural contexts of England and the USA (with elements of popular culture presented in the English and American contexts). Pictures depicting males behind the wheels, or a woman carrying a baby with the description “to take care of a child” were included in the analysis to emphasize stereotypical descriptions of gender roles in the analysed textbooks. Research findings pointed to racial inequality demonstrated through content aimed at EFL learning and teaching, and the results were in accordance with previous research on racial components in EFL teaching materials (Blažević and Blažević, 2023). The present study deals with British and American target culture representations, excluding gender roles.

As for primary schools, the two most relevant studies on the cultural content incorporated into EFL textbooks for primary education in Croatia were conducted by Ana

Petravić (2010) for German language textbooks and Marija Andraka (2014) for EFL textbooks. Both studies analysed Croatian-authored textbooks. Since this thesis focuses on the EFL textbooks, only Andraka's study is further described. Andraka (2019 in Vrhovac, 2019) introduced basic criteria for deciding which textbook material and content to incorporate in EFL culture teaching, proposing questions that could be summarised as follows:

- 1) Does the textbook contain topics and situations from different cultural contexts?
- 2) Is there a balance between the “macro-content” (political, geographical, historical and artistic) and the everyday life “micro-content”?
- 3) Is there a balance between positive and negative aspects of culture?
- 3) Does the cultural content depict a realistic image, or does it contain stereotypes, prejudice, or unrealistic images of culture?
- 4) Is the cultural content up-to-date and accurate? Does it represent society in real time? (Andraka 2019, in Vrhovac, 2019)

Another important feature Andraka pointed out is that the textbook authors apply mostly the schemas formed based on the cultural context in which they live (Andraka 2019, in Vrhovac, 2019). Although they aim to eliminate these stereotypes, aspiring to authenticity in designing the materials, these attempts are based on subjective choice, at least partially. Therefore, the materials presented in the textbooks do not represent the authentic reality but are rather the “author’s product” (Andraka, 2019 in Vrhovac, 2019, p.297). The questions proposed above served as a reference point for the present study, with special regard to incorporating the topics and situations from different contexts.

In the article “Intercultural communicative competence in English language textbooks for primary school” (Bilić Štefan, 2008), the cultural content in the EFL textbooks for early primary education (first four grades) is analysed regarding the development of intercultural competence. In the author’s opinion, the selected material consisted mainly of communication patterns, activities, and tasks through which students could acquire socio-cultural knowledge and partly activities suitable for acquiring intercultural skills. In the second part of the paper, the author described some activities, such as materials with the stereotypical representations of an Englishman or a Scot depicted through usual characteristics and asking the pupils to guess the nationality; and cultural encounters role-

play (activity named *Mirrors and windows*, p.86), which might serve the purpose of developing awareness of the self and the other through role-playing. She concluded that most of the EFL textbooks for primary school (*Project, Way to go*) either introduced or added to the previously introduced cultural facts (thus, the factual knowledge prevailed).

A diploma thesis by M. Magerl (2020) entitled “Teaching Foreign Language and Culture: An Analysis of Croatian Primary School Curricula” compared 2006 and 2019 curricula for primary schools based on the cultural content in the EFL textbook. The textbook written in 2013 (*Dip in 2*) and two more recent publications (*Dip in*, 2020; *Tiptoes 2*, 2020) were compared to establish the cultural content framework based on the two national curricula mentioned above. The author concluded that the textbooks followed the demands imposed by the curricula and incorporated the required cultural topics (e.g., holidays, food, and typical names, to name a few). The more recent version of *Dip in 2* (2020) incorporated more culture-related aspects than *Dip in 2* (2013): Croatia is compared to the UK, while the textbook portrays English-speaking cultures and non-native English-speaking countries and continents (Africa). *Tiptoes 2*, on the other hand, did not include many culture-related aspects, and many topics were culturally neutral. The author (Magerl, 2020, p.26) recognized and additionally emphasized that “one excellent feature of this coursebook is that it contains Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)”. She discussed it in relation to different subject matters that the CLIL sections incorporated as their constituent parts. The present study also includes the notion of CLIL and emphasizes its role in the EFL setting with special regard to culture-related topics.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Aim**

The present study aims to provide an overview of how and to what extent the current EFL textbooks used in early primary education in Croatia foster the development of intercultural communicative competence by incorporating cultural elements which, according to European standards and the Croatian National Curriculum (2019), should be integrated into foreign language learning in order to foster the development of the said competence.

### **4.2. Research questions**

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Do lessons marked as Content and Language Integrated Learning (*CLIL*) in the EFL textbooks for early primary education in Croatia help foster young learners' intercultural communicative competence by complying with the basic principles of CLIL and the learning outcomes defined by the curriculum?
- 2) Which cultural representations are included in early EFL textbooks with regard to examples of source, target, and international cultures?

The third research question focuses on the two specific target cultures: British and American.

- 3) How are the British and American cultures represented in the EFL textbooks for early primary education? Is such representation consistent with the development of intercultural communicative competence?

### **4.3. Corpus description**

The corpus under study consists of six currently used primary school textbooks for learners in the second and fourth grades of primary school (learners aged 8 and 10 respectively). The fourth-grade EFL textbooks were chosen to show the possible changes in the presentation of cultural content across two years of lower elementary education (from the second to the fourth grade). First-year textbooks were excluded from the analysis since “beginners are often taught through the repetition and memorisation of fixed forms of the language that leave little space for varying the content of what is taught”, as stated by the Council of Europe (2018, p.48).

The textbooks analysed were chosen because:

- they are enlisted in the Catalogue of approved textbooks for primary schools (*Katalog odobrenih udžbenika, MZO*)
- they have been published recently (in 2020 and 2021)

The following textbooks were included in the analysis:

- *Dip in 2* (Džeba and Mardešić, 2020)
- *Dip in 4* (Ban and Blažić, 2021)
- *Tiptoes 2* (Reić Šućur et al., 2020)
- *Tiptoes 4* (Žepina et al., 2021)
- *Smiles 2* (Dooley, 2020)
- *Smiles 4* (Dooley and Evans, 2021)

*Dip in* and *Tiptoes* editions are published by *Školska knjiga* (Croatian publisher), while the *Smiles* editions are published by *Express Publishing* (British publisher) in collaboration with the Croatian publisher *Alfa*.

#### **4.4. Methodological framework**

The qualitative approach to data analysis was chosen as the methodological framework for the present study. The source of the primary data was the corpus described above. The data were obtained and analysed using the basic principles of content analysis (Cohen et al., 2011). Relevant pictorial and textual representations were chosen and analysed according to the pre-determined categories of analysis described in the next subsection.

#### **4.5. Categories of analysis**

Categories of analysis, which are explained below, along with their link to the notion of intercultural communicative competence, correspond to research questions.

- 1) Elements of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in EFL textbooks

CLIL<sup>1</sup>, as a paradigm which connects language and content, i.e., encourages teaching content of a wide range of subjects through the foreign/second language, was chosen as a category of analysis for the following reasons:

- it is a relatively new approach in the EFL setting;
- there is no one preferred CLIL model or methodology (Coyle, 2010); thus, it provides multiple formats for learners to experience
- it presents a wide range of topics to be dealt with in class (cross-curricular and cross-cultural topics)

Méndez García (2012, p. 199) establishes explicit link between language teaching (CLIL lessons) and intercultural development: “The spirit of CLIL in Europe does not aim at biculturalism, acculturation or enculturation, but at intercultural development: individuals who are able to interact with members of other social groups – any social groups in the world, not just groups from the societies where the target language is spoken - on a basis of flexibility, mutual respect and understanding”. This thesis aims to examine to what extent the elements of CLIL in the EFL textbooks for early primary education in Croatia might foster intercultural sensitivity by complying with relevant learning outcomes.

## 2) Source, target and international target culture representation

As mentioned in subchapter 2.1, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) proposed the distinction between, target, international target, and source cultures. This thesis explores the notion of international (target) culture in a broader sense (not only those countries where English is a second language but any international country being mentioned or presented in the EFL textbooks). This category was chosen for the analysis since intercultural communicative competence is very much connected to the notions of the self and the other. Therefore, the development of intercultural communicative competence is encouraged not only through the representation of the target and international cultural content in the EFL textbooks, but also through the notion of using the target language to discuss the homeland (Vickov, 2016). This

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<sup>1</sup> Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), defined as a “dual-focused form of instruction where attention is given both to the language and the content” (Eurydice, 2006, p. 8), has become an educational initiative from 1990 onwards (Eurydice, 2006), culminating in the 2005 European Council recommendations that CLIL should be adopted throughout the European Union (EC, 2005). That was a moment when CLIL began to spread rapidly as a constituent part of most national curricula around Europe. Coyle (2007) prioritizes culture and communication as they constitute the contexts in which CLIL is realized and helps develop intercultural competence (Coyle, 2007). The final step (following the content, cognition, and communication) is developing cultural awareness and opportunities for learners from different cultures to develop a pluricultural understanding (Coyle, 2010).

category may provide answers to the second and third research questions, dealing with the distribution of such content in the EFL textbooks.

### 3) The UK and the USA as the dominant target language countries/cultures

According to Vodopija-Krstanović and Brala-Vukanović (2012), English has been predominantly associated with two countries, England and the USA. The choice of American English (AmE) or British English (BrE) over other language varieties may be explained by Kachru's (1986) model<sup>2</sup> of three concentric circles of the English language.

This category was chosen for the analysis to establish whether one target culture (British or American) dominates the contents of the selected textbooks. If so, this would mean non-compliance with the principles of the development of intercultural communicative competence as defined by the curriculum. Finally, the content analysed in this thesis may belong to more than one pre-determined category.

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<sup>2</sup> The Inner Circle - representing traditional, "mother-tongue varieties" of English (the UK, Canada, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand); The Outer Circle - English in multilingual settings where it is given an important social and political role (former colonies such as India, Kenya, Ghana, to name a few); the Expanding Circle - territories where English is learned as a foreign language.



## 5. Analysis and discussion

### 5.1. Elements of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in EFL textbooks

This part of the thesis aims to answer the first research question examining whether the lessons marked as CLIL in the EFL textbooks for early primary education in Croatia help foster young learners' intercultural communicative competence by complying with the basic principles of CLIL and the learning outcomes as stated in the curriculum.

#### *The second-grade textbooks*

A thorough analysis of *Dip in 2* textbook showed that elements of CLIL were not included in this textbook, at least not explicitly. *Smiles 2* and *Tiptoes 2*, on the other hand, explicitly mentioned CLIL, i.e., specific sections of these textbooks are designated as such. This thesis does not attempt to examine the right methodology for implementing CLIL in the EFL textbooks, but rather its possible contribution to the development of intercultural communicative competence.

As for the subject matter incorporated in CLIL lessons, those which deal with culture-related topics are further analysed and discussed.



Figure 1. Excerpts from the second-grade textbooks *Tiptoes 2* (2020, *I love my family*, p. 22) and *Smiles 2* (2020, *Small/big families*, p. 17)

1) The lesson entitled *I Love My Family* in Unit 1 in *Tiptoes 2* textbook, which is designated as a CLIL lesson, introduces three short texts about families from the USA, England, and Australia (see Figure 1), which are the target language countries. Such textual (and pictorial) representations may contribute to fostering intercultural communicative competence, since they evoke the personal experience (familiar topic), alongside the notion of ‘the other’ (different experiences, that is, families). This blending of a familiar context with the notion of otherness lies at the core of intercultural communicative competence, as proposed by different models of ICC, the Council of Europe, and the Croatian National Curriculum (2019). Namely, the first learning outcome for the second-grade EFL learning in the subject curriculum for English emphasizes that learners will be able to recognize the interconnection between the language and culture in a familiar context and acquire some basic knowledge of the target language countries. Moreover, this lesson introduces the single-parent issue, which may refer to the third learning outcome for the second-grade EFL learners, with regard to reacting appropriately to “not easily understandable content”. The title itself, “I love my family” suggests that there are different types of families, all of which mean connection, love and togetherness, despite the fact that some families might not be traditional, or may lack some ‘traditional’ family members. In accordance with the principles of CLIL, these topics surpass the usual content of a foreign language lesson and might be dealt with in other classes, too. In other words, the learner does not keep these topics in “strictly separated mental compartments” (CEFR, 2018, p. 157).

Figure 1 also shows the CLIL lesson *Big and Small Families* in *Smiles 2* textbook, which presents six photos depicting animal families and different races and nationalities. These photos portray a rather vivid representation of animal families, family Flintstones – *Kremenko*, and some big families among different cultures. These photos may implicitly point to the variety of possible family “formats” worldwide, as well as the notion of accepting all these different families. The notion of acceptance is one of the stages toward developing intercultural sensitivity, as Bennett proposed in his model (1986; 2013).

Both textbooks, *Smiles 2* and *Tiptoes 2*, explicitly designate lessons as CLIL lessons. However, *Smiles 2* adds an additional feature to the notion of CLIL (Figure 1), i.e., the abbreviation PSHE which stands for *Personal, social, health and economic education*. This is a school subject in England that is not a part of the Croatian educational context. Nonetheless, this abbreviation may serve as a reminder to the teacher that the topic could be covered in connection to the cross-curricular themes proposed by the Croatian National

Curriculum (2019)<sup>3</sup>, and in this case, it may refer to *Personal and social development*, as one of the seven proposed cross-curricular themes.

2) Unit 6 - CLIL lesson entitled *School uniform* in *Smiles 2* textbook introduces another notion which is culture-related, i.e., a school uniform. England and Croatia differ concerning this concept, and this topic might be used in the EFL classroom in connection to the first learning outcome in the subject curriculum (subsection 3.3.) which emphasizes acquiring some basic knowledge of the target language countries. This lesson, therefore, also contributes to fostering intercultural communicative competence in that it broadens learners' horizons about different educational and school systems. Learners may connect this to some other features present in one or another educational system (subjects, schedules, holidays, to name some), comparing their educational context to those of their peers in other countries. Thus, the content presented as a CLIL lesson may contribute to additional content being introduced, and this topic could help develop intercultural awareness.

#### *The fourth-grade textbooks*

Grade 4 textbooks *Tiptoes 4* and *Dip in 4* do not contain the lessons designated as CLIL in their content pages. On the other hand, some lessons are marked as CLIL topics in *Tiptoes 4* (next to their title, and these lessons are listed below). Textbook *Smiles 4*, as was the case with *Smiles 2*, dedicates a specific section to CLIL-related topics.

The CLIL sections in *Smiles 4* are incorporated as constituent parts of the following units: Unit 2 - PE (*Rules of Sport*); Unit 4 - ICT; Unit 6 - *Social Science*. All these subjects and cross-curricular themes (PE, ICT, Social Science) meet the requirements of the CLIL format, that is, another subject being taught in a foreign language. CLIL lesson PE (*Rules of sport*), for example, could help foster learners' intercultural communicative competence through introducing the notion of baseball, a sport that is not a part of the learners' source culture. Furthermore, this topic could open up space for other intercultural topics, such as the history of sports or national sports. Thus, the cross-curricular theme becomes the cross-cultural theme as well, and subjects become "decompartmentalised" (The Guide, 2016).

*Smiles 4* textbook introduces some more obvious examples of culture-related themes, namely geography lessons. Geography as a subject incorporates the notion of interculturality in that it

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<sup>3</sup> <https://mzo.gov.hr/istaknute-teme/odgoj-i-obrazovanje/nacionalni-kurikulum/medjupredmetne-teme/3852>;  
[www.eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems](http://www.eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems)

introduces places and topics which go beyond country borders, thus providing immediate contact with different cultures.

The last two units (Unit 8 & 10) incorporate two lessons designated as CLIL – Geography (see Figure 2). In the lesson *Getting Around* learners get acquainted with the names of English streets. Afterwards, they are asked to design a map of their area, which is an excellent way of combining the source and the target culture.

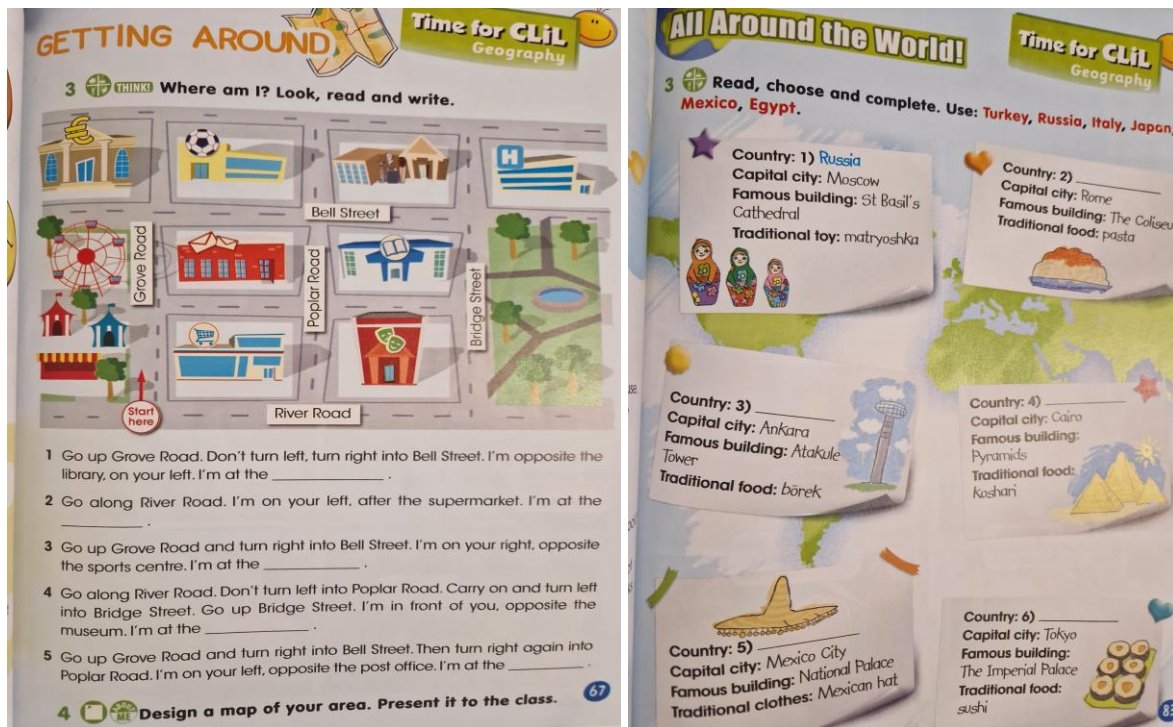


Figure 2. Excerpt from the second-grade textbook *Smiles 2* (2020, CLIL-Geography lesson, p. 67; 83)

Here, the obvious link is drawn between the self and the other, as well as the experience in the physical surrounding while designing a map of the area. This type of task could be connected to the second learning outcome in the subject curriculum (intercultural experiences in physical or digital surroundings).

The title *All Around the World* (see Figure 2) and the text below could also be described as a geography lesson in the EFL classroom. The most important characteristics of different countries are presented under this heading:

- capital cities: Ankara, Cairo, Rome
- famous buildings: The Coliseum, the Pyramids
- traditional toys/ food/ clothes: *matryoshka* in Russia, *börek* in Turkey, *koshari* in Egypt.



This example of a CLIL lesson might help develop intercultural communicative competence in that it provides access to acquiring knowledge of international cultures, namely supporting the facts based on concrete examples (the first learning outcome for the fourth grade). The representation of multiple ‘others’ is a constituent of intercultural communicative competence, and therefore, geography as a subject can make a significant contribution to its development (by providing insight into various cultural backgrounds). It is needless to say that factual knowledge plays a significant role here. However, photos help conceptualize this factual knowledge, and they open up space for possible comments made by learners (I have one *matryoshka* at home!/ I like *burek.*, for example), whereby they connect these photos to familiar contexts.

Although it does not contain CLIL section specifically designated as such in its content pages, *Tiptoes 4* textbook includes few lessons that are marked as CLIL in their title. Those lessons are: *Clothes around the world* (CLIL); *In my shoes* (CLIL); and *Healthy eating* (CLIL). The first two are presented in more detail.



Figure 3. Excerpt from the fourth-grade textbook *Tiptoes 4* (2020, *Clothes around the world* p. 66; and *In my shoes*, p. 110)

Figure 3 shows the lessons *Clothes around the world* and *In my shoes*, which are valuable examples of lessons dealing with culture-related topics, since they emphasize cultural similarities and differences. There is an abundance of colourful examples which, in the first lesson (*Clothes around the world*), point to differences (girls in India wear *saris*, a culture-specific part of clothing that the Croatian learners are not acquainted with). The other example (*In my shoes*) develops the awareness of all the features we have in common, disregarding the deeper cultural differences (*All people have eyes. They come in different shapes and colours. But what is the same? We all wink, blink or sometimes cry. Tiptoes 4, 2021, p. 110*). Moreover, this lesson could even be viewed as an example of Bennett's acceptance as a possible reaction to cultural differences. In other words, learners are encouraged to develop a tolerance for other cultures and strive towards inclusivity. The text makes a comparison to the chocolate candies that have different colours, but are all the same on the inside. Yet, learners may still fall into the pitfalls of superficial acceptance, as proposed by Bennett (1986; 2013). The topic as presented in this lesson may be considered superficial in terms of referring to physical appearance, although the deeper cultural differences (and misunderstandings provoked by different racial issues) are usually based on quite a superficial criterion, such as skin colour. However, the implicit message behind such content is probably meant to evoke positive attitudes and reactions toward other people that may be different on the outside, but importance should be given to what is inside. This may refer to the person's individuality and specific features that may enrich the intercultural encounter.

Another valuable example is the lesson *What are they doing?* (see Figure 4) which shows an international classroom where all pupils deal with different subjects simultaneously.

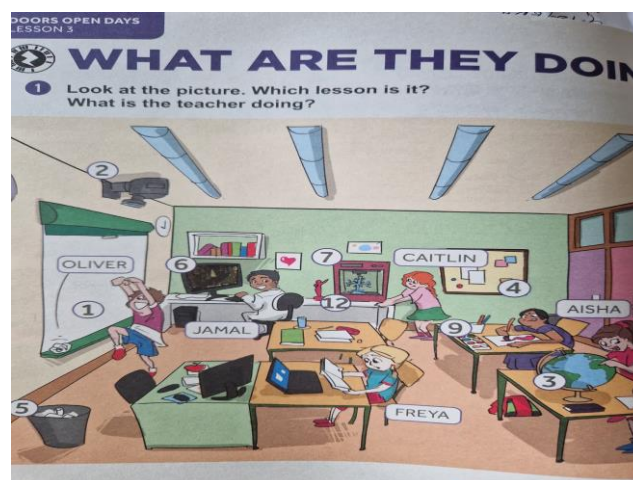


Figure 4. Excerpt from the fourth-grade textbook *Tiptoes 4* (2020, *What are they doing*, p. 48)

The main principles of CLIL are depicted through this image, namely an EFL classroom where learners deal with different subjects, and use a foreign language to transmit knowledge and exchange information. So many international names in one place (Freya, Oliver, Aisha, Jamal) may help learners develop an awareness of various international classrooms around the world, and they may compare such an image to Croatia and its relatively homogenous classrooms. Secondly, learners may well recognize the possible misunderstandings provoked by cultural differences in such settings, which are mentioned in the fourth learning outcome as described in subsection 3.3. (*Students will be able to recognize and differentiate between misunderstandings provoked by cultural differences and examples of accepting or refusing the other in a familiar context, becoming aware of the importance of learning a foreign language*). Finally, such representation certainly helps promote language learning as a feature that unifies all these differences.

The analysis showed that CLIL-related topics are unequally distributed among different EFL textbooks; some consider them rather important (the *Smiles* and the *Tiptoes* textbooks' authors), while *Dip in* editions do not include these topics at all.

## **5.2. Representations of target, international target, and source culture**

This section aims to answer the second and the third research questions. An attempt was made to analyse the source, target and international culture representations in the EFL textbooks with specific emphasis on the British and American culture (British English and American English are also usually described as dominant varieties of English). The examples presented in the analysis aim to establish whether these representations are consistent with encouraging the development of intercultural communicative competence. First, the representations of source, target and international cultures in the second-grade textbooks are analysed, followed by the analysis of the fourth-grade textbooks. It must be said that the division into the source, target and international target culture is somewhat artificial and the source culture cannot be analysed in isolation, since it is often presented in comparison to either the target or international cultures.

### *Source culture in the second-grade textbooks*

*Tiptoes 2* textbook does not mention Croatia at all, at least not explicitly. However, the source culture is present through emphasizing learners' identity. Namely, in the section entitled *My school project*, learners are invited to make a project about themselves, the food they like,

and their holidays on the beach, to name some (*This is me. My name is;/ My menu / My family on the beach*). While referring to oneself, the learner becomes aware of the “self” in comparison to the “other” and develops the cultural awareness.

*Dip in 2* textbook dedicates a few pages to Croatia, namely *Super me pages* (*I love Croatia, I'm from Croatia, I speak Croatian, Croatia is a country* (Figure 5). Some games (puzzles) introduce Croatian equivalents (adjectives: clever - *pametna*; funny – *smiješan*; to name some), and a few tasks reference Croatia: *Go to Zagreb airport webpage. What can you see there?; Look at the map of Croatia. Name some rivers and lakes.*

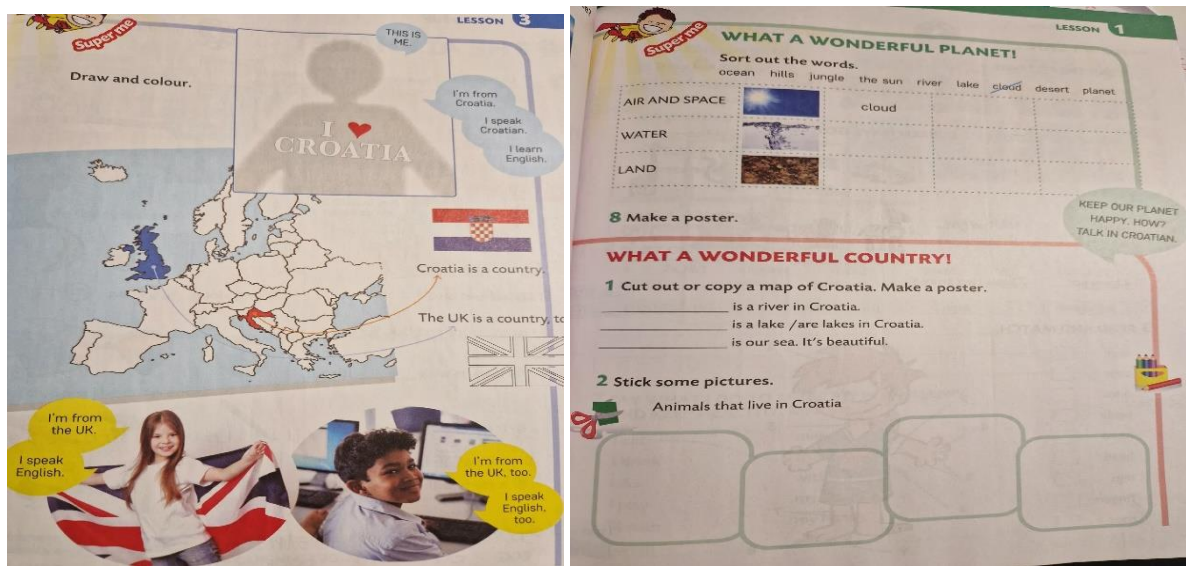


Figure 5. Excerpt from *Super me pages* in *Dip in 2* (2020, p.13; p. 65)

These pages point to factual knowledge about Croatia, providing a simple ‘definition’ of Croatia as a country where you speak Croatian and where you can find some natural features, such as rivers, lakes, and sea, as well as some animals that live there (see Figure 5). We should bear in mind that while developing the awareness of the self, one always starts with basic, factual information. (*My name is... I live in... It is a country...*, and so forth). According to the CEFR Companion Volume (2018, p. 157), individual person’s experience of language “expands from the language of the home to the society at large”. We can find the additional evidence for this claim in the examples above. Croatia is first defined as “a country” (source culture reference), followed by “the UK is the country, too” (target culture reference). The representation of the source culture finally moves from the isolated vision of “a wonderful country” with its natural features toward the overall image “a wonderful planet”. In addition, Bennett’s adaptation could be recognized here as a model to “define authenticity due to so many different cultural contexts that surround us” (Bennett, 1986;



2013). Therefore, although there are many countries and cultures in the world, we have to define our authenticity, and present it to the world.

*Smiles 2* textbook adopts a more systematic approach toward representing the source culture. This textbook dedicates a specific section to Croatia, namely *My magazine* section (see Figure 6). It shows various fortifications (Nehaj Castle, Pula Arena); Croatian cities (Zagreb, Split, Dubrovnik, Pula); cartoon characters (Professor Baltazar; Hlapić), to name a few.



Figure 6. *My magazine 1* (*Smiles 2*, 2020; p. 92); *My magazine 6* (*Smiles 2*, 2020, p. 102)

Such representations introduce the homeland (Croatia) through some regional characteristics. *My Magazine 1*, as shown in Figure 6, presents some “tourist attractions” and the most representative localities, whereas *My Magazine 6* tags the cities on the map of Croatia, while learners acquire some basic information (vocabulary) dealing with the weather. Thus, the homeland and its regional differences are outlined through *My Magazine* sections, and as such contribute to developing the awareness of the national identity and regional differences in Croatia.

*Smiles Magazines - Our World* sections, on the other hand, introduce the source culture in relation to the target and international cultures. This section contains a specific “pattern”: one target culture, two international countries and a task to compare it to “your country”, that is, the source culture (Figure 7). First, some culture-related concepts in a target country are introduced (traditional dance in Scotland, the rain the UK), followed by two

international countries (Russia, Spain, for example), accompanied by a task: *Find a picture of a traditional dance in your country / your town or city. Present it to the class.*



Figure 7. *My Magazine- Our World* sections (*Smiles 2*, 2020, p.58; 86)

These tasks appear to be an excellent way to connect the source, the target and the international target culture by comparing, contrasting, and becoming aware of the similarities and differences, including regional differences. *Flamenco* is introduced as a traditional Spanish dance. However, the learner in Croatia may refer to a similar concept in his/her immediate surrounding (namely EFL learners in Split may compare it to *Splitsko kolo*; someone in Dubrovnik to *linđo*; and learners in Korčula to *moreška*; to name a few). This adds to the notion of intercultural diversity, regarding the homeland and its regional differences. The second example of *My Magazine – Our World* section (Figure 7), deals with the same topic as *My Magazine 6*, namely the weather. Both lessons belong to the same unit, Unit 6 *My holidays* in *Smiles 2* textbook, and, therefore, deal with the same concept on different levels, namely global and local. Thus, in a single unit, learners encounter different features among different countries/cultures, including one's own and the international examples as well. The representation of the beaches, or the notion of dance (Figure 7) may provoke positive reactions, and certain learning outcomes may be realised through these lessons, namely the fourth learning outcome for the second grade of EFL learning. It emphasizes that students will be able to recognize concrete examples of foreign cultures in different contexts and these encounters may provoke positive reactions.

### Source culture in the fourth-grade textbooks

The analysis showed that the fourth-grade textbooks *Dip in 4*, *Tiptoes 4* and *Smiles 4* contain a greater range of cultural elements than second-grade textbooks. This comes as no surprise, as the complexity of content is expected to increase with each year of FL learning.

There is no section specifically dedicated to Croatia in *Dip in 4*. However, representations of the source culture are incorporated as a part of:

- providing Croatian equivalents for specific words and expressions (*Hvala!*; *Molim!*; *Izvoli!*; underground - *podzemna željeznica*; roast turkey - *pečena purica*, pumpkin pie- *pita od bundeve*, (see Figure 8). A Croatian learner may have heard of “underground”, but it is not a concept related to his/her source culture; “pumpkin pie” and “roast turkey” are all notions connected to the celebration of Thanksgiving, thus American culture. However, it is important to note that all these examples refer to direct translations of the words (see Figure 8).

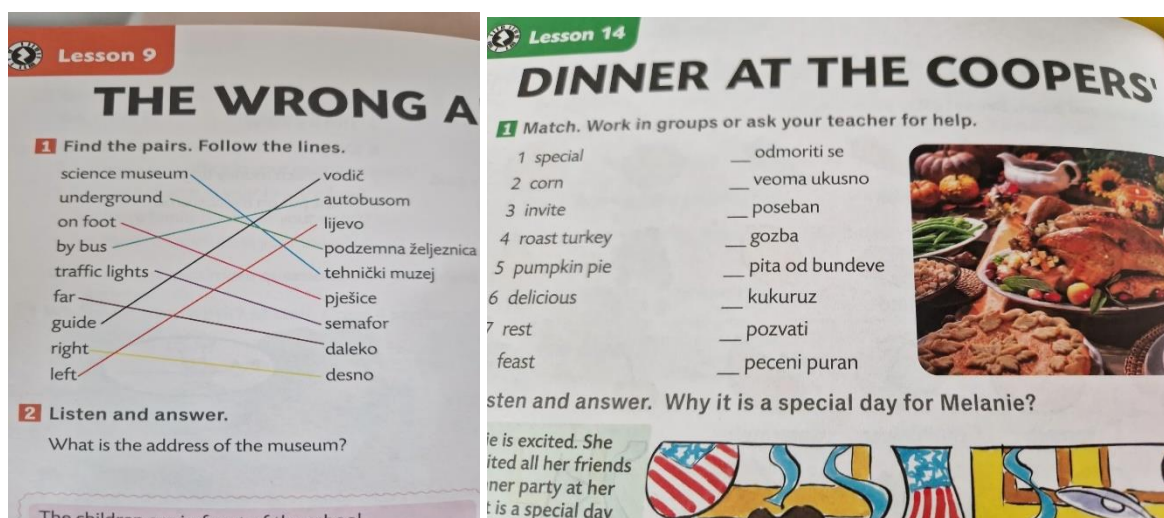


Figure 8. Excerpt from *Dip in 4* textbook (2021, p.68; 94) -Croatian equivalents (translations)

This kind of task may open up space for some additional discussions about differences between Croatia and other cultures. For example, a teacher might want to explain what “underground” is and also mention countries where this is a typical transit system, drawing a comparison to the situation in Croatia. This kind of discussion might, in turn, help achieve the learning outcome related to supporting the facts with concrete examples of target language countries and recognizing intercultural similarities (and also differences).



The lesson *Dinner at the Coopers'* starting with a task as proposed in Figure 8 (the second excerpt), also refers to the notion of *we* (Croatian people) in comparison to *they* (Americans) in task 7 (see Figure 9). The task states: *How different are we? Make true sentences.*, explicitly pointing to the similarities and differences between the source and the target culture. However, the statements (presented in Figure 9) which represent Croatian and American culture appear rather stereotypical descriptions of the whole nation: *They eat hamburgers a lot. / We don't celebrate Thanksgiving. / They play baseball./ We play football.* This might be confusing to learners to choose only one “correct” answer, , for they may personally be the ones to eat hamburgers a lot (although they are Croats, not Americans, to whom this may refer in the first place).

Based on these examples, it could be claimed that textbook authors, probably implicitly, transfer their own ideas or attitudes toward the culture, in this case, American culture, which becomes “an author’s product” to a certain extent (Andraka, 2019 in Vrhovac, 2019).

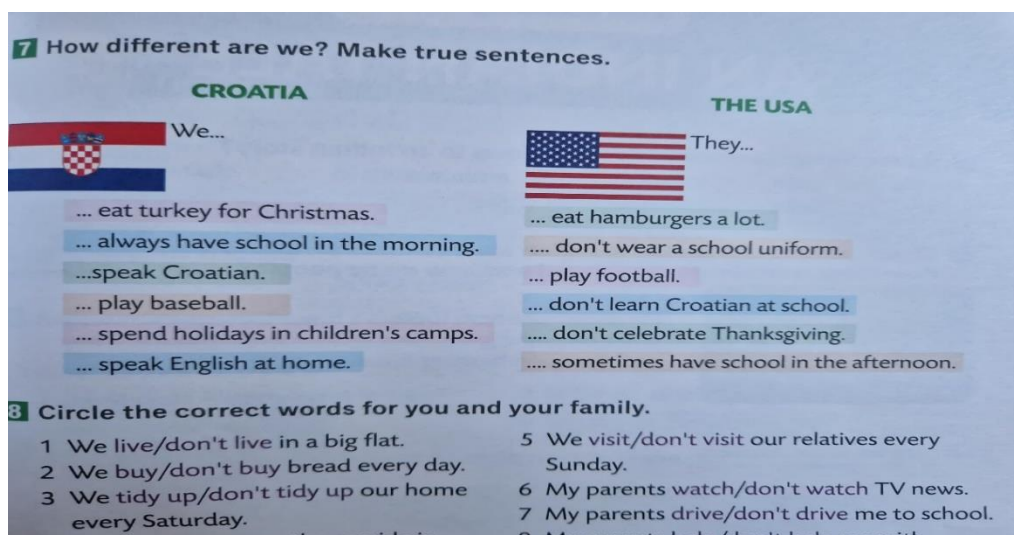


Figure 9. Excerpt from the lesson *Dinner at the Coopers'* (task 7: *How different are we?* in *Dip in 4*, 2020, p. 97)

*Tiptoes 4* textbook, similarly to *Dip in 4*, does not dedicate a specific section to Croatian culture. However, *Tiptoes 4* portrays Croatia in comparison, not solely to the UK or the USA (as was the case with *Dip in 4* textbook), but rather to the world. In other words, the textbook references Croatia through different texts (*Croatian gliders*, a text about endangered species, namely *bjeloglavi sup* in Croatia, in comparison to kangaroos in Australia; *True heroes*, a text about Croatian rescue dogs; “*Extreme Croatia*” compared to “*Extreme world*” and sports in Nicaragua and Bolivia (see Figure 10).

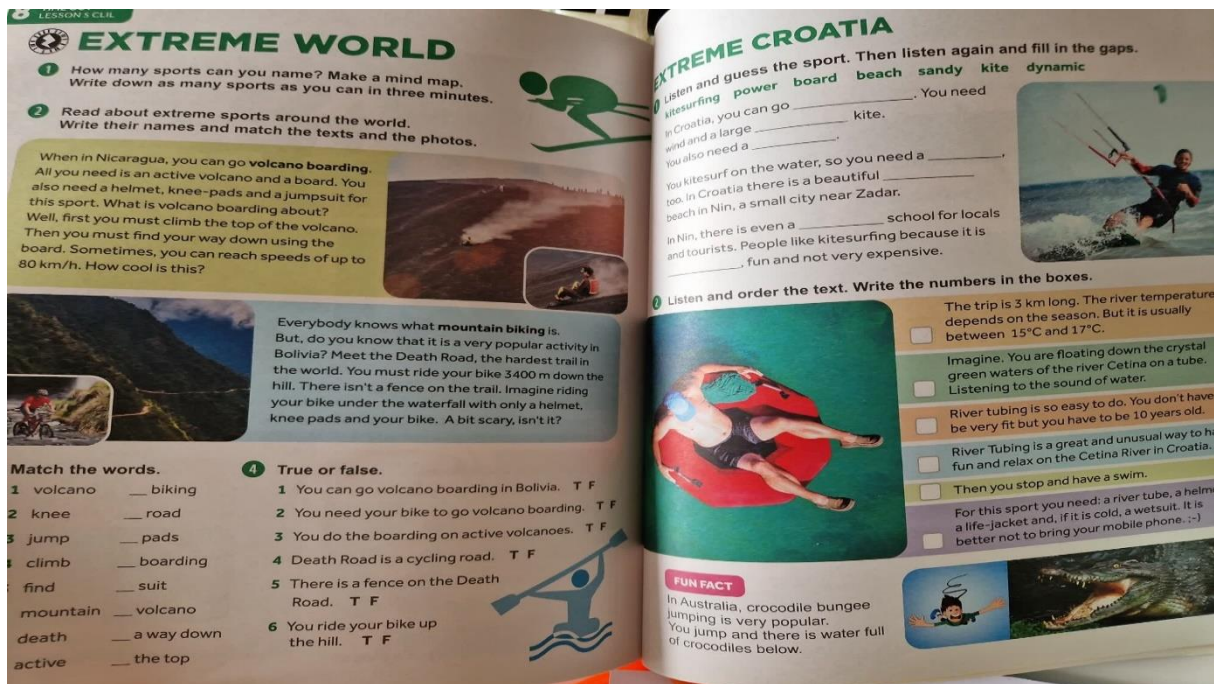


Figure 10. Excerpt from *Tiptoes 4* (2021, p. 124-125) - Croatia in comparison to the world

Some additional features are culture-specific names, namely *Tonka*, *Katja*, *Marin* in comparison to Jamal, Freya, Oliver in the international classroom proposed above – see Figure 4); and different tasks, such as: *Go online and find two or three animals that live in your country.*; *Find out more about one of the classrooms from the texts. Compare it to your classroom.*

Finally, *My magazine* is a constituent part of the *Smiles 4* textbook. This part is dedicated entirely to Croatia, and in the same lesson form as in *Smiles 2* textbook. However, *Smiles 4* textbook comprises ten units, five containing the *My Magazine* section, while *Smiles 2* incorporated this section as a part of each unit. The topics covered through *My magazine* section include geographical locations (Platak, Lika, Zrmanja, Korčula), typical food (*brodet*, *pašticada*, *štrukli*, *sarma*) and holidays (Saint Valentine's Day represented through *Galešnjak Island*, The Island of Love).

The *Smiles* editions (including the second and the fourth-grade textbooks) reflect regional diversity in Croatia, while the other two series (*Dip in* and *Tiptoes*) incorporate the source culture in comparison to either the target countries (in *Dip in* textbooks) or the international countries (*Tiptoes* editions).

### *Target culture in the second-grade textbooks*

*Smiles Magazines - Our World* section (mentioned earlier in relation to the source culture) is presented here regarding its references to the target culture (see Figure 11). It becomes evident from the excerpts presented below that *Smiles* editions refer to the sole target country – the UK.



Figure 11. Excerpts from *Smiles Magazine - Our World* sections (*Smiles 2*, 2020)

These target culture representations include either a tourist attraction (the London Eye), (stereo)typical favourite food; or a simple description of a house (cottage) in the UK, and the British flag in all three examples (see Figure 11). Therefore, very simple and basic vocabulary items are used, accompanied by photos.

On the other hand, *Tiptoes 2*, written by Croatian authors and published by the Croatian publisher (*Školska knjiga*), introduces the culture-specific names in English (Millie, Mason, Marge, Max, Jack, Molly, Henry, Sarah, Suzy, Ms Cooper, and Becky) that are all characters presented in the dialogues. However, apart from these names, no further notions of the specifically selected target culture, countries, or nationalities are incorporated. Only once did the textbook reference the USA, England, and Australia through the CLIL lesson: *I love my family* (see Figure 1).

*Dip in 2* mentions and represents the UK in a few different contexts (*Super me pages: Croatia is a country. The UK is a country, too./ I am from the UK.*; see Figure 6), while America is not mentioned once. Therefore, *Smiles 2* and *Dip in 2* introduce solely the British culture to represent the target culture, while *Tiptoes 2* references the USA in a single context (family in the USA, as represented in Figure 1).

Based on the limited list of examples presented above, the second-grade EFL textbooks do not appear to incorporate many target culture representations. This may be due



to the fact that the second-grade EFL textbooks dedicate more attention to developing the basic foreign language system norms.

However, the analysis showed that the UK is still a dominant target language country and, as such, the claim that “the native-like paradigm is becoming a matter of the past” (Blažević, 2023) is not confirmed., as well as the claim that the English language is “no longer being attached to a specific culture or nation” (Ryan, 2012, p. 423). The fourth-grade EFL textbooks are further analysed to either support or disclaim the above-mentioned views.

### Target culture in the fourth-grade textbooks

Analysing the examples provided in *Dip in 4*, one notices that the textbook is, as opposed to *Dip in 2*, oriented entirely toward American culture. The first unit introduces a new student, Melanie, from the USA (Figure 12). Another inner circle country is mentioned here, albeit as a joke (*She is from New York – Is that Australia?*).



Figure 12. Lesson *Who is that girl?* (*Dip in 4*, 2021, pp. 14-15)

The issue that appears rather important here is the positive reaction of peers upon the arrival of a new classmate. This notion of positively reacting toward the other is what matters, and what is actually important for the overall development of intercultural communicative competence.

The first unit includes also the English alphabet, followed by a task concerning symbols for *USA*, *FBI*, *CNN*, *NBA*, *BBC*, *MTV*, and *OK* (see Figure 13), probably incorporated to practice spelling.

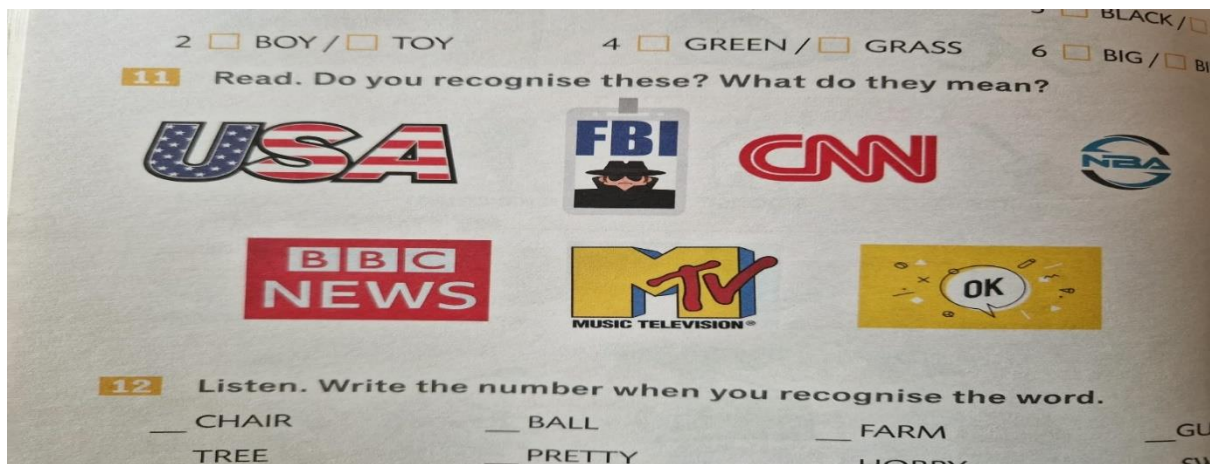


Figure 13. Excerpt from *Dip in 4* (2021, p. 28): culture-specific abbreviations

These examples may be considered valuable cultural content, since they include abbreviations that learners are probably all familiar with. These are still mostly the USA-related abbreviations, although the “USA“ and the “BBC“ are the only two explicit examples of American and British cultural representations, while other examples deal with concepts that the EFL learner may simply associate with either music (MTV), TV (FBI, CNN), or sport (NBA), regardless of its “origin“. The teacher may or may not point to additional information concerning the deeper cultural background.

Following the first unit, no cultural references can be found for approximately 50 pages within the textbook. Most of the content is oriented toward practicing grammar and incorporating different topics unrelated to culture. However, with Lesson 11 (*You’ve got an email*), there appears to be a new turn toward cultural content, more precisely, the American culture (*Melanie’s email* – see Figure 14; *Dinner at the Coopers’*).

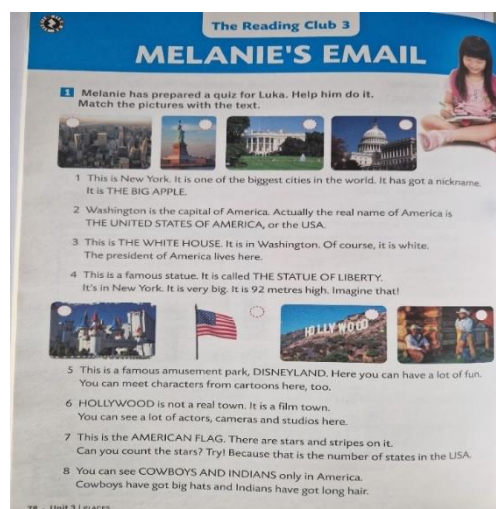


Figure 14. Symbols of America in *Dip in 4 – Melanie’s email* (2021, p. 78)



By looking at these examples (Figure 14), it could be suggested that the authors of the textbook are somewhat biased toward the American culture. They may be inclined to believe that this is the culture that students are most familiar with, due to the popularity of Hollywood movies and Disneyland, which may be close to learners' age and interests.

It is also interesting to notice the features selected to represent the USA in *Dip in 4* textbooks. These, again, are (stereo)typical representations of this country (the White House, Disneyland, the Statue of Liberty - see Figure 14). However, it is common knowledge that the topics cannot be strictly 'black and white'. For example, the USA history has been marked by the relationship between settlers and Indians throughout centuries. This textbook simplifies this relationship and describes it in one sentence: *Cowboys have big hats, and Indians have long hair* (see Figure 14). This sentence leads to an important question: Is this cultural representation conducive to developing intercultural communicative competence? Are stereotypical views a certain burden imposed on the learner, or could they be seen as examples of the "adapted" versions for easier understanding? The teacher's role is, in such cases, rather important to make sure that learners do not grasp only the surface meanings but rather lead them to "seek explanations to understand culture-specific content", as defined in the third learning outcome in the subject curriculum for English.

*Tiptoes 4* textbook also focuses on dominant English-speaking countries and cultures (America, Australia, and the UK): *The Shoe House in the USA; mailboxes in England; FUN FACT- People in the UK, Australia and India drive on the left-hand side of the road.*

There are again somewhat (stereo)typical cultural landmarks incorporated in the textbook: *Mailboxes are red in England.*, or another over-generalisation claiming that *Dinner is the main meal in the UK*. Based on these examples, one can only conclude that the authors inevitably implement some personally biased views, which could be considered their own cultural burden.

Australia is additionally referenced through the lesson dedicated to the Christmas celebration on the beach, and learners are asked to compare it to their country and celebration in the wintertime. The second learning outcome, which states that students will be able to describe what they have learned about the self and the other based on "intercultural encounters", may be realised through such representation.

It is also interesting to note that, throughout the whole textbook, the differences between British, American and Australian spelling (Figure 15) are emphasized under the heading “Learn more”.

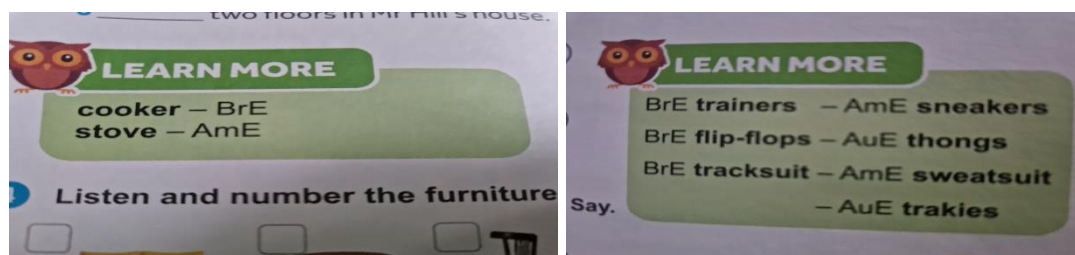


Figure 15. Excerpts from the fourth-grade textbook (*Tiptoes 4*, 2021) - *Learn more* sections

This is the only textbook that offers examples of major English language varieties (mostly BrE and AmE; and only a few AuE culture-related expressions). It would be a valuable piece of information to find out why the authors consider these examples necessary and why other varieties of English are not mentioned.

Finally, *Smiles 4* does not mention the USA. This textbook, written by the British author (or rather, published by the British publisher), presents British culture as the only target culture without mentioning other cultures. The UK is referenced solely through *My magazine - Our World* section (see Figures 7 and 11), alongside other international cultures (Figure 7). Another fact should be emphasized here: although it is the target (foreign) culture to us (Croats), it is the source culture for British authors. This fact could be one of the possible clues to why Croatian authors and publishers (*Školska knjiga*) include more variations of the inner circle countries (the UK, the USA, Australia) and adopt a more neutral perspective towards these countries. Nonetheless, such unequal distribution of content, namely *Dip in 4* as being oriented entirely toward the American culture, *Smiles* editions without a single mention of the USA, and *Tiptoes* with its inclination toward the intercultural concepts, may not contribute to the overall development of intercultural communicative competence, since each textbook may be deficient in certain aspects.

#### *International culture in the second-grade textbooks*

*Dip in 2* textbook introduces the fewest examples of international culture (Croatia and the UK are the only two countries introduced; Africa and Europe are the two single continents mentioned). However, there is still one valuable example of interculturality presented in the textbook (see Figure 16).

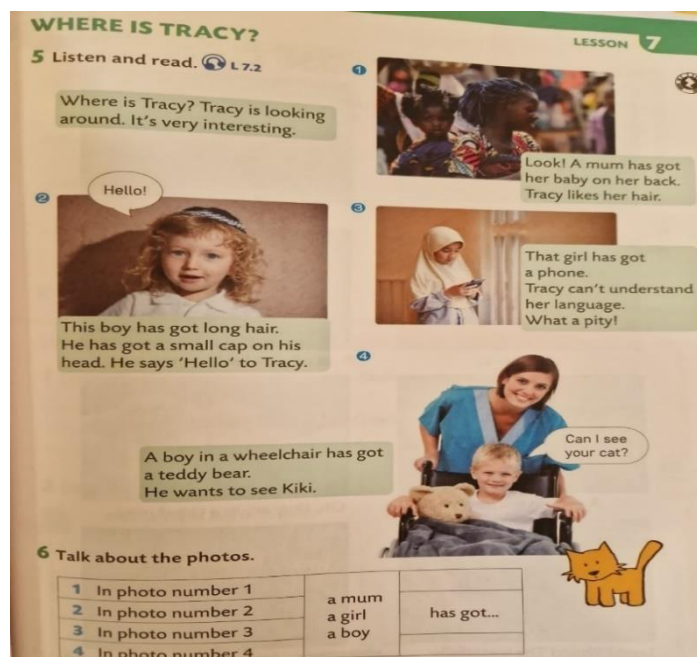


Figure 16. The representation of interculturality in the excerpt from *Dip in 2* (2020, p. 63)

This page depicts intercultural diversity while the focus is on grammar structure (*has got*). Specific cultures are not explicitly mentioned, but there is a photo of a boy with a traditional Jewish cap (*kippah*), and a photo of a Muslim girl holding a phone. The sentence next to the photo says: *Tracy can't understand her language. What a pity!*, implying the value of communication and the value of learning foreign languages. In addition, a photo of a black woman (in this sense, more importantly, a mum) carrying a baby on her back, and the sentence accompanying it: *Tracy likes her hair*, implicitly invites the learner to accept and to like the diversity, the other and the different. These are valuable examples of fostering intercultural awareness and acquiring a positive attitude toward cultural differences.

However, such representations may include some additional delicate issues regarding the learners' curiosity in approaching these photos (more precisely, approaching people represented in these photos). They may be willing to find out more about the specific features represented in the textbook (a Jewish cap - why are they wearing it?); or they may be willing to understand the reasons why the boy ended up in the wheelchair. The teachers' role appears to be important here, for teachers present the additional source of information (if not the major and the most important one, when it comes to the classroom setting). However, this question is not the subject of the present thesis, but the role of such representation in the overall development of intercultural communicative competence is. Although valuable, these examples are rather rare in *Dip in* editions.

On the other hand, *Tiptoes 2* textbook does not mention international countries (apart from the UK, the USA, and Australia, in a single lesson – *I love my family*, presented above (Figure 1). This example was analysed as a part of both the CLIL section and the target culture representations.

*Smiles 2* textbook incorporates a long list of international cultures. Specific parts of the textbook, i.e., *Smiles Magazines*, as well as *Smiles Magazine - Our World*, cover a wide range of countries (some are mentioned only as a part of a subtitle accompanying the stories, e.g., “*The King and the Bee - A story from...*” (see Figure 17); other examples are part of *Our World* sections: *This is a pyramid in Egypt. It's a triangle.* / *This is Isi from Japan. His favourite food is rice. This is a “balero.” It's a toy from Mexico.* (Figure 17)



Figure 17. Excerpts from *Smiles 2* (2020) representing international countries

Interestingly, the sections dedicated to stories (see Figure 17), namely *Our Smiles Magazine* in *Smiles 2*, introduce various countries (either as the story's origin or where the plot takes place). Even though the teacher may or may not decide to point out further information about the origin, mentioning “*This is a story from...*” may broaden learners' horizons and awareness that there are many other countries apart from their own, as Bilić Štefan (2008) proposed. This abundance of examples, therefore, helps develop intercultural communicative competence in that it makes children wonder where this part of the world is (Jamaica, Greece, Poland, to name a few).

## International culture in the fourth-grade textbooks

Interestingly enough, the thorough analysis showed that *Dip in 4* does not contain a single representation of international culture, at least not explicitly introduced.

The only example that may be mentioned as an example of international culture is integrated into the very ending sections of the book, Lesson 22 – *Lolly is worried* (Figure 18). This lesson introduces the notion of endangered species (pandas, whales, tigers, elephants, storks) under the heading *Don't wait! Act now!* without explicitly mentioning the geographical part of the world where they live. To be more precise, different natural habitats are mentioned but countries where these animals live or cultures where they are regarded as important are not mentioned (*pandas in bamboo forests, whales in the sea, tigers in the jungle, and grassland*). Nevertheless, pandas, elephants, or tigers are not animals that the Croatian learners could associate with their own culture; therefore, it is “other” to them and may well be considered as an example of a global issue which connects different countries and cultures.

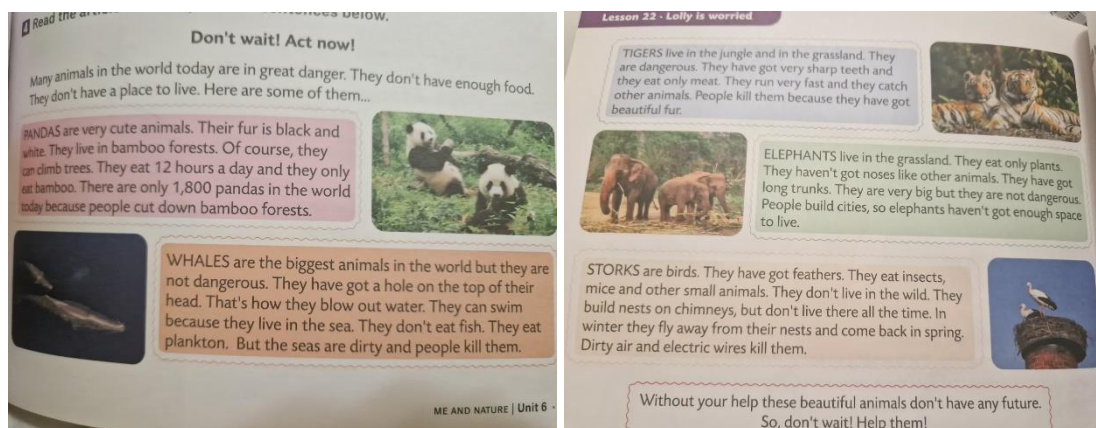


Figure 18. Lesson *Lolly is worried* (Dip in 4, 2021, pp. 135-136)

On the other hand, the results of the analysis show that *Tiptoes 4* incorporates a wide range of international culture representations, with an abundance of examples, including various and colourful textual and pictorial representations, such as:

- cool houses (*The Seashell in Mexico; Bosco Verticale in Italy; Crooked House in Poland*);
- amazing creatures: elephants, kangaroos (Australia), arctic fox; and the places where they live: America, Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, Europe;



- clothes around the world, namely India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Peru (as shown previously in Figure 3);
- classrooms around the world in Indonesia, Uruguay, and Bangladesh (Figure 19);
- extreme sports: volcano boarding in Nicaragua; mountain biking in Bolivia (see Figure 10)
- different international days (*When is Mother's Day, Father's Day, International Day of Happiness, English Language Day, and World Bicycle Day? Find out.*); and the example of Easter celebration in South Africa (See Figure 19).



Figure 19. Excerpts from *Tiptoes 4 - Classrooms around the world; Holidays around the world* (2021, p. 52; 132)

A representation of a “Go green” classroom in Indonesia, a classroom outdoors in Uruguay, a classroom on a boat in Bangladesh, and a classroom on a train platform in India, may broaden learners’ horizons regarding different political and economic contexts (thus, the macro-content, as suggested by Andraka, 2019 in Vrhovac 2019), and also open up learners’ minds toward the ecological themes, providing learners with a global and more holistic view on the matter (*they learn how to plant vegetables; they use solar panels; you can see only recycled materials*). Also, learners could be asked to compare their own classrooms to different classrooms around the world, and this may help realise the second learning outcome for the fourth grade (subsection 3.3).

*Holidays around world* (Easter- Figure 20), and “the Rainbow nation” with their traditional dance *Mkhukhu*, alongside different customs and traditions in South Africa, add to the overall abundance of colourful examples presented in *Tiptoes 4* textbook.

*Smiles 4*, in its section *Our World*, portrays international book characters (Mint Aizawa from Japan; Tintin from Belgium); unusual jobs (a police officer on a horse from Mexico, an astronaut from Russia; traditional costumes (in Peru and Japan), and festivals worldwide (*Las Fallas* festival in Spain; *Sapporo Snow Festival* in Japan. Different parts of the world and their natural features are also included (Australia – Sydney -the Murray River – Mount Kosciuszko - kangaroos; Italy – the Alps – Mount Etna – the Vatican City – Rome; and the Easter celebrations in (the UK), Italy and Poland- see Figure 20).



Figure 20. Excerpts from *Smiles 4* (2021, p.61; 110) - *Our World* section; *Easter around the world*

In the first example above, a girl from Australia is presented, as well as the boy from Italy, thus implying that English truly is a global language. Some basic facts are presented about both countries, contributing to learners’ factual knowledge. However, we may also consider the fact that it is actually the representation of two young people and their national identities, and cultural content is not depicted in isolated contexts (as was the case in *Smiles 2*, *Our World* section; see Figure 2). Easter in Italy, Poland and the UK also add to the factual knowledge on different customs regarding celebrations, but the learner inevitably compares it to one’s own experience. These representations, therefore, help realise the second learning outcome for the fourth grade EFL learning, as described in the subsection 3.3.

To conclude, the results of the analysis show that *Smiles 4* and *Tiptoes 4* incorporate more examples of international culture than *Dip in 4* textbook. The representations of source, target and international cultures in *Smiles* editions could be described as the most systematic. *Dip in 4*, however, appears to be lagging behind in relation to the distribution of the cultural content regarding the source and the international countries. This conclusion is based on the comparison with the other two series (*Smiles* and *Tiptoes* editions).

#### *Stories as representations of international countries*

Another interesting aspect of the selected fourth-grade textbooks is that they include different stories. *Dip in 4* introduces stories as part of the *Reading club* section. Stories are presented in an entirely traditional way. The origin of the stories is not explicitly mentioned, but these stories are known to most children from the Western part of the world: *The ugly duckling* and *Cinderella*, to name some.

On the other hand, it is interesting to notice that *Smiles 4* mentions the origin of each story (Denmark, Indonesia, Jamaica), thus implicitly pointing out the range of contexts in which English is spoken as an international language. All the stories in the textbook contain a moral, namely *Smiles values: Do not judge people by their appearance! Do the right thing even when it's difficult! Knowledge is the treasure of life!; Never stop trying!; Always be polite and grateful!*, thus reminding young EFL learners of some basic values and 'life lessons', apart from those already acquired while growing up and building on their own set of values and attitudes.

*Tiptoes 4* textbook introduces characters from different fairy tales (Mr. Wolf, Little Red Riding Hood, Peter Pan, Little Mermaid, Pinocchio, Hansel, and Gretel) in a single story, namely the *School of Fairy Tales*. *The Pea and the Princess* is the story introduced in comparison to the traditional version of *The Princess and the Pea*, thus changing the perspective and acquiring different points of view. Namely, the story presents the princess as the actual gardener (see Figure 21).





Figure 21. Excerpt from *The Pea and the Princess* (Tiptoes 4, 2021, pp. 94-95)

In addition, an inverted version of *Wolf and three pigs* entitled *Three kind wolves and the big bully* emphasizes the change of roles. Another interesting example is incorporated in the story *The Ant and the Grasshopper*, which provides students with the chance to change the plot, to take a moment and reconsider another possible ending: *Do you like this version of the story? How about this one?* The aim of these inverted plots is most likely to provide learners with the implicit message that it is not necessarily the wolf “the bad guy”, it can be the pig instead (see Figure 22). The ant and the grasshopper may well work together (Figure 22) to have food for themselves, rather than moralizing one another for being lazy (as is the case with the original version of the story).



Figure 22. Excerpt from the fourth-grade textbook *Tiptoes 4* (2021, p. 21; 123) – the inverted plots

Stemming from all the examples presented above, such inverted plots emphasize the necessity of acquiring multiple perspectives, and adopting the right attitude toward the multicultural world, as the basic principles of intercultural communicative competence.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study aimed to analyse the examples of cultural representations in the EFL textbooks for early primary education in Croatia and to discuss them based on their role in fostering intercultural communicative competence. The following categories were chosen: 1) Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), 2) Source, target and international culture representations 3) the representations of the UK and the USA, as dominant target cultures. An attempt was made to connect the examples to learning outcomes as defined in the subject curriculum for English (2019).

For the first research question, the CLIL-related content was analysed. The analysis showed that CLIL lessons incorporate multiple culture-related topics and thus help foster intercultural communicative competence among young EFL learners. For example, learners are encouraged to connect geography lessons or certain cross-curricular themes (*Personal and social development*) with the EFL setting. However, there is an unequal distribution of such content in EFL textbooks (*Smiles* and *Tiptoes* editions incorporate CLIL, while *Dip in* editions do not mention CLIL at all.)

As for the second research question, it could be concluded that *Smiles* editions adopt the most systematic approach toward Croatian culture through the *My Magazine* section. The topics covered in these textbooks reflect the regional diversity of Croatia. The other two series (*Dip in* and *Tiptoes* textbooks) compare the source culture to either the target countries (*Dip in* textbooks) or the international countries (*Tiptoes* editions), as a part of different texts (e.g., *Croatian gliders* in *Tiptoes 4*) and different tasks (e.g., *How different are we?* in *Dip in 4*). International cultural representations are frequent in the *Tiptoes* and *Smiles* editions (especially in the 4th-grade EFL textbooks), with a wide range of examples (clothes/classrooms/celebrations around the world). *Dip in* editions incorporate a rather limited list of international cultural representations.

The answer to the third research question is found in the stereotypical representations of the UK and the USA. *Dip in* textbooks are somewhat biased toward the American culture (especially the fourth-grade textbook), while *Smiles* editions, written by the British authors, give primacy to the UK. It could be claimed that the exclusion of other countries/cultures where English is spoken as a first language (for example, Australia) is not in compliance with the learning outcomes and the overall development of intercultural communicative

competence, as proposed in the subject curriculum for English (not to mention the fact that English is a global language and that the question of “ownership” of this language has long been discussed within different disciplines of applied linguistics). *Tiptoes* editions, on the other hand, appear to be more culturally “neutral” regarding the target cultures, and are inclined toward the intercultural dimension in the language learning.

To conclude, the results of the analysis show that all analysed EFL textbooks – to a certain extent - include topics aimed at fostering the development of intercultural communicative competence as per learning outcomes as defined in the subject curriculum for English within the domain of the same name. However, the approach to these topics in these different textbooks is vastly different and - it could be claimed - unsystematic.

There are certain limitations of the present study. The first is the limited corpus size, which may be considered insufficient for objective conclusions regarding culture representations in early EFL textbooks. Another limitation may be choosing only the more recent publications, instead of choosing some earlier publications in comparison, to outline the actual progress in implementing the intercultural dimension in foreign language learning and teaching. The third limitation may be that the present study was inevitably conditioned by the author’s ability to recognize and note certain phenomena and occurrences, which may have affected the level of objectiveness of the analysis.

## Summary

The present study provides qualitative analysis of six EFL textbooks from three different series (*Dip in*, *Tiptoes* and *Smiles* editions for the second and the fourth grades) used in Croatian early primary school education. The categories chosen for the analysis include: 1) Content and Language Integrated Learning - CLIL, 2) the source, target and international culture representations, and 3) the UK and the USA as the target language representatives. The analysis aims to establish whether the cultural content found in the textbooks helps foster the intercultural communicative competence as proposed in the learning outcomes of subject curriculum for English (Croatian National Curriculum, 2019). The results indicate that *Smiles* and *Tiptoes* editions incorporate CLIL lessons, while *Dip in* textbooks do not mention CLIL explicitly. *Smiles* edition adopt the most systematic approach toward the source, target and international culture representations. *Dip in* textbooks seem to be oriented toward the American culture; *Smiles* textbooks introduce the UK as the only target culture representative, while *Tiptoes* editions include many examples of international target cultures.

*Key words:* EFL textbooks, early primary education, qualitative analysis, cultural content intercultural communicative competence, subject curriculum

## Sažetak

U ovom istraživanju provedena je kvalitativna analiza šest odabranih udžbenika engleskog jezika koji se koriste u hrvatskom ranom osnovnoškolskom obrazovanju i pripadaju trima različitim serijama (*Dip in*, *Tiptoes* i *Smiles* izdanja za 2. i 4. razred). Kategorije analize uključuju: 1) CLIL, kao relativno novu metodologiju koja povezuje jezik i sadržaj, odnosno, različite predmete i međukulturne teme s učenjem jezika; 2) prikaz hrvatske kulture, kulture ciljnog jezika i međunarodnih kultura u udžbenicima engleskog jezika; 3) prikaz američke i britanske kulture kao glavnih kultura ciljnog jezika, te njihov utjecaj na razvoj međukulturne komunikacijske kompetencije, kao domene *Kurikuluma nastavnog predmeta Engleski jezik za osnovne škole i gimnazije* (2019). Rezultati pokazuju da *Smiles* i *Tiptoes* izdanja (2020; 2021) uključuju CLIL kroz različite lekcije, dok *Dip in* udžbenici ne spominju CLIL. Udžbenici *Smiles* daju najsustavniji prikaz hrvatske kulture, prikazujući je u zasebnoj rubrici (*My Magazine*), kao i usporedno s kulturama ciljnog jezika i međunarodnih kultura (*Our World*). *Dip in* izdanja usmjerena su prema američkoj kulturi, uz određen broj stereotipnih prikaza Amerike kao ciljne kulture; dok udžbenici serije *Smiles* sadrže primjere vezane samo za Ujedinjeno Kraljevstvo. *Tiptoes* izdanja uključuju cijeli niz različitih kultura.

Ključne riječi: udžbenici stranog jezika, rano osnovno obrazovanje, kvalitativna analiza, kulturni sadržaj, međukulturna komunikacijska kompetencija, predmetni kurikulum

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