

PRESENTATION OF CULTURAL  
INFORMATION ABOUT THE UK:  
Textbooks of English from primary school  
to upper secondary school

Master's thesis  
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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Kulttuurien välinen tuntemus ja viestintä ovat yhä tärkeämmässä roolissa kielten opetuksessa, mistä myös asian korostus opetussuunnitelmissa ja muissa säädöksissä kertoo. Oppikirjoilla puolestaan on aina ollut keskeinen osa kielten opetuksessa, eivätkä sähköiset materiaalit ainakaan vielä ole haastaneet niiden asemaa. Tästä johtuen niillä on suuri vaikutusvalta oppilaisiin ja siihen tietoon, mitä he kohdekulttuureista omaksuvat.</p> <p>Aiempien tutkimusten perusteella brittikulttuurilla, jolla tässä tutkimuksessa tarkoitetaan Englantia, Skotlantia, Walesia ja Pohjois-Irlandia, on ollut suuri painoarvo englanninkielisten kulttuurien esittelyssä. Tämän takia tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli saada selville, tarjoavatko oppikirjat kattavan paketin kyseisestä kulttuurista, jota esitellään muiden kulttuurien kustannuksella. Tutkimuskohteena oli kolme kirjasarjaa, <i>Wow!</i>, <i>Spotlight</i> ja <i>Open Road</i>, yksi jokaiselta kouluasteelta eli alakoulusta, yläkoulusta ja lukiosta.</p> <p>Lähtökohtina olivat kulttuuritietouden sisällön ja muutosten lisäksi kielten opetuksen säädökset Eurooppalainen viitekehys sekä Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet ja Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet. Kulttuuritietoutta peilattiin näiden sekä Byramin ja Ammerin esittelemien kategorioiden pohjalta, ja tutkimusmenetelmänä oli sisällönanalyysi. Huolellisen tarkastelun jälkeen kirjojen kulttuuri-elementit luokiteltiin seitsemään eri kategoriaan ja tuloksia analysoitiin kirjasarjoittain.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittavat, että kulttuurien välinen viestintä on otettu kaikilla kouluasteilla melko hyvin huomioon, mikä on positiivista. Peruskoulun oppikirjoissa huomautettavaa jäi kuitenkin esimerkiksi kohdekulttuurin ja sen edustajien kritiikittömästä esittelystä, mikä oli ongelmana varsinkin <i>Wow!</i>-kirjoissa. Tällaista lähtökohtaa ei esiintynyt <i>Open Road</i> -sarjassa, mutta siinä ongelmallista oli maiden esittely, joka jäi hyvinkin puutteelliseksi. Korkeakulttuuri ja ihmisten arkielämä olivat melko hyvin tasapainossa, vaikkakin olisi suositeltavaa sisällyttää kirjoihin enemmän oikeita ihmisiä fiktiivisten hahmojen sijaan. Kaiken kaikkiaan oppilaille jää näiden kirjasarjojen jälkeen melko kattava kuva Yhdistyneestä kuningaskunnasta, joskin Englanti saa eniten huomiota, mikä saattaa vääristää mielikuvia. Lisäksi kulttuuriainesten käsittely oli jossain määrin pinnallista, joten syvyyttä olisi hyvä saada lisää.</p> <p>Tämä tutkimus oli laadullinen, mutta tulevaisuudessa olisi mielenkiintoista tutkia määrällisesti, miten esimerkiksi maininnat Englannista, Walesista, Skotlannista ja Pohjois-Irlandista jakautuvat tai onko eri kulttuurikategorioiden välillä eroja. Lisäksi voisi ottaa huomioon äänitteet ja eri murteiden esiintyvyyden niissä.</p>	
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Culture-appropriate communication is increasingly important in today's global world, where travelling and work are starting to be everyday phenomena for many people. Today culture also has a more central role in language teaching, which can be seen in the objectives of language teaching guidelines, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the national curricula. For example, in CEFR there are four key competences concerning cultural aspects: *sociocultural knowledge* (knowledge of the society and culture of the target language), *intercultural awareness* (knowledge of the differences and similarities between the culture of origin and the target culture), *intercultural skills* (mediating between the two cultures) and *sociolinguistic competence* (using the language appropriately on a social level).

An important aspect which ties language and culture together is the idea of *intercultural language teaching*. The main aim of language learning is no longer achieving perfect, native-like proficiency but rather being able to communicate in a culturally acceptable way, in other words mastering *intercultural communicative competence*. Along the process learners will come to understand the language and behaviour of the target culture by being exposed to foreign phenomena, receiving information about cultural standards and comparing them. Comparisons between cultures are important because then learners will increase their knowledge of their own culture and identity too. Intercultural language teaching also seeks to increase respect and tolerance towards others and can therefore be seen in a wider educational perspective. Thus, central aspects of the approach are the relationship between language, culture and identity (see for example Corbett 2003, Kaikkonen 2004 and Kramsch 2006).

Textbooks have a central role in language teaching. They are often the only teaching material used and therefore have a huge impact on learners. According to Luukka et al. (2008: 97), almost 90 % of foreign language teachers consider textbooks as the most important teaching material. The cultural content in textbooks has been criticised for many reasons, although there has been development into a more positive direction over the past few years. Main sources of criticism have been the one-sided selection of cultures and people. If the target language is spoken in many countries, the most powerful nations are often more visible in textbooks too. In addition, also the introduction of people includes more instances of the most dominant groups, or "exaggeration of the typical" as Byram (1989: 16) puts it. Other reasons for criticism have been the conflict-free presentation of the target culture and promoting a

tourist's viewpoint on the expense of real life interaction. Textbooks and cultural content in them will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

In the present study the focus is on the British culture. Here it means the culture of the United Kingdom, in other words of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. My definition of culture includes the high culture as well as everyday life aspects and this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. Based on previous research (see for example Pohjanen 2007, Lamponen 2012 or Lindström 2012), the British culture has a central role in textbooks used in Finland. The British culture alongside with the American one is emphasised more in contrast to other English-speaking cultures, such as the Australian or Indian cultures. Furthermore, the spelling and pronunciation models often follow the British convention. With such emphasis, the aim of the study is to find out whether the (over)exposure is worthwhile.

The role of culture in textbooks has been studied in the past few years and it was also the theme of my Bachelor's Thesis (Lindström 2012). However, in the present study the approach is more complete: textbooks throughout learners' school time, from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to upper secondary school, are examined. By studying the cultural content, it will be analysed what information of the target culture is given in each school level and whether it corresponds to the official guidelines about language teaching, discussed in Chapter 4. Attention will also be paid to the nature of the cultural content. No actual learners are interviewed and the approach is simply to discover what kind of information is expected to be learned.

The first three chapters shed light on the two main angles of the study, culture and textbooks. First, definitions of culture, instances of the relationship between language and culture and of culture in foreign language teaching are given. Second, closer attention is paid to textbooks in language teaching, including their role and types of cultural content in them. Third, cultural references in language teaching guidelines, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, National Core Curriculum for Basic Education and National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools, are outlined. Chapter 5 introduces the data and methodology in more detail, including the research questions, chosen data, method of analysis and the categories used for the analysis. The analysis section is divided into three sub chapters, one for each book series. These are further divided into seven main categories, in which the cultural content is analysed. Finally, the results are discussed and interpreted in more detail in Chapter 7. It also addresses some limitations of the study and proposes suggestions for improvements and for further research.

## 2 LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

This section focuses on the concepts of language and culture. First, an attempt is made to enlighten the complex definition of culture from the perspectives of anthropology and cultural sociology and then from angles that are more specific to the present study. Second, the relationship between language and culture is discussed for example on levels of thought, vocabulary and non-verbal communication. Third, the importance of culture in foreign language teaching is evaluated from multiple views, including the benefits of cultural instruction and intercultural learning.

### 2.1 Definitions of culture

The word culture was originally used in classical Latin in the form *cultūra* and it had to do with cultivation. In post-classical Latin it also meant rites, veneration of a person or training of the body. Since then the word has had many wider meanings in modern languages, such as worship or cult (14<sup>th</sup> century), mental development through education (17<sup>th</sup> century) or intellectual and artistic conditions of a society (18<sup>th</sup> century). In addition, in the field of biology it means the artificial growing of microorganisms or cells. In modern everyday use the word generally refers to the arts and other aspects of intellectual life. (Oxford English Dictionary: 2013.) As the examples above illustrate, we are dealing with a complex concept. Definitions of culture will first be discussed from the perspectives of anthropology and sociology to place the concept in a wider context and then the point of view is narrowed to linguistics. A thorough presentation of the concept of culture is naturally impossible within the current framework but some key theories are introduced.

The first viewpoint is that of the anthropology. The following theories are introduced by Risager (2006: 40-48). According to the theory of *classic evolutionism*, which developed from 1860s onwards, societies around the world are developing towards the same goal. In this process European societies were seen as more advanced, whereas primitive societies were described as uncivilised. Thus, according to this theory, culture and civilisation are practically the same thing. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a theory opposing the racist elements of classic evolutionism was born. In *diffusionism* the interest was in explaining the similarities between

different cultures by diffusion, for example by migration, contacts and borrowing between cultures. Another important theory is *cultural relativism*, which can be divided into three types. First, according to the *conventional anthropological view*, differences in behaviour are not due to biological differences but a result of culture-historical development. Second, according to the *ethical view*, moral values have developed through history of each culture and are therefore unique. Third, in the *epistemological view* it is claimed that different cultures have so different world views that mediation and communication between them are impossible. To oppose this view, it can be argued that people from different cultures have managed to communicate with each other despite some cultural misunderstandings. Furthermore, some more recent views of culture in the field of anthropology are for example *meaning-oriented*, *cognitive*, *structuralist* and *interpretive* concepts of culture. (Risager 2006: 40-48.) The theories above demonstrate well how complicated and multifaceted the definition of culture can be within just one discipline.

Another discipline from the point of view which culture can be viewed is sociology. Griswold (2005: 254-266) outlines the following points. From the 1980s culture became a popular subject in sociology. Research was divided into two empirically different fields that however are theoretically close to each other: *sociology of culture* and *cultural sociology*. In sociology of culture, culture is regarded as a dependent product in the formation of social processes, whereas in cultural sociology it is an independent part that shapes social outcomes. As in Griswold's article, also the notions of this paragraph can be linked to both fields of research. In the early 20th century there was an attempt to separate culture from society. The arguments for it varied but one common reason was the need to see the difference between culture and its reflection, society. However, by the end of the 20th century the division was abandoned. At present, there are certain issues that researchers of cultural sociology agree on. These are, for example, that cultural forms are involved on a global level, that organisations and industries form cultural objects and that cultural hierarchies are not based on cultural properties but produced by social hierarchies. (Griswold 2005: 254-266.) The link between culture and society will also be discussed in the following paragraphs from the perspective of language study.

On the language teaching level, as Kramsch (2006: 11) says, the attitude towards culture has changed over the years. Until World War II culture was mostly associated with literature. After the war the focus shifted to include the way of life and behaviour of society. It was seen



that those features were shared by members of the target culture. However, the concept of one language and one culture within one country does not apply anymore and it can be questioned whether it ever has applied. As Corbett (2003: 19) points out, there are always different age, gender and ethnic groups within societies. In fact, it may be that in the future young people from the western world have more in common with other young people than with older people from their own society (Kaikkonen 2004: 57). According to several studies (for example Byram 1989, Pohjanen 2007, Lamponen 2012), the aspect of diversity has often been ignored in language teaching and textbook making, as the focus has mostly been on dominant groups. This issue will be discussed further in section 3.2, where the cultural content in textbooks is covered.

In the field of language study, culture can be observed, for example, from two different angles: the *modernist perspective* and the *post-modernist perspective*. Kramsch (2006: 12-23) introduces them in the following way. First, in the *modernist perspective* language is seen spoken by a homogeneous group in a community with traditional institutions and customs. This view can be further divided into the humanistic concept and the sociolinguistic concept. The *humanistic concept* refers to the aspects that are valued, traditional and meaningful in a nation, such as literature, art and history. The concept is also known as *culture with a big C*. The *sociolinguistic concept*, or *culture with a little c*, focuses on national characteristics, for example customs, beliefs and values but also includes actions such as eating and talking. It is typical to handle them from the point of view of the dominant group thinking that there is only one language and one culture. Second, in the eyes of the *post-modernist perspective*, the modernist view of culture is too limited in the current global world. The meaning of culture is therefore widened to include discourse, identity and power. *Culture as discourse* suggests a close link between language, thought and culture where feelings, actions and values make people part of socially meaningful groups. In *culture as identity* the emphasis is shifted from culture to identity and from collective to individual, which brings a sense of power with it. (Kramsch 2006: 12-23.)

Different learning methods also define culture in a different way. Kaikkonen (1994: 72-78) presents different conceptions in the following way. In the *behaviouristic view* culture is seen as traditions, habits and rituals, in other words as behaviour patterns or behaviour rules of the target culture. In language learning information about practises and institutions is seen important, for example how a German family spends their free-time. There is, however, no

attempt to explain the phenomena. In the *functional view* culture is regarded as a social phenomenon. According to it, there are common habits within societies and the roles of them are regarded as important. The *cognitive view* stresses the processes that take place in learners, when they are learning about cultures. Culture is not something concrete but models and forms inside people's minds. It is how experiences are categorised and interpreted. The *symbolic view* sees culture as a system of symbols and meanings. Thus, foreign language learning should create an extensive system of those symbols containing linguistic features, non-verbal communication and communication strategies that are typical to the target culture. (Kaikkonen 1994: 72-78.)

As has been seen, culture is a complex concept, of which people and branches of science have different interpretations. These are some further definitions by linguists that attempt to clarify its meaning more. Kramsch (2006: 23) summarises some of the interpretations about culture to include "literate tradition or high C culture, level of civilization, way of life, ethnic membership, country of origin, nationality, ideology, religious affiliation, moral values". Culture can also be described as "socially acquired knowledge". It is something that we acquire unconsciously in the same way as we acquire our mother tongue. (Yule 2006: 216.) Thus, the influence of our surroundings and of other people is essential in developing cultural identity. Bearing that in mind, Kaikkonen (1994: 69) talks about "an agreement about values, norms, rules, expectations and meanings that guide the behaviour and interaction of members of society". Furthermore, Corbett (2003: 20) refers to a "relationship between its core beliefs and values, and the patterns of behaviour, art and communication that the group produces, -- constantly being negotiated within the group." Culture is therefore not static but dynamic as norms, beliefs and values change over time (Corbett 2003: 20.)

In the context of the present study, culture is considered to consist of both "culture with a big C" and "culture with a little c". The big C culture includes the traditional aspects of culture, such as literature, art and history, in other words the high culture. The little c culture, on the other hand, takes into account everyday life aspects, such as customs, beliefs and values. Both the big C culture and the little c culture tend to treat all of the aspects mentioned above from the point of view of the dominant group, ignoring any subcultures within the society. Thus, while adopting such a point of view, it is necessary to bear in mind that the idea of one language and one culture within one country is not realistic. There are always different

people, ideas and habits within societies. That individualistic variety is taken into account in the present study and combined with more traditional views of culture.

## **2.2 The relationship between language and culture**

Having considered the somewhat complex definitions of culture from several points of view, the focus is now shifted towards the relationship between language and culture, which can also be rather complicated. As Byram (1989: 40) reports, language is one of the ways of demonstrating cultural identity. Speaking in a certain dialect can express cultural background and attitudes in the same way as wearing certain types of clothes. He continues that while language can be paralleled to other signs of cultural identity, such as clothing, accommodation and social institutions, it differs from the other phenomena because it can be used to refer to those other realisations of culture. One of the earliest examples between language and culture is how history, stories and cultural knowledge were passed on orally (Kaikkonen 2004: 103-104). Also written language, as Kaikkonen (2004: 106) points out, was used to record cultural knowledge and to convey it to future generations. Thus, the relationship of language and culture goes way back. That long history is now illustrated by different examples.

One of the classic examples about the link between language and culture is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Yule (2006: 218-219) summarises that the hypothesis was presented by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf who claimed that a Native American tribe, the Hopi, have a different conception of the world because of their language. The Hopi people make a distinction between *animate* and *inanimate* entities in their grammar, and the category of animate includes for example clouds and stones. Thus, according to Whorf, the Hopi people think clouds and stones are living entities as suggested by their language. Yule (2006: 219), however, points out that the problem of the theory is the confusion between the linguistic classification *animate* and the biological classification *living*. In other words, linguistic categories do not make people surpass biological categories. Another argument that refutes the theory is presented by Lyons (1981: 307). His example refers to the Zuni people, another Native American tribe, who do not have a difference between the words orange and yellow in their language. When learning English they had some difficulties in remembering the particular words but they could see the difference between the colours when asked to compare

them. Thus, in its extreme form the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is invalid because the Hopi people can make a distinction between the linguistic category of *animate* and the biological category *living* and the Zuni people can perceive both colours although they do not have different words for them. Furthermore, in Russian there are two terms for blue, *sinii* (dark blue) and *goluboi* (light blue). It was found that monolingual Russian speakers differentiated between the two colours, whereas the examined young immigrants who spoke English tended to perceive blue as a single colour. (Andrews 1994, cited in Jarvis and Pavlenko 2007: 167.) So, as Lyons (1981: 307) points out, language and culture can modify people's memory, thought and language use but they do not determine them. Examples of the modifications are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Different cultures express things in a different way. Language, vocabulary and other linguistic features carry cultural meanings. For example, in some cultures communication is more direct, while in others it is polite to linger on and circle around the topic before getting to the point. (Kaikkonen 2004: 25-27.) It is therefore important to be aware of the conventions of the target culture as well as of one's own culture. A good example of this is the use of the *how are you* question in Anglo-American cultures. As Gorrell (1994: 179) writes, taking the question literally and giving a thorough report one's feelings will likely end further questions of the sort. He continues that one can also reply "wonderful", even if it is not true, or "all right", the information value of which is not very high. In other words, the phrase can be regarded as a cultural greeting rather than as a genuine question. Thus, not knowing about the convention can lead to cultural misunderstandings.

The relationship between language and culture is also present on the vocabulary level. Kaikkonen (2004: 104-105) gives an illustrating example of this. The Finnish word *kansainvaellus* resembles its German equivalent *Völkerwanderung*. The sense of the word *Völkerwanderung* is neutral or even positive, which can derive from the fact that it was the Germanic tribes who were wandering. The English counterpart *Germanic invasions*, however, has a more negative meaning as it refers to the act of invading, entering by force. Even more negative in meaning is the Italian version *invasioni barbariche*. It not only refers to an invasion but also accuses the invaders of being barbarians, uncivilized people. One reason for the term is naturally that *le invasioni barbariche* were one cause for the fall of the Roman Empire. (Kaikkonen 2004: 104-105.) However, nowadays also in Italian it is advisable to avoid the term invasion and to speak about migration (Treccani 2014). The examples present

well how language and culture are intertwined on the vocabulary level. Furthermore, in English the word *grandmother* is used for both father's mother and mother's mother, whereas for example in Norwegian there are different expressions *farmor* and *mormor* (Yule 2006: 217). Similarly in Finnish there's a distinction in the word *uncle*: father's brother is *setä* and mother's brother is *eno*. Another example of the effects of culture, as Yule (2006: 219-220) reports, is the diversity of words that Eskimos have for snow or how the speakers of Tuvaluan have come up with different words for a coconut. Cultural history, conventions and conditions therefore affect vocabulary.

Also non-verbal communication is culture specific. For example, pauses in speech can carry different meanings. In the Finnish context silence is more acceptable, whereas in certain other cultures pauses are avoided (Kaikkonen 2004: 27). Other examples, according to Kaikkonen (2004: 27), are gestures, facial expressions and body language. Germans tend to shake hands, whereas the French might give a kiss on the cheek. There are two simple hand gestures that can easily go wrong. First, the thumbs-up gesture in the UK and the USA is a sign of approval, whereas in Iran it is highly offensive and in Australia rude. Second, forming a V sign using one's index and middle finger means victory or peace but when the palm is facing the speaker, it is an offensive gesture in the UK. (Mitchell 2009: 85-87.) Those gestures are often seen done by sportsmen and sportswomen. Another interesting hand gesture is forming an "O" sign with one's thumb and index finger. In the USA it means OK, in France a zero and in Japan it refers to a coin, money (Mitchell 2009: 80). So, in a business meeting the use of that particular gesture can lead to confusion. Thus, not only spoken language but also non-verbal communication are affected by cultural norms and can therefore cause cultural misunderstandings. In fact, according to Mitchell (2009: 76), body language and other forms of non-verbal communication are more important than spoken words. He adds that when people decode a message, the role of the verbal content is 10 %, the pitch of a person's voice covers 30 % and non-verbal communication 60 %. For this reason, it would be very beneficial to understand the cultural norms behind non-verbal communication and emphasise their meaning also in language teaching. The next chapter will deal with the instances of culture in foreign language teaching in more detail.

### 2.3 Culture in foreign language teaching and learning

The following paragraphs deal with the importance of cultural content in foreign language teaching from various perspectives. Before moving on, it is essential to define some central concepts. They may seem obvious or even overlapping but are in fact more complex than they seem, so it is necessary to describe their features in more detail.

- *intercultural education* is an attempt to encourage communication and understanding between different cultures. In the language learning context it refers to the reduced focus on native-like linguistic competence, instead highlighting the process which involves the relationship of foreign language, culture and identity. (Kramsch 2006: 14-15.)
- *intercultural communication* is communication that aims at learning about the target culture and its phenomena. It includes the need to understand and explain the phenomena and the desire to accept the foreign culture. (Kaikkonen 1994: 20.)
- *intercultural competence* includes aspects such as empathy, respect and tolerance towards others and the ability to see different perspectives. Central is also being able to recognise and analyse features of one's own as well as of foreign behaviour and interaction. (Kaikkonen 2004:146-150.) Furthermore, it is also defined as knowledge of the differences and similarities between cultures, and as the ability to act in different situations according to this knowledge (Mennecke 1993: 43).
- *intercultural awareness* means having knowledge of the differences and similarities between cultures, and recognising that there is regional and social variation in every culture. It also includes understanding cultures in a wider context and the ability to adopt different perspectives. (CEFR 2001: 103.)
- *cultural awareness* consists of attitudes, with the help of which people can meet other cultures and understand them without the burden of stereotypes and prejudices. Although the aim is a tolerant and warm attitude towards foreign cultures, it does not mean ignoring a critical approach when necessary. Cultural awareness can be improved by promoting positive attitudes and by dealing with stereotypes and prejudices. (Mennecke 1993: 43-44.)

All of the definitions above are about understanding different cultures but from slightly different viewpoints. For example, some focus on the need to accept foreign phenomena and some emphasise the realisation that there is variation within cultures. Common features are also attitudes, such as curiosity, open-mindedness and abandoning prejudices. However, as the last part points out, criticism must not be forgotten altogether. It does not mean pointlessly finding faults with the target culture but rather being able to see the situation without rose-tinted glasses. As will be seen in sections 3.2 and 3.3, the criticism-free handling of target cultures has been a problem in some textbooks. While some textbook makers have thought that presenting the target culture as an idyll creates positive attitudes in learners, it leaves them with an insufficient and incorrect image of the target culture. Some weaknesses also often make texts and characters more interesting and therefore appeal more to learners.

Interaction between cultures is not a new phenomenon; different cultures have always been in contact with each other. Foreign customs and mentalities have also been examined and taught before. Nevertheless, in the modern world mobility makes cultural interaction a great deal easier than ever before. In addition, many countries are becoming more and more multicultural. However, it must be borne in mind that not every country is in the same position in terms of for example travelling possibilities. (Kaikkonen 2004: 38-39.) Also the role of foreign language teaching varies in different countries. Countries whose own language is not widely used tend to invest in foreign language teaching more than countries whose languages have greater influence (Kaikkonen 2004: 132). Consequently, supposing that cultural elements are well embedded in language teaching, learners from countries where language teaching is appreciated can become culturally more skilful than their monolingual peers, even if their language proficiency does not match the native-like level. (Kramsch 1998, cited in Corbett 2003: 40). Language teaching and cultural elements in it are now considered from different points of view.

According to Kaikkonen (1994: 20-21), it is sometimes claimed that cultural instruction is only important, when cultures differ from each other greatly. He disagrees and says that even cultures that are close to each other can be very different. He continues that especially phenomena that appear similar around the world, such as eating, family or living conditions, can vary significantly in different cultures. Let us consider those three examples and their different realisations from my own experiences. First, the simple concept of having tea can be confusing in meaning. For example, in the Finnish context it mainly refers to drinking a cup

of tea, whereas in Britain it can mean the main evening meal, dinner. Also the Japanese or African tea drinking traditions bring different elements and meanings with them. Second, when Finns talk about family, it usually refers to the immediate family: children and parents who live under the same roof. In for example Spain or Portugal the meaning can be extended to include grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. Third, when a Finn and a German picture what a town looks like, the outcome is no doubt different because of cultural, historical and urban reasons. Although the differences in the examples above are also linked to the word level, the effect of culture is also present. They attempt to illustrate how culture can affect even the simplest aspects of life that are often taken for granted and it therefore justifies the need for cultural instruction.

As discussed above, cultural differences can also be seen in everyday aspects that appear to be similar around the world. However, in the language teaching context, as Kaikkonen (1994: 19) points out, the knowledge about the target culture has often been understood as knowledge about high culture and political systems. Also the focus on national traits has typically a high emphasis in language teaching. Kramsch (1993: 206) admits that national characteristics are not unimportant but they cannot form the basis of cultural knowledge. For example, age, regional and ethnical backgrounds also determine features of people. As Byram (1989: 16-17) points out, one-sided presentation of the target culture can lead to stereotypes and in addition is not appealing for learners. These issues will be discussed in greater detail in section 3.2.

Kramsch (1993: 207-208) talks about "cultural reality" and "cultural imagination". Cultural imagination is a result of discourses in for example literature and media that have been formed over centuries. Cultural imagination affects how people see and perceive themselves and others, and creates stereotypes. Thus, teaching of culture is dealing with a phenomenon where reality and myths contradict each other. She sees learning of culture as a "kaleidoscope", where four different reflections are constantly encountering each other. These reflections are 1) culture of origin's perception of self, 2) culture of origin's perception of others, 3) foreign culture's perception of self and 4) foreign culture's perception of others. These reflections of self and others can be illustrated with a following example about open and closed doors (Moeller and Liedloff 1979, cited in Kramsch 1993: 209). The example is based on an observation where in an office environment Germans tend to keep their doors closed, whereas Americans keep them open. From the American point of view, Americans see



their open doors are a sign of friendliness and closed doors are interpreted as examples of German discipline and rudeness. Germans, however, consider closed doors as a sign of order and respect, whereas open doors refer to American disorder and disrespect. (Moeller and Liedloff 1979, cited in Kramersch 1993: 209). Thus, simple cultural differences can lead to a cycle of misinterpretations. Acquiring cultural knowledge can help break that cycle and language teaching is an important tool for it.

As Byram (1989: 18) points out, learners are not blank canvases in terms of culture; they already have cultural knowledge about their own culture. In fact, the relationship between the target culture and culture of origin is essential when learning about cultures. Kramersch (1993: 205) reports that comprehension of the foreign culture requires reflection on both the target culture and culture of origin. Kaikkonen (2004: 41) agrees with her stating that recognising one's own cultural identity is important because it is impossible to understand a foreign culture without knowing one's own. He continues (2004: 168-169) that when learners' knowledge about the target language and culture is expanded, they also learn about their own culture. In the culture of origin many features of behaviour are automatic and taken for granted. Learning about foreign culture conventions therefore mirrors the features of the culture of origin and makes them visible. (Kaikkonen 2004: 168-169.)

The link between culture of origin and target culture can also be problematic. According to Byram (1989: 18), learners often consider their own culture to be the norm, the right and natural one, which may lead them to see other cultures as wrong. He continues that these beliefs, however, should not be ignored in language teaching but discussed directly. Also Kaikkonen (2004: 168) points out that the reflection on stereotypes and conceptions about right and wrong is essential when encountering foreign cultures. He also reminds us that misunderstandings and wrong interpretations are a natural part of the learning process. Byram (1989: 20-21) suggests that learners should be provided with an insider's view to the target culture. The target culture should be seen as natural and normal as the culture of origin. He also states that tolerance is achieved when learners manage to change their point of view and see the culture of origin as something strange compared to the target culture, even if the change of heart was brief.

There is sometimes an assumption that mere exposure to language and language teaching automatically results in cultural learning (Byram 1989: 16). This claim has been contradicted

for example by Tsou (2005), who studied the effects of cultural instruction. The study and its results will be discussed in greater detail later on in this section. It is true that language and culture are intertwined in numerous ways as was seen in section 2.2. Even the grammar-translation method, as Byram (1989: 100) points out, is ultimately concerned with cultural meanings because of its attention to linguistic details. However, to assume that cultural knowledge is an automatic by-product of language learning is too optimistic. One must remember that young learners do not yet have a similar kind of understanding about their own culture as adults (Byram 1989: 100). Thus, it cannot be expected that they understand obscure hints about cultural qualities let alone cultural differences that appear on the word level. This leads to two conclusions. First, the focus on culture in foreign language teaching should get more emphasis. Second, learners ought to get more guidance of how to interpret cultural material.

Learning about cultures is beneficial in many ways. As was discussed earlier, reflection on both target culture and culture of origin is an essential part in the process of learning about cultures. According to Kaikkonen (1994: 82), this reflection of own actions, values and norms, and comparing them to others improves learners' self-knowledge and results in better understanding of their own behaviour. Learners' view of thinking is also expanded when they learn not only about the way of life abroad but also about the underlying values and meanings of the culture (Byram and Esarte-Sarries 1991: 179-180). Having cultural knowledge also promotes the ability to live in multicultural societies, the respect towards diversity and the curiousness about differences in behaviour (Kaikkonen 2004: 137), as well as aims at decreasing prejudices and encourages tolerance (Byram 1989: 15). Furthermore, in a larger context, intercultural competence gives a chance for international harmony (Byram 1993: 16). Moreover, the benefits do not only occur on the level of thought and attitudes. As Byram (1989: 57) points out, cultural knowledge also makes learners better users of the language in question.

An illustrating example about the benefits of culture teaching can be seen in a study by Tsou (2005). The integration of culture teaching in language classrooms was examined and the study was conducted during one semester in a Taiwanese primary school, where two groups of altogether 54 learners received ten 20-minute lessons of cultural teaching by a special instructor and two control groups of altogether 55 learners received none. The lessons consisted of finding similarities and differences between the culture of origin and the target

culture. This was followed by presentation of images or objects related to the target culture, further discussion and other activities, such as mini-dramas. The topics were considered from the viewpoint of a 10-year-old Taiwanese boy Joe, who was studying in the USA. The themes covered for example school, table manners, social manners and festivals. Thus, the learners got to experience what it is like to live and study in the USA. Quite naturally the experimental group learners performed better in a cultural knowledge test than their peers in the control groups. The results also showed that the language proficiency of the learners in the experimental groups improved more than of those in the control groups. Furthermore, the learners who received cultural instruction had more interest towards language learning. In other words, the cultural content improved their motivation. In addition to learning more about the target culture, learners also improved their understanding about their own culture. This, as has been discussed earlier, is one of the key elements in culture learning. According to the study, closer focus on cultural content has no doubt a positive influence on language learning on many levels. Tsou (2005: 51) also points out that culture lessons are easily implemented in classrooms since traditional language skills, reading, writing, listening and speaking, can be practiced simultaneously.

Finally, in the context of culture in language teaching it is essential to discuss the teaching approach that accentuates culture in more detail. In intercultural language teaching approaches intercultural knowledge is a central feature. The main aim is not achieving native-speaker proficiency but being able to communicate and act in a culturally appropriate manner. (Corbett 2003: 30.) In other words, the ultimate goal is *intercultural communicative competence*, which means being able to understand the language and behaviour of the target culture (Corbett 2003: 2). However, as Corbett continues, this does not mean that language proficiency is irrelevant; language skills are still considered important but intercultural understanding is brought to the same level with them. In fact, learners' language and culture knowledge can make them even more skilful than monolingual native speakers (Kramsch 1998, cited in Corbett 2003: 40). This observation is one of the key elements of intercultural learning and an important incentive to focus on cultural aspects in foreign language teaching.

Kaikkonen (1994: 134-135) lists stages of intercultural learning that should be taken into account in foreign language teaching: 1) exposing learners to foreign phenomena, 2) guiding learners to make observations about the target culture and its phenomena and comparing them with their culture of origin and 3) receiving information about cultural standards and

comparing them. These stages act as a base for intercultural learning and lead to successful communication with foreign culture representatives. However, as Kaikkonen (1994: 135) points out, it must be borne in mind that the process is lengthy. While speaking about the benefits of intercultural learning, Corbett (2003: 34) admits that language education does not play an important role outside school for every learner but he reminds that intercultural education's ability to enrich language teaching results in better understanding of cultures and therefore contributes to wider educational aims. The reasons for intercultural learning can also be seen in a larger context than language learning, as is illustrated by Kaikkonen (2004: 40):

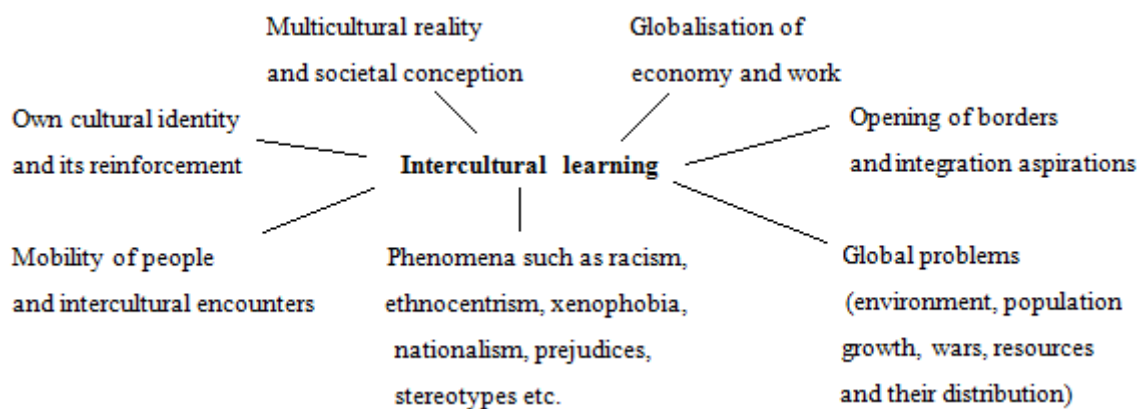


Figure 1. The necessity of intercultural learning (Kaikkonen 2004: 40)

### 3 TEXTBOOKS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

The importance of language textbooks cannot be denied. Both teachers and learners strongly rely on them and they are often the main if not the only source of teaching material. Because of their central role, textbooks have a great influence on learners and on their opinions about the target language and target culture. Thus, their content is not insignificant. In this section the role of textbooks will be considered from three points of view. First, some factors affecting textbooks are mentioned, the popularity of textbooks is discussed and some general criticism towards them is introduced. Second, the cultural content in textbooks is reviewed by presenting criticism, evaluation criteria and improvement suggestions. Finally, some previous studies about the cultural content in textbooks are summarised.

### 3.1 The role of textbooks at school

Textbooks are not produced in a vacuum. Instead, there are many factors that are impacting them. Linguistic opinions about teaching and learning affect the contents of curricula, teacher training and therefore also teaching materials (Kaikkonen 2004: 163-164). Thus, they have an influence on the actual teaching and learning processes. In addition, also textbook traditions and past views towards language learning are not insignificant (Elomaa 2009: 61). Even the influence of the grammar-translation method was visible long after its popularity sank, as Byram (1989: 10) points out, and some instances of it can surely be seen in today's teaching materials as well. As Kaikkonen (2004: 166) reminds us, these large factors on the background prevent a quick change in language teaching. Furthermore, in the Finnish context another factor affecting teaching are the matriculation examinations of the general upper secondary school. They create their demands for language teaching and therefore for teaching materials. (Kaikkonen 2004: 166.)

In the context of foreign language teaching there is a strong dependency on teaching materials that are developed by others, in other words textbooks. They function as a general framework and provide teachers and learners with a safe set of exercises and language material. (Kaikkonen 1994: 5-6.) Luukka et al. (2008) have studied literacy practices in schools and in free time and they also interviewed foreign language teachers about textbooks. The results show the strong position that textbooks have in foreign language teaching in Finland. According to the study, 70 % of foreign language teachers think that textbooks have a *great* influence on their aims and 68 % *often* follow the aims suggested by textbooks (Luukka et al. 2008: 67-71). In addition, 98 % *often* use textbooks in teaching and 50 % *agree* and 39 % *partially agree* that textbooks are the most important teaching material. Moreover, when answering to "all the necessary teaching material can be found in textbooks", 37 % of foreign language teachers *agreed* or *partially agreed* with the statement. (Luukka et al. 2008: 94-98.) The percentages are rather high and demonstrate well the dependence on textbooks. Such dependence therefore gives reason for the analysis of textbooks since they guide foreign language teaching so strongly.

Elomaa (2009: 31) lists some reasons for the popularity of textbooks. When an extensive textbook is available, teachers do not have the need to make their own materials. The reliance on textbooks may be because teachers do not have the time or abilities to design their own

materials, or not enough guidance to use other types of teaching aids, such as electronic materials. Furthermore, as Elomaa (2009: 31) explains, the use of electronic materials can be complicated because of the lack of appropriate equipment or because it would require too much time to move between the classroom and computer room. Moreover, according to Elomaa (2009: 31), it is not only the teachers who rely on textbooks: also learners value them because they seem to be regarded as more long-lasting than for example electronic materials and it is easy to turn to them later on. This is also given statistical support by Luukka et al. (2008: 97) who found out that only 20 % of learners disagree with the statement "the textbook is the most important teaching material in foreign languages".

The lack of interest in learners and learning processes has been criticised in textbook making. Elomaa (2009: 48-49) discusses the "top to bottom model" of textbook making, where educational guidelines decide *what* to teach, textbook makers and teachers *how* to teach, whereas learners are the object of the process but do not have say in the actual planning. Tomlinson (2008: 7) is along the same lines of thought when he writes that materials are developed from the point of view of buyers, in other words administrators and teachers, and not from the point of view of learners. He admits that many books focus on the educational side as well but claims that the main motivation of publishers is to make money. In a survey he carried out many teachers admitted that they chose the best-selling textbook series because "it was designed to minimize their lesson preparation". However, some felt guilty because it was not attractive to learners. Furthermore, Tomlinson (2008: 3) argues that textbooks are designed to teach English rather than to learn it. To accentuate the need of the shift from teaching to learning, he chooses to use the term "language learning materials" instead of "language teaching materials". In addition, Bleich (1999: 16, 34) accuses the "textbook genre" of using a declarative and directive tone. According to him, textbooks seldom challenge learners to question the contents of the books or encourage them to use their own knowledge or experiences. Instead, textbooks simply tell learners what to do in order to learn something.

### **3.2 Cultural content in textbooks**

Choosing a certain starting point for language teaching is a matter of prestige and habitual conventions. In English as a foreign language British English is often given more credit than other variants. Similarly, German teaching tends to accentuate North German dialects and

French teaching the French context. (Kaikkonen 1994: 71.) In the Finnish context spelling and pronunciation patterns in textbooks follow mostly the British conventions, unless the texts specifically focus on other countries, such as the USA or Australia. Reasons for this can probably be found in history; British English might be considered to present the traditional and original variant of English. In the Finnish context it might also be the question of geographical proximity and past habits. Despite the lexical and phonological reliance on Britain, also the American culture is given a great deal of emphasis in textbooks, as will be discussed later on.

The role of cultural content in textbooks has encountered criticism from many directions. One of the reasons for criticism is the conflict-free presentation of the target culture. Gray (2000: 274) talks about a "cultural promise" and an "ambassadorial aspect" that are embedded in textbooks. According to him, textbooks seem to promise learners an entry to a community that is often presented in an idealised way and he parallels textbooks with commodities such as Coca Cola and Levi's jeans. Although he refers to textbooks that are written in the UK and the United States about the countries in question, it can also be applied to other textbooks. For example Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991) noticed how a French textbook presented France as a harmonious place without any negative aspects.

Another source for criticism is the "exaggeration of the typical", as Byram (1989: 16) puts it. By that he means that the focus is on the main differences between the target culture and the culture of origin and how this one-sided presentation can reinforce stereotypes. This type of listing of random facts about "typical" families with simple information about history and geography can hardly broaden anyone's view about other cultures (Byram 1989: 20). Another questionable and common feature in textbooks is the lack of interpretation. Facts are mentioned and described but not interpreted or explained further (Byram 1989: 54). However, the move to the level of interpretation would be highly beneficial in trying to understand foreign languages, customs and ways of thinking. In the Finnish context one of the most common flaws is the focus on British and American cultures, while ignoring other English-speaking cultures (Pohjanen 2007, Lamponen 2012 and Lindström 2012).

Byram (1993: 34-38) suggests eight cultural categories that should be included in textbooks and says they should to be regarded as a "minimum content list" in textbook making. The list is made for textbooks of German, so some features, such as events of German history, are not

relevant for the present study and were left out. A modified version of the list will be used in the actual analysis.

- 1) *social identity and social groups*: social groups, occupational groups, regional identity including dialects, sub-cultures, ethnic and cultural minorities
- 2) *social interactions*: greetings (formal, informal, verbal and non-verbal), behaviour at meals, gender roles and relationships, taboos
- 3) *belief and behaviour*: explaining meanings behind obvious actions, such as going to school or going to church and introducing for example the use of transport or restaurant behaviour
- 4) *social and political institutions*: government, elections, health care, law and order, trade-unions
- 5) *socialisation and life-cycle*: education, family, free-time, relationships between generations, ceremonies
- 6) *national history*
- 7) *national geography*: distribution of population, areas of industrialisation, neighbouring countries, topography and climate
- 8) *stereotypes and national identity*: explanation of stereotypes, information on auto-stereotypes, symbols of national stereotypes and their meanings

Another categorisation of cultural information in textbooks is introduced by Ammer (1999: 34-35). His categorisation includes six different categories. They are: 1) *land and nation* including international relationships, geography and history, 2) *state and politics* including type of state, organs of the state, politics and education system and the relationship of the state and the citizen, 3) *economy*, 4) *society*, 5) *art and science* including science, technology and art and 6) *everyday life* including work, family, living, food and drink, free-time and characteristics of people. These aspects were also taken into account in the categorisation used in the present study.

Ammer also (1999: 37-38) introduces five different ways in which the target culture can be represented. First, in *typical-imitating* presentation the texts describe different situations but do not give background information or criticism. Instead, they tend to imitate the reality. Second, the *normative-documentary* presentation aims to present the target culture in an exact and objective light. This often includes the use of numbers, statistics and authentic texts. Third, *affirmative-exclamative* view presents unusual phenomena. These types of texts show



learners remarkable and astonishing features about the target culture. Fourth, the *problem-orientated* presentation shows problems of the target culture, makes statements about them, shows different points of view and proposes solutions. Fifth, in *critical-emancipatory* presentation the emphasis is on clashes of interest in different situations. The situations are presented from the point of view of different measures, conditions and developments and they lead to criticism.

There are several suggestions of how to improve the quality of cultural information. Learners come from different social classes and backgrounds and this versatility should also be visible in textbooks. Instead of focusing on the dominant groups and promoting traditional gender and family roles, a wider range of people should be introduced. (Byram 1989: 54.) Furthermore, in order to improve intercultural understanding it is important to present the target culture in a realistic way. Choosing to present only the positive aspects of a certain country is not enough, because learners need to see the culture from a realistic point of view and from the point of view of the people from the target culture (Byram and Esarte-Sarries 1991: 180). Ignoring social problems and other kinds of negative aspects is not only unrealistic but also unattractive to learners. To achieve the level of realism is also dependent on abandoning facts for tourists because learners want to know more than just how to survive in travel situations. (Byram 1989: 17.) Guest (2002: 157) takes the thought of realism even further by emphasising the role of individuals. He argues that the focus should be on individuals rather than cultures because it is closer to real world. To support his argument he explains that when meeting people from our own culture, we interpret that their behaviour derives from their personalities and not from the culture. However, when we meet a foreigner, we are more prone to use cultural stereotypes to explain things such as rudeness or generosity.

Finally, a summary of how to promote intercultural understanding in textbooks is presented by Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991: 183-184):

- the cultural content should be considered as important as grammar and vocabulary
- the tourist viewpoint must be expanded to a viewpoint that combines intercultural competence and sociolinguistic competence
- foreign culture must be presented in a realistic light, including credible characters, wide range of social interactions as well as information about the history and geography

- representation of socio-political issues in the target culture and also between the target culture and the culture of origin
- taking into account the influences learners meet outside the classroom
- reflection on the foreign culture
- a possibility to visit the foreign country with preparation beforehand and reflection afterwards

All of the factors mentioned by Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991), apart from the last one, could be easily implemented in textbooks and language teaching. One of the problems of cultural content is that it has often been regarded as extra material and not as central as other aspects of language learning. Fortunately the growing emphasis of intercultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence is changing that: one cannot master a language or communicate properly without understanding the culture on the background. Bearing that in mind, it is no longer enough to teach learners to survive in the foreign culture as tourists. Also unrealistic and criticism-free handling of the target culture is insufficient when trying to meet today's language learning goals. Furthermore, especially in terms of English, learners encounter the language also outside the classroom. These encounters can happen for example via television and music, game playing or chatting with foreign friends online. They too are important in language and culture learning and should not be ignored in the classroom or textbooks. The final factor, a possibility to visit the target country, might be the most beneficial one in terms of intercultural understanding but naturally contains various obstacles, such as economic factors. However, getting the opportunity to experience the target culture in real life would no doubt clarify numerous features, improve language skills and increase learners' motivation. But also making the cultural content of textbooks interesting, appealing and realistic can act as a motivation boost.

### **3.3 Previous studies about cultural content in textbooks**

Textbooks have been widely studied in the past years also in Finland. The angles of approach vary from gender roles (see for example Piironen 2004) to taboo content (see for example Keturi and Lehmonen 2012). Also the role of cultural content in textbooks has been analysed but mainly in the context of secondary and upper secondary education. I shall now present four textbook studies, three latter of which focus on textbooks in Finland.

Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991) analysed a textbook of French in terms of its cultural content. The book series is called *Action! Graded French* and it is aimed at British learners between 11 and 16 years (Byram 1989: 122). Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991: 174-182) discovered certain flaws in the book series. First, it presents a very positive image of France and the French. Nice people, interesting places and fun activities are introduced. This is actually the writer's intention; he says he wants to create a positive attitude towards the French people and French-speaking countries. However, as Byram (1989: 17) points out, such presentation lacks realism and is not appealing to learners, who would rather read about real people and real life. Another factor in which the goal of realism is not fulfilled is that the characters have no personalities, emotions or beliefs. Second, examples of linguistic use and social context are almost entirely limited to touristic interactions: learners learn how to order food, take the bus and ask for advice. While such skills are important for tourists, language education should aim higher than that. Third, the information value remains distant. Interesting facts, such as how French bread is flown to Tokyo every day, are introduced but they are not given a proper context and therefore remain unconnected. There is some information about francophone countries and regional cooking but little information about history. No information about socio-political problems is given. This problem is linked to the first point where France is presented as an idyll. Thus, the "image of social harmony is not interrupted by reference to social problems" (Byram 1991: 182).

The role of cultural content in textbooks used in Finland has also been examined. Common flaws in Finnish textbooks of English have typically been the focus on British and American cultures and the amount of touristic information. These aspects were also observed by Pohjanen (2007), who studied two series of secondary school textbooks, *The News Headlines* and *Key English*. She discovered that the introduction of English-speaking countries was very uneven because the main emphasis was on the UK and on the USA. While other countries and ethnic groups are presented briefly, in *The News Headlines* there was no mention of dialects at all, which is an alarming defect. Furthermore, she states that while learners are provided with information about the target cultures, the information does not sufficiently promote intercultural learning but consists mostly of facts that are useful for tourists. Despite the touristic approach none of the books had proper maps of the target countries, which seems rather interesting. The general atmosphere seems to be mentioning facts and presenting information but not discussing it further or allowing learners to make comparisons.

Lamponen's study (2012) focused on more recent upper secondary school textbooks. According to her observations, the quality of cultural content in general has improved after Pohjanen's study (2007). Lamponen studied textbooks of English and Swedish, *Open Road* and *Galleri*, which made it possible to compare the somewhat different approaches between the two languages. *Galleri* dealt with cultural content in a more detailed manner and included more aspects of daily life, whereas *Open Road* seemed to lack a deeper perspective. In both series learners were able to practise suitable communication in different social situations. *Open Road* included information about formal talk and active listening, the knowledge which can help decrease cultural misunderstandings. This seems to be a step forward from the older books and culture appropriate communication is also one of the goals of the National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools (2003). Another positive development is that neither of the series promoted a tourist's point of view but had a genuine attempt to focus on everyday lives of people. However, a feature that has not changed in *Open Road* is that the main emphasis is still on the American and British cultures. Because of this unfortunate fact learners are not able to understand the world of English-speaking countries in its full context let alone the role of English as a lingua franca.

A different type of perspective towards textbooks is presented in Korpela's study (2007), where she examined what Finnish 9<sup>th</sup> graders think about their English textbooks. Although the study was not conducted from the point of view of cultural content, it is mentioned in learners' answers. In general, learners appreciated texts that they could relate themselves with, in other words texts that were told from the perspective of young people. They also preferred authentic material and texts about everyday life. These opinions are positive in terms of cultural understanding because such texts will help learners to make comparisons between different ways of life and through reflection they will learn more about the culture of origin and the target culture. The majority of learners wanted to have texts about both Finland and the target culture. This is also the suggestion of the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2004), so learners and curricula designers seem to see eye to eye in that aspect. Moreover, in their dream textbooks learners would include more global topics and information about other cultures. They would also like to read more about non-native people in different countries and about young people making friends across the world. The answers show that learners do care about the cultural content in textbooks and that the new guidelines are on the right path for instance about authentic texts and everyday life topics.

## 4 CULTURE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING GUIDELINES

In this chapter the focus is on the general language teaching guideline Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and on the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education and the National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools. Their views towards culture in language teaching are introduced and compared. Finally, the section is concluded with a discussion about the relationship between language teaching guidelines and textbooks.

### 4.1 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, from now on abbreviated as CEFR, is the Council of Europe's general handbook for language educators and governments in Europe. It provides syllabi, curricula and textbooks with a basic framework (CEFR 2001: 1) and is therefore the starting point to the curricula planning also in Finland. CEFR covers different areas of skills and knowledge that learners need in order to master a certain language. It also introduces levels of proficiency with the help of which learners' development can be monitored. The common description of language proficiency levels makes it easier to meet and compare different qualifications and it therefore increases the mobility across Europe. Furthermore, the transparency of courses and syllabi strengthens international co-operation. (CEFR 2001: 1.)

CEFR introduces central skills that are essential in learning languages and cultures. First, *sociocultural knowledge*, as its name implies, refers to the knowledge of the society and culture of the target language. It includes various aspects such as everyday living (e.g. food and drink, hobbies and sport), values and beliefs (e.g. national identity, religion and humour), social conventions (e.g. punctuality, fashion and taboos) and body language. These aspects may be different from the culture of origin and can be influenced by stereotypes. (CEFR 102-103.)

Second, *intercultural awareness* means having knowledge of the differences and similarities between the culture of origin and the target culture. Furthermore, learners should understand that there is regional and social variation in both cultures. In addition to the two cultures learners should also know about a wider range of cultures in order to understand the cultural context better. Intercultural awareness also includes the aspect that learners should be aware of how each culture is seen from the perspective of the other. This includes the knowledge of common stereotypes. (CEFR 2001: 103.) Linked to intercultural awareness are *intercultural skills*. These skills cover the following areas:

- the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other
- cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures
- the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations
- the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships (CEFR 2001: 104-105)

Third, *sociolinguistic competence* refers to the knowledge and skills that are needed in order to use the language appropriately on a social level. Sociocultural and sociolinguistic competences have common aspects but there are certain elements that are precisely linked to sociolinguistic competence, such as politeness conventions, linguistic markers of social relations and dialect and accent. What makes them important is that they vary from one culture to another. Politeness conventions include aspects such as the appropriate use of words like 'thank you' and 'please', showing interest in another person or offering hospitality. Being very culture specific they can cause cultural misunderstandings. Linguistic markers of social relations differ from one culture to another for example according to how well one knows the conversation partner. They include the use and choice of greetings and address forms but also expletives. Dialect and accent can help identify the speaker's social class, occupation and educational level. A part of sociolinguistic competence is being able to recognise different dialects and aspects, as well as knowing about their connotations. (CEFR 2001: 118-121.) Different competence levels of sociolinguistic appropriateness are introduced below:

Table 1. Sociolinguistic appropriateness (CEFR 2001: 122)

<b>SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROPRIATENESS</b>	
<b>C2</b>	<p><i>Has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative levels of meaning.</i></p> <p><i>Appreciates fully the sociolinguistic and sociocultural implications of language used by native speakers and can react accordingly.</i></p> <p><i>Can mediate effectively between speakers of the target language and that of his/her community of origin taking account of sociocultural and sociolinguistic differences.</i></p>
<b>C1</b>	<p><i>Can recognise a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts; may, however, need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar.</i></p> <p><i>Can follow films employing a considerable degree of slang and idiomatic usage.</i></p> <p><i>Can use language flexibly and effectively for social purposes, including emotional, allusive and joking usage.</i></p>
<b>B2</b>	<p><i>Can express him or herself confidently, clearly and politely in a formal or informal register, appropriate to the situation and person(s) concerned.</i></p> <p><i>Can with some effort keep up with and contribute to group discussions even when speech is fast and colloquial.</i></p> <p><i>Can sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker.</i></p> <p><i>Can express him or herself appropriately in situations and avoid crass errors of formulation.</i></p>
<b>B1</b>	<p><i>Can perform and respond to a wide range of language functions, using their most common exponents in a neutral register.</i></p> <p><i>Is aware of the salient politeness conventions and acts appropriately.</i></p> <p><i>Is aware of, and looks out for signs of, the most significant differences between the customs, usages, attitudes, values and beliefs prevalent in the community concerned and those of his or her own.</i></p>
<b>A2</b>	<p><i>Can perform and respond to basic language functions, such as information exchange and requests and express opinions and attitudes in a simple way.</i></p> <p><i>Can socialise simply but effectively using the simplest common expressions and following basic routines.</i></p>

	<i>Can handle very short social exchanges, using everyday polite forms of greeting and address. Can make and respond to invitations, suggestions, apologies, etc.</i>
<b>A1</b>	<i>Can establish basic social contact by using the simplest everyday polite forms of: greetings and farewell; introductions; saying please, thank you, sorry, etc.</i>

## 4.2 National Core Curriculum for Basic Education

The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2004 in Finland, from now on referred to as NCCBE 2004, presents a general and a national framework for local curricula. It covers the values, missions and structures of basic education also referring to learning environments and pupil welfare. In this chapter the focus is only on the mentions of culture, first on a general level and then according to different grades. The descriptions are based on the guidelines of English as a foreign language. In the context of the current study it means a compulsory foreign language that usually begins in the third grade. According to NCCBE (2004: 138), one of the aims of foreign language teaching is to ensure that learners understand and appreciate foreign cultures. Furthermore, learning a foreign language combines cultural knowledge and language skills. In regard to a first foreign language, learners' intercultural competence begins to develop gradually.

During grades 3 - 6 the language proficiency starts to develop from themes that are close to learners. Learners should become conscious of the fact that while languages and cultures are different, they are not unequal. (NCCBE 2004: 139.) To correspond to this, teaching contents include subject areas of the culture of origin but also of the target culture. These areas cover for example the school environment, hobbies and different living environments. It is also possible to cover the target culture in Finland. (NCCBE 2004: 140.) In regard to cultural skills, the following points are highlighted:

The pupils will:

- get to know the culture of the target language and will gain a preliminary introduction to the similarities and differences between that culture and Finnish culture
- learn to communicate with representatives of the target language culture in everyday situations, in a manner natural to that culture (NCCBE 2004: 139)

By the end of the 6th grade, in terms of cultural knowledge, learners should recognise central aspects of the culture of origin and the target culture, as well as the main differences and



similarities between them. Learners should also be able to communicate with a representative of the target culture on an everyday level. (NCCBE 2004: 141.) The language proficiency of learners is described in terms of listening comprehension, text comprehension, speech and writing. Cultural knowledge is not included on the scale. However, the expected command of language according to the four elements mentioned above falls between A1.3 and A2.1. (NCCBE 2004: 140.) The sociolinguistic appropriateness table by CEFR (2001: 122) describes that learners of those levels should be capable of basic and simple language use. In terms of cultural aspects the use of appropriate forms of greeting and address can be picked up.

Table 2. Sociolinguistic appropriateness (CEFR 2001: 122)

<b>A2</b>	<p><i>Can perform and respond to basic language functions, such as information exchange and requests and express opinions and attitudes in a simple way.</i></p> <p><i>Can socialise simply but effectively using the simplest common expressions and following basic routines.</i></p>
<b>A1</b>	<p><i>Can handle very short social exchanges, using everyday polite forms of greeting and address. Can make and respond to invitations, suggestions, apologies, etc.</i></p> <p><i>Can establish basic social contact by using the simplest everyday polite forms of: greetings and farewell; introductions; saying please, thank you, sorry, etc.</i></p>

During grades 7 - 9 the language skills develop further and also the capability to perform according to the target culture is deepened (NCCBE 2004: 141-142). In addition to culture appropriate communication in everyday situations new aspects are introduced. First, learners should know more about the target culture and understand it by comparing it to the culture of origin. Second, the relationship between values and culture is brought up. Third, differences between the English variants are mentioned. The topic range is still handled from the viewpoint of the culture of origin and the target culture, but more themes, such as travel, public services and media, are added. The cultural skills to be mastered are as follows:

The pupils will:

- get to know the target culture and come to understand it against their own cultural background
- learn to communicate and act in normal day-to-day situations in a manner acceptable in the subject culture

- learn to be aware of the culturally bound nature of values (NCCBE 2004: 142)

In addition to the factors mentioned above, by the end of the ninth grade learners should also know about the society and history of the target culture. Listening comprehension, text comprehension, speaking and writing skills are placed between A2.2 and B1.1. In the sociolinguistic appropriateness table by CEFR (2001: 122) the corresponding levels cover basic and neutral communication, the ability to use essential politeness conventions and the knowledge of central differences between customs, values and beliefs. Those features combine mastering both linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Table 3. Sociolinguistic appropriateness (CEFR 2001: 122)

<b>B1</b>	<p><i>Can perform and respond to a wide range of language functions, using their most common exponents in a neutral register.</i></p> <p><i>Is aware of the salient politeness conventions and acts appropriately.</i></p> <p><i>Is aware of, and looks out for signs of, the most significant differences between the customs, usages, attitudes, values and beliefs prevalent in the community concerned and those of his or her own.</i></p>
<b>A2</b>	<p><i>Can perform and respond to basic language functions, such as information exchange and requests and express opinions and attitudes in a simple way.</i></p> <p><i>Can socialise simply but effectively using the simplest common expressions and following basic routines.</i></p> <p><i>Can handle very short social exchanges, using everyday polite forms of greeting and address. Can make and respond to invitations, suggestions, apologies, etc.</i></p>

### 4.3 National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools

The National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools 2003 in Finland, from now on NCCUSS 2003, provides general upper secondary education with basic objectives and regulations. As with NCCBE 2004, a wide range of topics, such as the role of general upper secondary education, values and conceptions of learning, are covered but the focus of the discussion here is merely on cultural aspects. On a general level it is worth mentioning that the task of general upper secondary education is to encourage learners to "treasure, assess and renew their cultural heritage" and to provide them with tools to "tolerant and international co-

operation" (NCCUSS 2003: 12). Thus, emphasis on cultural aspects is embedded in the concept of general upper secondary education.

Since learning contents in general upper secondary education are more demanding than in basic education, quite naturally also the perspective towards culture is wider. According to NCCUSS (2003: 102), the main objectives of foreign language learning in terms of cultural content are the following. First, learners' intercultural communication skills and the ability to communicate appropriately according to the target language and culture are developed further. Second, learners should understand and appreciate the target culture and become aware of its characteristic features. Third, European identity as well as European multilingualism and multiculturalism are taken into account.

NCCUSS (2003: 102-103) presents several guidelines for courses. First, the subject areas are considered from the viewpoint of the culture of origin, of the target culture or possibly from a broader perspective. This should allow learners to make comparisons. Second, differences between communication in learners' mother tongue and in the target language are taken into account, and they are explained with cultural aspects. Authentic materials, such as literature, are used to demonstrate the differences. Third, learners should also develop their "cultural sensitivity" and acknowledge how values and actions are tied to cultures.

On the language proficiency scale learners are expected to achieve level B2.1 in listening comprehension, reading comprehension, speaking and writing (NCCUSS 2003: 102). In terms of the sociolinguistic appropriateness table provided by CEFR (2001: 122) it means mastering both formal and informal registers in different situations, understanding fast and colloquial speech and being able to interact with native speakers without causing funny or irritating misunderstandings. The knowledge of those abilities is linked not only to linguistic skills but also to cultural aspects. For example, situations where informal speech is accepted vary in different cultures, and the same applies to matters that can amuse or offend native speakers.

Table 4. Sociolinguistic appropriateness (CEFR 2001: 122)

<b>B2</b>	<i>Can express him or herself confidently, clearly and politely in a formal or informal register, appropriate to the situation and person(s) concerned.</i>
	<i>Can with some effort keep up with and contribute to group discussions even when</i>

<p><i>speech is fast and colloquial.</i></p> <p><i>Can sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker.</i></p> <p><i>Can express him or herself appropriately in situations and avoid crass errors of formulation.</i></p>
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To sum up, CEFR 2001 introduces four key competences concerning cultural aspects: *sociocultural knowledge* (knowledge of the society and culture of the target language), *intercultural awareness* (knowledge of the differences and similarities between the culture of origin and the target culture), *intercultural skills* (mediating between the two cultures) and *sociolinguistic competence* (using the language appropriately on a social level). These skills act as a base for cultural knowledge and should therefore be borne in mind in local curricula planning and in textbook writing.

According to the Finnish guidelines, the key developments in terms of cultural knowledge after each grade are the following. Grades 3 - 6 function as an introduction to cultures. After grade 6 learners should know something about the central aspects of the target culture and about the main similarities and differences between it and the culture of origin. Learners should be able to communicate in basic everyday situations and master common politeness forms. During grades 7 - 9 the knowledge of central differences between customs, values and beliefs is deepened. As new aspects comparisons between the culture of origin and the target culture, relationship between values and culture, different English variants and history are mentioned. In general upper secondary education intercultural communication skills are highlighted more and the European identity is emphasised. Differences between the target language and learners' mother tongue are taken into consideration and especially how they can be explained by cultural aspects, for example by using authentic materials. Learners are expected to acquire "cultural sensitivity" and understand how cultural values are behind actions and beliefs. In communication different registers and avoiding misunderstandings are brought up.

To conclude the theoretical background, a few words about the language teaching guidelines and textbooks and their influence are said. The national curricula are the most important framework for teaching. Towns, schools, teachers and textbook makers are expected to follow

them. (Luukka et al. 2008: 53.) There are also town and school specific curricula but they are not covered in the present study. While the national curricula are officially the most important guidelines, textbooks have a great influence on teaching. As was seen in section 3.1, 70 % of foreign language teachers think that textbooks have a *great* influence on their aims and 68 % *often* follow the aims suggested by textbooks (Luukka et al. 2008: 67-71). The influence is so great that textbooks are sometimes referred to as "hidden curricula" (Luukka et al. 2008: 64). However, it must be borne in mind that textbooks alone cannot be used to deduce what is happening in classrooms as teachers can use the material differently (Luukka et al. 2008: 65). But textbooks do create a general framework for teaching and they have an effect on what is central in language teaching: they emphasise certain aspects while ignoring others (Luukka et al. 2008: 64). So, while conclusions of the actual learning outcomes cannot be made by textbooks or curricula only, one can find out what is expected to be learned.

## **5 DATA AND METHODOLOGY OF THE PRESENT STUDY**

This section presents the study in more detail. First, the research questions are outlined. Second, closer attention is paid to the data of the study. Third, the methods of data analysis are introduced.

### **5.1 Research questions**

The study examines British cultural content in selected Finnish textbooks of English in primary, secondary and upper secondary schools. The British culture refers to the United Kingdom: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. British culture is emphasised in the Finnish textbook context, so it was chosen as the viewpoint. The term culture in the present study is understood as both the "big C culture" (high culture: for example literature, art and history) and the "little c culture" (everyday life aspects: for example customs, beliefs and values). The emphasis is on the changes and nature of cultural knowledge throughout different school levels and examining how the knowledge corresponds with the objectives of language teaching guidelines presented in Chapter 4. No actual learners are studied and the attention is finding out what the textbooks emphasise and therefore what is expected to be learned. The research questions are the following:

- 1) What kind of cultural knowledge about the United Kingdom is presented by the textbooks and how does the cultural content change after each school level?
- 2) To what extent does the cultural content correspond to the objectives of language teaching guidelines?

## 5.2 Introducing the data of the study

The book series for the primary, secondary and upper secondary school are respectively *Wow!* (Sanoma Pro/ WSOYPro), *Spotlight* (Sanoma Pro) and *Open Road* (Otava). They were chosen partly because of their novelty in order to examine the latest trends of textbooks and partly because of their promises of cultural content. Textbooks were chosen from the two leading learning material publishers in Finland with the aim of including possibly different views. Because of the limitations of the study, only textbooks were examined as it can be assumed that the majority of cultural information comes from them. However, exercises present in the textbooks were examined when relevant. Also teacher's materials were ignored based on the restrictions of the study and also because the viewpoint is that of the learner, not of the teacher. However, they may have provided more profound information of the cultural content and could be included in future studies.

All the *Wow!* books consist of 20 text chapters. In addition, there are songs, vocabulary sections and special Reading Corner chapters. In *Wow! 3: Ice-cream Island* the main character Chris travels to Ice-cream Island in his dreams and meets the curious residents of the place. *Wow! 4* is titled *The Dream Team* which refers to the group of children from Windsor who form a dream team and also to the daydreams that take place after each text chapter. *Wow! 5: The Famous Four* follows four children from East Bridgford and their friends. The first three books are mainly UK-centred but *Wow! 6: TOP SECRET* focuses on Oceania, North America, Africa, Asia and Europe.

The three *Spotlight* books consist of six (*Spotlight 7* and *9*) or nine (*Spotlight 8*) Units that in *Spotlight 7* focus on different themes, such as free time, food or fashion, in *Spotlight 8* on certain countries and in *Spotlight 9* they again have a specific theme, such as education, media and environment. Each Unit begins with a comic feature called "Log on", which is linked with the theme. The Units have an A text as well as additional B texts and text extracts from literature. There are also "Spotlight on" and "Scrapbook" sections that give further

information about the different themes. Sections "Listen & Learn", "Chat" and "Grammar talk" are not relevant for the present study.

The *Open Road* books usually consist of four themes, except *Open Road 3* only has two of them. Each book or course has an overall theme assigned by the National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools. Their themes are respectively: Young people and their world, Communication and leisure, Study and work, Society and the surrounding world, Culture, Science, economy and technology, Nature and sustainable development and Globalisation and internationalisation (NCCUSS: 103-105). In this study, the two specialisation courses were left out based on the limitations of the study and only the six compulsory courses were examined. However, the omitted books were looked at on the surface level to ensure no crucial information was left out. While they do contain some new cultural material, it must be borne in mind that the courses are optional and some learners will have to deal with the knowledge acquired from the compulsory books only. In addition to the texts, which often consist of authentic material, there are sections Travel Guide with tips to improve language skills, grammar section Highway Code and Service Station with revision exercises. Also these were taken into account since they often included mentions of cultural material.

### **5.3 Methods of data analysis**

The present study is conducted from the viewpoint of qualitative research. As Eskola and Suoranta (1998: 20-22) point out, in qualitative research the position of the researcher is different than in statistical research. In qualitative research there is more flexibility in the planning and realisation of the study. In other words, "experimental imagination" is required. They continue that qualitative and quantitative research are sometimes opposed as subjective and objective, which can further lead to the division into inaccurate and accurate. However, as they report, it must be borne in mind that also numeric data from surveys was originally created through "soft" methods. In addition, as they point out, fundamentally the divisions are not believable and the differences are due to different perspectives. (Eskola and Suoranta 1998: 20-22.)

By using "experimental imagination", the starting point for the present study was chosen to be content analysis. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 91), content analysis is a basic

method of analysis that can be used for all kinds of qualitative research. The method can be applied to all kinds of verbal, graphic and symbolic data to receive new insights and to deepen understandings of different phenomena (Krippendorff 2013: 23-24). The aim is to present the examined data in a clearer form by organising the information. This is accomplished by dividing the data into parts and gathering it together to form logical conclusions. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 108.) Like every scientific method, content analysis is a reliable and a replicable tool of analysis. Same results should be drawn when other researchers use the same approach to the same phenomena. (Krippendorff 2013: 24.)

Similarly as every method of analysis, also content analysis has its pros and cons. As was mentioned earlier, content analysis aims at presenting the examined data in a more compact form. Sometimes the researcher might present the organised data as results failing to introduce proper conclusions. This has to lead criticism about content analysis's incompleteness. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 103.) The results of content analysis can also be extended by making quantitative calculations, for example by counting how many times something is mentioned. While this is a positive addition, it may be that producing numerical information of the usually small amount of data does not bring anything new. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 120-121.) Adding a quantitative element to the present study was considered but I come to a conclusion that it would take too much space from the quantitative reflection. As Krippendorff (2013: 47) points out, content analysis can also analyse large amounts of data. Smaller samples of texts may be more conventional but content analysis is not limited to them. Content analysis is also versatile in terms of the data. Examined materials are not restricted to written texts. Also images, sounds, symbols and numbers can be observed and analysed (Krippendorff 2013: 25). The final point is very relevant for the present study, as for example pictures and statistics about the UK can also be taken into account in the analysis.

According to Krippendorff (2013: 355-371), there are three different starting points to content analysis. First, text-driven analysis begins with interesting text samples, for example personal letters, comic books or family photographs. In the beginning there is no direct research question but instead it is formulated while examining the material. Second, method-driven analysis is interested in analysing data by unusual procedures, by something that has not been tried before. This method is sometimes criticised because the desire to use technological tools may overpower the desire of finding answers. Third, problem-driven analysis is motivated by wanting to find answers to a question and by believing that the data will provide those



answers. The problem of not knowing something is therefore considered to be important. The problems can be very concrete, such as lawyers trying to find evidence or historians trying to clarify historical events. The problems are formulated into research questions and they are answered with the help of the texts. (Krippendorff 2013: 355-371.) The problem-driven analysis is the most relevant for the present study.

Krippendorff (2013: 45-47) compares content analysis to more structured methods, such as interviews, surveys or statistical analyses, and presents their differences. Structured methods usually produce results that can be easily analysed and coded but they can also ignore the individual voices of the respondents. Content analysis, which often deals with data that has already been produced, can analyse data that is in different formats and unstructured, and therefore preserves the original voices. Content analysis is also context-sensitive in contrast to context-insensitive methods, such as surveys or statistical analyses, which take single words out of their context ignoring the original setting. Furthermore, controlled experiments, interviews and surveys are prone to phenomena, where the subjects are aware of being observed and where the situation is artificial. Researchers will also influence the participants, whether they want it or not. Content analysis is an unobtrusive method and therefore avoids such aspects. (Krippendorff 2013: 45-47.) However, also content analysis and discourse analysis, which are both qualitative text-based methods, differ from each other. As Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 104) point out, content analysis observes meanings within texts, whereas discourse analysis is interested in how the meanings are produced.

So, content analysis was chosen as the method of analysis because it can be applied to written, graphic and numerical data and because it is fairly flexible. The starting point is a problem-driven analysis since the motivation of the study starts from finding answers to the research questions. In order to separate the content and to re-organise it to form meaningful results, a set of categories is needed. The following categories are adapted from the suggestions of Byram (1993), Ammer (1999) and CEFR (2001) with certain changes of my own. They were formed in order to provide a clear and varied presentation of different cultural aspects.

- 1) *Social identity and social groups*: regional identity, dialects, sub-cultures, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, social groups, occupational groups
- 2) *Everyday life*: family, living, food and drink, hobbies, characteristics of people
- 3) *Stereotypes and national identity*: stereotypes, auto-stereotypes, symbols of national identity

- 4) *Art, science, media and sports*: literature, music, art, media, sports, fashion, science and technology
- 5) *State, politics, monarchy and economy*: government, royalty, education system, society and economy
- 6) *Land, nation and tourism*: descriptions of countries and towns, geography, history, international relationships, tourist information and popular sights
- 7) *Intercultural awareness*: differences and similarities between the culture of origin and the target culture and other cultures

I started the analysis process by browsing the books to get an overall picture of the content. During this initial examination it was noted that certain pieces of information did not fit in any category and the categorisation was altered according to the findings. The establishing of the categories was followed by a thorough reading of the texts. While reading I made notes and highlighted features while organising the content into the appropriate categories. All references to the UK were taken into account, whether verbal or graphic. Of the verbal content attention was paid both to actual text chapters as well as extra material, such as information boxes and relevant exercises. Exercises were taken into account because especially in *Open Road* they contain stories. The main focus was on a broader point of view but I also descended to a word level when necessary, for example when variations of spelling were mentioned. Although the study is not conducted from the point of view of image analysis, pictures referring to the UK (e.g. landmarks, maps, flags etc.) were included in the analysis.

## **6 ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL CONTENT**

In this chapter the findings of cultural content are categorised and analysed. In addition to the seven categories, there is a short conclusion after each sub chapter to draw together the outcomes. The results will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 together with conclusions and improvement suggestions.

### **6.1 Analysis of *Wow!***

The four *Wow!* books are analysed in terms of their cultural content below. The information is divided into seven categories followed by a brief summary of the main insights.

### 6.1.1 Social identity and social groups

One of the most evident instances of regional identities is the passage "Only English people can be called English." It is further explained that the Scots, Welsh, Northern Irish and Irish are not English. (*Wow! 5*: 72.) What it means to be one of these nationalities is not clarified though. Also identities related to smaller areas than countries, such as counties or town-countryside, are not present. Furthermore, important indicators of regional identity are dialects and languages. Dialects are not dealt with at all but the minority languages in Wales and Scotland are mentioned. It is said that Wales has two official languages, English and Welsh, "one of the oldest languages in Europe" (*Wow! 5*: 21), and that in Scotland the official language is English but also Gaelic and Scots are spoken (*Wow! 5*: 54). However, the languages or their significance are not discussed in further detail. Still, while dialects are not brought up directly, it can be assumed that they are heard in the text recordings, which were not examined in the present study.

There are some instances of cultural and ethnic minorities. In *Wow! 3* the main character is nine-year-old Chris, whose father is English and they live in Finland (*Wow! 3*: 12). Chris moves to England in *Wow! 4* and being half British, half Finnish he is a part of a cultural minority in both countries. The situation is addressed in that Chris says he misses Finland and that he speaks Finnish at home (*Wow! 4*: 66-67). Other than that, the cultural backgrounds of the characters are not dealt with directly. Different ethnic backgrounds come up indirectly in the illustration as Ed and Laura have a darker skin colour (*Wow! 4*: 7). On the other hand it is not necessarily a bad idea not to deal with for example Ed and Laura's background. The UK is a more multicultural society than Finland and one should not assume that a different skin colour means a foreign background.

Many characters introduced in the books are the same age as the learners and usually people of a different age are related to them (for example parents, grandparents or siblings) or work in an environment familiar to the children (for example teachers and school cooks). In contrast with the *Spotlight*, the elderly are depicted as rather youthful. Linda's granddad Alan is still at work and he is "busy" and "active" (*Wow! 5*: 25). There is also a "little old lady" who buys jeans, a T-shirt, a cap and sports shoes from the children. The clothes are not for her grandchildren but for herself, since she likes skateboarding. (*Wow! 4*: 40.) While including people of different ages is important in terms of providing learners with a versatile picture of the target culture, in Korpela's (2007) study learners expressed that they prefer material told

from the perspective of young people and therefore the approach is justified. Characteristics related to different people are discussed in 6.1.2 and they differ in terms of age.

Different occupational groups come up often. Many are related to the school world: there are teachers (*Wow! 4: 20, Wow! 4: 53 and Wow! 5: 29*), a head teacher (*Wow! 5: 41*) as well as school cooks, dinner ladies (*Wow! 5: 52*) and a lollipop lady (*Wow! 5: 41*). Also the medical field is well presented. These professions include a dentist, a nurse (*Wow! 4: 52*) and a vet (*Wow! 5: 18*). In addition, the parents and relatives of the children are farmers, housewives, bus drivers, cooks (*Wow! 4: 52-53*), village vicars (*Wow! 5: 24-25*), gamekeepers and policemen (*Wow! 5: 28-29*). There is also unemployment amongst the parents as Molly's mother is out of work but she does start a new job soon, as a lion tamer (*Wow! 5: 29*). While the occupational situation looks ideal, some of the jobs do have certain downsides. Laura's father, the bus driver, has to work long hours (*Wow! 4: 52*), Keith's father, the police officer, often has to work at night (*Wow! 5: 29*) and the village vicar does not have much free time and he also works on Sundays (*Wow! 5: 25*). The gender roles are fairly traditional in that the police officer and the village vicar are men, the person staying at home is a woman and the school dinner ladies are women but on the other hand there is a male nurse.

### **6.1.2 Everyday life**

The families introduced are very traditional and idyllic, most often consisting of both parents, siblings and pets. Chris has a big brother Ken, their mother is Tina (*Wow! 3: 26*) and their father is from England (*Wow! 3: 12*). They also have a two cats, Rose and Tom (*Wow! 3: 54*). In *Wow! 4* we learn that Chris also has a grandmother as he sends her a postcard (*Wow! 4: 62*). Linda has a mother, a father and a brother and Keith's family includes two brothers and both parents (*Wow! 5: 10*). Linda's granddad Alan, the vicar, is introduced later on (*Wow! 5: 24-25*). Laura's father is Tom (*Wow! 4: 38*) and they have lots of cats and dogs (*Wow! 4: 11*). Based on the illustration she also has a mother (*Wow! 4: 16*). Also Jill and Bill's parents live together, supposedly, as they work together on their farm (*Wow! 4: 52*). The only single-parent household introduced seems to be that of Molly. She lives with her dad "in a nice little house" and they also have a dog, Bones (*Wow! 5: 15*). In addition to cats and dogs, the children have rabbits, fish and ponies as pets (*Wow! 5: 18-19*) and Jill and Bill, who live on a farm, have cows, hens, pigs, goats and horses (*Wow! 4: 22*). The problem with the presentation of "typical" families is that it lacks realism. One-sided presentation of the target

culture can also lead to stereotypes and it is not very appealing to learners, as Byram points out (1989: 16-17).

One of the suggested themes in the NCCBE is hobbies (NCCBE 2004: 140) and it is very noticeable in *Wow!*. Chris collects stickers, stamps and sports cards (*Wow!* 3: 31) and he also plays football, ice hockey and chess (*Wow!* 3: 54). Keith collects key rings, baseball caps, football cards, badges and posters and he plays football, basketball, tennis, the guitar and the saxophone. He also goes cycling, skateboarding and rides his kickboard. (*Wow!* 5: 12-13.) Other hobbies of the children include for example skateboarding (*Wow!* 4: 9), reading (*Wow!* 4: 10), fishing (*Wow!* 4: 63), riding and swimming (*Wow!* 5: 60). Of the adults we learn that Alan, the vicar, goes Nordic walking and likes football and music (*Wow!* 5: 25). It would seem that the hobbies are introduced as useful vocabulary rather than as cultural material.

All the attributes given to adults are positive except that some of them are busy. Chris's father is "tall and kind" and his mother is "small and lovely" (*Wow!* 3: 26). Also Linda's father is "tall" and her mother is "pretty" and they are "very kind parents" (*Wow!* 5: 11). In addition, her father is very interested in the environment and he recycles. He is very busy though and does not have much free time. (*Wow!* 5: 28.) Keith's parents too are "very nice people" (*Wow!* 5: 10). Furthermore, we learn that Molly's father is the best cook in the village (*Wow!* 5: 16) and that Linda's grandfather Alan is a "very busy man", but "very active and he doesn't get ill very often" (*Wow!* 5: 25). Also the school staff is described. Teacher Miss Jones has got "long blonde hair" and she is "young and kind" (*Wow!* 4: 20). Mr Frost is young and he wears glasses and a tie. He is "a good head". Mrs Garner, the lollipop lady, is "friendly and helpful" and "she is never late for work." (*Wow!* 5: 41.)

While adults are always described in a positive way, the siblings are not always all nice. Linda's brother Jason is "difficult sometimes" but also "great fun" (*Wow!* 5: 11). Keith fights with his brothers sometimes but they are still "good friends" (*Wow!* 4: 10). He also calls his little brother a monster (*Wow!* 5: 40). Chris's brother Ken, however, is "quick and clever" (*Wow!* 3: 26). Twins Bill and Jill are said to be "kind and funny", whereas the new girl Laura in the beginning is "tired and lonely" (*Wow!* 4: 12) and the new boy Jerry is "shy" (*Wow!* 5: 37). Traditional gender roles are related and broken in terms of girls only. On the one hand there are Molly and Linda trying on clothes and pretending to be fashion models (*Wow!* 5: 64) and on the other there is a song about a football mad sister (*Wow!* 5: 62). In addition, Laura is

a goalkeeper and she is "fast and very brave". A man in the audience finds a girl in goal "different". (*Wow! 5*: 42-43.) Despite the adjectives related to different characters the attributes are very superficial. The only character that seems to have personality is Keith, who is a little wild. For example, he teases the new boy Jerry suggesting that he comes from Mars and ends up getting detention. He however gives Jerry a Mars bar as gesture of reconciliation (*Wow! 5*: 37-38) and they later become good friends.

A recurring feature in the basic education books is the willingness to help others. It is also visible especially in *Wow! 4*, where helping is often related to cooperation. For example, the children work together to save a baby from a river (*Wow! 4*: 31-32) or sell old clothes together in the market and donate the money to the poor (*Wow! 4*: 38). Success of cooperation can also be seen in switching roles and duties in their football squad because they are a team (*Wow! 4*: 42-43). Team work and helping others are also visible in songs, such as in lines "We try to help others / In any little way" (*Wow! 4*: 33) or "We want to do much more / To help other people / Young or old or poor" (*Wow! 4*: 54). The book in question is also titled "The Dream Team". Team work also gives results when the children catch dog stealers (*Wow! 5*: 81-82).

Of food and drink, fish and chips are mentioned more than once (*Wow! 4*: 7, *Wow! 4*: 67 and *Wow! 5*: 67) and so is tea (*Wow! 3*: 29 and *Wow! 4*: 7). In section 2.3 I discussed how phenomena that appear to be similar can be very different around the world, tea being one example. When the children sing that they "have fish and chips for tea" (*Wow! 4*: 7), tea does not refer to the drink but in the British context to the main evening meal. Without the explanation this can be vague for learners. Food and drink are also discussed in terms of school lunches, which are "excellent" (*Wow! 5*: 10) and "delicious." (*Wow! 5*: 50). The head cook accentuates the importance of fresh fruit and vegetables and the school staff tries to teach pupils about healthy eating (*Wow! 5*: 52). A part of the school menu is also written down. On Monday, for example, the children eat sausage rolls, spaghetti hoops, potato waffles, cake and custard and fruit (*Wow! 5*: 50). School meals in the UK could also have been covered from a more realistic point of view since in general they are not regarded as very nutrient-rich or healthy.

### 6.1.3 Stereotypes and national identity

Symbols of national identity are visible in the illustration, mostly in drawings but also in actual photographs. Pictures of red double-deckers, phone boxes and post boxes appear in the scenery of the Ice-cream Island (*Wow! 3*: 35), see Figure 2 below, which suggests that the imaginary island is in the UK. The double-decker is also visible for example as a poster (*Wow! 3*: 8) and a toy (*Wow! 3*: 43) and the post box can be seen elsewhere too (*Wow! 3*: 37 and 51). Phone boxes (for example *Wow! 4*: 56) and post boxes (for example *Wow! 4*: 40) also appear in *Wow! 4*, the story of which takes place in Windsor, and therefore it is understandable to use them in the town scenery. A proper overdose of symbols of national identity is pictured in Ed's dream, where Beefeaters and Foot Guards are marching in front of a red double-decker (*Wow! 4*: 21). The British flag is also present many times. The Union Flag often flies above Windsor Castle (for example *Wow! 4*: 8 and 40) but it is also pictured on a wall (*Wow! 4*: 15) and even as a kite (*Wow! 4*: 27). English flags can be seen in the stands of a football match (*Wow! 4*: 14). Other common symbols are black cabs (for example *Wow! 4*: 56, *Wow! 5*: 73) and "bobbies" (for example *Wow! 4*: 40, *Wow! 5*: 8). Beefeaters and Foot Guards are also pictured in the London section of *Wow! 5* (*Wow! 5*: 73-75).

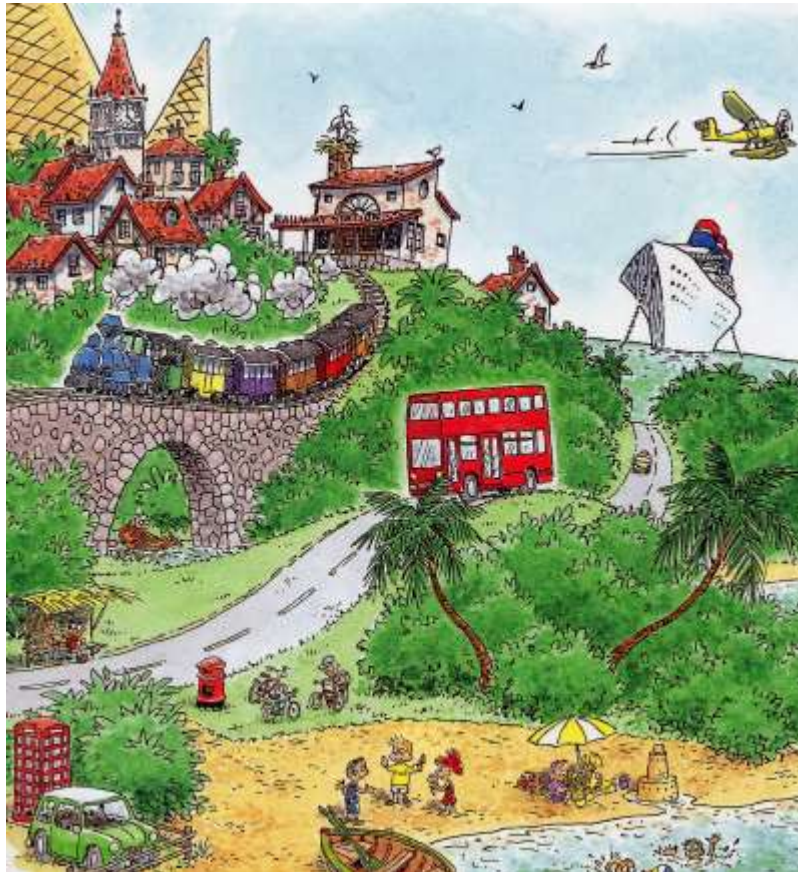


Figure 2. Red double decker, phone box and post box in *Wow! 3* (*Wow! 3*: 35)

In addition to the symbols mentioned above, monuments and sights especially in London are present (for example *Wow! 4*: 68-71, *Wow! 5*: 73-74). Touristic attractions are discussed better in 6.1.6. Moreover, a famous character from the English folklore, Robin Hood, is pictured (*Wow! 4*: 8) and also dealt with in a comic strip (*Wow! 4*: 76-77). Kilts, tartan and bagpipes, famous symbols of Scotland, come up occasionally too (*Wow! 5*: 55 and 57). Another common stereotype is omitted almost entirely as it rains only once (*Wow! 5*: 58). Instead the weather always seems to be "very sunny" (*Wow! 4*: 63), "lovely" and "hot" (*Wow! 4*: 24). This highlights the overall positive atmosphere of the book series but is also paints an idyllic picture of the UK and lacks realism.

#### **6.1.4 Art, science, media and sports**

Of the themes in this section, sports get the most attention. The most popular instance is football, which channels the real-life enthusiasm for the sport in the UK. Many children play it (for example *Wow! 3*: 54, *Wow! 5*: 12) and the characters support different teams. Alan the vicar, for example, "doesn't support Manchester United or Arsenal. He supports Leeds United." (*Wow! 5*: 25.) Keith supports Manchester City and Jerry Chelsea, "so sometimes they argue" (*Wow! 5*: 61). Chris dreams of playing for England in the World Cup and based on a banner on his wall he supports Newcastle United (*Wow! 4*: 14-15). In *Wow! 5* the twelve of England's top football clubs are introduced with names, nicknames and crests (*Wow! 5*: 63). The football clubs in London, such as Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur, are also listed (*Wow! 5*: 74). Also the football clubs of Glasgow, Celtic and Rangers, are mentioned (*Wow! 5*: 56). In addition, a page of "famous English people" includes a picture of David Beckham (*Wow! 5*: 75). Cricket is explained to consist of two teams of 11 players, who "hit the ball with a bat and score runs." It is also said that players usually wear white and that it is the other national sport of England. (*Wow! 5*: 72.) Other instances of sports include picture of rowing (*Wow! 5*: 72), as well as mentions of golf, which is the national sport of Scotland (*Wow! 5*: 54), and rugby, which is the national sport of Wales (*Wow! 5*: 22). Furthermore, Laura dreams of diving in the Olympics (*Wow! 4*: 13).

Other aspects of this category are dealt with in a very narrow way: Literature wise Ed has new glasses and he is reading Harry Potter (*Wow! 4*: 47) and there is a picture of William Shakespeare with mentions of Romeo and Juliet and his birthplace Stratford-upon-Avon (*Wow! 5*: 72). Music, film and television are covered with pictures of The Beatles, "a world-



famous pop group from the sixties" (*Wow! 5*: 72), and Rowan Atkinson (*Wow! 5*: 75). The media is present in a BBC camera filming a football game (*Wow! 4*: 43).

### **6.1.5 State, politics, monarchy and economy**

In contrast to *Spotlight*, *Wow!* does not have a section of the UK as a whole but the information is scattered in separate sections in *Wow! 5*. The first country to be introduced is Wales. The information includes the population, capital, languages, national sport and a flag (*Wow! 5*: 21). About Northern Ireland the population, capital, national sport and a flag are given along with the important fact that "Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England form the United Kingdom" (*Wow! 5*: 33). Also the Scotland section includes an information box with population, capital, languages, national sports and a flag (*Wow! 5*: 54) similarly with that of England (*Wow! 5*: 72). It is also said that Scotland has its "own laws, church and school system" (*Wow! 5*: 54). Learners are also reminded of the fact that Ireland "is not part of Great Britain or the United Kingdom" (*Wow! 5*: 35). It is also said that the Prime Minister lives on 10 Downing Street (*Wow! 4*: 73) and "politician" Churchill is pictured as one the "famous English people" (*Wow! 5*: 75). More subjective descriptions of the countries are discussed in section 6.1.6.

Monarchy, education and economy are discussed to some extent. Of monarchy learners are told that "the Queen lives in her palace" with hundreds of rooms and that her name is Elizabeth (*Wow! 4*: 68). The title is specified to be Elizabeth II later on (*Wow! 5*: 73). Previous queens Elizabeth I (*Wow! 6*: 90) and Victoria (*Wow! 5*: 75) are pictured and so is Princess Diana (*Wow! 5*: 75). In *Wow! 4* the children live in Windsor but interestingly the connection with the royal family is not mentioned. Learners are given some very basic information about the British education system. The school starts in September (*Wow! 4*: 63) and the school days last from around nine o'clock to quarter past three (*Wow! 4*: 65). It is also said that children have to pay for their school lunches but they can also bring a packed lunch, for example "sandwiches, crisps, some fruit and a drink" (*Wow! 5*: 52). The school food is said to be "excellent" (*Wow! 5*: 10) and "delicious" (*Wow! 5*: 50). Economy is present with pictures of pounds and pennies (*Wow! 5*: 27).

### 6.1.6 Land, nation and tourism

Official information about the countries was discussed in 6.1.5 and this paragraph focuses on the descriptive side. About Wales it is said that the Welsh countryside is "beautiful" and there are many sheep. In Wales there are also a great deal of castles and music festivals because the Welsh like to sing. (*Wow! 5*: 21-22.) Northern Ireland, Ulster, is described as "a beautiful country, full of mountains, rivers and lakes" (*Wow! 5*: 33). Scotland has "a rich history and culture" (*Wow! 5*: 54) and it "is full of romantic old castles" and "some of them even have their own ghosts" (*Wow! 6*: 88). The descriptions largely rely on nature and present the countries in a very idyllic light. No negative aspects, such as social or political problems, are mentioned. Interestingly, no such remarks are made about England, the presentation of which is made through statistics, famous persons and tourist attractions rather than verbal description. Other aspects that fall in the subjective category rather than official information are legends. After the presentation of each country there is a comic strip of a legend typical to the country. Of Wales we learn about land under the sea in Cardigan Bay (*Wow! 5*: 23), a Northern Irish legend is about Giant's Causeway (*Wow! 5*: 34), the Scottish one about bagpipes (*Wow! 5*: 57) and the English one narrates the story of Robin Hood (*Wow! 5*: 76-77).

In terms of geography there is a map of the British Isles inside the front cover of *Wow! 5*. It shows the four countries and their capitals as well as Ireland and Dublin. Also East Bridgford, where the story takes place, is marked. A less detailed map presents the route from London to Cork, via train, ferry and car (*Wow! 5*: 24). A useful reminder is also given with regard to geography: "Ireland is not part of Great Britain or the United Kingdom" (*Wow! 5*: 35). In terms of topography learners are told that Scotland's Ben Nevis, 1,344 metres, is the highest mountain in the UK (*Wow! 5*: 56) and the highest mountain in Wales is Snowdon (*Wow! 5*: 21). Sherwood Forest, the home of the legend of Robin Hood, is also mentioned (*Wow! 5*: 72).

Different British towns appear in texts. Some of them are described in more detail and some merely mentioned. In *Wow! 4* the children live in Windsor, which is "a fantastic place" and has "many shops and cafés" (*Wow! 4*: 67). In *Wow! 5* the story takes place in East Bridgford, "a lovely English village" with "a nice school, a small shop, an old church and a big river" (*Wow! 5*: 10). Of Wales learners are told that the main cities are Cardiff and Swansea and a name of an unpronounceable village in northwest with 58 letters is also mentioned (*Wow! 5*: 21). Belfast in Northern Ireland is said to be "a modern, exciting city" (*Wow! 5*: 33). Of the

Scottish towns Edinburgh "has a wonderful castle" and Glasgow is "big" (*Wow! 4*: 54-56). London is many things, for example "shops", "parks", "theatres" and "fun!" (*Wow! 4*: 70-71). It is also "one of the most exciting cities in the world" (*Wow! 5*: 73). London is the most accentuated town and more direct information is given about it than for example of Windsor and East Bridgford, which are the main settings in two books. Other English towns mentioned are Manchester and Liverpool, "famous for football", Oxford and Cambridge, "famous for their universities", Stratford-upon-Avon (*Wow! 5*: 72), Bradford-on-Avon (*Wow! 6*: 88) and Bingham (*Wow! 5*: 68).

History is not touched upon very thoroughly but it is also not demanded by the NCCBE. The most detailed piece of information is given in a comic strip about Captain James Cook. While most of the information is related to his personal accounts and discoveries around the world that are not relevant for the present study, it is said that in 1770 he "makes Australia part of Great Britain" (*Wow! 6*: 22-23). The claim of Australia does not have a negative echo like the other piece of history, the colonisation of America. It is told from the viewpoint of a Native American who says: "Then came the settlers. They arrived from England in 1620. We helped them. Maybe that was not such a good thing. We didn't see the danger." (*Wow! 6*: 34.) Negative historical events are also seen in *Spotlight*.

With regard to tourism, London is the most popular travel destination. It has multiple pages dedicated to it in *Wow! 4* (68-71) and *Wow! 5* (73-74). The sights mentioned in *Wow! 4* (68-69) are Tower Bridge, River Thames, Buckingham Palace, Big Ben and London Eye. Sights whose interpretation is left to learners, in other words they are only pictured, are Madame Tussauds and Westminster Bridge. *Wow! 5* (73-74) includes pictures and short descriptions of the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, the Tower of London, the British Museum, the Natural History Museum and Trafalgar Square. The pages are decorated with pictures of Foot Guards. Sights elsewhere in England include the Eden nature park (*Wow! 4*: 24) and several mentions of the Windsor Castle. It is often drawn on the background (for example *Wow! 4*: 8 or 40) and is also pictured in a postcard (*Wow! 4*: 62). Things to see and do in Scotland include the Highlands of Scotland, the Highland Games, Loch Ness and its monster and skiing on mountain Ben Nevis (*Wow! 4*: 54-56). Wales and Northern Ireland seem to have fewer places to explore. There is Conway Castle in Wales (*Wow! 5*: 22) and Glengariff Forest Park in Northern Ireland "is really worth a visit" and Giant's Causeway is one of the "most famous tourist spots" (*Wow! 5*: 33-34).

### 6.2.7 Intercultural awareness

One of the most stressed areas of cultural information in both CEFR (2001) and NCCBE (2004) is the knowledge of differences and similarities between the target culture and the culture of origin, or intercultural awareness. It also includes the knowledge of variation within the cultures as well as information of further cultures. *Wow!* handles the aspect in the following ways. First, the school in the UK is "not like Finnish school". The days are longer, according to Chris, from around nine till quarter past three. (*Wow! 4: 65.*) Second, the weather is different. "The winter is not very cold here. We don't have much snow or ice." (*Wow! 4: 66.*) Third, the cars drive on the left, which "can be dangerous for tourists" (*Wow! 4: 68.*) In addition, differences between other cultures are present when vocabulary variations between British and American English are brought up, for example *soccer* vs. *football* (*Wow! 6: 38*) or *primary school* vs. *elementary school*. (*Wow! 6: 76*). Furthermore, Chris has noticed how the "English people say 'please' all the time" (*Wow! 4: 67*). The politeness forms can be observed in the dialogues throughout the books and sometimes they sound very artificial, for example when the children are buying a train ticket (*Wow! 5: 78*).

The main aim of the study is not to compare the distribution of English-speaking countries but it can be said that the UK is the most important culture in *Wow!*. The choice to accentuate the British culture made the examination of sociolinguistic competence easier than in *Spotlight*, where the example dialogues in different interaction situations are presented on a general level. In *Wow!* examples of how to behave politely while eating (*Wow! 5: 52*) or while buying ice cream (*Wow! 5: 26-27*), however, are given in the context of the UK, although they can be applied on a broader level too. So, by following the norms and examples given in *Wow!*, learners should be able to fulfil the required basic politeness conventions of CEFR and NCCBE.

To sum up, learners are provided with statistical information and some descriptions of the UK but not what it is like to be from a particular country or region. Tourist attractions especially in London are given a great deal of attention but the everyday lives are also present to some extent. However, personalities are left a little shallow. People are described with different adjectives but only one person, Keith in *Wow! 5* seems to have a personality. It is also interesting how the British adults are described in a positive way while the children have some annoying features, at least according to their siblings. All in all, the books portray the

UK and its residents in a very positive light. The weather is sunny, the people are friendly and even the school food is tasty. There is no long-term unemployment, poverty or other problems in the society apart from dog stealers but they too are caught. While the idea of such an approach is to provide learners with a positive picture of the UK and therefore of learning of English, it might not be very appealing to learners, as for example Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991: 180) remind us.

## **6.2 Analysis of *Spotlight***

The cultural content in the three *Spotlight* books is analysed below. *Spotlight 7* and *Spotlight 9* contain quantitatively more cultural material about the UK, whereas the focus of *Spotlight 8* is mainly on other cultures but some information about Northern Ireland is included. The following chapters present the cultural content according to the different categories followed by a summary of the main points.

### **6.2.1 Social identity and social groups**

Regional identities are discussed directly but on a rather general level in *Spotlight 7*: "Everybody from the UK is British, but only people from England are English!" The exclamation mark suggests that the difference is important. It is also said that there are the Scottish and the Welsh, whereas people from Northern Ireland call themselves Irish or British. In addition, learners are told that all the countries have their own national teams in sports. (*Spotlight 7*: 99.) While those differences are important, regional identities on a more precise scale, such as north-south or town-countryside, are missing. The general level can also be seen in relation to different dialects. One direct remark towards the theme is in *Spotlight 9*, where it is said that "English is spoken all over the world in hundreds of different accents and dialects: British English, American English, Australian English and Indian English are just some of them." It is also said that there is variation within accents, as all users speak in their own way. (*Spotlight 9*: 10.) These variations are not explained or discussed further. But since the characters are from different regional backgrounds, it can be assumed that different dialects are heard in the text recordings, which were not examined in the present study. World Englishes are also dealt with in a listening exercise in *Spotlight 7*, where people from different parts of the world speak in their own accent. Picture of Big Ben suggests that learners hear a speaker from London, unless the famous sight is used as a symbol for the whole of the UK. (*Spotlight 7*: 76.)

Ethnic and cultural backgrounds and subcultures come up occasionally, for example in a text in *Spotlight 9*, where British teenagers are interviewed about their lives. The interviewees include Jimmy with Jamaican roots living in Bristol and Yameen from Pakistan living in Manchester. Religion wise in the same text there is Nasif, a Muslim who lives in London. (*Spotlight 9*: 15.) In *Spotlight 7* one of the main characters is half-British Jack, whose father is English and mother Finnish. They live in Espoo, which makes Jack a part of a cultural minority in Finland. Also Sarah's parents are from different countries: her father is Scottish and her mother English (*Spotlight 7*: 86). With regard to subcultures, in *Spotlight 9* there is Emma from Scotland, who is a Goth. Some of her friends are punks, heavy metal or manga fans and therefore dress differently. According to Emma, it is expensive but worth it. She also says that they are not able to express their identities at school because of school uniforms. (*Spotlight 9*: 165.) There are also different fandoms throughout the books. The most devoted fandom is football fandom introduced in *Spotlight 9* (*Spotlight 9*: 166). Kenneth from England and his whole family are dedicated Manchester City fans. Their house is decorated in the team's colours, sky blue and white, and they have a great deal of merchandise including mugs, jumpers and even toilet paper. (*Spotlight 9*: 166.) Jack too is a football fan, of Liverpool (*Spotlight 7*: 8), but the level of his fanaticism is not discussed in as much detail as Kenneth's. There is also a text about "fandomania" in general, where fandoms such as the Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter and anime are mentioned. There is also a picture of a cosplay (costume play) girl. (*Spotlight 9*: 169.) Since learners themselves have different backgrounds, it is important to promote versatility in textbooks too (Byram 1989: 54). In addition, it should be borne in mind that "one language, one culture" thinking is outdated: there is always variation within cultures (Corbett 2003 and Kramsch 2006).

The ages of the people introduced in the books most often correspond with the ages of the learners in each level. In *Spotlight 7* the main characters are around 13 years old, in *Spotlight 8* around 14 and 15 and in *Spotlight 9* around 15 - 18. This is a natural choice because that way learners can identify with the characters. People of other ages are often related to the main characters. For example, there are Sarah's 5-year-old little brother Glen (*Spotlight 7*: 86-89), Jack's parents Paul and Tiina (*Spotlight 7*: 10 and 21) and Brenda's mother Rachel (*Spotlight 8*: 46-48). There are also slightly older personalities in the media consumption text (*Spotlight 9*: 74-75) as they are first or second year students at university. An example of a person who is clearly of a different age than the target audience of the book and not related to

any of the characters is 70-year-old pensioner Ann Timson, who fought off robbers with her handbag, as is written in a text titled "Granny fights off armed robbers" (*Spotlight 9: 87*). Mrs Timson is a very spirited person but the older generation is also mentioned in less flattering contexts, where the young people do charity by helping the elderly, who need company and aid (*Spotlight 9: 31 and 116*).

Since most of the characters are pupils or students, occupational groups often come up with reference to their relatives. For example, Jack's father is a journalist and his mother is a social worker (*Spotlight 7: 10*), Sarah's father is an engineer and her mother is a writer (*Spotlight 7: 22*) and Rachel's father and Brenda's grandfather was a policeman in Belfast (*Spotlight 8: 47*). The work life of the youngsters is mentioned when they share their dream professions: Alisha's dream jobs are fashion designer or fitness trainer (*Spotlight 9: 15*), Hettie from Scotland wants to become a doctor (*Spotlight 8: 44*) and Jack dreams about playing for Liverpool (*Spotlight 7: 21*). The young people are also keen on voluntary work, such as helping the elderly or walking dogs (*Spotlight 9: 116-117*). In addition, when introducing several culture personalities, their professions are also very important. Learners are told, for example, about writer Agatha Christie (*Spotlight 9: 173*) and TV broadcaster Sir David Attenborough (*Spotlight 9: 92*).

### **6.2.2 Everyday life**

Two of the families introduced in greater detail are multicultural, because the parents come from different countries. In *Spotlight 7* there is 13-year-old Jack who has an English father and a Finnish mother (*Spotlight 7: 10*). Jack also has a half-brother in Wales and we learn that Jack and Thomas have never met and that Thomas' parents separated when he was a baby (*Spotlight 7: 20*). Also Sarah's parents have different cultural backgrounds since her father is Scottish and her mother English. She also has a little brother. (*Spotlight 7: 86*.) A glimpse to the past of British families is given when Paul describes how in the 1950s children were taught to read young, even at the age of three. Paul could not read when he was five, so his mother was worried and forced him to practice every night. When he made a mistake, she would sometimes hit him. (*Spotlight 9: 46*.) In terms of pets, learners are given very random information about cats and dogs, the favourite pets in the UK. It is even told that the most popular dog names are Max, Molly and Buddy, while the most popular cat names are Molly, Charlie and Tigger. (*Spotlight 7: 100*.) So, a divorce is present and characters are not as nice

as those in *Wow!*. So, there is a step towards a more diverse presentation of people and the texts no longer reply on typical families only, as Byram (1989: 20) has previously criticised.

Living gets the most attention in *Spotlight 7*. Log on section introduces several different house types. Based on the pictures and terms (e.g. *block of flats, terraced house*), the focus is on British housing. There is also an example of a British postal address. It is pointed out that when talking about a Finnish 'rivitalo', the American word *row house* can be used. (*Spotlight 7: 84.*) Of the living conditions of the characters we learn that Sarah and her family are moving to a semi-detached house (*Spotlight 7: 87*), Jack lives in a detached house and his granny in a cottage in Finland (*Spotlight 7: 95-96*). A different kind of living is brought up in the Belfast of the 1980s. Learners are told that it was dangerous to go out and everyone was worried about bombs and shootings. "The whole family was desperately unhappy sometimes" during the difficult times but they survived. (*Spotlight 8: 47.*) Because living conditions can differ from culture to culture, as was discussed in section 2.3, even more attention could be paid to it.

Different kinds of hobbies are mentioned throughout the books. Some are tied to characters, while others are linked to nations. Examples of the first type are that Jack is into football (*Spotlight 7: 21*) and is also "mad about music": he plays the drums, the electric guitar and reads music magazines. (*Spotlight 7: 40.*) Sarah is into drawing, reading and writing poems. She does not want others to see her poems because they might laugh at them. It is told that in the quiet Scotland countryside her hobbies keep her busy. (*Spotlight 7: 22*). She also goes bowling on Fridays (*Spotlight 7: 88*). There are also Jimmy who hangs around with his mates and plays the bass in a reggae band (*Spotlight 9: 15*) and Yasmeen who goes to town with her friends and plays basketball (*Spotlight 9: 15*). About hobbies linked to countries or nations it is said that rugby and choirs are popular in Wales (*Spotlight 7: 20*) and that people in the UK like to take walks and watch football, rugby and cricket (*Spotlight 7: 100*). The importance of football in the British culture can be seen in the many mentions throughout *Spotlight* and *Wow!* and also in *Open Road*.

The young people describe their own characteristics as well as those of their families. For example, Sarah is a little insecure about herself: she does not want to publish her poems in case people laugh at them and is also worried about her mother's opinion since she is a writer herself (*Spotlight 7: 22*). In *Spotlight 9* British teenagers describe their thoughts, hopes and



fears. What they say about being a teenager is that it is sometimes difficult because there is group pressure to do things they would not want to do and that adults should try to remember what it was like to be young. Young people are also family-centred (Yasmeen is the happiest when she is with her family), tolerant (Nasif's motto is: "Live and let live.") and afraid of war and terrorism (*Spotlight 9*: 14-15.) What also seems to be important to the British youngsters is charity work. Ian is involved with the British Red Cross's Dance for Life activities, Monica walks people's dogs and Sheena helps the elderly (*Spotlight 9*: 116-117). Of the older generation we learn that Jack's mother is "nosey" because she wants to keep up to date with Jack's comings and goings but his dad is more relaxed. He likes to watch football and drives Jack to his football practice and watches Jack play cheering like "a madman" (*Spotlight 7*: 21.) In terms of realism, *Spotlight* lies somewhere between *Wow!* and *Open Road*: people are quite admirable but have some weaknesses too.

### 6.2.3 Stereotypes and national identity

The most visible stereotype is mentioned in an example sentence in the grammar section behind *Spotlight 8* and therefore might go unnoticed. Nevertheless, it states that "British people are very polite. And so are the Irish." (*Spotlight 8*: 188.) These types of character related stereotypes are rare elsewhere in the books. In terms of food and drink, all the most common stereotypes are mentioned: fish & chips (*Spotlight 7*: 66), Sunday roast, Yorkshire pudding and tea (*Spotlight 9*: 168). What are more apparent are symbols of national identity, such as pictures of famous monuments and sights. Besides the actual section that focuses on London, there are pictures of the Houses of Parliament, London Eye, black cabs, Big Ben and Piccadilly Circus elsewhere as well (*Spotlight 9*: 11). Big Ben also appears more than once (for example *Spotlight 7*: 76 and *Spotlight 9*: 18). A Foot Guard is also pictured (*Spotlight 7*: 17). As can be seen, the presentation of symbols of national identity is very London-centred, which might lead to the conclusion that all Brits live there, which in itself is a common stereotype. The only famous sight situated elsewhere is Loch Ness (*Spotlight 7*: 100).

### 6.2.4 Art, science, media and sports

Of arts, literature gets the most attention. Agatha Christie, "a cultural icon", is discussed in *Spotlight 9*. Learners are briefly told about her life and her most popular novels, as well as the famous characters Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple. (*Spotlight 9*: 173.) "Bookworm" Sarah reads Jane Austen and Charles Dickens because even though "they lived a hundred years ago

-- their stories still work today" (*Spotlight 7: 22*). Ariana from Wales likes Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Harry Potter and the Lord of the Rings (*Spotlight 9: 164*). The Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter fandoms are also mentioned later on (*Spotlight 9: 169*). *Spotlight 8* and *Spotlight 9* also include authentic text extracts. While the authors mentioned elsewhere in the books are well known and influential, the chosen extracts are from less known writers, such as Louise Clover, Joan Lingard and Alan Posener in *Spotlight 8* or Rachael Wing in *Spotlight 9*. In terms of music, there is a small picture of the British band The Shadows (*Spotlight 8: 54*) and in the film genre Charlie Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* is mentioned (*Spotlight 9: 165*). Musicians and films are poorly covered and there are no references of painters at all.

Sports is covered from different points of view. In Spotlight on Culture section (*Spotlight 9: 164-166*) young people share their ideas of culture. To Kenneth from England culture means being a Manchester City fan. Learners are told that the team's colours are sky blue and white, the City of Manchester Stadium is often completely full and the supporters have their own song, Blue Moon. It is also mentioned that there is another famous football team in the town, Manchester United. (*Spotlight 9: 166.*) The two teams are also referred to in an oral exercise earlier on, where one is looking for the stadium and the other asks: "City or United?" (*Spotlight 9: 20*). In *Spotlight 7* Jack is a big Liverpool fan (*Spotlight 7: 8*) and would like to play for them in the future (*Spotlight 7: 21*). Learners are also told that rugby is popular in Wales (*Spotlight 7: 20*) and that the British introduced cricket in India (*Spotlight 9: 110*). Furthermore, in Scrapbook United Kingdom it is said that almost half of the people in the UK are into sports, the most popular activity being walking. Favourite spectator sports are football, rugby and cricket. Famous sporting events FA Cup Final and the Wimbledon tennis tournament are also mentioned. (*Spotlight 7: 100.*)

Media in the UK is discussed from many viewpoints and it is one of the suggestions of NCCBE (2004: 142). First, British teenagers tell us about their media consumption: they watch television but they also use their computers for watching TV programmes. Radio is not very important, except web radio. Music, on the other hand, is seen as important: the interviewees watch music channels and YouTube and buy music online but not illegally. Some read newspapers but television and Internet are faster sources of information according to some. Social media is popular for interaction with friends because it is cheaper than texting. (*Spotlight 9: 70-71.*) Also Jack from *Spotlight 7* says that Internet keeps him and his

friends from primary school together (*Spotlight 7: 12*). Second, another text describes how British students survived without media (like TV, music and phone) for 24 hours. Some felt they were out of touch with the world but on the other hand they had more time for other activities. One noticed that even without phones media is still all around us in the form of adverts, posters and background music in shops. One of the respondents lasted only two hours before succumbing to his phone and laptop: he was restless and bored. Many did not realise how dependent they actually are. They also list good sides of the media: it enables contact with family and friends, offers news and provides with an escape from the world. (*Spotlight 9: 74-75*.) Jack too admits he spends too much time on the internet but since he is otherwise behaving well, he thinks his parents have no reason to complain (*Spotlight 7: 21*).

Media is also discussed from the viewpoint of its reliability. A text named *Fact or fiction* presents some of BBC's April Fool's Day jokes, such as penguins flying to the tropic and trees that grow spaghetti. It is told that some people actually believed the spaghetti trees were real and phoned in to ask where they could get them. This naturally left people angry but the producer said "it did people good to realize they shouldn't believe everything they see on television." (*Spotlight 9: 72*.) BBC is mentioned on other occasions too, for example in Spotlight on Media section, where it is said that it is the first broadcasting company in the world and was established in 1922. The section also tells learners about the inventor of the telephone Alexander Bell, the first postage stamp that was issued in Britain and that the first television programmes were shown in Britain. (*Spotlight 9: 81*.) Mentions of free sheets and newspapers include *Metro* (*Spotlight 9: 71*) and *News of the World*, the last number of which is pictured (*Spotlight 9: 86*). In regard to media personalities, TV broadcaster Sir David Attenborough is introduced (*Spotlight 9: 92*) and an extract of his autobiography is also included (*Spotlight 9: 93-94*).

### **6.2.5 State, politics, monarchy and economy**

With regard to the state, the UK is covered in detail in Scrapbook United Kingdom section (*Spotlight 7: 98*), where there is an explanation and a map of the British Isles, the largest island of which is Great Britain. The information box explains the differences between the United Kingdom, Great Britain and England, while also listing the capitals and population of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We also learn those facts about the United Kingdom, as well as its area, capital and head of state. (*Spotlight 7: 98*). Northern Ireland is

also included in Scrapbook Ireland in *Spotlight 8* (*Spotlight 8*: 58-60), where it has its own information box alongside the Republic of Ireland. Interestingly, the box contains more information than that of *Spotlight 7*, informing for example about the area and official languages. Learners are also reminded that Northern Ireland is one of the countries of the UK, not of Ireland. (*Spotlight 8*: 58-60). An important reminder is also found in Scrapbook United Kingdom, where Sarah reminds us that "Scotland is **not** in England" (*Spotlight 7*: 98), which can be seen Figure 3 below. It is also said that the Union Flag "Union Jack" consists of the flags of Northern Ireland, England and Scotland (*Spotlight 7*: 99). In other occasions it is also stated that the king or queen of England is the head of state of Canada (*Spotlight 7*: 44), Australia (*Spotlight 7*: 80) and New Zealand (*Spotlight 8*: 157). More subjective descriptions of the countries are discussed in section 6.2.6.



Figure 3. Scrapbook United Kingdom (*Spotlight 7*: 98)

The role of monarchy is not dealt with very directly. In Spotlight on London section (*Spotlight 9*: 24-26) it is mentioned that Westminster Abbey is the location for many royal weddings and that the Crown Jewels are kept in the Tower of London, where three queens were also executed. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are touched upon as an example of royal weddings and they are also pictured in a limited edition Oyster Card. On both occasions they are referred to intimately as "William and Kate" or vice versa. Queen Victoria is pictured in the world's first postage stamp (*Spotlight 9*: 81) but curiously there are no direct mentions

or pictures of the reigning monarch. The role of monarchy can be a touchy subject in the UK but it is still a central aspect of the society and it could be covered in more detail.

Learners are told about the education systems in *Spotlight 7* and *Spotlight 9*. The first (*Spotlight 7: 48*) gives very basic information, such as the school starting ages and British and American vocabulary variants, but the *Spotlight 9 (52-54)* section is very thorough. Learners from Finland, the UK and the USA describe their school systems and figures displaying the ages and corresponding levels support the verbal account. 15-year-old Monir from England explains, for example, that most children go to school between the ages of five and sixteen. Most go to free state schools and about six percent to expensive private schools, like Eton and Harrow, which for reasons unknown to Monir are called public schools. She is currently in Year 10 and has to take her GCSE exams, in which there are three compulsory subjects, English, maths and science. If she wants to proceed to university, she has to study for two more years and then take A levels. Also the vocabulary differences are looked into in more detail. The need for school uniforms is mentioned but not discussed further (*Spotlight 9: 52-54*) but there is a listening exercise about them in another book (*Spotlight 7: 102*). Comparisons between the Finnish and British education systems are examined further in section 6.2.7.

In regard to economy, learners are given basic information about different currencies including the pound sterling, dollar and euro. They are told that 1 pound is 100 pence and given pronunciation instructions. The information is linked to a restaurant situation, where learners are asked to act out a dialogue, in which they get to practise dishes and communication. (*Spotlight 7: 67.*) It seems that the currency is more relevant for practising numbers than anything else. Economy is also brought up in a situation where a British tourist complains about the high price level in Finland. They solved the dilemma by taking a ferry to Tallinn. (*Spotlight 7: 26.*)

### **6.2.6 Land, nation and tourism**

Most of the information about the countries is given in the form of statistics and official information, such as population, area and capital, discussed in 6.2.5. More subjective point of view is given to Wales, which overall gets the least attention. None of the texts are directly about it and besides the information box it is dealt with in a listening exercise (*Spotlight 7: 20*). There is picture with a caption "Wales is beautiful. There are lots of lovely little villages

and castles there." These types of descriptions are rare about the other countries. In terms of geography, there is a map of the British Isles with the four countries, their capitals and a few other towns as well as Ireland and Dublin (*Spotlight 7: 98*). A less detailed map is found earlier on to illustrate the location of Wales (*Spotlight 7: 20*). Topography is dealt with a single mention that the highest mountain in Great Britain is Ben Nevis, 1,344 metres high (*Spotlight 7: 99*).

Of towns London gets the most attention. It has its own section, *Spotlight on London* (*Spotlight 9: 24-26*), and it is also mentioned more times than other towns in other contexts in both *Spotlight 7* and *Spotlight 9*. In *Spotlight 8*, where the theme countries are Ireland, the USA and New Zealand, it is not mentioned at all. Belfast is introduced in the negative context of the Troubles of the 1980s (*Spotlight 8: 46-48*) but it is also stated that it is now a pleasant place to live and a popular travelling destination for weekend breaks (*Spotlight 8: 60*). More than one mentions are also given to Glen Nevis, a small village in the Scottish countryside (*Spotlight 7: 13*), where Sarah lives. She is moving to Fort William, which is described to be near Glen Nevis and bigger (*Spotlight 7: 86*). In the introduction of a listening exercise, the Welsh town Llanelli is mentioned with a reference to its "funny" name (*Spotlight 8: 12*). Other towns that are simply mentioned are for example Glasgow and Edinburgh in *Spotlight 7* and Manchester, Bath and Bristol in *Spotlight 9*. They are mentioned in exercises or as home towns of the persons introduced.

What learners learn about the history of the UK are mostly negative events. First, Rachel describes what it was like to live in the Belfast of the 1980s, during the Troubles. Learners are told about soldiers in the streets, unsafety and even deaths. It is told that Rachel's father, a policeman, was shot but he survived. (*Spotlight 8: 46-48*.) However, the reasons behind the Troubles are not discussed at all. Second, the invasions of Ireland, where the English and the Irish fought for 500 years, are described. It is told that the source of problems is the religion, the clash between the Catholics and Protestants. Furthermore, it is mentioned how in the 1800s the Irish had to pay large amounts to their English landlords, which caused great poverty. (*Spotlight 8: 57*.) The British are also shown in a less complimentary light in the New Zealand section, where it is told that the country became a British colony in 1840, which made the lives of the Maori people difficult (*Spotlight 8: 160*). Less thorough references of history are found in an exercise where famous historical events are displayed as news

headlines on smartphone screens. These are, for example, the declaration of independence of the American colonies and the death of Admiral Nelson. (*Spotlight 9*: 89).

Tourism and landmarks are given attention in different books. *Spotlight 9* dedicates three full pages to introducing some of the most famous sights in London (*Spotlight 9*: 24-26). It includes eleven tourist attractions, the Tube, Hyde Park, Harrods, Oxford Street, the British Museum, Piccadilly Circus, Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, Camden Market, the Tower of London and London Eye, with a small picture and an introduction text. On the background there is a Tube map, with the help of which learners can locate the sights. Sharp-eyed learners will notice some of these sights, such as London Eye and Big Ben, in a comic strip a few pages earlier. Also the Houses of Parliament and a black cab are pictured in the comic. (*Spotlight 9*: 11.) A picture of Big Ben appears twice elsewhere as well, not in an informative role but rather as a page filler (*Spotlight 7*: 76 and *Spotlight 9*: 18). Attractions outside London include some Scottish sights: Edinburgh Castle, which is merely mentioned (*Spotlight 7*: 22), and the Loch Ness lake, which attracts a million visitors a year because of "Nessie" the monster (*Spotlight 7*: 100). In *Spotlight 8* a recurring sight is the famous rock formation Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland. It first appears in a postcard saying that it was made by a volcano but according to the legend, a giant, Finn MacCool as we later learn, built it in order to make a bridge to Scotland. (*Spotlight 8*: 8). Later on there is also a comic strip dedicated to it (*Spotlight 8*: 43) and it is also discussed in Scrapbook Ireland (*Spotlight 8*: 60), where it is cited as "the most famous tourist attraction in Northern Ireland". Returning to England, learners are also told about the Eden project in Cornwall (*Spotlight 9*: 127) and the Lake District (*Spotlight 9*: 128).

### **6.2.7 Intercultural awareness**

CEFR (2001) and NCCBE (2004) stress the knowledge of differences and similarities between the target culture and the culture of origin, while also knowing of other cultures and variation within the cultures. In *Spotlight* there are two themes that get a great deal of attention in terms of differences. First, the education systems are discussed in both *Spotlight 7* and *Spotlight 9*. For example, we learn that the school starts in August in both Finland and Scotland (*Spotlight 7*: 13) and that there is more homework in Scotland than in Finland (*Spotlight 7*: 59). Some basic differences between school systems are also introduced, including the starting ages and vocabulary differences between British and American English, such as *pupil* vs. *student*, *timetable* vs. *schedule* and *holiday* vs. *vacation* (*Spotlight 7*: 48).

*Spotlight 9* returns to the education systems more thoroughly and learners are told, for example, that schools in Finland have an informal atmosphere, free meals and transportation. The narrator admits that he takes many things regarding the Finnish school system for granted. (*Spotlight 9*: 52.) In the UK schools are free (apart from expensive private schools) but meals and school uniforms are not. The use of school uniforms is naturally one of the most visible differences but it is not discussed further on that occasion. The explanation of the different stages of education is facilitated with figures displaying the age of learners and the corresponding level. More differences on the word level between British and American English are also brought up. (*Spotlight 9*: 53-54.) In both books the sections contain information of Finland, the UK and the USA, which allows learners to compare the three countries.

The second important theme concerning differences is the nature and environment. A very apparent difference is uttered by a Scottish girl Sarah, who says that life in the Scottish countryside is much quieter and slower than in Helsinki (*Spotlight 7*: 22). More indirect remarks are given later on (*Spotlight 7*: 26), where English youngsters write about their holidays in Finland. Common observations are that the food was healthy ("No junk food. We had fresh fish, fruit and berries."), the nature and lakes were clean and the weather was wonderful. Those who visited Finland during winter were not as pleased, as it was "grey and dark". (*Spotlight 7*: 26.) Similar experiences are brought up in *Spotlight 9*, where holiday goers once again share their insights: the environment was clean, the water was pure, the food was healthy and the trees were beautiful (*Spotlight 9*: 127). Apart from the winter complaint, the Finnish nature is presented as something very pure and pristine. Naturally, the aspects mentioned are normal to Finns but in the British eyes they seem to appear in an almost exotic light. The differences are further accentuated in a text about the Lake District where the writer is appalled by the rubbish and crowd in the area. He compares this trip to his visit to Finland where people, according to him, take care of the environment and where there are few campers around. (*Spotlight 9*: 128.)

Analysis of the sociolinguistic competence and its differences proved to be difficult in the context of the present study because information concerning culture appropriate communication is given from the viewpoint of the English-speaking world in general, not that of the UK. Information about table manners ("Please, remember please") (*Spotlight 7*: 73) or a



remark that in English conversations people often use the name of the interlocutor (*Spotlight* 7: 17) apply to the Anglophone communication rather than just to the UK. In addition, a part of sociolinguistic competence is being able to recognise different dialects and knowing about their connotations. The lack of this is discussed in section 6.2.1. It is understandable that textbooks have their limitations and not everything can be covered but the Anglophone countries and cultures differ in terms of communication conventions, amongst other things, and it could receive some recognition in textbooks too.

As a summary, according to *Spotlight*, the UK is a pleasant place to live with interesting sights especially in London. At present, there appears to be no poverty or socio-political problems. All the negative aspects, such as the Troubles, colonialism and the tensions between England and Ireland, are discussed in regard to the past. However, learners are left with good knowledge of the UK state-wise, although some countries are given more attention than others. The British people introduced are presented in a mainly positive light with no major faults, unless being dependent on the Internet is one. The people in the books are mostly youngsters and people of different ages are relatives of them. The non-related elderly are either heroes who smack robbers with their purses or weak who need special assistance. The youngsters are often half-British and have parents from different countries. They are happy, tolerant and do charity work. High culture and everyday life seem to be in balance. Learners are given information about literature and in smaller amounts about music and films. Sports is considered to be a part of culture, which is positive. A great deal of consideration is given to people's daily lives even though it happens on a general level without much reflection.

### **6.3 Analysis of *Open Road***

Cultural content of the six compulsory *Open Road* books is examined below. After the seven categories the main insights are summed up briefly.

#### **6.3.1 Social identity and social groups**

Regional identities are dealt with in a rather narrow way. A section about inclusive language reminds learners of how to speak of the British people correctly: "Don't assume that all the people living in the same country belong to the same ethnic group. Scottish and Welsh people mustn't be referred to as English." (*Open Road 4*: 117.) Further help is in a vocabulary about

nationalities. Countries of the world are listed with adjectives and nouns referring to the inhabitants and their languages are also mentioned. Section of Britain and its neighbours includes the United Kingdom/Britain, England, Scotland, Wales as well as Ireland, France and the Netherlands. Of languages it is said that in Wales one speaks English and Welsh and in Scotland English and Gaelic. (*Open Road 4*: 126.) This is essentially all learners are told about the UK in terms of regional aspects, which is rather alarming. One would assume that the information acquired in basic education would be enhanced in upper secondary level, so the approach adopted by *Open Road* seems almost like a step backwards. In addition, what was noted in *Wow!* and *Spotlight* too, identities linked to more restricted areas, such as north-south or town-countryside, are omitted.

Language is present in the language of the upper class on two different instances. First, Little Bee talks about the authority of Queen Elizabeth and how it is not tied to "the crown and the sceptre". It is her grammar and voice that make people obey her. Little Bee knows English because it is the official language in Nigeria but their English is very different from the "Queen's English". Learning the standard variant takes a long time, like "scrubbing off the bright red varnish from your toe nails" and there is always some left. (*Open Road 6*: 10.) Second, actor Rupert Everett speaks with his distinctive upper class accent in an audition. The staff is afraid that his way of speaking is "impenetrable". They particularly address his use of "eh-oh" instead of "o" and "shushy S" in "sshchurch". (*Open Road 3*: 89.) These examples show the posh accent as something that distances common people from the upper class and also as something less rich in terms of expression. While this contradiction is interesting, it would have been interesting to read about dialects on a regional level too.

"Each generation has their own way to shock their parents" and subcultures are brought up in an extract from Griff Rhys Jones's autobiography *Semi-Detached* (*Open Road 2*: 29). His father is reading an article from the *Daily Telegraph* with pictures of different hairstyles. In the article it is said that "long hair has become a badge of degeneracy amongst teenagers", some examples being teddy boys and greasers. Rhys Jones himself had "delicately coiffeured curls" at the time and his father was concerned of him being "associated with the criminal class". Rhys Jones is upset with his father's prejudices and wants to "live and dress exactly as" he wants to. He also shocked his parents with rock music and fur coats. (*Open Road 2*: 29.) There is also a listening exercise of different youth movements, such as rappers, hippies and Goths (*Open Road 2*: 33). Examples like these are extremely important in fading out the

thinking of "one language, one culture", discussed for example by Corbett (2003) and Kramersch (2006).

Ethnic and cultural minorities are discussed from the point of view of immigration and racism. There is an extract from Chris Cleave's *The Other Hand*, which tells the story of Little Bee, a 16-year-old Nigerian girl, locked up in an immigration detention centre and seeking asylum in the UK. She wishes she "was a British coin instead of an African girl. Everyone would be pleased to see me coming." "A pound coin is free to travel to safety. -- This is called globalisation. A girl like me gets stopped at immigration, but a pound can leap the turnstiles". (*Open Road 6: 9-10.*) Billy Bragg's song *England, Half English* deals with racism and questions over-patriotism. There is a diversity of cultures in the UK and even the most English things can have foreign roots. The singer is "half English" with "half English appetite". For breakfast he has Marmite and cappuccino and later he eats veggie curry. Furthermore, he sings how the English patron saint, St. George, was born in Lebanon and how the three lions representing the English football team are not exactly English either. Even the language is not all English, it is Latin too. (*Open Road 4: 18.*) I find these very important. Racism and xenophobia are current phenomena in both Finland and the UK at the moment and one of the aims of intercultural learning is to shed light to the negative attitudes and how prejudices can be overcome. Also the NCCUSS stresses the need for "tolerant and international co-operation" (2003: 12).

Different age groups are well presented in *Open Road* in the form of both fictional and non-fictional characters. Persons close to the age of the target audience are for example 16-year-old asylum seeker Little Bee (*Open Road 6: 9*) and 15-year-old student Sam and his girlfriend Alicia (*Open Road 3: 9-10*), all fictional. Slightly older is for example Gina, a British art student (*Open Road 2: 71*). Adults presented in more detail are often celebrities, such as actors or writers. The elderly generation is not that well depicted but there is a grandmother with a gambling problem (*Open Road 4: 93*). It is also typical not to mention the ages. There are, for example, Mike describing his living conditions (*Open Road 4: 53*), Spike and Jelena discussing job interviews (*Open Road 3: 52-53*) and Hannah writing about her stay in China (*Open Road 3: 65-66*). The assumption is that they are young adults but they can just as well be older. Characters of different ages are important because age, alongside gender and ethnic background, can affect the perspective towards life (see for example Corbett 2003: 19).

Like the age groups, occupational groups also consist of both fictional and non-fictional characters. For the latter, experts of different fields are typical. For example, Stephen Hawking gives his views about time travel (*Open Road 6: 28*) and a psychologist about addictions (*Open Road 4: 87*). Real people are also often famous, like writer Alexander McCall Smith (*Open Road 5: 37*), comedian Griff Rhys Jones (*Open Road 2: 30*), actors Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman (*Open Road 2: 82-83*) or fashion icons Vivienne Westwood and Naomi Campbell (*Open Road 1: 34*). Actor Rupert Everett's extract also lists other professions in the acting world, such as head of movement and head of voice (*Open Road 3: 88-89*). Famous people are discussed in more detail in section 6.1.4. Fictional occupational groups come up in literature extracts and they include for example artists, art critics (*Open Road 5: 32*) or plumbers (*Open Road 3: 10*). In exercises there are for example flight attendants, pub workers and doctors (*Open Road 1: 52*). So, some everyday professions are present but the selection is slightly distorted by the vast range of celebrities. The selection of celebrities in itself could be a theme of further analysis. They were perhaps chosen because they are presumed to be known by learners, illustrate well certain topics or are expected to stand the test of time and are therefore timeless.

### **6.3.2 Everyday life**

Living and housing are dealt with in different books. Living glossaries are given on two different occasions (*Open Road 1: 47* and *Open Road 4: 52*). The concept of British terraced houses is also explained. They "are a row of 2-3-floor dwellings connected by common dividing walls. They face the street and follow the contours of the land." (*Open Road 4: 52.*) Renting a flat together with your friends is said to be very common in the UK because of its affordability. It is also pointed out that in contrast to Finland, "men and women of all ages might share a flat even though they aren't in a relationship." (*Open Road 2: 19.*) Individual perspective to living is given in a translation exercise where Mike from London says he loves to live in a city and that he could not move to a suburb or countryside. He lives in a wealthy neighbourhood but there is no community spirit. (*Open Road 4: 53.*) In the final remark of Mike's description there is a hint of real life, not everything is perfect, which is an important part of providing learners with a realistic picture of the target culture, as discussed in 3.2.

Some instances of food, drink and hobbies are given. Mentions of the first are not numerous. Typical British Marmite is contrasted with Italian cappuccino and Indian veggie curry, popular in the UK (*Open Road 4: 18*), and a traditional dish Yorkshire pudding is mentioned

in a food quiz (*Open Road 1*: 71). It is also said that the English "consume twice as much champagne as the Americans" and that they "love bubbly drinks like ginger beer" (*Open Road 4*: 141). Interestingly and refreshingly, tea is not accentuated like in the other two book series. The choice of hobbies is very different from *Wow!* and *Spotlight* too. Not everyone plays football and collects key rings. In fact, the only hobby given applies to the whole nation rather than to individuals: pub quiz introduced in *Open Road 5* is said to be a "popular British pastime". The quizzes take place in pubs and answers are usually given as teams since the questions are often very difficult. There is an entrance fee and the pot is given to the winners. Learners are then asked to form groups and take part in a quiz in the form of a listening exercise. (*Open Road 5*: 6.) A positive feature is how the cultural information is not left unconnected but learners get to experience it themselves too. This recurs with debating and poem analysis too, as will be seen later on.

British families are introduced mainly via literature extracts from novels or autobiographies. Griff Rhys Jones's father is worried about his son being "associated with the criminal class" because of his unconventional hairstyle. Despite his poorly chosen words and intolerance towards difference, he seems to care about his son. (*Open Road 2*: 29.) Another father-son relationship is depicted in a novel *The Portrait* (*Open Road 5*: 32). In Hornby's *Slam*, learners are told about Sam's mother who cares about him and his father who was not around but it was a "good thing" since he was not into education at all. Sam's girlfriend has a more traditional family: a mother, a father and a brother. (*Open Road 3*: 9-10.) As can be seen, introducing families is not accentuated in *Open Road* like in the previous two book series. Furthermore, the families are not always idyllic nuclear families but they fight and argue too. Like Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991: 180) point out, a realistic point of view is more beneficial to learners than an idyllic one.

To continue with families, the members have different characteristics: Two fathers are introduced and at first glance they appear harsh but are later revealed in a different light. First, Griff Rhys Jones's father is worried about appearances and thinks long hair makes his son "associated with the criminal class". Rhys Jones leaves rebelliously but does not get too far because his father immediately goes after him to apologise. Rhys Jones describes himself as "too much of a conformist" and is going to Cambridge, so "sod" rebellion. (*Open Road 2*: 29.) Second, in an extract of Ian Pear's novel *The Portrait*, the main character describes his father as a "thoughtful man to his children" but also as "harsh and unforgiving". However, "despite

his apparent lack of interest in" his son, he gets him the best apprenticeship and therefore shows his affection that way. (*Open Road 5: 32.*) Some fathers appear to be unpleasant no matter what. Sam's father thinks that education is "a waste of time" and that "you're a bad person" if you study. Other Brits are described in Hornby's *Slam* too. Sam got her girlfriend Alicia pregnant and therefore is not a typical character in a schoolbook but he is realistic, which should appeal to learners. In addition, Sam thinks that his girlfriend's brother Rich is "King of Nerds" because he plays the violin. Rich also wears glasses but they are "cool" and Sam likes him. Alicia's parents, on the other hand, are getting on his nerves because unlike his father, they overvalue education and make Sam feel inferior. (*Open Road 3: 9-10.*)

Other types of characters are introduced elsewhere. Many British seem to be international. Gina Nicholson, a British art student, wants to work abroad for a while so she chooses a job as a camp instructor in California (*Open Road 2: 71*) and Hannah Fletcher moves to China for a year to improve her Mandarin (*Open Road 3: 65-66*). We also hear gap year experiences from Steve in a listening exercise (*Open Road 3: 72*). Furthermore, actors Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman have longing for faraway places too. They drive through Europe, Asia and North America with their motorbikes. (*Open Road 2: 82-83.*) Other types of people include flatmates Carl and Jodi who seem to be lacking authority since they are letting their dog terrorise them to the extent that outsider help is needed (*Open Road 2: 19*) and David who has changed from a "normal, happy child" to "miserable, withdrawn and rebellious" because he is addicted to gambling (*Open Road 4: 87*). The gambling problem also affects Holly's grandmother, who is heavily in debt because of slot machines (*Open Road 4: 93*). As can be seen, the characters are very different from the basic education books where everyone seemed to be more or less perfect.

### **6.3.3 Stereotypes and national identity**

Stereotypes or symbols of national identity are not reinforced in *Open Road*. One outsider stereotype is expressed by shoe designer Manolo Blahnik, who is afraid his new fur shoe will not sell well in London: "The British. Animal rights. No foxhunting. No shooting birds. -- They won't buy this shoe, but - they'll eat rabbits and poor little animals like that." (*Open Road 1: 36.*) Symbols of national identity come up in the form of pictures but not even nearly as often as in the other two book series. Big Ben and a tube sign are pictured (*Open Road 2: 109*) and so is the British flag (*Open Road 6: 12*). The best introduced symbol is the song *Jerusalem* written by William Blake and put to music by Charles Parry. The short history of

the "unofficial national anthem for England" is given, as well as instances where it is often heard, for example churches, schools and sports events. It is also the anthem of the English cricket team. In addition, it is said that the official national anthem for England is *God Save the Queen*. (*Open Road 4: 62*.) I find this type of a symbol very useful because it is introduced in such a detail and the foundation is also laid by saying "sometimes a piece of music manages to capture our sentiments for our country" (*Open Road 4: 62*).



Figure 4. Tube sign and Big Ben in *Open Road* (*Open Road 2: 109*)

#### 6.3.4 Art, science, media and sports

Literature is very a prominent part of the culture section. In *Open Road 5* learners are asked to match the opening line with the book and the examples include works by J.K. Rowling, Agatha Christie, J.M. Barrie, J.R.R. Tolkien, Jane Austen and Arthur Conan Doyle (*Open Road 5: 57*). Works of many of them are mentioned elsewhere as well. For example, Harry Potter, Sherlock Holmes, Miss Marple and also The Famous Five are mentioned in the grammar section (*Open Road 2: 130*). Harry Potter is probably the most cited with other mentions too (*Open Road 2: 142* and *Open Road 5: 55*). Furthermore, there is a fill-in exercise about Tolkien and the Lord of the Rings (*Open Road 5: 168*) and a Holmes and Watson joke is quoted (*Open Road 5: 169*), which is followed by example sentences about punctuation (*Open Road 5: 170*). The last two instances are useful in my opinion as they combine cultural and grammar material. In fact, the Sherlock sentences may actually work better than conventional examples because they might be easier for learners to remember.

There are several authentic text extracts from fiction: Nick Hornby's *Slam* (*Open Road 3*: 9-10), Chris Cleave's *The Other Hand* (*Open Road 6*: 9-10), Iain Pears's *The Portrait* (*Open Road 5*: 32-33) and Graham Greene's *A Shocking Accident* (*Open Road 5*: 106-110). The first three extracts are followed by a short introduction of the author. There is also a list of suggested readings which contains several British authors. In addition to the already mentioned there is Mark Haddon (*Open Road 5*: 133), and the sci-fi genre includes Douglas Adams, Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman and crime fiction lists Robert Harris, Ruth Rendell and Ian Rankin (*Open Road 5*: 134). Single mentions are given to Mary Shelley and *Frankenstein* (*Open Road 5*: 77), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (*Open Road 5*: 173) and George Orwell (*Open Road 6*: 92).

Introduction to poetry is given by comedian and TV personality Stephen Fry with the help of an extract of his book *The Ode Less Travelled* (*Open Road 5*: 66-67). Learners can then put the instructions into practice by reading poems by Percy Shelley, Philip Larkin, William Blake and Carol Ann Duffy (*Open Road 5*: 74-75). The poetry section also includes Shakespeare's Sonnet 138 (*Open Road 5*: 72). Shakespeare is also mentioned in exercises elsewhere in the books (*Open Road 2*: 151 and *Open Road 5*: 77). Furthermore, an abridgement of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* is given as an example of the deadly sin of greed (*Open Road 4*: 66).

The selection of musicians mostly consists of iconic bands, which will ensure that the mentions will not be outdated any time soon. Some of the bands have been famous for decades so it can be assumed that they are popular for a few more years as well. The Beatles are mentioned several times (*Open Road 4*: 168, *Open Road 5*: 199 and *Open Road 6*: 152) and The Rolling Stones (*Open Road 5*: 199) and member Keith Richards once (*Open Road 1*: 146). The most accentuated music genre, however, is metal music. Griff Rhys Jones reminisces seeing Black Sabbath, Uriah Heep, Argent, Pink Fairies and Edgar Broughton Band when they were not yet famous and wonders "why some of these pub rockers were to become international stars. They all seemed astonishingly loud and equally basic." (*Open Road 2*: 29.) Metal music is also discussed in a blog post with mentions of Judas Priest, Deep Purple, Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden and Motörhead (*Open Road 5*: 80). Motörhead song *Ace of Spades* is also given as an extract (*Open Road 5*: 88). "Notorious punk band" the Sex Pistols and their manager Malcolm McLaren are discussed in an exercise (*Open Road 2*: 32).



More recent music is introduced in the form of a drawn picture of Amy Winehouse (*Open Road 3*: 14).

Of films James Bond gets the most attention. First, there is a warm up exercise where learners have to match the Bond actor with the film (*Open Road 5*: 18). The actual text is Roger Moore's article for *The Times*, where he reflects on the evolution of Bond (*Open Road 5*: 19-20). Learners also get to combine famous quotes with the correct ending, including "Shaken or stirred? -Do I look like I give a damn?" (*Open Road 5*: 23). After reading about the motorbike adventures of actors Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman, there is a short information box with examples of movies they have acted in (*Open Road 2*: 83). A different approach to acting is given by Rupert Everett, who describes an audition process in his memoir *Red Carpets and Other Banana Skins* (*Open Road 3*: 88-89). Other film mentions include actresses Helen Mirren who "was awarded an Oscar in 2007" (*Open Road 2*: 145), Natasha Richardson, Dame Judi Dench, Vanessa Redgrave and Joely Richardson (*Open Road 6*: 102) and director Tony Scott (*Open Road 1*: 131).

British comedy is dealt with in an exercise in *Open Road 3*. Learners are asked to translate sentences mentioning *Benny Hill Show*, *Monty Python*, *Blackadder*, the *Fast Show*, *Little Britain*, *The Royle Family*, *Absolutely Fabulous*, *Men Behaving Badly*, *The Office*, Mr Bean and Rowan Atkinson (*Open Road 3*: 155). Information box about comedian Griff Rhys Jones mentions popular sketch shows *Not the Nine O'Clock News* and *Smith and Jones* (*Open Road 2*: 29). Other British television shows mentioned are Channel 4's *It's Me or the Dog* and made-up *Westenders* in a TV guide (*Open Road 5*: 16), a tribute to the long-running *Eastenders*. Mentions of TV personalities also include for example actor Hugh Laurie (*Open Road 5*: 68) and cook Jamie Oliver (*Open Road 5*: 162).

In *Wow!* and *Spotlight* sports is given a great deal of emphasis but in *Open Road* it is not in a central role and the instances are merely on a mention level. Football is the most common instance: FA Cup Final is mentioned in an exercise (*Open Road 1*: 129), Arsenal in an information box about Nick Hornby (*Open Road 3*: 10) and a listening exercise about football results lists more teams, such as Liverpool, Tottenham and Chelsea (*Open Road 3*: 124). There is also a listening exercise about sports and one question is "who won the race". The alternatives being Oxford and Cambridge, it can be presumed that the question is about rowing. (*Open Road 2*: 58.) Furthermore, rugby and cricket are mentioned in the information

box about *Jerusalem* song (*Open Road 4: 62*). Motorsports is also present, for the first time. Formula 1 teams McLaren, Williams and Lotus are mentioned in an exercise (*Open Road 3: 149*) and driver Lewis Hamilton is pictured as a drawing (*Open Road 4: 156*).

Newspaper media is present in the form of many text extracts that are taken from several sources. For example, the James Bond article is from *The Times* (*Open Road 5: 19-20*), there is a war photograph article from *The Sunday Times* (*Open Road 5: 41-42*) and a science article from *The Guardian* (*Open Road 6: 27-28*). In Rhys Jones's text his father is reading the *Daily Telegraph* (*Open Road 2: 29*). Electronic media is present in a blog post from *guardian.co.uk* (*Open Road 5: 80*). A more in depth look is given to how British tabloids attract readers with their "creative and colourful" headlines. Five different techniques are listed: emotive language, patriotic jingoism, word play, colloquial language and poetic devices. Short examples are given of each technique. (*Open Road 4: 95*.) Learners are then asked to create headlines to given short pieces of news.

*Open Road 6* begins with a list of famous inventions and their inventors on the inside cover. For example, James Watt invented the steam engine, Alexander Graham Bell the telephone and John Logie Baird the television. The British are also responsible for many medical advances: Alexander Fleming found penicillin "quite by accident" (*Open Road 6: 153*), Edward Jenner "invented the small pox vaccine" (*Open Road 6: 153*) and "British doctor Sir Patrick Monson linked malaria with mosquito bites", while his pupil Ronald Ross tested the theory and won a Nobel Prize for it (*Open Road 6: 154*). Furthermore, physicist Stephen Hawking is interviewed about time travel (*Open Road 6: 28*). It is also said that Sir Isaac Newton and Hawking were both professors at Cambridge University, but "not at the same time, of course" (*Open Road 6: 31*). It might be useful to give the nationality of the scientists more often because otherwise the names can be left quite unconnected.

A culture category that is not present in the other two book series is fashion. Learners are told about designer Vivienne Westwood and supermodel Naomi Campbell (*Open Road 1: 34*). Westwood is also mentioned in the context of the Sex Pistols as she designed clothes for the band (*Open Road 2: 32*). Victoria Beckham is also pictured as a drawing (*Open Road 4: 156*). Also art is a new category and it is dealt with a spread of nine works of art that are all "somehow connected to Britain". The artists include for example J.M. Turner, L.S. Lowry and John Constable and more recent ones, such as Damien Hirst and David Hockney (*Open Road*

5: 30-31). Another viewpoint to culture is given on the inside cover of *Open Road* which introduces awards and prizes in the cultural field. The British ones are the media and film award BAFTA, Turner Prize for visual arts, pop music ceremony Brit Awards as well as Booker Prize and Orange Prize for Fiction for literary accomplishments.

### 6.3.5 State, politics, monarchy and economy

As I already mentioned in 6.1.1, the knowledge given about the UK and its countries is very scarce compared to the other book series. The most informative part is the section about nationalities in *Open Road 4*, which lists countries, adjectives and nouns related to the inhabitants as well as the languages and the capital. The United Kingdom/Britain, England, Scotland and Wales are listed but Northern Ireland is omitted. Learners also find out the population of Britain in an exercise (*Open Road 4*: 130) if they can match it right and an example sentence asks "Who lives at 10 Downing Street?" (*Open Road 6*: 159). Byram (1993: 34-38) expects to find instances of political institutions in his "minimum content list" of cultural information and Ammer (1999: 34-35) too lists knowledge of land and nation as one of his categories. NCCUSS (2003) also expects learners to know of the target culture's characteristic features and the omission of such an essential aspect as government and state is not beneficial in my opinion.

The monarchy, on the other hand, gets more attention than in the other book series. The most informative section of monarchs is a listening exercise where learners have to fill in numbers. The monarchs mentioned are William the Conqueror, Richard The Lion-Heart, Richard III, Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, Charles I, Victoria, Edward VIII and Elizabeth II. Learners learn, for example, that the love life of Henry VIII "led to England breaking from the Catholic Church" or that Edward VIII abdicated "because he couldn't marry the woman he loved". (*Open Road 6*: 147.) Mentions elsewhere include a notion of Queen Elizabeth I who asked her shoemaker to make her a "pair of Spanish leather shoes with high heels and arches" (*Open Road 1*: 34) and of Queen Victoria who reigned for over 60 years (*Open Road 5*: 162). Monarchs also appear in paintings or drawings (*Open Road 5*: 30, *Open Road 6*: 121, *Open Road 6*: 146-147). The current monarch is discussed in an extract from Chris Cleave's *The Other Hand*, where the main character both envies her beautiful language and thinks speaking it means leaving out features of one's native language (*Open Road 6*: 9-10). Furthermore, Prince William is mentioned in an example sentence (*Open Road 4*: 170). The monarchy can also

serve as a discussion topic abroad. Hannah had her bike fixed in China over a 15-minute-conversation about the British royal family (*Open Road 3*: 65).

The British education system is introduced in *Open Road 3*. The differences between state schools (or non-fee paying schools), private schools (or independent schools) and grammar schools are explained. The term public school refers to leading private schools like Eton and Harrow. Also the different exams - 11 plus, GCSEs, AS levels and A levels - are explained in more detail. Furthermore, learners are told about primary school, secondary school and optional levels sixth-form college and vocational school. (*Open Road 3*: 12.) Also higher education is introduced briefly (*Open Road 3*: 54) and there is a guide of how to apply to universities in the UK (*Open Road 3*: 113). British university students' attitudes towards their exams are expressed by Kate Fox in an extract from *Watching the English - The Hidden Rules of Behaviour*. According to her, studenthood is a "limbo state", where students have a great deal of privileges but few responsibilities. She says that students moan about their workload and pretend to be anxious because it is socially acquired. (*Open Road 3*: 39-40.) Several universities are also mentioned throughout the books: Cambridge (*Open Road 2*: 58, *Open Road 5*: 68 and *Open Road 6*: 28), Oxford (*Open Road 2*: 58), Sheffield (*Open Road 3*: 127), Liverpool (*Open Road 3*: 127) and Birmingham (*Open Road 4*: 87).

Unlike in the other two book series, problems in the society are dealt with in *Open Road*. For example, after a text about arranged marriages there is a passage about child brides. The problem is said to affect mostly developing countries but "there is growing concern about missing schoolgirls in Britain, where underage immigrant girls are believed to have been sent to countries with a lower marrying age." (*Open Road 4*: 81.) Also racism (*Open Road 4*: 18), attitudes towards immigrants (*Open Road 6*: 9-10) and gambling (*Open Road 4*: 87) are brought up. Conflict-free presentation of the target culture in textbooks has been one of the reasons for criticism (for example Gray 2000: 274) but *Open Road* takes into account also negative aspects. In the middle of all the problems, an option to make a change is also brought up. Learners are told about The Big Challenge campaign targeted towards people aged 16 to 25. Its aim is to improve their surroundings. Young people can apply for a fund to pay the costs of their ideas and they receive mentoring in putting the projects into action. (*Open Road 4*: 107.) Another aspect of society, economy, is present in the form of pictures of pounds (*Open Road 3*: 60) and therefore does not get much attention.

### 6.3.6 Land, nation and tourism

Tourism is given little attention compared to *Wow!* and *Spotlight*. There is an exercise in the grammar section where learners are asked to implement a definite article if needed. The story is about travelling and it starts from London. The following sights are mentioned: the British Museum, the National Gallery, the Tower, the Thames and Abbey Road. The traveller also wants to visit the Isle of Skye and Loch Ness in Scotland. (*Open Road 5*: 164). The previous page gives help by introducing the article rules by mentioning for example mountain Ben Nevis, the Lake District and the Globe (*Open Road 5*: 163). Even though tourism is not in an important position, the distribution of tourist attractions does follow the familiar pattern: London is given the most attention, followed by Scotland.

A weakness of *Open Road* is the depiction of countries within the UK. The only instance of geography is a world map, in which the UK is marked (*Open Road 4*: 6). The related exercise encourages learners to think about what they know about different countries. Unless the opportunity is taken to reflect on the situation of the UK and the countries within it, learners are on thin ice regarding that information. Alarming, Northern Ireland is not mentioned at all and Wales barely and indirectly (for example *Open Road 4*: 155). Several counties are mentioned though: Bedfordshire (*Open Road 6*: 77), Cornwall (*Open Road 4*: 70), Essex (*Open Road 4*: 18), Flintshire (*Open Road 6*: 76) and the historic county of Yorkshire (*Open Road 4*: 142). Of towns London gets the most mentions and it is present in all the books. It is also the only town that is described: "Modern day London is one of the most international cities in the world" (*Open Road 5*: 164). Everyday life in Liverpool is also dealt with in a listening exercise (*Open Road 3*: 72). Numerous other towns come up as the home towns of people or are mentioned in example sentences but nothing else is learned about them. Most of these are located in England: Ampthill, Birmingham, Bristol, Durham, Halifax, Holywell, Lincoln, Liverpool, Manchester, Poole, Sevenoaks. Scottish towns Edinburgh and Glasgow are mentioned more than once but towns from Wales and Northern Ireland are completely omitted.

History is often told in contrast with other countries. For example, many inventions that are closely tied with other countries are actually British. Baseball was invented in 18<sup>th</sup> century England but Americans were ashamed of the origin and made a report stating that it was invented in New York in early 1800s (*Open Road 5*: 165). The English are also responsible for two famous inventions that are important to the French. Wine from the Champagne region

was made bubbly by the English already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the guillotine was first built in Halifax, Yorkshire, in 1286. Especially the first is not "easy for the French to admit". (*Open Road 4*: 141-142.) To further illustrate the relationship between the UK and France, it is said that "the English and the French were enemies for hundreds of years" (*Open Road 3*: 160). The name of America might also derive from a Briton. The term America is commonly thought to come from Italian Amerigo Vespucci but an exercise points out that new countries are not named after a person's first name. Thus, one should take into consideration a Welsh merchant named Richard Ameryk. (*Open Road 4*: 155.) The colonialist history of Britain is also touched upon in an exercise about George Washington (*Open Road 5*: 165) and by stating that India was once a part of the British Empire (*Open Road 1*: 10). It is also indirectly present in the story of a Nigerian girl (*Open Road 6*: 9-10). A quick look into the monarchy is also given (*Open Road 6*: 147). Most of the historical information is slightly trivial but the references to France do draw attention to international relationships.

### 6.3.7 Intercultural awareness

Intercultural awareness, important in CEFR (2001) and NCCUSS (2003), is raised in different ways. The British culture is contrasted with the American one with regard to vocabulary. British Gina is in Los Angeles talking with her new friends but they are having some language barriers. In a listening exercise learners are asked to fill in the American variants of for example *bonnet*, *luggage* and *petrol*. (*Open Road 2*: 77.) Traffic related vocabulary differences are also introduced, for example *pavement* vs. *sidewalk*, *diversion* vs. *detour* and *roundabout* vs. *traffic circle* (*Open Road 6*: 71). Different variants are also acknowledged in other glossaries. For example, in the glossary about marriage different terms are given: *stag night* vs. *bachelor party* and *hen night* vs. *bachelorette party* (*Open Road 4*: 84).

Two areas are given special attention in terms of general differences. Of living it is said that "unlike in Finland, men and women of all ages might share a flat even though they aren't in a relationship" (*Open Road 2*: 19). A vocabulary difference is also brought up: the word *house* refers to a "place where individuals or families live", whereas bigger places, such as *block of flats*, are called *buildings*. In Finnish 'talo' can be used for all them. (*Open Road 1*: 47.) Second, learners are given information about the education systems in the UK (*Open Road 3*: 12), the USA (*Open Road 3*: 22), Australia (*Open Road 3*: 30-31) and Finland (*Open Road 3*: 49) and therefore an opportunity to compare them arises. In addition to the aspects discussed in 6.1.5, it is said that "In England, secondary school refers to a school that starts at the age of

11 and may also include a sixth form. Sometimes the term comprehensive school is also used." (*Open Road 3*: 48). Furthermore, it is noted that in the UK "children start school at the beginning of the academic year (not the calendar year, like in Finland) in which they turn 5" (*Open Road 3*: 12).

Instances of sociolinguistic competence, stressed in both CEFR (2001) and NCCUSS (2004), are also present. Language specific communication is introduced on many occasions but most of them are from a general point of view, like the use of formal and informal language (*Open Road 1*: 19). Some instances are from the British perspective though. In *Open Road 3* British Spike informs her friend about job interviews in the UK: important factors are a good first impression, greetings, small talk, friendliness and confidence (*Open Road 3*: 52-53). Other examples are active listening and intonation, which are general remarks but told with reference to British student Kate. Phrases that an active listener uses are for example "uh-uh" and "has she?" and eye contact, nodding and smiling are also important. Of intonation it is said that "speaking with a monotonous, low intonation might sound rude" and therefore it is advisable to exaggerate the intonation in order to sound polite. (*Open Road 1*: 48-49.) Debating is also popular in Anglophone cultures, especially in the universities in the UK and the US. Learners get to practise their debating skills in various exercises. (*Open Road 4*: 54.) However, dialects and accents are omitted, at least on a written level.

To sum up, *Open Road* clearly adopts a more critical approach, in which negative aspects of the target culture are also presented. There are problems with the handling of immigration, racism and gambling. Also the people are not always nice; they can be harsh and intolerant too. High culture gets more attention than in the other book series, perhaps slightly on the cost of ordinary people and their lives: culture and language material are tied together by literature extracts from fiction or autobiographies by celebrities. While the choice appears clever, it might be more interesting to include more thoughts from ordinary people. Knowledge of the political structures, however, is rather poorly executed. In contrast to *Wow!* and *Spotlight*, there is no direct information about the target countries apart from a vocabulary glossary. Culture appropriate communication is handled from a more complex point of view though, some instances being for example debating and active listening. It is also positive how there is interaction between the given information and learners. For example, texts about pub quizzes or debating are followed by exercises in which learners can practice the described activities.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to examine how well the presupposed extensive presentation of the British culture appears in English textbooks of different school levels from primary school to upper secondary school. Studying the amount of the British cultural content in contrast with other English-speaking cultures was not the purpose but even without any systematic examination it can be said that also in these textbooks the British culture has a firm foothold, as previous studies suggest (see for example Pohjanen 2007, Lamponen 2012 or Lindström 2012). Especially the primary school book series *Wow!* focuses clearly on the UK but the selection of cultures becomes somewhat more versatile in *Spotlight* and *Open Road*. Thus, with such attention I wanted to know whether it all is worthwhile. Summaries of the main points are given after each book series in the analysis section and I have chosen some central points to be discussed in more detail here. Main insights with regard to the research questions are given, followed by addressing some improvement suggestions, limitations of the study and proposals for future research.

First, it was asked what kind of cultural knowledge about the United Kingdom is presented by the textbooks. Because of the vast concentration on the UK, learners are given many opportunities to become aware of the target culture, from different points of view. In all of the book series the reviled tourist's viewpoint, meaning for example quick facts and information boxes for travellers, is not as apparent as previous studies on older textbooks suggest (see for example Pohjanen 2007). Even *Wow!* and *Spotlight* which contain statistical facts and information boxes also focus on the ordinary way of life, for example by including communication examples that can be used in everyday situations and that are not useful only for tourists. However, the information given is sometimes superficial and does not include enough reflection.

In the past, culture has often been interpreted as high culture, meaning mainly literature and art, and its role has been important, also on the cost of people's everyday lives. Now the books studied seem to have found a balance between arts and everyday aspects of ordinary lives. With regard to the information about literary, artistic and athletic accomplishments and interests, its amount increases as learners get older but the focus varies. In *Wow!* and *Spotlight* sports, especially football, gets a great deal of attention and it is positive how it is included as an integral part of culture. Introduction to literature begins in *Spotlight* and media too is well



covered and it is also suggested by NCCBE (2004: 142). The most thorough presentation of cultural aspects in the strict sense of the word is given in *Open Road*, where one book is dedicated to it. The information includes literature, music, film, television, art, media, sports, fashion and science. Literature is the most prominent part and it is present in author introductions, text extracts and poetry. Knowledge of such areas is important and like I mentioned, the presentation does not take too much space from other areas of culture as such.

However, all books suffer from a 'fictional character syndrome'. The use of fictional characters allows book writers to introduce any kinds of characters they wish but if it results in bland and unrealistic people, it is hardly worth it. In *Spotlight* and especially in *Wow!* this can be seen as people who are overly nice and positive, although there is some variation of personalities in *Spotlight*. In *Open Road*, where the overall perspective allows room for criticism and diversity, unrealistic characters show in a different way. Many texts are extracts from fiction or from celebrities' memoirs. While it is a handy way to combine culture and language material, it does have a downside: it might be more appealing to learners to know of real people and their thoughts. Celebrities are naturally people too but in my opinion there is a gap in terms of realism. However, my notion of the 'fictional character syndrome' is generalised and does not apply to every character. Still, it is easily noticeable.

By continuing with people, the inner world of the characters is not often clear. For example, the connection between values, beliefs and culture, an aspect highlighted in both NCCBE and NCCUSS, is a left bit unclear. People's dreams and principles do come up occasionally but sometimes they seem a little disconnected and understanding them requires interpretation from learners. Positive values are introduced in the basic education books: in *Wow!* people value co-operation and goodwill and in *Spotlight* people are family-centred, tolerant and involved in charity. In *Open Road* it is shown how some values can have negative senses: valuing the upper class accent might seem impenetrable and patriotism gone too far can lead to intolerance. Are the values and beliefs introduced then typically British? Maybe it does not matter. In 3.2 Guest (2002: 157) suggests that the role of individuals should be accentuated over culture as there is always variation within cultures. In addition, I admit that tying values and cultures together is probably one of the most difficult aspects to execute.

The presentation of information can be viewed with the help of Ammer's (1999: 37-38) suggestions discussed in 3.2. In *Wow!* the most typical approach is typical-imitating meaning

that the texts describe different situations without much background information or criticism and therefore tend to imitate the reality. Fictional characters and the proficiency level of learners might be a partial cause of this. Also the normative-documentary view is present: it introduces the target culture in an objective light with the help of numbers and statistics, in this case with country introductions. The same categories apply to *Spotlight* but also the problem-orientated presentation (showing problems of the target culture) and the critical-emancipatory presentation (showing clashes of interest in different situations) are present to some extent, for example in the presentation of negative historical events, such as The Troubles and colonialism. However, the full descriptions of the categories include proposing solutions but in *Spotlight* this is not the case. *Open Road* too imitates the reality to some extent but there are practically no statistics. Problems of the society are shown more than in the other books and they are also discussed from a wider point of view, like immigration, and solutions are sometimes given, like with gambling. However, the categorisation is slightly problematic since the categories often overlap and the descriptions do not always match perfectly but it does give some indication of the information presentation.

I also wanted to know how the content of cultural knowledge changes after each school level. An area in which there was a clear chronological change was the critical approach towards the target culture. *Wow!* presents the UK in a very positive light, as a place where the weather is always nice and where no socio-political issues are affecting the harmony. The positive take also applies to people who are often very nice and lack personalities. *Spotlight* includes also some negative aspects, such as colonialism and the tensions between England and Ireland, but they are all told with reference to the past. The people are also very admirable, engaging in charity activities and being described with mostly positive adjectives. *Open Road*, however, adopts a very different approach. The selection of characters also includes people who are intolerant, mean or have addictions, such as gambling problems. Problems in the society are not ignored either: racism and the situation of immigrants are brought up. While it is understandable that the primary school books want to provide learners with a so called soft landing to the British culture by focusing on the positive, a little bit of realism would not hurt. In a way, ignoring criticism underestimates learners. I believe they are able to deal with negative aspects as well, especially if reasons behind them are also discussed. The case of criticism is also related to credibility, which should appeal more to learners than sugar-coated stories and people.

An aspect in which learners' knowledge goes almost backwards is the information about the countries within the UK. *Wow!* introduces basic information about England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and *Spotlight* adds more aspects to that and also explains the differences between Great Britain, the United Kingdom and the British Isles. One would expect that on the upper secondary school level the already learned would be deepened, for example by discussing what it is like to be English, Welsh, Scottish and so on. However, the presentation of countries in *Open Road* is very poor as it is not addressed directly at all. It is probably a conscious choice to exclude information about population, area and capitals but it also leaves a gap in the knowledge of the target culture. Maybe the book writers are trying to steer clear of the criticised tourist's point of view but even information boxes are better than nothing. Instead of omitting country facts altogether, it would be more advisable to find a balance between statistical information and everyday life. Especially when the concept of the UK is as complex as it is, in my opinion it should be addressed directly.

Furthermore, similarly as there is inequality in terms of the presentation of English-speaking countries according to previous research (see for example Pohjanen 2007, Lamponen 2012 or Lindström 2012), the portrayal of the British culture is unbalanced. England and the English culture are by far more emphasised than the other countries of the UK. This recurs in all of the book series. Scotland is given more attention than Wales and Northern Ireland, which alternate as the least covered cultures, *Open Road* omitting Northern Ireland completely. Also within England London gets more attention than other towns. The starting point of the present study was not to compare this type of distribution or to make quantitative analysis of the occurrences to support the view, so it would be an interesting study point for the future. However, naturally not all instances that have been mentioned provide learners with cultural knowledge, such as mere mentions of towns, but they do tell us about the prestige that certain places have. So, England seems to be more valued than other countries and with no explanation of the political structures the view of the UK may be distorted.

Furthermore, it was asked to what extent the cultural content corresponds to the objectives of the language teaching guidelines. One of the most addressed cultural aspects in CEFR, NCCBE and NCCUSS are intercultural awareness and intercultural communication skills. Of the first, a difference that is brought up in all book series is education in the target culture and the culture of origin. It is naturally a field that is very close to learners and therefore relevant. The presentation also allows comparison between different cultures, another highlighted

objective, as school systems in various countries are introduced. With regard to other differences the books choose to include different aspects. *Wow!* mentions the weather and the left-hand traffic, *Spotlight* focuses on nature and *Open Road* on living. In addition, vocabulary differences are discussed to some extent, in terms of Finnish-English as well as British English-American English. However, sociolinguistic differences in terms of dialects are unfortunately omitted.

The assessment of intercultural communication skills proved to be difficult at times because the focus of the present study is on the British context and the information is often given on a more general level. After primary school, NCCBE (2004: 139) expects that learners are able to communicate with native speakers in "everyday situations, in a manner natural to that culture" and the corresponding level in CEFR (2001: 122) expects for example "using everyday polite forms of greeting and address" and the ability to "socialise simply but effectively". In *Wow!* these basic skills are presented in the contexts of the home environment, for example table manners, and with services, for example buying ice cream or train tickets. The use of 'please' might be a little exaggerated but at least learners will not be rude. Expectations after 9th grade according to NCCBE (2004: 142) include communicating in "day-to-day situations in a manner acceptable in the subject culture" and according to CEFR (2001: 122) using a "neutral register" and being "aware of the salient politeness conventions". The problem of assessment applies especially to *Spotlight* as the communication situations are given from the viewpoint of the English-speaking world in general and therefore the question remains unanswered in the context of the British perspective. The aims for upper secondary school by NCCUSS (2003: 102) are culture appropriate communication and CEFR (2001: 122) lists the ability to communicate "clearly and politely in a formal or informal register" and "without unintentionally amusing or irritating" native speakers. The formal and informal registers are covered in *Open Road*, on a general though, and the latter point is also touched upon for example in terms of intonation. However, it must be borne in mind that no matter how well the aspects are covered in the books, the actual implementation of communicative exercises relies heavily on the teacher and on the time available. Furthermore, it can be asked whether giving culture appropriate communication from the general point of view is enough. Do the British, the American, the Australian, the Indian and other English speakers communicate in a same way? Naturally the limitations of time and room are a hindrance; not everything can be covered.

There are some suggestions with the help of which the cultural content could be improved. An overall weakness in the books examined is that the cultural content is mentioned rather than explained. The interpretation of facts, for example tea referring to a meal rather than to a drink, is left to teachers or learners themselves. A good counter-example can be found in *Open Road* where a *Jerusalem* song and its meaning to the British are explained. Also the inner-life of people is left somewhat in the dark; for example different nationalities are mentioned but it would be interesting and beneficial for learners to know what it is like to be English, Scottish and so on. It is understandable that primary school books like *Wow!* choose fictional characters to accentuate the play-like environment of language learning in the beginning. However, also fictional characters can be introduced in a deeper way, with personalities and feelings. A recipe of 'less people, more depth' might be useful in creating a more realistic scene. Although the idea of language learning is not to bash the target culture, some criticism would be useful on primary school level too. *Spotlight* has many positive features but it too would benefit from a more critical and realistic point of view, especially in terms of people. *Open Road* is a delight in terms of the critical approach. However, the major lack of country introductions cannot be overlooked. The lack is so apparent that it is probably a conscious choice but in my opinion not the right one. How are learners expected to acquire sociocultural knowledge if such a central aspect as countries is completely omitted? However, it must be borne in mind that the books have limited resources and not everything can be included. It is especially problematic with a language like English, which is well spread across the world, both as a native language and as a lingua franca.

While a Master's Thesis allows a wider perspective, it too has its limitations in terms of how much material can be examined. In the present study, for example, exercise books and oral material were left out, as well as the two optional upper secondary school books. The omission of the recordings lead to that the variety of dialects heard on texts and listening exercises could not be analysed. This was also acknowledged in the analysis section. Another point is the selection of textbooks that results in theoretical conclusions. First, the textbooks chosen for the study are fairly new. The choice was done in order to get evidence of the latest trends of cultural content but also because they had to follow the same language teaching guidelines so that the theoretical background would not get too complicated. However, a real learner who uses *Open Road* in upper secondary school will have used older book series in basic education. It should also be borne in mind that learners will neither internalise nor remember all the aspects mentioned in the books. In addition, a different choice of textbooks

could have produced different results. Also the choice to focus merely on the British culture restricted the collection of facts. For example, there were many instances of culture appropriate communication that apply to the English language in general, which were not included in the analysis. It should also be borne in mind that the study was conducted from a subjective point of view. Even if the study was replicated following the exact steps described, the results might become slightly different. The data is fairly large and people might choose to emphasise different aspects.

Addressing some weaknesses of the present study, it might be useful to conduct a study with less data that could include oral material and observe whether the distribution of dialects in an oral form makes up the lack of written information. Another aspect that could be examined in more detail is the presentation of the British culture from a quantitative point of view. It was noticed how England is emphasised on the cost of other countries of the UK and it would be interesting to see numerical data of this. Quantitative analysis could also be applied to the data in general to examine how the cultural mentions are distributed between different categories. Unfortunately it could not be implemented in the present study. Quantitative analysis might also require a different categorisation since the information is often rather intertwined.

Textbooks have a huge influence on learners but they are not omnipotent. Cultural aspects can be covered extremely well but also the teacher and learners themselves are responsible in whether the information is understood and absorbed. Teachers and learners can also affect the content of textbooks by giving active feedback to publishers. All in all, it would be beneficial to include more interpretation of facts instead of mere mentions and also to encourage learners to be critical. Being critical also applies to textbook writers: they should not be afraid to include negative aspects of the target culture, as it is only realistic and appealing to learners. All the books examined show genuine attempts to include cultural material and it is clearly in an important position. However, its amount could be increased even more. As Tsou (2005: 51) points out, cultural content can be easily implemented in language teaching as reading, writing, listening and speaking can be practiced at the same time. *Open Road* put this in use effectively by combining grammar exercises with cultural information. In addition, as for example Byram (1989: 57) says, cultural knowledge makes learners better users of language, which should be an incentive to include cultural aspects in textbooks. Moreover, by abandoning the outdated "one language, one culture" thinking, textbooks can give learners a useful set of tools and help them become tolerant and intercultural language users.

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