AUTHENTIC TEXTS AS CULTURAL MIRRORS:

A handbook for English teachers

Master's thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Autenttisuutta kieltenopetuksessa on käsitelty vuosien mittaan monesta eri näkökulmasta. Laajimmassa määritelmässä autenttiseksi oppimiseksi mielletään kaikki mikä on oppijalle keskeistä kun taas kapeimmassa määritelmässä autenttisuuden ajatellaan rajoittuvan vain tekstiin. Tässä määritelmien laajassa kirjossa, tämä tutkielma käsittää autenttisuuden kieltenopetuksessa kolmen osion summana: tekstien, tehtävien ja oppijalähtöisen kohtaamisen autenttisuutena. Käytännössä autenttisuuden määritelmä toteutuu siten, että paketti sisältää autenttisia tekstejä, eli tekstejä joilla on kommunikatiivinen funktio. Näiden tekstien ympärille on rakennettu autenttisia tehtäviä, jotka noudattavat tätä kommunikatiivista funktiota. Kaiken oppimisen keskipisteenä on kuitenkin oppija itse, eli miten hän tulkitsee tekstit ja tehtävät.

Autenttisia opetusmateriaaleja on helposti saatavilla, kysymys kuuluukin mitä niillä voisi luokassa tehdä? Koska autenttisia tekstejä ei ole kirjoitettu tai muokattu kieltenoppimistarkoitukseen, ne ovat oivallinen peili kohdekulttuuriin, jossa ja jolle ne ovat tuotettu. Tässä paketissa hyödynnetään juuri tätä autenttisten tekstien tapaa heijastaa kulttuuria kulttuurisen kompetenssin lisäämiseen. Korostaakseni englannin kielen roolia kansainvälisenä kielenä, olen valinnut Intian kulttuurin esimerkkikulttuuriksi, mutta tehtäväideoita ja ohjeita voi soveltaa muihinkin kohdekulttuureihin.

Paketissa esitellään kaksi autenttista tekstityyppiä (informatiivinen ja viihdyttävä) sekä kolme tehtävätyyppiä (reaktio, inferenssi ja transferenssi). Paketti koostuu yleisistä ohjeista sekä 15. mallioppituntisuunnitelmasta, jotka ilmentävät lähestymistapaa käytännössä. Oppitunnit koostuvat kolmesta eri vaiheesta: aloitustehtävästä, autenttisesta tehtävästä ja jälkikeskustelusta. Tehtävät ovat tarkoitettu edistyneille englannin kielen opiskelijoille joko lukio-opetukseen tai muuhun vastaavaan. Paketin tavoitteena on innoittaa ja rohkaista opettajia hyödyntämään autenttisia tekstejä englannin kielen ja kulttuurin opetuksessa.

Asiasanat – Keywords Language education, teaching materials, authenticity, culture
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1   INTRODUCTION

"Upper secondary schools must reinforce students' positive cultural identity and knowledge of cultures, which form the basis of attaining the ability for intercultural activities and of succeeding in international co-operation."(The National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools 2003:29).

The objectives set by the National Core Curriculum (NCC 2003) cited above illustrate the central role of interculturalism in the Finnish education system. In fact, cultural education appears to become more and more significant as the world gradually and increasingly is marked by globalisation. Due to the rapid developments, perhaps most importantly in communication technologies, our world certainly appears a great deal smaller (Kaikkonen 2004:38).

As argued above, the multicultural nature of our modern world requires us to be capable of interacting with other cultures; consequently, there is an apparent call for the development of intercultural skills as part of foreign language education. In previous research these skills have been addressed through a variety of closely related terminology, such as *cultural intelligence, cultural sensitivity and global competence* as well as the ones applied in the present material package, namely, *cultural awareness* and *intercultural competence*.

Even though there is a clear need for the integration of language and culture studies, the challenging question is: how can cultural skills be attained in an educational setting? T.S Eliot introduced the idea of authentic materials mirroring a target culture as early as the late 1940s: "even the humblest material artefact which is the product and the symbol of a particular civilisation is an emissary of the culture out of which it comes (Eliot 1948:92). Building upon this notion, the present material package acknowledges authenticity as the "key" to cultural education in foreign language classes. The aim of the present material package is to create a theoretical and a pedagogical framework for the application of authentic materials and tasks for cultural exploration in foreign language education.

As Widdowson 1976 (166) argues, "Authenticity, then, depends on a congruence of the language producer's intentions and language receiver's interpretation, this congruence being effected through a shared knowledge of conventions." Consequently, when incorporating authentic texts in foreign language classes the crucial question is: what kind of tasks ought to be designed around the materials? In order to maintain the authenticity-centred approach the present material package applies a method adapted from Mishan (2005) where authenticity of tasks is ensured by the acknowledgement of the communicative purpose of the text.

The majority of teaching materials regarding authenticity are focused solely on one aspect of authentic materials, for example, Säkkinen (2000) and Suihkonen (2004) on teaching English and culture with the Internet, Rintala (2004) on using newspapers for increasing students' knowledge about American holidays, Pihlajakangas (2005) on using *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* for teaching British culture and Mäkinen (2011) on using literature in teaching African American history and culture. As can be seen, there is a vast amount of authentic materials available as teaching resources, yet, there are few guidelines for teachers on how to incorporate them into language and culture education in practice. In contrast to the available material packages, the present one addresses authenticity from a wider point of view: as an interaction between the text, task and learner. In fact, no handbooks on the implementation of authentic texts or the design of authentic tasks for cultural education exist to my knowledge, which is a gap the present material package attempts to fulfil.

To summarise, the goal of the present material package is to illustrate how different types of authentic texts can be used for the development of students' cultural awareness and intercultural competence. Consequently, a framework for cultural education through authentic materials and tasks is required. In order to merge the frameworks of authenticity and culture in foreign language education, the present material package first provides a theoretical discussion on both individually, and second combines the two in a unified framework.

Chapter 2 forms a theoretical and pedagogical framework on authenticity in foreign language education. First, the different understandings of authenticity and how it has been portrayed in language education in the past is discussed. Second, moving on from the

conceptual and historical exploration of authenticity, the section focuses on creating an authenticity-centred learning approach based on the different manifestations of authenticity in language education, that is, authentic materials, authentic tasks and learner authenticity. Third, the pedagogical rationale of the authenticity-centred approach as well as its limitations is discussed. Finally, the role of authenticity in the NCC (2003) and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR 2001) is evaluated.

Chapter 3 forms a theoretical and pedagogical framework on culture in language education. First, a conceptual analysis of the term *culture* and the relationship between language and culture is provided as a starting point for the framework. Second, the different methodologies for teaching culture in foreign language education are presented with a concentration on intercultural competence and cultural awareness. Third, the portrayal of culture in foreign language education is followed by a discussion on its limitations and challenges. Finally, the role of culture in the NCC (2003) and the CEFR (2001) is evaluated.

Chapter 4 attempts to combine the frameworks of authenticity and culture in foreign language education by constructing a joint framework for the application of authentic texts as cultural mirrors The authenticity-centre approach for cultural exploration combines the pedagogy of culture in language learning (Byram 1989) and authenticity in language learning (Mishan 2005).

2   AUTHENTICITY IN LANGUAGE EDUACTION – KEEPING IT REAL

Authenticity in foreign language education has been vigorously debated particularly during the last two decades. In order to attain an overall view on authenticity, the following section first provides a conceptual analysis on the definition of authenticity followed by a brief historical outline of how authenticity in foreign language education has developed through time. Thereafter, the practical integration of authenticity into foreign language education is discussed in the light of authentic materials, authentic tasks and learner authenticity.

The discussion on *how* authenticity can be integrated into its three manifestations mentioned above, is followed by a discussion on *why?* The pedagogical rationale for the authenticity-centred approach is defined and evaluated. Authenticity in language education is, however, far from trouble-free. Some of the common concerns regarding the use of authentic texts as classroom materials are, for example, text difficulty and the loss of authenticity. Hence, a discussion on the challenges connected to the application of authentic texts in foreign language education is essential in order to overcome them. Finally, the current understanding of authenticity in the NCC (2003) and the CEFR (2001) is examined and assessed.

2.1   Towards a definition of authenticity

Authentic, real, genuine and *natural* are often used nearly synonymously but what do they actually refer to in language education? To begin with, the word *authentic* originates in the Greek word *authentees,* meaning initiator and subject, thus, it can be concluded that authenticity in language education refers to the genuineness of the learning process with an emphasis on the learner as an active subject of his/her own learning (Kaikkonen 2000:54). The debate over what is in fact meant by authenticity, being authentic and authenticity in learning has become vastly complex as it has been explored through multiple research fields such as sociology, pragmatics and discourse analysis (Gilmore 2007:97).

Early definitions of authenticity typically concentrated on text authenticity; that is, language produced by a native speaker/writer for a real audience. For instance, Widdowson (1983:30) attributes authenticity to products by native speakers, but a shift in perspective towards the increasing acknowledgement of the role of the learner can be detected:

> [Authenticity] can, on the one hand, be used to refer to actually attested language produced by native speakers for a normal communicative purpose. But the term can also be used, quite legitimately, to refer to the communicative activity of the language user, to the engagement of interpretative procedures for making sense.

In addition, Breen (1985), Mishan (2005) and Badger and MacDonald (2010) highlight the importance of learner response and therefore contribute to the acknowledgement of the significance of authentic task design. This understanding of authenticity perceives authentic texts merely as a starting point of the authenticity-centred approach as it is what you do with the texts in class that eventually counts.

Towards the end of the 20th century foreign language acquisition research began to truly acknowledge the importance of learner experience in the definition and understanding of authenticity. The general focus in language pedagogy research began to shift towards the language learner. Conforming to the learner-centred approach, Kaikkonen (2000:55) emphasises the importance of treating students not solely as cognitive processors of information, but as social and emotional human beings. Similarly, van Lier (1996:128) argues that

> Authenticity is not brought into the classroom with the materials or the lesson plan, rather, it is a goal that teachers and students have to work towards, consciously and constantly [...] authenticity is the result of acts of authentication, by students and their teacher, of the learning process and the language used in it.

As an attempt to combine the diverse aspects of authenticity discussed above and in order to produce a comprehensive framework on authenticity in language education Mishan (2005:18) proposes a definition of authenticity as a set of the following criteria:

1. provenance and authorship of the text

2. original communicative and socio-cultural purpose of the text
3. original context (e.g. its source, socio-cultural context) of the text
4. learning activity engendered by the text
5. learners' perceptions of and attitudes to, the text and the activity pertaining to it.

In conclusion, authenticity has been viewed in previous research from different perspectives, some focusing on authenticity of texts and others on participants or tasks. By reviewing these past definitions and by referring to Mishan's (2005:18) set of criteria above, it may be concluded that authenticity in language education is essentially manifested in three domains, namely, authenticity of texts, authenticity of tasks and learner authenticity. These manifestations will be discussed in more detail in sections 2.3.1-2.3.3. First, however, the following section provides a brief historical background to the development of authenticity in education.

2.2 Authenticity and language learning: a historical background

The use of authentic materials in language education has a long, yet, not coherent history. Mishan (2005:1-10) divides the language teaching methods preceding and eventually leading to the authenticity-centred approach into three groups: communicative approaches, materials focused approaches and humanistic approaches.

Mishan (2005:2) explains that the core idea embraced by the *communicative approaches* is: "a means of communication can only be learned by using it for this purpose". In addition, Mishan (ibid.) argues that communicative approaches were used as early as the colonial times when a clear need emerged to communicate with people from other cultures. She continues by explaining that much of the language learning and teaching that took place at that time can be regarded as "authentic in spirit" as language learning had a clear communicative goal and occurred through direct contacts with native speakers in non-classroom settings and without any specific learning materials.

What is nowadays known as communicative language teaching (CLT) has its roots in the language teaching methodologies of the 1970s (Mishan 2005:2 and Gilmore 2007:97).

What can be seen as a specific ignition to CLT was Chomsky's (1965) distinction between language competence and language performance. Chomsky (1965:4) used the term *language competence* to refer to the speaker's or hearer's knowledge of the language while *language performance* was used to refer to the actual use of language. This definition would contribute to the construction of the term *communicative competence*, which would function as the cornerstone of CLT (Mishan 2005:2). In addition, laying emphasis on communication over form, CLT created new pedagogical reasonings for the use of authentic materials in foreign language education (Mishan 2005:1). Berardo (2006:63) argues that authenticity is a central concept in CLT as learners ought to be exposed to the same linguistic variation as native speakers. Khaniya (2006:18) summarises the view by arguing that authentic materials are essential in a communicative language class since the use of artificial texts tells us very little about the students' actual abilities to communicate outside the classroom as they do not represent a reality of language use.

The materials-focused approaches which dominated the 20th century adapt several views on language acquisition (Mishan 2005:5). The approach has a long history in foreign language teaching methodologies with proof of the use of authentic materials found as early as the 9th century in England (Mishan 2005:3). By medieval time the teaching method most commonly used was the "scholastic method" which consisted of learning the alphabet and memorising sequences by heart. As there was no specific books designed for language teaching, authentic texts, such as prayer books, were often used (Mishan 2005:4).

As an example of the materials-focused approaches, Mishan (2005:4) mentions the *inductive method* that was introduced in the 1890s by Sweet (1899) who is regarded as one of the first who saw a pedagogical potential in the use of authentic materials in language teaching (Gilmore 2007:97). Sweet (1899) suggested that grammar should be taught trough texts that could be examined and analysed by learners. Mishan (2005:4) concludes that Sweet's ideas can be regarded as strikingly modern since some of his ideas are still known and used to this day.

As can be seen, the use of authentic materials and authenticity in language learning started to gain ground in language pedagogy very early in history, however, the early part of the

20th century was defined by a blossoming of a variety of teaching methods such as *the oral method*, *the audio lingual method, the situational approach* and *the direct method,* which applied language learning materials that concentrated on the linguistic aspects of language and were specifically structured for language learning purposes (Mishan 2005:6 and Gilmore 2007:97). According to Mishan (2005:5), this period of time can be seen as the foundation to the still existing dependency on textbooks, the choice of teaching material for the majority of teachers.

According to Mishan (2005:5), the *humanistic approaches* such as suggestopedia, total physical response and the Silent Way can be seen as thematically related to the authenticity-centred approach. They have emerged periodically in history, often as reactions to more mechanistic teaching methods. However, the humanistic approach that can be seen to have had the most impact on the use of authentic materials in language learning is the rather recent development in language pedagogy, that is, *self-directed learning* or *learner autonomy* discussed as one of the pedagogical reasonings for including authenticity into language learning in section 2.4.3.

As explained in the present section, authenticity has in one form or another obtained an important, yet, widely debated role in language education. The main purpose of the section was to explore the extensive roots of authenticity in education and end up on the threshold of a contemporary authenticity-centred learning approach explored in the following sections.

2.3   Integrating authenticity into foreign language education

"The central premises of the authenticity-centred approach are the use of authentic texts for language learning and the preserving of this authenticity throughout the procedures in which they are implicated." (Mishan 2005: ix).

By reviewing past and current definitions of authenticity it becomes apparent that authenticity in education is not a simple concept manifested, for example, solely in the authenticity of learning materials. Referring to the different definitions of authenticity discussed in section 2.1 and as illustrated by the citation above (Mishan 2005: ix), it can be concluded that in constructing a framework for an authenticity-centred approach it is

crucial to acknowledge authenticity as a process, an interaction between materials, tasks and students themselves, specifically, their experiences, attitudes, needs and emotions.

The following section discusses authenticity connected to its three manifestations: materials, tasks and learners. The main goal is to portray how the authenticity-centred approach is realised in practise. Even though presented here as separate sections, authenticity in language education relies in fact on an interaction between all the three components: the relationship and appropriateness between text and task as well as the learner's attitude and response to both.

2.3.1   Authentic materials

As argued in section 2.1, the definition of text authenticity has slowly shifted from an understanding of authentic texts as native-speaker productions towards the highlighting of reader response. According to present understandings, the core definition of authentic texts relies in the fact that they have a communicative purpose (Mishan 2005:33). In other words, authentic texts are written to fulfil a particular purpose, for example, to convey information, to engage, to instruct or to persuade, not to highlight particular linguistic or grammatical features (Table 1). According to this definition, novels, poems, newspaper articles, manuals, recipes, postcards, advertisements, travel brochures, tickets, timetables, only to mention a few, can all be considered authentic materials (Crossley et al. 2007:17).

Mishan (2005:79) presents a seven point descriptive table (a modified version presented in Table 1) of possible communicative purposes of texts. Mishan's understanding of communicative purpose is partly based on the genre, discourse and linguistic analysis by Wilkins (1976) and Biber (1988). The main goal of the categorisation is to provide language teachers with the tools to assign communicative purpose to a specific authentic material

Table 1: Description of communicative purposes (adapted from Mishan 2005:79)

Terminology	Communicative purpose of text is to
Informative	transmit information
Persuasive	advise, order, warn, threaten, permit, persuade (re. purchase, opinion, action etc.)
Soliciting	interact or transact (business or personal)
Instructional	give instruction for implementing a process
Provocative	causing external manifestation of inner emotions in the form of emotive/intellectual/kinaesthetic reaction
Interactive	interact or transact
Engaging	engage personal/internal emotions(including for example humour, pleasure and displeasure) / imagination/reaction/

Understanding the definition of text authenticity and being able to detect possible authentic materials for language education purposes is only the first stage in the process of actually incorporating them into a language classroom. As there is an endless variety of authentic materials available as language learning resources, materials selection becomes a crucial challenge for the teacher. How should a teacher select appropriate authentic materials to be used in a classroom from the infinity of materials available? According to Khaniya (2006:21), the factors to be considered in materials selection are curricular goals, the learner's age and level of language proficiency as well as students' interests and needs. Similarly, Berardo (2006:63) provides a check-list for teachers for authentic materials selection:

> **Suitability of Content**
> Does the text interest the student?
> Is it relevant to the student's needs?
> Does it represent the type of material that the student will use outside of the classroom?
> **Exploitability**
> Can the text be exploited for teaching purposes?
> For what purpose should the text be exploited?
> What skills/strategies can be developed by exploiting the text?
> **Readability**
> Is the text too easy/difficult for the student?
> Is it structurally too demanding/complex?
> How much new vocabulary does it contain? Is it relevant?
> **Presentation**
> Does it "look" authentic?
> Is it "attractive"?
> Does it grab the student's attention?
> Does it make him want to read more?

To summarise, the core definition of text authenticity relies in that they have a genuine communicative purpose (Mishan 2005:79) and that they are used in a similar manner as they would be used in their original context (Badger and MacDonald 2010:578). In other words, a poem can surely be regarded as an authentic piece of text, but if it is used in the classroom for grammatical analysis, for example, it is not authentically recognized. The poem still remains a genuine poem, however, it loses its authenticity since it is not treated as one. Here we have reached the critical issue of authentic task design which will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.2 Authentic tasks and task typologies

'Use of authentic materials does not imply that tasks will be authentic [...] it is what trainees or students DO that counts" (Arnold 1991:238).

The central definition of authentic materials was in the previous section concluded to be their communicative purpose. Now, due to the communicative nature of authentic texts learners need to adopt the communicative reading strategies of native speakers, that is, "to skim and scan for desired information, capitalize on the natural redundancy of a text and get clues from its context, recognize authorial intention and act upon it, for example, stop at a stop sign, or bake a cake according to a recipe" (Kramsch 1993:178). In other words, the core definition of authentic tasks can be formulated as classroom activities that acknowledge the communicative purpose of an authentic text.

To start, it is important to determine the general components of a task. According to Nunan (1989:11) they are: input, activities, goals, teacher role, learner role and classroom settings. In addition, it is essential to make a distinction between so called *pedagogic tasks* and *authentic tasks* or "real-world" tasks. Nunan (1989:40-41) explains that authentic tasks are designed to follow the types of behaviours learners are expected to face outside the classroom, while pedagogic tasks are tasks that students will unlikely perform outside the class, but are designed to stimulate internal language learning processes. Yet, the distinction between authentic and pedagogic tasks appears to be more of a continuum than a strict division. Even though the tasked-based learning approach has been examined by

many (for example, Nunan 1989 and Littlewood 2004), Mishan (2005) is the sole, to my knowledge, who has designed theoretical and practical guidelines for the incorporation of authentic tasks particularly around authentic materials.

To further explore the notion of authentic tasks, Mishan (2005:75) presents task authenticity as a set of guidelines designed to function as a checklist designing authentic tasks.

In order for tasks to be authentic, they should be designed to

1. reflect the original communicative purpose of the text on which they are based
2. be appropriate to the text on which they are based
3. elicit response to/engagement with the text on which they are based
4. approximate real-life tasks
5. activate learners' existing knowledge of the target language and culture
6. involve purposeful communication between learners.

By evaluating possible reader responses to the communicative purpose of text (Table 1 section 2.3.1) Mishan (2005:83-93) provides a set of seven authentic task types (Table 2).

For example, advertisements have a persuasive communicative purpose, hence, possible authentic tasks designed around them could, for example, be to buy the product in question or to rip out the advertisement from a paper, in other words, to provoke a reaction of some sort (Mishan 2005:90). The task typologies suggested by Mishan (2005:91) are presented below in a slightly modified version (Table 2).

Table 2: Authentic task types (adapted from Mishan 2005:91)

Task type	Description	Examples
Reaction	Reaction to written, audio or audio-visual input of *non-emotive nature* e.g. acting on instructions in order to create something, accomplish a task or participate in activity.	Make or alter plans on the basis of a weather forecast.
Response	Response to written, audio or audio-visual input of emotive nature.	Listen to an instrumental section of a song and write a prose piece, poem or draw a picture to illustrate what it evokes.

Inferencing	Inferring/extrapolating/interpreting information/concepts (including cultural) from audio, written, visual or audio-visual input.	Watch a series of film trailers and infer the genre, setting, basic story, intended audience etc.
Transference	Transference, translation or paraphrase from one medium, genre or culture to another (includes awareness of significance of these transferences).	Deconstruct a newspaper article reporting findings of a survey to infer and write the original survey questions.
Extraction	Extracting factual information (including factual cultural indicators) from audio, written, visual or audio-visual input.	Extract factual information from advertisements.
Analysis	Awareness-raising of linguistic forms and functions and of emotive /figurative (subjective use of language.	Analyse how newspaper headlines achieve impact. Analyse conversational strategies on basis of dialogues from interviews, films, soaps.
Extension	Extension or prediction of development /outcome of event or situation.	Identify with a character in a novel/story/film and develop characterisation.

Mishan (2005:91) underlines that a certain communicative purpose of a text does not limit the authentic response to one single task type. Consequently, as there are several different equally authentic ways of responding to a specific text type, a cross-reference of communicative purposes and possible authentic task typologies is illustrated below in Table 3.

Table 3: Cross-reference in task typologies (Mishan 2005: 92)

Communicative purpose	**Possible authentic task typologies**
Informative	Extraction, reaction, transference, analysis, inference
Persuasive	Reaction, response, analysis, inference
Soliciting	Response, reaction
Instructional	Reaction
Provocative	Reaction, response, inference, analysis
Interactive	Extraction, reaction, response, inference, transference

Engaging	Analysis, response, inference, extension, transference.

To summarise, Mishan's (2005) approach to designing authentic tasks around authentic materials begins with the consideration of the communicative purpose of a text (Table 1) when the communicative purpose of a text is identified, the teacher can select between the different task types presented in Table 2. As the task type follows the communicative purpose of the text, not all tasks go with all text, for example, the only natural response to an instructional text would be to react to the instructions. The possible authentic tasks that go with a particular communicative purpose of a text are summarized in Table 3. The key argument behind the methodology is that the authenticity of tasks can be guaranteed by acknowledging the communicative purpose of the authentic text.

2.3.3 Learner authenticity

"Authenticity in this view is a function of the interaction between the reader/hearer and the text which incorporates the intentions of the writer/speaker. We do not recognize authenticity as something there waiting to be noticed, we realize it in the act of interpretation." (Widdowson 1976:165).

A central consideration for authenticity in foreign language education is the role of the learner. In order to illustrate the significance of learner response, Widdowson (1976: 164) presents the following example:

> Ali and Basir are brothers. Every morning they get up at five o'clock and wash their hands and face. They have their breakfast at six o'clock. They have an egg and a banana for their breakfast. They had an egg and banana for breakfast yesterday morning. They are having an egg and a banana for their breakfast this morning and they will have an egg and banana for their breakfast tomorrow morning.

The example above is not from any particular English course book, however, similar text examples, in this case emphasising verb tenses, are widely found in foreign language materials especially for beginners. Widdowson (1976:165) argues that a text like the one

above is "linguistic data without being language data" as the reader's experiences of language use is what makes the text appear inauthentic. Consequently, what defines authenticity is not solely the authenticity of text or even the authenticity of text and task since neither would be realised as authentic without the subjective response of the learner.

Kaikkonen (2000:54-55) points out that the key to authentic language learning is in the emphasis on the learner and his/her experiences, opposing the view of learners simply as cognitive processors of information. The learner-centred approach to authenticity takes into consideration the attitudes and emotions of the learner. Jaatinen et al. (2009:21) argue that the emotional reactions of the learners are important for the learning process as they enable personal growth. In other words, learning is perceived as authentic when the learner is an active agent in the learning process (Jaatinen et al. 2009:20).

2.4 The pedagogical rationale: why authenticity matters

Incorporating authenticity into foreign language education is admittedly not an easy task; hence the question: is it worthwhile? By reviewing past literature and research it becomes apparent that authenticity in language education has for decades been a battleground for those for or against. The present section aims at justifying the authenticity-centred approach by discussing its pedagogical rationale, that is, authentic language input, learner motivation and autonomy.

2.4.1 Input: real-life proximity, readability, challenge and currency

Language input is one of the most widely studied areas connected to second language acquisition (SLA). One of the core theories is the *input hypothesis* by Krashen (1985) who argues that a second language is acquired only through what he refers to as *comprehensible input,* meaning that input that is either too complex or too easy does not contribute to SLA. The input theory is one of the central components of the *monitor theory model*, which is a set of hypotheses about SLA. Concerning language input, at least four motives for the use

of authentic materials can be distinguished: *challenge, readability, real-life proximity* and *currency.*

First, *challenge* in this context is used to refer to the optimal degree of difficulty of authentic texts and tasks. Krashen's (1985) hypothesis of comprehensible input establishes that the optimal level of language input ought to be just slightly above the learner's current proficiency level, however; still comprehensible for the learner to grasp the core meaning. According to Mishan (2005:45), challenge of input is one of the fundamental justifications for the use of authentic materials in foreign language education. This claim is justified by the argument that when using authentic texts as classroom resources, the teacher has an opportunity to select learning materials that are appropriate for a particular group or a particular student.

Second, Phillips and Shettlesworth (1988) argue that authentic texts, due to their cohesiveness, are in fact more comprehensible than simplified texts which usually rely on splitting of sentences, cutting of words and omission of logical connectors. The great advantage of authentic texts over artificial ones is that they do justice to every feature of the language (Sweet 1899:177). When comparing authentic and simplified texts Crossley et al. (2007:25) concluded that authentic texts were more likely to contain causal verbs and particles, which is why they are more likely to reflect cause and effect- relationships in a comprehensible manner. In addition, authentic texts contained more connectives than simplified texts. Consequently, it can be argued that authenticity has a potential positive effect on the *readability* of a text.

Third, it can be argued that authentic texts provide authentic or "real life" language input for language learners (Spelleri 2002:16, Berardo 2006:60 and Badger and MacDonald 2010:579). Breen (1985:63) argues that learners need to be exposed to authentic materials as they provide "immediate and direct contact with input data which reflect genuine communication in the target language", or as Berardo (2006:64) puts it "…giving the learner the proof that the language is real and not only studied in the classroom". Swaffar (1985:17) justifies the use of authentic materials by claiming that edited or simplified texts lack the essential features of authentic language use such as repetition, redundancy and discourse

markers. The real life-proximity of authentic texts opposes logically the reality of pedagogically constructed texts which according to Berardo (2006:61-62), often contain series of false text indicators, such as perfectly formed sentences throughout the text and repetitions of structures. These false indicators make pedagogically constructed texts beneficial for teaching structures, but not for practising reading skills or interpreting contents. The core justification of real-life proximity can be summarised as follows:

> One of the main reason for using authentic materials in the classroom is once outside the "safe", controlled language learning environment, the learner will not encounter the artificial language of the classroom but the real world and language how it is really used (Berardo 2006:60).

Fourth, *currency* is used to refer to the up-to-datedness and topicality of authentic texts (Mishan 2005:55). Mishan (2005:55) argues that the currency of subject matter and language use are crucial areas where authentic materials have clear advantages over manufactured texts. It can be argued that authentic texts function, not only as up-to-date learning materials, but as current, versatile and easily updateable examples of language use (Berardo 2006:60). As language is constantly evolving and changing it is important for foreign language learning materials to reflect this evolution (Berardo 2006:64). Particularly Internet based materials offer a vast amount of opportunities for the introduction of authentic texts that reflect language use associated with new media such as emailing, blogging, chat-rooms and Facebook (Mishan 2005:55-56).

As a conclusion, authentic materials and tasks can be specifically adapted to the needs of a specific learner or a learner group. All of the previously discussed potentials, namely, real-life proximity, readability, challenge and currency, have an impact on the learner discussed in the following sections.

2.4.2 Authenticity and learner motivation

"Alongside this recognition of the need to develop effective skills and strategies for the real world, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of affective factors in

learning, and the use of authentic texts is now considered to be one way of maintaining or increasing students' motivation for learning." (Guariento and Morley 2001:347).

Motivation has generally been accepted as one of the most significant affective factors in foreign language learning and is most traditionally categorised as *intrinsic/extrinsic* motivation, that is, whether motivation is seen as emerging from learner's own interests or from external sources (Deci and Ryan 2000:55). Mishan (2005:26-27) argues that the use of authentic texts and tasks is not directly connected to any specific type of motivation as a student may be intrinsically motivated in a specific situation and extrinsically in another depending on the language learning situation. However, Mishan (2005:27) points out that by a careful selection of authentic materials the teacher can pick out materials that meet the students' interests and thus potentially enhance their intrinsic motivation.

There is an abundant amount of literature supporting the argument that authentic materials are more motivating than non-authentic (for example Swaffar 1985, Little and Singleton 1991, Guariento and Morley 2001, Spelleri 2002, Mishan 2005, Berardo 2006, Khaniya 2006). Nevertheless, slightly different explanations for the connection between authenticity and motivation are given. According to Swaffar (1985) and Little and Singleton (1991), the ability of authentic materials to motivate students relies in the fact that authentic texts have a communicative goal while non-authentic texts are designed to highlight specific structures in a target language. Guariento and Morley (2001:347) on the other hand, argue that the use of authentic texts as language learning materials increases learner motivation since "They give the learner the feeling that he or she is learning the "real" language; that they are in touch with a living entity, the target language as it is used by the community which speaks it". Mishan (2005:60) claims that authentic materials and tasks are motivating as the challenge they pose functions as a motivating force. Berardo (2006:60) adds that overcoming this challenge creates a sense of achievement and may function as an inspiration. Additionally, the interest in a topic is an important motivational factor and by using authentic materials it is easier for a teacher to find materials that interest learners and encourage them to independent learning (Berardo 2006:64).

Few empirical studies on the connection between authentic materials and motivation have been conducted (for example, Peacock 1997 and Fei and Yu-Feng 2008). The general

consensus appears to be that the use of authentic materials does increase motivation, however, the connection is neither consistent nor clear. Peacock (1997) noticed that students only reported being motivated by authentic materials when they were familiar with the text types. This implies that it might take time for students to realise the potentials of authentic materials, which is why it is extremely important for teachers to be specific about the goals of authentic texts and tasks. Fei and Yu-Feng (2008) studied motivation and the application of authentic materials in Chinese universities. They discovered that authentic materials increased the students' positive attitudes towards English language and culture. In addition, the study showed that authentic materials motivated students to read in the target language outside the classroom (Fei and Yu-Feng 2008:13-14).

To my knowledge, no studies on task authenticity have been conducted. At present, it can only be assumed that the factors contributing to authentic texts and learner motivation may apply to authentic tasks as well. It remains to be investigated whether authentic tasks have the potential to be perceived as more motivating as they "bridge the gap" between the classroom and the outside world.

2.4.3   Authenticity and autonomous learning

Learner autonomy is a term generally used to describe students' abilities to take charge of their own learning (Smith 2008:395). Mishan (2005:37) argues that authentic texts and tasks involve learner autonomy as they demand a high level of learner contribution and investment. Similarly, Swaffar (1985:17) remarks that "a characteristic of authentic texts is that readers are allowed to analyse message systems for themselves". She continues by arguing that aids often provided together with pedagogical texts, such as glossaries and word lists, in fact hinder learners from inferring meaning as they place the focus on comprehension of individual words. Hence, it may be argued that authentic materials are particularly beneficial for developing students' *top-down* processing skills, a term created by Nunan (1989:26), that is, identifying participants and themes as well as inferring relationships and anticipating outcomes (Mishan 2005:39).

Gilmore (2004:367) notes that as the goal of language learning is to prepare students to become independent language users, language learning materials ought to reflect realistic models of discourse. According to Mishan (2005:37), the realistic models of language use increase learner autonomy as they demand a high level of personal investment of the learner as he/she is obliged to set in action all the pre-existing knowledge of a target language and culture in order to make "the vital connection between the classroom and the "real world". In addition, instead of mechanistic gap filling exercises the authentic tasks enable learners to process information in a critical and reflective manner, thus enhancing the role of the learner and his/her contribution.

2.5   Criticism and challenges

"...there is a sense in which authenticity has a kind of halo effect" (Badger and MacDonald 2010:579).

As the authenticity-centred approach has become a trend in foreign language education, its "halo" effect may have left some of the criticism towards it in the dark. It is, however, crucial to acknowledge that the implementation of authenticity into foreign language education is far from straightforward. Challenges, such as, text difficulty and the ambiguity of definitions are therefore discussed below.

One of the central dilemmas of authentic texts relies in their classroom application. If the core definition of authentic texts is that they have a communicative purpose and are originally not designed for language learning purposes, how can they then be authentically incorporated into language education? In other words, does a text lose its authenticity as soon as it is used for pedagogical purposes? Both Morrow (1977:14-15) and Widdowson (1998:711-712) argue that absolute authenticity cannot be recreated for language learning purposes since as soon as a text is used for learning, it loses its authenticity. Morrow (1977:14) claims that, "by using it in a classroom for teaching purposes, we are destroying this authenticity" and similarly Widdowson (1998:711-712) argues that, "What makes the text real is that it has been produced as appropriate to a particular set of contextual conditions. But because these conditions cannot be replicated, the reality disappears".

Others, by contrast, call attention to the authenticity of the learning situation itself: "We must recognise that the classroom has its own reality and naturalness [...] participants in the language classroom create their own authenticity there as they do elsewhere" (Kramsch et al. 2000:79). The communicative situation in the classroom creates a reality of its own, equally authentic as any other situation outside the class. By recognising the classroom as part of the "real-world" and not as a separate artificial reality, the question of text authenticity in a classroom setting is partly overcome. In addition, the concern of the preservation of authenticity ought not to overrule the pedagogical potentials of the approach.

Another feature often criticised is text difficulty. For example, Widdowson (1976, 1998 and 2003) has continuously argued that authentic texts are too difficult for language learners to comprehend due to their contextual and cultural complexity. He suggests simplified texts that gradually introduce learners to authentic materials as the solution. Similarly, Guariento and Morley (2001:348) claim that the use of authentic texts at lower levels may prevent learners from responding to a text in a meaningful way and consequently cause frustration, confusion and demotivation. The challenge of text difficulty is acknowledged by many others (Mishan 2005:61-62, Berardo 2006:65, Khaniya 2006:18-19).

If authentic materials in fact are regarded as too difficult, it may be asked whether they ought to be simplified before being integrated into language teaching. Can a text be altered to meet the needs of students without losing its authenticity? There are nearly as many answers as there are research papers on the subject. The general perspectives in the research field can be divided into those who are ready to compromise authenticity by allowing text alterations justified by pedagogical reasonings (for example Widdowson 1976 and Young 1999) and those who hold on to a very strict approach on authenticity and thus argue against text simplifications (for example Morrow 1977, Grellet 1981, Swaffar 1985 and Bacon & Finnemann 1990 and Berardo 2006).

The research that supports simplifications of authentic texts does so especially for beginning and intermediate levels. Text simplifications are favoured as authentic texts are regarded as lexically, syntactically and culturally too complex (Guariento and Morley 2001:347). Widdowson (1976:171) suggests the use of simplified texts for gradually introducing learners to authentic texts. His view is supported by studies on the effects of text alterations on language acquisition. For example, Yano et al. (1994) explored the effects of simplified input on non-native speaker comprehension by summarizing and evaluating the results of fifteen studies and concluded that text modifications tend to have a positive effect on language learning. Similarly, Crossley et al. (2007) conducted a comparative linguistic analysis of simplified and authentic texts and the results suggest that simplified texts contain more frequent and familiar vocabulary than authentic texts. However, research shows that actually only one type of text simplification has a potential positive effect on comprehension, that is, elaboration (Ellis 1994: 276-277). Elaboration such as adding repetition, contextual and extra linguistic clues and paraphrasing is likely to occur spontaneously in the classroom even when not explicitly designed into the materials (Gilmore 2007:110).

Even though research results show the possible benefits of simplified texts, the results are far from consistent and many researchers argue in favour of non-modified authentic texts (for example Grellet 1981, Mishan 2005 and Berardo 2006). Grellet (1981:8) goes as far as to argue that even the layout of the text ought to be retained as untouched as possible:

> Authenticity means that nothing of the original text is changed and also that its presentation and layout are retained. A newspaper article, for instance, should be presented as it first appeared in the paper; with the same typeface, the same space devoted to the headlines, the same accompanying picture.

To respond to the criticism regarding text difficulty, Guariento and Morley (2001:348) argue that "…a partial comprehension of text is no longer considered to be necessarily problematic, since this is something which occurs in real life". Many researchers suggest that with a task-based language learning approach authentic materials can be used even with beginners as the difficulty level is modified by adapting the task and not the text itself

(Prabhu 1987, Nunan 1989 and Mishan 2005). In other words, task design can be seen as a solution to the problem of text difficulty. This task-based approach supports the use of authentic texts as it allows for partial understanding of language input and emphasises students' compensatory strategies. Swaffar (1985:17) argues that difficult words and passages should be left in a text in order to convince students that a single difficult word or part in a text does not make the whole text unreadable. Hence, it can be argued that authentic materials encourage students' tolerance for partial comprehension and develop their inferencing skills (Guariento and Morley 2001:348).

Gilmore (2007:110) explains that simplifications actually may make the comprehension of a text more difficult as they alter the linguistic and extralinguistic cues, such as text layout, paragraph structure, choice of vocabulary and sentence length. In addition, from the point of view of authenticity, text simplifications are particularly problematic as they may alter the original communicative purpose of a text (Mishan 2005:76).

A common concern regarding authenticity is the ambiguity of its definition. For example, Gilmore (2007:98) argues that as soon as unobjectifiable criteria are included in the framework of authenticity, the term authentic becomes useless as any discourse may be defined authentic. A similar point on subjectivity can be made concerning motivation and challenge of text. As motivation is a very subjective affective factor in language education it evidently follows that authentic texts which are motivating for some will be boring for others, and authentic texts which are easy for some will be difficult for others (Badger and MacDonald 2010:579). Hence, it is important to recognise the subjectivity of the foreign language learning process, which is why it is advisable to vary the types of texts selected and tasks designed.

Finally, the cultural complexity of authentic materials is frequently criticised. In an anecdote Berardo (2006:65) describes a typical classroom situation as follows:

> Students often bring copies of newspaper articles (in particular the tabloids) or song lyrics to the classroom, asking to translate them after having looked up each word in the dictionary and not understood a single word. The reason is that authentic materials often contain culturally specific content which is often difficult for students and even teachers to decode.

While undeniably posing a challenge for the application of authentic texts in foreign language education the cultural complexity of texts may, in fact, even be used as a resource for cultural analysis and comparison. The class may wish, for example, to discuss why a certain linguistic feature is difficult to understand even with the help of dictionaries. This type of discussion and reflection can ideally enable a profound reflection on culture.

2.6   Authenticity and the foreign language learning curriculum in Finland

After developing a framework on authenticity in foreign language education and discussing its potentials and challenges, the present section evaluates the role of authenticity in the NCC (2003) and the CEFR (2001). The NCC is set by the Finnish National Board of Education and it provides the basis of values, objectives and content for upper secondary school education. The CEFR (2001), on the other hand, is set by the Council of Europe and it provides a common reference for curriculum guidelines all. In contrast to the NCC, the CEFR is not set by law, which is why its implementation is not obligatory for any school in Finland. However, it aims at forming a more unified set of objectives and methods for language learning in Europe (CEFR 2001:1).

Even though the NCC (2003) does not directly mention authenticity, it does share some common values with the authenticity-centred approach. To be precise, the NCC emphasises the use of learning methods that develop students' independent learning (NCC 2003:14). In addition, the NCC (2003:14) acknowledges that education ought to enable students to apply their previous experiences and background knowledge. Yet, it does not recognise the importance of the vice versa, that is, enabling students to apply what they learn in the classroom to their needs outside the class by merging the needs of "real life" to classroom activities, which can be seen as the primary ambition of the authenticity-centred approach. Thus, the authenticity-centred approach can offer some very important insights in order to

"bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world" (Guariento and Morley 2001:348).

While the NCC focuses on the general values and objectives of education, the CEFR (2001) presents more comprehensive guidelines on language education as it discusses both language learning materials and tasks, although similarly to the NCC, without overtly taking part in the authenticity debate. Concerning texts, the CEFR (2001:95) suggests different text types, such as books, newspapers, manuals, labels, tickets and brochures, for foreign language education. The different tasks connected to the texts are identified as *production, reception, interaction, mediation, translation* and *interpretation* (CEFR 2001:98-99). There is a clear overlap between these task types and the authentic task types designed by Mishan (2005) discussed in section 2.3.2 and even though the CEFR (2001:157) does bring up the distinction between real-life and pedagogic tasks, it thereafter focuses solely on strategic and conditional factors.

3   CULTURE IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION – CULTURAL EXPLORATION

As the present material package aims to demonstrate the possibilities of authentic materials and tasks in teaching a target culture, it is crucial to explore culture and its role in foreign language education. In order to do so, the following questions need to be addressed: how is the term *culture* generally defined, what is the relationship between language and culture and perhaps most importantly, why and how should culture be incorporated into foreign language education.

3.1   Towards a definition of culture

"Nature refers to what is born and grows organically (from the Latin nascere: to be born); culture refers to what has been grown and groomed (from the Latin colere: to cultivate)." (Kramsch 1998:4).

Culture is without doubt currently regarded as a central element in foreign language education; however, it has proved to be notoriously difficult to define. By reviewing past

literature and research, it is apparent that there are several and complex paths of understanding and explaining culture. Thus, a word of caution: the present section introduces a mere glimpse of all the possible directions in the jungle of explanations. What is presented here is an overview of the main tendencies of understanding and defining culture.

Young et al. (2009:150) suggest two main traditions in defining culture. The first has its roots in the study of humanities and focuses on the way a social group represents itself and others through its material products, such as art and literature, and their transmission from generation to generation. The second interpretation of culture derives from the field of social sciences and emphasizes the shared attitudes, beliefs and ways of thinking of a community. One of the most renowned sociological approaches to culture embodies the metaphor of culture as an iceberg illustrating the different levels of culture:

> Culture can be likened to an iceberg—only 10 percent of the whole is seen above the surface of the water. It is the 90 percent of the iceberg that is hidden beneath the surface of the water that most concerns the ship's captain who must navigate the water. Like an iceberg, the most meaningful (and potentially dangerous) part of culture is the invisible or subjective part that is continually operating on the unconscious level to shape our perceptions and our responses to these perceptions. It is this aspect of culture that leads to the most intercultural misunderstandings." (Cushner, McClelland and Safford 1996:50).

While Cushner et al. (1996) focus on the so called unconscious levels of culture, many others define culture by emphasising the values and beliefs of individuals, groups of people and the society as well as their interaction with one another. For example Lustig and Koester (2006:25) explain that "Culture is a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms, and social practices, which affect the behaviours of a relatively large group of people".

Another way of presenting a dual definition of culture is to talk about culture with a small *c* or culture with a capital *C*. The former is commonly used to refer to the sociological aspects of culture and the latter to the artistic accomplishments of a society, for example, literature, music and art (Kramsch 1991:218). Thus, the definition of culture with a capital *C* is comparable to the sociological understanding of culture and culture with a small *c* with

the humanistic understanding of culture discussed above. Mishan (2005:45) underlines that the two aspects of culture do not function in isolation, but form an interdependent conceptualisation of culture where "The intellectual 'products' of a society *affect* but at the same time *reflect* the behaviours and values of its people and the frameworks within which they function."

In addition to the dual humanistic/social or culture with a capital *C/*small *c* definitions of culture, another way of understanding culture is its categorisation into a *hierarchical* or *differential* concept (Bauman 1999:6-7). The hierarchical conceptualisation of culture includes the notion of culture as something an individual or a society "has" or "does not have". The differential concept of culture, on the other hand, explains culture as something that differentiates groups of people from each other. This explanation highlights the comparison of cultures from the inside as well as from the outside. For example Hofstede (1984:51) argues that "Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another."

The current definitions of culture attempt to enclose all the previously discussed understandings: culture as products and culture as social conventions. For example, Kaikkonen (2004:104) perceives culture as a complex entity of values, norms, rules, concepts and meanings developed and accepted by a certain community as well as a set of events and products formed as a cause of interaction between people and communities.

3.2   Language and culture

"*Language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways.*" (Kramsch 1998:3).

As Kramsch argues above, the connection between language and culture is fundamental, yet, not straightforward. Underlying the current understanding of language and culture is the so called *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis* which is based on the research of Sapir and Whorf in the beginning of the 20th century and embodies the idea of language influencing the way one perceives the world (Kramsch 1998:11). Despite being revolutionary at the time, the

hypothesis has confronted severe controversy ever since. Kramsch (1998:13) argues that even though there are cultural differences in the semantic associations of common concepts, such as the way cultures name colours, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in its strictest version cannot be accepted as the fact that it is possible to translate across languages leads to the conclusion that the link between language and culture is arbitrary. As Kramsch (1998:14) explains: "We are, then, not prisoners of the cultural meanings offered to us by our language, but can enrich them in our pragmatic interactions with other language users."

From the early attempts of defining the relationship between language and culture the current explanations have progressed toward an understanding of language expressing, symbolising and embodying cultural reality (Kramsch 1998:3). Similarly, Byram (1991:17) emphasises the interaction between language and culture by presenting the metaphor of language as the "key" to culture. In addition, Young et al. (2009:150) argue that language is an integral part of culture by both creating and expressing cultural realia:

> Along with values, beliefs and behavioural norms, language is a component of culture. Unlike other components of culture, however, language interacts with it in different ways, because language is both a transmitter of culture, and is the main tool for the internalization of the culture by the individual.

Taking the inseparability of language and culture one step further Agar (1994) presents the term *languaculture* in order to unite the two concepts. He argues that the term is required in order to draw attention to the essential bond between language and culture (Agar 1994:60). Even though Agar's conceptualisation of languaculture has not succeeded in becoming broadly applied, it does highlight the fundamental interaction between language and culture nowadays universally accepted among most theoreticians. For example, Kaikkonen (2004:104) emphasises the relationship between language and culture by explaining that language is throughout cultural as it has been created and developed side by side with culture.

3.3   Culture and foreign language education

"Except for 'language', 'learning' and 'teaching', there is no more central concept in the field of teaching English than 'culture. (Atkinson 1999: 625).

The importance of culture as a part of language education is nowadays widely accepted as can be illustrated by the argument by Atkinson above. The pedagogical reasoning for including culture in language education has its roots in the acceptance of the inseparability of language and culture. Like Atkinson, Byram (1991:18) emphasizes the significance of culture by claiming that:

> …to teach culture without language is fundamentally flawed and to separate language and culture teaching is to imply that a foreign language can be treated in the early learning stages as if it were self-contained and independent of other sociocultural phenomena.

In addition to the language/culture explanation, the importance of culture in foreign language education can be explained by the practical needs of modern language education, that is, to meet the demands of our modern intercultural world (Kaikkonen 2004:38-40). Despite the fact that the amount of immigrants in Finland is at the moment relatively low, it is constantly increasing and the everyday practises in our society may still be considered highly multicultural partly due to technical developments such as mobile phones and the Internet (Kaikkonen 2004:39). The whole world is now available on one small click.

During the past two decades there has been a clear flourishing of research on language and culture pedagogy resulting in a complex set of closely related terminology such as *cross-cultural awareness, global competence, intercultural sensitivity, international competence and global intelligence*. Even though the terms have slightly different perspectives they are ultimately all used as variants of the umbrella term *cultural learning*. Consequently, in order to simplify and specify the representation of culture in foreign language education the present study focuses solely on the closely related terms *cultural awareness* and *intercultural competence* as well as their pedagogical implications However, before exploring the pedagogical methodologies of culture in language education the following section provides a brief discussion on cultural content areas for language classes.

3.3.1   Cultural content for foreign languge classes

Regarding the representation of culture in language education, the first crucial question to be discussed is *what?* Which aspects of culture ought to be addressed in foreign language classes? Nostrand (1978:2-7) offers a set of cultural topics divided into six groups, namely: *culture, society, conflicts, the ecology and technology, the individual* and *the cross-cultural environment*. The groups are further specified according to the particular cultural areas they may entail, for example, the group culture involves: values, traits,world picture, knowledge, art forms, language and paralanguage (Nostrand 1978:2-4). Byram et al.'s (1994:51-52) categorisation of cultural topic areas is internally rather similar to Nostrand's, however, it divides the framework into smaller groups, namely: *social identity and social groups, social interaction, belief and behaviour, socio-political institutions, socialisation and the life-cycle, national history, national geography, national cultural heritage, stereotypes* and *national identity*.

Even though Nostrand's (1978) and Byram et al.'s (1994) lists of cultural content areas appear to be rather comprehensive, they do not address the question: which culture? As English expands around the globe it is naturally represented by a great diversity of forms (Gilmore 2007:103). Traditionally, the texts found in English language textbooks are representatives of, in Kachru's (1982) terms, so called "inner circle" cultures such as Great Britain and America (Badger et al. 2006:254 and Pohjanen 2007:129). However, in recent years there has been a rising approach among language teaching theoreticians to question the ownership of English. It is questioned whether even a native form of English exists and more particularly whether any native form of English ought to be taught as a model for language use. The native model is nowadays generally considered problematic as it is acknowledged that even within the inner circle cultures there are great regional variations which are just as authentic representatives of English as any other. Badger et al. (2006:254) go as far as to argue that the prioritizing of inner circle or "native" models for language learning may lead to a "poverty of language".

3.3.2 Methodologies for teaching culture

Perhaps most important in culture and language pedagogy is to embark on a profound discussion on *how?* To contribute to the debate, the present section explores the pedagogical implications of culture in foreign language education in the form of *cultural awareness* and *intercultural competence*.

Cultural awareness focuses on a change from a monocultural to an intercultural competence and can be regarded as a starting point of intercultural competence (Byram 1989:142). Byram (1989:136-146) suggests a cyclic model for teaching language and cultural awareness (Figure 1). The model includes four stages: *language learning, language awareness, cultural awareness* and *cultural experiences*. The skill-oriented language learning is connected to the sociolinguistic knowledge-oriented language awareness involving reflection on language as a social and cultural phenomenon. Cultural awareness refers to the study of language as a subject enriched with the comparison of a target culture with the learners' culture in their first language (Byram 1989:138). The model is finalised by direct experiences with the target culture carried out in the foreign language, therefore contributing to language acquisition. In fact, all four stages develop in relation to each other signifying that cultural awareness develops out of and parallel with language awareness (Byram 1989:139).

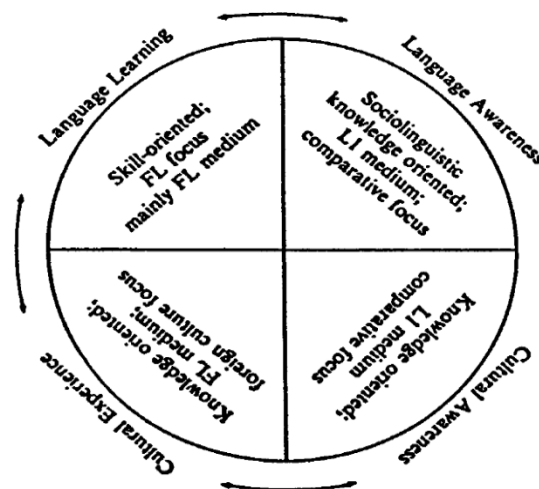Figure 2: A model for language and culture teaching (Byram 1989:139)

Figure 1: A model for teaching language and culture (Byram 1989:138)

Even though cultural awareness is a good starting point for cultural education, the leap from the knowledge-oriented awareness of culture to its actual implementation appears to need further explanation. Our ability to interact with, to understand and to reflect other cultures is certainly much more than simply based on knowledge. In order to appropriately and effectively engage in intercultural communication learners need to be able to apply his/her cultural awareness in practise. To meet these practical and pedagogical demands, Byram (1997) developed the concept of *intercultural competence*, which is defined as a set of skills and abilities for intercultural communication. The model for intercultural competence includes five components: *knowledge*, *skills of interpretation and relation*, *critical cultural awareness, skills of discovery and interaction* and *attitudes*. The five factors of intercultural communicative competence are further defined in terms of their objectives as follows (adopted from Byram 1997:50-53):

1. *Knowledge about/of*: processes of interaction including knowledge of how to act in specific situations, historical and contemporary relationships, the processes and institutions of socialisation, social distinctions and their principal markers, institutions and perceptions of them and the processes of social interaction.
2. *Skills of interpreting and relating involve the ability to:* interpret documents from another culture, identify ethnocentric perspectives in a document, identify areas of misunderstanding in an interaction, and relate the document to document of one's own culture.
3. *Critical cultural awareness entails the ability to:* interpret the explicit or implicit values and goals of documents or events in one's own culture or other cultures, analytically evaluate cultural events, practices and products and to interact in intercultural exchanges in accordance with explicit criteria.
4. *Skills of discovery and interaction involve the ability to*: develop skills that enable the learner to recognize phenomena in a foreign culture, identify similar and different processes of interaction, acquire new cultural knowledge and to operate knew knowledge and skills in interaction.
5. *Attitudes:* tackling stereotypes, willingness to question cultural values and presuppositions, striving towards attitudes of curiosity and openness towards other cultures, willingness to critically reflect on one's own beliefs, meanings and behaviours also from the perspective of other cultures, to see and recognise oneself through the eyes of someone else.

A model that is based on more humanistic values, such as individual growth, has been developed by Kaikkonen (2004:148). According to his understanding, the core principles of intercultural competence include *tolerance of ambiguity, empathy, ability to reflect, ability to interact, ability to vary perspective, respect* and *acknowledgement of ethical issues.* The model highlights the student's abilities to act and think ethically and to respect and accept others by viewing the world through someone else's eyes. In addition, Kaikkonen (2004:146-150) emphasises the learner's psychosocial abilities which enable him/her to face intercultural situations in a productive and positive manner.

3.4   Criticism, ethics and the future

While intercultural competence has gained status as a core element in intercultural education, criticism on the ambiguity of the term rises every now and then. Another recurring source of criticism appears to be the fact that intercultural competence has due to its popularity become highly commercialised. There is an abundance of guidelines on "how to develop your intercultural competence" available on the market, however, many attempt to present intercultural competence as simple learnable techniques as it is what the market and language pedagogues seem to require at the moment (Kaikkonen 2004:147). The presentation of intercultural competence as tricks and gimmicks to be mastered can be seen as problematic. As Kramsch (1993:1) argues "Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing." In other words, acquiring intercultural competence is much more complex and time consuming than portrayed by many of the guidelines offering a quick-fix to intercultural understanding.

One of the crucial questions regarding intercultural communication is whether cultural competence equals behaving in accordance with the social conventions of a given speech community (Kramsch 1993:181). This question over the ethics of intercultural competence is an important one: does "when in Rome do as the Romans do" apply for intercultural competence? (Lustig and Koester 2006:323). Kramsch (1993:181) argues that the ability to mimic someone else's behaviour does not guarantee mutual understanding or facilitate one's integration into a group or society. In addition, Kramsch (1993:81) highlights the ability of language learners to explore a foreign language and culture while maintaining their own cultural point of view as a crucial part of successful intercultural understanding.

Empathy, understanding and the ability to vary perspective have been defined as core concepts in intercultural competence (Byram 1989 and Kaikkonen 2004) but do we really need to accept, understand and have empathy towards every aspect of another culture in order to become interculturally competent? It has been argued that complete objectivity, understanding and acceptance of may be impossible to achieve as one always relates a new culture to one's own (Kane 1991:232-233 and Mishan 2005:46). Similarly, Byram (1991:18) argues that "it would be misguided to teach as if learners can acquire foreign cultural concepts, values and behaviours as if they were *tabula rasa*". For example Byram (1989:138) and Mishan (2005:46) conclude that the fact that learners perceive the target culture from the point of view of their own can in fact be used as a great advantage for cultural exploration in the foreign language classroom.

Byram and Feng (2004:149) argue that there has not been adequate empirical research on the causal relationships of intercultural competence. There is little we know about, for example, the relationships between intercultural competence and motivation, acquisition of linguistic competence or its effects on social and cultural identities. There is a clear need for research in order to form a systematic approach for language-and-culture education.

3.5   Culture and the foreign language learning curriculum in Finland

Both the NCC (2003) and the CEFR (2001) discuss cultural studies in education in general and more specifically in foreign language education. The general starting point for both is

equality, democracy and tolerance. Both value and emphasise a multicultural reality, however, the actual interpretation and implementation of the values are left in the hands of individual schools and eventually individual teachers. The following section focuses first on how the NCC presents culture and second on culture in the CEFR.

Even though the NCC (2003:29-30) does not explicitly use the term *intercultural competence*, the objectives for the development of cultural identity and knowledge of cultures are clearly stated in the cross-curricular themes. The NCC (2003:26-29) suggests that the cross-curricular themes are integrated in all subjects for reflection on humanistic and cultural values, such as building a positive cultural identity and enhancing knowledge and acceptance towards other cultures. The NCC (2003: 29-30) establishes the following objectives for learning about cultures:

> The objectives are for students to:
>
> • be familiar with different interpretations of the concept of culture and be able to describe the special characteristics of different cultures;
> • be familiar with immaterial and material cultural heritage;
> • be aware of their own cultural identity, be clear about the cultural group to which they wish to belong and know how to act as interpreters of their own culture;
> • appreciate cultural diversity as part of the richness of life and as a source of creativity and be able to reflect on the alternatives of cultural development in the future;
> • be able to communicate diversely with people from different cultural backgrounds, even in foreign languages;
> • endeavour to contribute actively to the construction of a multicultural society based on mutual respect.

In addition to the cross-curricular themes, the importance of interculturality is particularly highlighted in the sections regarding foreign language education:

> Instruction in foreign languages will develop students' intercultural communication skills: it will provide them with skills and knowledge related to language and its use and will offer them the opportunity to develop their awareness, understanding and appreciation of the culture within the area or community where the language is spoken. In this respect, special attention will be given to European identity and European multilingualism and multiculturalism" (NCC 2003:100).

The NCC (2003:102-103) emphasises in accordance with language learning theories (for example Byram 1989 and Kaikkonen 2004) the importance of making comparisons between the Finnish context and the target culture. According to the NCC, the themes on

foreign language courses ought to be dealt from the perspective of Finland, the target culture as well as from a global point of view in order to provide students with opportunities to make comparisons.

The NCC does not present language learning and cultural learning as two separate themes; on the contrary, it seems to follow the approach acknowledging the inseparability of culture and language supported by, for example, Byram (1989), Kaikkonen (2004) and Young et al. (2009). Strangely, however, it does not follow this principle in the actual implementation of the language courses. The compulsory foreign language courses are divided into themes, course five being "culture", creating the illusion that culture and language are in fact something that are to be taught and learnt in separate courses. For example, Byram (1997:7) criticises such a view as it implies that culture in language teaching can be treated as something additional and supplementary. This raises the question whether culture in the NCC ought to be more clearly incorporated into all of the language courses?

Although mainly focusing on linguistic competencies the CEFR (2001) does acknowledge the role of culture by addressing issues such as *sociocultural knowledge, intercultural awareness* and *intercultural skills and know-how*. Regarding *sociocultural knowledge*, the CEFR (2001:102-103) emphasises the knowledge of a target culture as well as warns about the reinforcement of stereotypical cultural notions. The CEFR (2001:102-103) continues by dividing sociocultural knowledge into the following domains: everyday living, living conditions, interpersonal relations, body language, social conventions, ritual behaviour and values, beliefs and attitudes. The understanding of sociocultural knowledge in the CEFR is clearly in line with Nostrand's (1978:2-7) and Byram et al's (1994:51-52) suggestions for cultural content areas (see section 3.3.1).

Intercultural awareness is defined as comprehension of the connection between the "world of origin" and the "world of a target community" (CEFR 2001:103). Similarly to the NCC (2003) and previous research (Byram 1989 and Kaikkonen 2004), the CEFR (2001:103-104) emphasises the comparison of the learner's own culture with the target culture and claims that this cultural comparison aids students in placing both cultures in context and

hence in developing their intercultural competence. The CEFR (2001:104-105) divides *intercultural skills and know-how* into cultural sensitivity, avoidance and overcoming of national stereotypes, strategies for intercultural communication and capability to handle cultural misunderstandings. However, similarly to the NCC, the CEFR does not specify or give particular pedagogical practises for how to actually incorporate culture in foreign language education. The practical interpretation and application of the general cultural objectives is left to language teachers.

To conclude, both the NCC and the CEFR value the role of cultural identity, cultural growth and the appreciation of cultures and cultural differences. The official guidelines for foreign language teaching in Finland offer a set of objectives and values for our language education. Even though interculturality is highlighted in the general objectives for language education the actual implementation of culture into foreign language education is left rather vague.

4   FRAMEWORK FOR THE MATERIAL PACKAGE – CULTURAL MIRRORS

"It is a truism to say that teaching language is teaching culture, but what exactly does it mean? How can learners in the artificial and standardized environment of a classroom have access to the central code of another culture?" (Kramsch 1993:178).

The present material package proposes an approach where authenticity is regarded as a means of incorporating culture into language education. Mishan (2005:46-47) argues that authentic texts are the "treasure chests" of cultural exploration as they in a way "contain" the culture. In addition, the potentials of authentic texts for cultural exploration lie in that they are direct products of and for a target culture, consequently, they function as "mirrors" of that particular reality. However, as Mishan (2005:46) remarks, the cultural elements in authentic texts are not always explicit: "Rather like a page written in invisible ink, the cultural message is there to be read, but only if one has learned how to make the invisible writing appear". In other words, the importance of designing tasks that allow students to discover the cultural codes of authentic texts needs be recognized.

4.2   Present view on authenticity

The theoretical framework of the present material package has so far focused on an inspection of the understandings of authenticity and culture, their pedagogical rationale as well as their current representation in language education. The challenge of the present material package is now to attempt to construct a framework where the two are combined. In order to achieve this goal it is crucial to define the present view on both authenticity and culture.

The present material package perceives authenticity in language education as an interaction between learner authenticity, authentic texts and authentic tasks. These three variables are deeply interconnected, forming the components that lay the ground for the authenticity-centred approach (Figure 2).

Authentic texts

1.Provenance and authorship of the text

2. Original communicative and socio-cultural purpose of the text

3. Original context (e.g. its source, socio-cultural context) of the text.

(Mishan 2005:18)

Authenticity in language education

Authentic tasks

Reaction

Response

Inferencing

Analysis

Transference

Extraction

Extension

(Mishan 2005:91)

Learner authenticity

The learner as a subjective and active agent in the authenticitation process
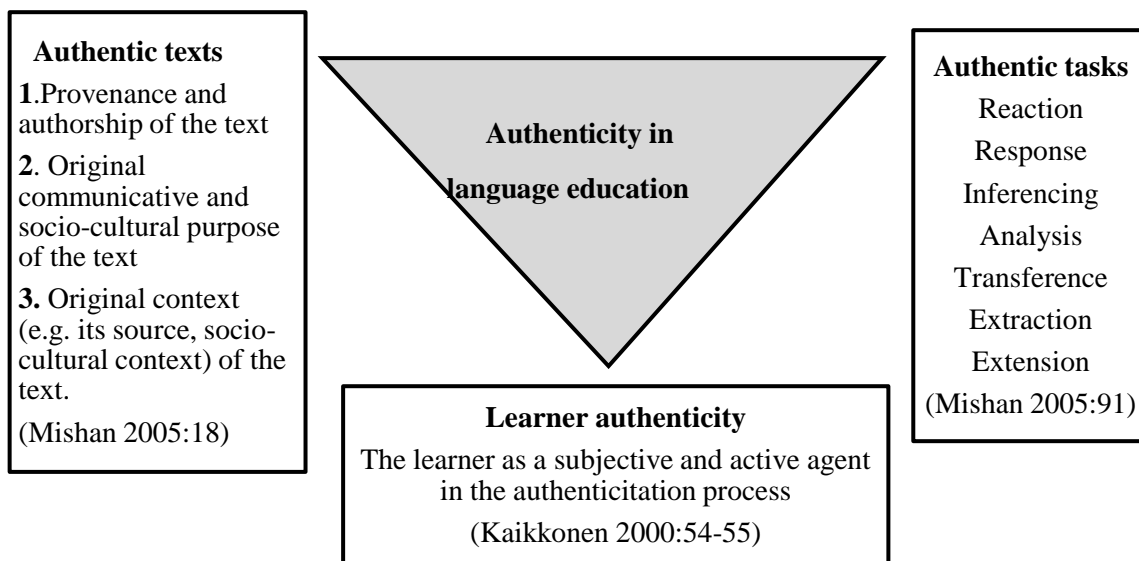
(Kaikkonen 2000:54-55)

Figure 2: A framework for authenticity in language education

In the centre of the framework is the learner himself/herself as an active subject in the learning process (Kaikkonen 2000:54). Authenticity in language learning depends on the

learner's perception of what is authentic, that is, the learner's response (Widdowson 1976:165, Arnold 1991:239-240, Mishan 2005:18). The learner is the one who experiences and evaluates the authenticity of texts and the tasks designed around them (Mishan 2005:18). Thus, as authenticity has to do with the learners' genuine encounters with language the foundation of the authenticity-centred approach is the learner him/herself. Authentic texts enable the genuine encounters in a classroom setting and around the texts teachers ought to design authentic tasks that maintain the authenticity throughout the learning experience.
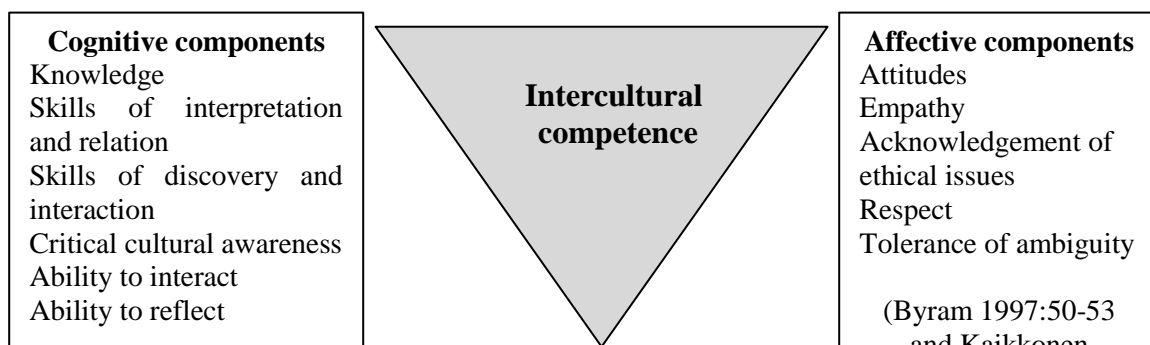
The definition of authentic materials in the present material package follows the design suggested by Mishan (2005:18), namely, that authenticity of texts is realised by its provenance and authorship as well as original communicative and socio-cultural purpose. Concerning the first argument, provenance and authorship of text, the present material package emphasises that all varieties of English ought to be regarded as equally authentic. Even when mirroring a specific target culture, the versatility of that culture in terms of multiculturalism, is a reality that ought not to be dismissed. The selection of authentic texts ought not to be restricted to merely standard cultural representations as these may result in a stereotypical and superficial portraying of the culture. Concerning the second argument, the original communicative and socio-cultural purpose of a text is divided into the following: *informative, persuasive, soliciting, instructional, provocative, interactive* and *engaging.* It is precisely the acknowledgement of the communicative purpose of the text that contributes to the design of authentic tasks defined next.

The definition of task authenticity is adapted from Mishan (2005:70-93) discussed in section 2.3.2. According to the current definition, task authenticity is guaranteed through the acknowledgement of the communicative purpose of a text. The task typologies designed are recognized as: *extraction, extension, analysis, reaction, response, inference* and *transference.*

4.3   Present view on culture and intercultural competence

The present material package perceives culture as a fusion of the humanistic and social approaches discussed in section 3.1, thus, culture is distinguished as both culture with a capital *C*: the cultural products of a community, and culture with a small *c*: the norms, values and attitudes of a group of people (Kramsch 1991:218). Most importantly, the present material package acknowledges the possibilities of culture with a capital C to carry and reflect the aspects connected to culture with a small c.

The present material package applies the theories of Byram (1989) and Kaikkonen (2004) in the formation of a framework for intercultural competence, which is perceived to be the goal of intercultural education. The components of intercultural competence were concluded in section 3.3.2 to be: *knowledge*, *skills of interpretation and relation*, *critical cultural awareness*, *skills of discovery and interaction* and *attitudes* (Byram 1997:50-53). As Byram's model focuses mostly on skills and knowledge it is supplemented with Kaikkonen's more learner-centred theory (2004:148) containing features emphasising individual growth and intercultural understanding, namely: *empathy, acknowledgement of ethical issues, respect, tolerance of ambiguity, ability to vary perspective, ability to reflect, ability to interact* and *tolerance of ambiguity*. Byram's (1997) and Kaikkonen's (2004) models of intercultural competence are hence divided into two sections: those reflecting cognitive components and those reflecting affective components (Figure 3).

Cognitive components	**Intercultural competence**	**Affective components**
Knowledge		Attitudes
Skills of interpretation and relation		Empathy
Skills of discovery and interaction		Acknowledgement of ethical issues
Critical cultural awareness		Respect
Ability to interact		Tolerance of ambiguity
Ability to reflect		(Byram 1997:50-53 and Kaikkonen

> **Contents/topic areas**
> Social identity and social groups, social interaction, beliefs and behavior,
> socio-political institutions, socialisation and the life-cycle,
> national geography, national cultural stereotypes and national identity.
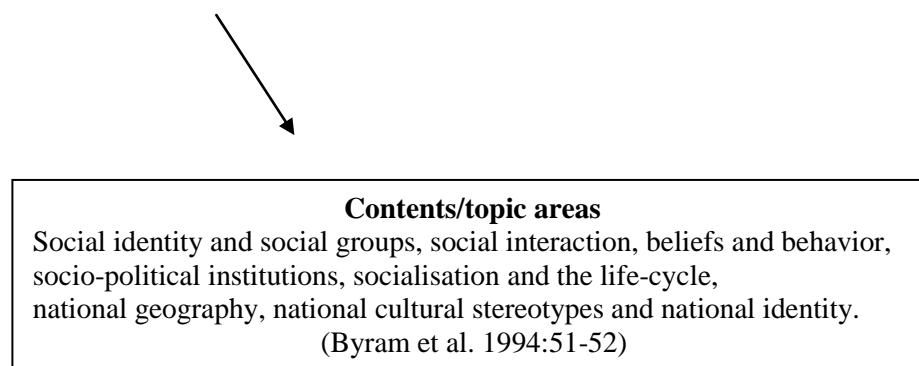> (Byram et al. 1994:51-52)

Figure 3: Framework of intercultural competence

As illustrated by the framework above (Figure 3) the present material package highlights both cognitive and affective factors in the development of intercultural competence. The framework describes the foundation of intercultural learning as it identifies the components and objectives of intercultural competence. However, the framework does not yet provide a method through which these skills may be established and practised. Therefore, the following section will focus on the creation and presentation of the current authenticity-centred approach for the development of intercultural competence.

4.4 Authentic materials as cultural mirrors: creating a framework

Following the current view on authenticity and culture in language education defined above, the present material package aims to assemble a framework where the two are combined. The framework presents an authenticity-centred approach for developing intercultural competence. In order to illustrate the possibilities of the authenticity-centred approach the framework is presented below as a linear continuum (Figure 4). The starting point for the approach is learner authenticity and on the other end is the desired outcome: intercultural competence. The linear model is chosen to demonstrate how all the previous stages have an impact on the following components and the learning process.

```
┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐
│ 1. Learner   │ ▶ │ 2. Authentic │ ▶ │ 3.Cultural   │ ▶ │ 4 Authentic  │ ▶      │ 5 Cognitive  │
│ authenticity │   │    texts     │   │   content    │   │    tasks     │        │ components   │
└──────────────┘   └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘        └──────────────┘
                                                                         ▶                          ▶  ┌──────────────┐
                                                                             ┌──────────────┐          │ 6 Intercultural │
                                                                             │ 5 Affective  │          │ competence   │
                                                                             │ components   │          └──────────────┘
                                                                             └──────────────┘
```
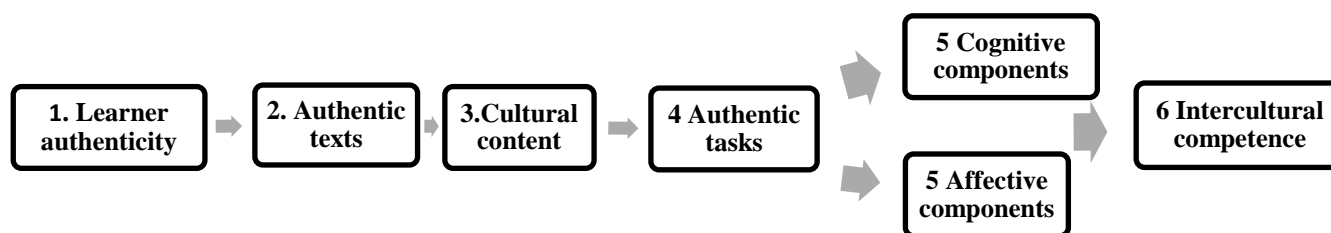
Figure 4: The stages of intercultural competence through the authenticity-centred approach

The key behind the framework is the use of authentic materials and tasks for cultural exploration, which will consequently ideally increase students' intercultural competence. To illustrate the main ideology behind the framework, the cornerstones of the approach are described in the following stages:

Stage 1: Learner authenticity is seen as the starting point for the approach. This signifies that the role of the learner is emphasised. It is the learner who subjectively evaluates, assesses and experiences the authentic texts and tasks. Whether the authentic materials and tasks are actually perceived as authentic depends on the learner's response to the text. In addition, learner authenticity recognizes the learners' pre-existing attitudes, values and principles as the starting point for the development of intercultural competence. All students are individuals; hence, they may have differing preconceptions about cultures which influences the ways in which they interpret cultural contexts in authentic materials and tasks.

Stage 2: With learner authenticity as the foundation, the next step in constructing an authenticity-centred approach is materials selection. There is an endless amount of materials available for classroom resources. Some of the deliberations to be taken into consideration in selecting materials for cultural resources are text appropriacy and difficulty (discussed in detail in section 2.3.1.).

Stage 3: The present framework perceives all authentic texts as culturally bound and therefore explicitly or implicitly mirroring a target culture. The authentic texts may be chosen to reflect one or several cultural content areas such as social identity and

social groups, social interaction, and beliefs and behavior (presented in detail in Figure 3 and discussed in section 3.3.1) as suggested by Nostrand (1978:2-7) and Byram et al. (1994:51-52).

Stage 4: The authentic materials reflecting different cultural themes are on the other hand merely a possibility for authentic learning as it is what you do with them that counts. Therefore, the key for authenticity in language learning actually lies in the authentic task design. The authentic task types are defined by that they follow the communicative purpose of the text and, hence, identified as reaction, response, inferencing, analysis, transference, extraction and extension (presented in Figure 2 and discussed in section 2.3.2).

Stage 5: By the use of authentic materials to mirror a target culture the tasks designed around them need not solely to maintain the authenticity of the materials but to reflect the goals of intercultural competence. Hence, the tasks are designed to develop one or several of the cognitive and affective components of intercultural competence such as knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs (presented in Figure 3).

Stage 6: The ultimate goal for the framework is the development of students' intercultural competence. It is the desired outcome of the process where authentic materials provide the topics and enable the design of authentic cultural tasks which ideally allow profound and critical cultural reflection.

The present framework argues that the authenticity-centred approach has the potential to increase students' intercultural competence by addressing authentic texts as the "treasure chest" for cultural exploration and by striving to maintain the authenticity by the design of authentic tasks. In addition, the approach enables students to encounter and experience direct reflections of a target culture and to process these examples in a genuine way.

4.5   The target group of the material package

The present material package is primary intended as an idea bank and handbook for teachers who teach English corresponding to an upper secondary school level. Although supporting the view that authentic materials may be applied even at lower levels, upper secondary school was chosen due to the desire to demonstrate rather complex cultural issues for a profound reflection of the target culture. Upper secondary school students have the presumed language ability to discuss relatively complex authentic cultural themes, to realize the explicit and implicit cultural codes of authentic texts and to critically reflect on their own cultural assumptions in the light of new insights. However, the general guidelines may be adapted to any level by careful materials selection and modification of task difficulty.

In addition to the recognized complexity of cultural objectives of the tasks, the present material package is targeted for rather proficient language learners as the types of authentic texts selected are presumed to be complex enough to require rather advanced reading skills in English. Upper secondary school students are likely to be accustomed to reading, not only course book texts, but other types of genres in their mother tongue and in other languages. Consequently, upper secondary school students most likely have some pre-existing knowledge and experience about different text types which makes it easier for them to work with the present authentic texts and tasks.

The NCC (2003) highlights the importance of intercultural exploration and understanding. However, it does not specify how this intercultural competence may be developed in a classroom setting. Consequently, there is a clear need for different methods and approaches. The present material package provides one potential approach of bringing cultural reality into the classroom through authentic materials and authentic tasks.

4.6   The organization of the material package

The present handbook consists of practical guidelines for English teachers on the selection and application of authentic texts as well as the design of authentic tasks. The aim is to

confront some of the most common questions and concerns teachers may have about incorporating authenticity to their language classes. As a guidebook for English teacher's the goals of the material package are to

1. define authentic texts
2. provide ideas and guidelines for materials selection
3. explain the idea of authentic task design
4. illustrate the use of authentic materials as mirrors to a target culture.

Even though seven possible communicative purposes are acknowledged, namely, informative, persuasive, soliciting, instructional, provocative, interactive and engaging, the present handbook concentrates solely on informative and engaging text types due to length constrains of the present study. The two text types were chosen as illustrative examples as they are easily available for teachers and enable a versatile and profound reflection on cultural themes. Hence, the handbook is divided into two units, Unit 1 containing lesson plans around informative texts and Unit 2 around texts with the communicative purpose to engage.

Similarly, from the task types presented by Mishan (2005:91), namely, response, reaction, inference, analysis, transference, extraction and extension, the handbook concentrates on three: response, inference and transference. Reaction was left out as it is presumed that all physical reaction automatically involves some type of emotive response as well. For the same reason analysis and extraction were left out as they can be seen as being incorporated automatically to each of the task types. Extension is included in some of the task as an extension of the task idea, but it is not treated as a separate task type.

In addition to general guidelines, the handbook contains 30 lesson plans to illustrate the authenticity-centred approach in practise around informative and engaging texts. The goals for the approach are for the learner to:

1. identify cultural representations in authentic texts
2. tolerate and analyse cultural ambiguity in authentic texts
3. develop a deeper understanding of culture
4. become able to vary cultural perspective
5. become able to question and reflect on attitudes towards cultures

6.   become accustomed to reading authentic materials representing authentic language use

7.   become motivated to explore authentic texts on their own.

Each lesson plan includes a *GET STARTED-* section with general guidelines, cultural topics, objectives as well as materials and handouts included. The actual lessons are divided into three steps:

STEP 1 The first step is a kick-off task which functions as an introduction to the actual authentic task. It will orient the students towards what will follow by, for example, familiarizing them with the topic, providing background information, raising questions and evoking interest and motivation towards the task.

STEP 2 The second step is the actual authentic task designed around the particular communicative purpose of the text. The authentic task types presented are response, inference and transference.

STEP 3 The third step consists of discussion and analysis in order to enable students to process and reflect on the cultural matters that have arisen in the authentic task. This step will additionally give students the opportunity to practice their communication skills in English by allowing them to discuss their ideas and observations on the cultural issues present in the main task.

5 DISCUSSION

As our world gradually comes to be even more international it is only natural to highlight the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language education. The great challenge for teachers and materials designers relies in how to effectively integrate cultural content into foreign language education. As authentic texts are written in and for a specific target culture, they can be utilised as a valuable mirror to cultural values and beliefs. In a way authentic materials "contain" the culture in which it produced and are therefore effective resources for the development of intercultural competence in a classroom environment: a way of bringing the target culture into the classroom.

The goal of the present material package was to produce a handbook for English teachers on authenticity as a cultural transporter. It offers English teachers concrete guidelines for materials selection as well as ideas for task authentic task design. The aim of the lesson plans provided is to illustrate the authenticity-centred approach to intercultural competence in practise. The guidebook and the materials aim to address the advantages as well as the possible concerns teachers may have regarding the application of authentic texts as classroom materials.

As authenticity is such a broad term and difficult to define, it is clear that the approach chosen by the present package is just one of the many possible. In the definition of authentic texts the present handbook relies on the communicative purpose of the text. In other words, authentic texts are seen as texts that are not directly produced for language learning purposes. To maintain the authenticity of the text, the task types presented in the present guidebook are designed to follow the communicative purpose of the text. The acknowledgement of the significance of communicative purpose excludes task types generally connected to authenticity such as filling out forms, applications or online bookings as students do not in fact have a genuine purpose of completing such tasks at the particular moment. The view on authenticity in the present study highlights the authenticity of learning processes rather than mimicking real-life tasks.

The strength of the present material package relies in the advantages of the authenticity-centred approach, namely, the real-life proximity, challenge and currency of texts as well as learner motivation and autonomy. Applying authentic texts as cultural mirrors enable students to profoundly reflect on cultural themes in class while developing students' language skills as they are presented with a variety of texts and examples of genuine language use. However, some of these advantages have been questioned, for example, text difficulty may demotivate students, cultural specifity of authentic text may hinder comprehension and as motivation is very subjective it may be impossible to motivate all learners at once. In order to confront and overcome these possible concerns, the present handbook provides practical guidelines and concrete do's and don'ts for materials selection.

Due to length limitations of the current study only two text types and three task types are covered in the handbook. Therefore, in the future the authenticity-centred approach applied in the handbook may well be expanded to all of the text and task types. In addition, even though the present material package acknowledges the possibilities of the application of the authenticity-centred approach for cultural exploration on all levels, the guidelines and materials provided are mainly designed for proficient English learners. Hence, by the adaptation of tasks the authenticity-centred approach could be expanded for lower levels as well. Moreover, as the tasks are yet to be tested in a classroom a trial to assess the implementation of the lesson plans in practise is recommended.

In order to highlight the intercultural role of English, the target culture selected for the present guidebook is India. However, it must be acknowledged that students may have little prior knowledge about India and its culture. The lack of background knowledge is not a hinder for the application of the material package, however, teachers may wish to deliberate whether they wish to add some general facts and figures about India before going through the task. Similarly, some students may be unsure of what exactly is meant by the term *culture,* which is why a general class discussion on the definition may be necessary. In other words, the material package only provides insights for the application of the authenticity-centred approach and a great responsibility on successful classroom application and adaptation of the tasks to specific learner needs is left to the teacher.

Although authenticity in language education has become somewhat of a trend, there is still a great deal left in the dark. There is a lack of research on the effects of the use of authentic texts for language learning. Future research on, for instance, the connection between authenticity and motivation as well as text and task authenticity perceived by students could give some very beneficial cues for new and innovative task design for the implementation of authentic texts.

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AUTHENTIC TEXTS AS CULTURAL MIRRORS

A handbook for English teachers

An outlook on India

Advanced level

30 Lesson plans

Dear teacher,

Have you ever felt that you could spice up your lessons with authentic materials but felt unsure about what to actually do with them in class?

This handbook provides practical guidelines as well as illustrative lesson plans on the application of authentic materials as cultural mirrors. The handbook adapts an authenticity-centred approach to cultural exploration in English language classes, in other words, it aims to demonstrate authentic task design around authentic texts.

Why authentic materials?
The variety of authentic materials available for classroom practises is endless. Authentic materials are particularly beneficial for the exploration of a foreign culture as they can be seen as "mirrors" to another world, environment and society. In addition, by using authentic materials in language classes students are presented with real discourse which helps to bridge the gap between the classroom and the world outside. It is easy to keep teaching materials up-to date by varying the selection of authentic resources. The real-life proximity and up-to datedness of materials and topics are valuable in keeping your students interested, challenged and motivated.

Why authentic tasks?
Incorporating authentic materials as classroom resources is the first step, but it is what you do with them that counts. The handbook presents an authenticity-centred view on task design, that is, an approach where the task is designed to match the communicative purpose of the text.

The handbook is divided into *two units* according to the communicative purpose of the texts, namely, *informative* and *engaging*. Each unit consists of practical guidelines for materials selection and task design as well as five lesson plans per task type to illustrate the authenticity-centred approach in practise.

India has been chosen as the target culture for all of the lesson plans in order to acknowledge the role of English as an international language.

The lesson plans can be directly applied on an optional culture course or as extra material on any English course dealing with India.

The lesson plans consist of three stages: a *kick-off task*, *the authentic task* and end *discussion* and *analysis* on cultural themes. The lesson plans contain ready-made handouts and layouts which makes it easy for you to directly apply the tasks in your classes. All longer extracts of texts can be found on CD 1 and CD 2.

The aim of the handbook is to inspire and encourage you to use authentic texts as cultural mirrors and to guide you in designing authentic tasks around those texts.

Laura Autio

THE DESIGN OF THE MATERIAL PACKAGE

GUIDEBOOK

LESSON PLANS

APPENDIX

CD 1	
CD 1 - 1.2 Changing the world	**CD 1- 2.5** I read, I think
CD 1 - 1.3 Tackling stereotypes	**CD 1 - 3.1** News into charts
CD 1 - 1.4 Holiday celebration	**CD 1 - 3.2** Incredible India
CD 1 - 1.5 Opinions graffiti	**CD 1 - 3.3** Creating culture capsules
CD 1 - 2.1 Newspaper headlines	**CD 1 - 3.4** Bollywood
CD 1 - 2.2 Life without an identity	**CD1 - 3.5** A taste of India
CD 1 - 2.3 The weatherman says	

CD 2	
CD 2 - 1.1 An illustration of the world	**CD 2 - 2.4** The grammar of a story
CD 2 - 1.2 I read, I feel	**CD 2 - 2.5** City-life
CD 2 - 1.3 Poetry reading	**CD 2 - 3.2** Double translation
CD 2 - 1.5 Book club-read, reflect & review	**CD 2- 3.3** Myths and legends
CD 2- 2.2 Inferring the moral lesson	**CD 2 - 3.4** LOL! Humour across cultures
CD 2- 2.3 *Mikä maa, mikä valuutta*? Culture shock!	**CD 2 - 3.5** Isn't it ironic?

GUIDEBOOK

1 TEXT AUTHENTICITY

Authentic texts are not specifically designed for language learners or to highlight a particular theme or language form, however, they are a rich resource of genuine language use and a valuable reflection of cultural themes. In addition, authentic texts are very easily available, so seize the opportunity and incorporate them into your languages classes as cultural mirrors.

Authentic texts are defined by that they have a genuine **communicative purpose**. This purpose reflects the author's original intent as well as the interaction between the text and the reader. The different communicative purposes of authentic texts are:

- Informative
- Persuasive
- Soliciting
- Instructional
- Provocative
- Interactive
- Engaging

You will find illustrative lesson plans on texts with the communicative purpose to inform (UNIT1) and engage (UNIT2).

1.1 Communicative purpose of text – informative

News articles	Headlines	Weather forecasts	Announcements
Menus	Schedules	History books	Posters
Statistics	Timetables	Maps	Telephone books
Research reports	Catalogs	Calendars	TV and movie-guides
Labels (on food boxes, clothes)	Tables and charts	Travel books	Reports

With *informative texts* this material package refers to texts that have as their principal goal to **inform** the reader in different ways.

Informative texts reflect an enormous range of cultural information ranging from obvious practical information, such as, weather, news, health, sports and television programs to more subtle reflections of cultural values, priorities and attitudes. Apart from conveying information, informative texts can be seen as effective cultural mirrors as they reflect what people like, what they hold dear and what makes them angry or laugh.

Due to the rich variation of texts available you may choose a text or realia that is suitable for your students, their language level and interests.

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR MATERIALS SELECTION

DO

- Strive to maintain the original format and preserve the authentic "look" of the texts. Removing features such as pictures from, for example, newspaper articles may restrict the contextual cues required for comprehension an analysis.

- Refresh your news article stock regularly.

- Reassure students that it is acceptable and normal not to understand everything in a text while reading it for the first time. Partial understanding is normal even for native speakers.

- Encourage students not to become anxious if text difficulty appears too challenging. Guide your students to note down all issues causing ambiguity and these can, in fact, be used for analysis of cultural differences.

- Encourage students to search for vocabulary, unfamiliar cultural terms and notions online or to discuss them together in class.

- Acknowledge the cultural complexity of authentic texts as an opportunity for cultural reflection and not as a hinder for classroom application.

- Let students select the text they are interested in, if possible.

- Ask yourself: does the text interest the student? Is it relevant to the student's needs? Does it grab the student's attention? Does it make him want to read more?

- Utilise the universality of genre for analysis of cultural differences.

- Practice and exploit strategies for newspaper-reading such as skimming and scanning.

- Provide a contemporary and up to date variety of themes.

DON'T

- Although it can be regarded as an authentic practice to search for words in dictionaries and culturally specific terms online, do not utilise authentic tasks for the highlighting of a particular grammatical feature.

- Give all the answers to the students, let them analyse, question and explore.

- Use the same text over and over - update!

- Assume that students are interested in a certain theme, let them choose the text they want to work with.

- Don't stick to one text type - variate!

- Avoid using "yesterday's news".

1.2 Communicative purpose of text- engaging

Poems	Short stories	Novels	Pictures
Jokes	Folklore	Blogs	Fairy tales
Myths and legends	Comics	Song lyrics	Online forums
Columns	Satires	Cartoons	Gossip magazines

With *engaging texts* this material package refers to texts that have as their principal goal to **attract, excite, fascinate, interest, intrigue and thrill** the reader in different ways.

Culture with a capital 'C" is often defined as literature and other "high" forms of cultural products. The relationship between a culture and its literary products can be seen as reciprocal: culture both forms and is shaped by its literary works. That is why texts with a communicative purpose to engage are such a rich resource of cultural mirrors. In addition, engaging texts are often universal, for example, fairy tales and poems exist in all cultures.

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR MATERIALS SELECTION

DO

- Exploit different types of literature.

- Consider text length and lexical choices in selecting texts for different proficiency levels.

- Utilise contemporary literature as a window to present-day perspectives.

- Highlight reading as an esthetic experience.

- Acknowledge the subjectivity of reader response and interpretation.

- Apply texts with colloquial and regional variations of language.

DON'T

- Focus on what the student can remember of the story *after* reading. Focus on *while* reading experiences.

- Treat texts with the communicative purpose to engage only as sources of information.

- Do not edit of paraphrase texts.

2 TASK AUTHENTICITY

As authentic texts are defined by their communicative purpose, it is only logical that it functions as the starting point for authentic task design. The core argument of the authenticity-centred approach is, that **by acknowledging the communicative purpose of the authentic text in the design of the task, task authenticity can ideally be guaranteed**. In other words, a poem can surely be regarded as an authentic piece of text but if it is used in the classroom for, for example, grammatical analysis, its communicative purpose to engage is not authentically recognised.

The core principle of authentic tasks is that they should be designed to:

+ reflect the original communicative purpose of the text
+ elicit engagement with the text
+ approximate real-life tasks
+ activate learners' existing knowledge of the target language and culture
+ involve purposeful interaction between the text and the reader.

When thinking about authentic tasks you may be familiar with exercises such as filling out forms and applications or completing online bookings. However, it may be questioned how authentic such tasks in fact are as students most likely do not have a genuine need for completing such activities at a particular moment in class. In contrast to attempting to mimic so called "real-life" tasks, that lose their authenticity as they are more designed for rehearsal of future practises than actual current needs, the present material package highlights genuine and subjective interaction between the text and the reader. The authenticity of tasks is guaranteed by the acknowledgement of the communicative purpose of the text.

The authentic task types are:

- Reaction
- Response
- Inference
- Transference
- Extraction
- Analysis
- Extension

The task types *response, inference* and *transference* are presented below in more detail and illustrated in the lesson plans in Unit 1 and Unit 2.

2.1   Response

Reading a text is an active and most of all interactive process. You could say that without the interaction between the text and the reader the text does not exists on its own, or at least its communicative purpose becomes meaningless. Reading a text may in fact be compared to a dialogue in spoken conversation, just the medium is different.

The task type **response**, benefits from the fact that reading is a reflective and creative process where the reader interprets the text from his/her past experiences, beliefs, expectations and assumptions. The focus is rather on what the text makes students feel, as opposed to only on what students can understand.

Reader response may either be a physical reaction, such as changing plans due to the weather forecast, or an emotive response that may range from anything from mild interest to deep engagement. Whatever form it takes, response such as expressing opinion, reflection, analysis, challenging, opposing and questioning, is an essential part of learning.

Reader response is a subjective process as the readers construct their own meanings. This is why it is important to accept multiple interpretations of a text as well as to encourage creative and critical thinking.

While reader response may seem to be a very classic and simple manner of utilising authentic texts it is also very authentic as it benefits from strategies usually applied by native speakers in interacting with texts. The main focus is on how a reader receives a text.

The processes involved in reader response are:
- expressing emotions, attitudes and opinions
- relating background knowledge and personal opinions to the text
- actively interacting with the text
- evaluating forms of narration and the cultural values implied.

2.2   Inference

Trying to find meaning in what we read can be compared to the work of a detective. We look for clues and evidence in our own experiences, our view of the world and our background knowledge and try to connect this to the ideas provided in a text. This detective work of constructing and interpreting meaning in a text is defined as *inference.*

Just like reader response, inference is always a subjective process; we may infer different things from the same text depending on our background knowledge and experience of the world. Especially text types with the communicative purpose to engage allow for a vast variety of different interpretations. Informative texts may provide a more narrow range of interpretations, but are particularly beneficial for drawing conclusions and analysis.

In the narrowest sense inference refers to finding meaning in words and phrases. Inference is also used to interpret larger concepts and themes, such as, cultural significance in authentic texts.

The processes involved in inference are:

- connecting background knowledge of the author, the publication and the theme to the interpretation of the text
- predicting and anticipating outcomes of events
- imagining and visualising themes in a text
- differentiating between fiction and reality
- making connections between text and personal experiences and attitudes
- questioning and analysing expressions in the text
- drawing conclusions.

2.3   Transference
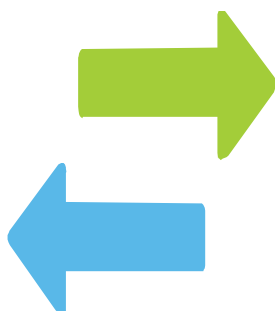
As we read a text and try to interpret its cultural cues, we evaluate what we read through the glasses of our own culture. We make cultural transferences in our minds and visualize events and themes through our own reality. This transference can be used as a valuable tool for cultural comparison.

In addition to cultural comparison, transference may also be used in transference of text type, for example, transferring poems into prose or numbers and figures into informative texts. This transference of text type allows for an analysis of language as well as expressing information gained in one format by another.

The processes involved in inference from a text are:

- indentifying the way we relate texts to the world
- transferring what we have read before to what we read
- transferring our world beliefs to what we read
- transferring cultural themes in a text to global contexts
- transferring cultural themes in a text to our own culture

LESSON PLANS

Each authentic task type is presented with five sample lesson plans in order to illustrate how the tasks may be applied in practice. You can freely adapt the lesson ideas to the needs of your own class. Each lesson consists of a *get started* task description and the *guidelines presented as steps* including actual handouts and layouts ready for classroom use.

GET STARTED

1. **Task outline**
2. **Cultural topics**
3. **Objectives**
4. **Materials and handouts included**

Handouts   Layouts

STEPS

PREPARATION FOR CLASS: This section explains if there are certain things that need to be done before class, for example, printing out materials or preparing for group work. It also defines whether the task is designed to be implemented in class or in a computer classroom.

STEP 1: The first step is a kick-off task which functions as an introduction to the actual authentic task. It orients students to what will follow by, for example, familiarising them with the topic, providing background information, raising questions and evoking interest towards the task.

TEXT(S): All longer text extracts to be found on CD1 and CD 2. You may freely vary the reading strategies applied:

Individual reading
Reading as homework/ in class
Reading aloud
Reading with a friend
Reading and explaining to a friend

STEP 2: The second step is the actual authentic task, designed around the communicative purpose of the text. The task types are: *response, inference and transference.*

STEP 3: The third step consists of discussions and analysis in order to enable students to reflect on the cultural themes that have arisen in the authentic task. This step will additionally give students the opportunity to practice their communication skills in English by allowing them to discuss their ideas and observations on the cultural issues present in the main task.