# PRESENTATION OF CULTURE AND PRAGMATIC KNOWLEDGE IN A FINNISH SECONDARY SCHOOL EFL TEXTBOOK

Bachelor's Thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Kulttuurin opettamisen on yleisesti katsottu olevan tärkeä osa kielen opettamista, mutta englannin kielen aseman muutos globaaliksi lingua francaksi on tuonut uusia haasteita kielen ja kulttuurin opetukseen. Viime vuosikymmeninä monet tutkijat ovatkin ehdottaneet siirtymistä englannin opettamiseen kansainvälisenä kielenä, jolloin opetuksen tavoitteena on oppijan kulttuurienvälisen kompetenssin parantaminen. Tällöin erityisesti kulttuurienvälinen pragmatiikka sekä kulttuurinen tietoisuus ovat suuressa roolissa. Vaikka kulttuuriselle monimuotoisuudelle olisi tekstikirjamateriaaleissa kysyntää, tutkimukset ovat osoittaneet, että kulttuurit, joissa englantia puhutaan pääasiallisena kielenä, eritoten brittiläinen ja yhdysvaltalainen kulttuuri, hallitsevat edelleen oppimateriaaleja. Tekstikirjat eivät myöskään usein tarjoa materiaalia kulttuurienvälisen pragmatiikan opetukseen. Tämän tutkielman päämääränä on tarkastella eri kulttuurien esiintyvyyttä sekä pragmaattisen tiedon esittelyä Suomen yleisimmin käytetyssä yhdeksännen luokan englannin kielen oppikirjassa. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan mitä, missä määrin ja miten eri kulttuureita esitetään, sekä missä määrin ja miten oppikirjassa esitetään kulttuurienvälisen pragmatiikan strategioita.

Tutkimus toteutettiin tarkastelemalla yläkoulun englannin oppikirjaa *Spotlight 9* sisältöanalyysin avulla, käyttäen sekä laadullisia että määrällisiä metodeita. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että vaikka eri kulttuureita on esitelty oppikirjassa verrattain paljon, brittiläinen ja yhdysvaltalainen kulttuuri olivat aineistossa selvästi näkyvimpiä. Lisäksi tulokset osoittivat, että aineistossa ei esitelty kulttuurienvälisen pragmatiikan strategioita, vaan pragmaattinen tieto keskittyi lähinnä kulttuurisidonnaisten kohteliaisuusnormien esittelyyn. Vaikka tutkimuksen aineistona oli vain yksi kirja, voidaan tulosten perusteella ehdottaa oppikirjojen suunnittelijoille kulttuurisen sekä pragmaattisen materiaalin monipuolistamista. Lisäksi ehdotetaan jatkotutkimuksen tekemistä kulttuurin sekä kulttuurienvälisen pragmatiikan opettamisen toteutumisesta yläkoulussa.

| Asiasanat – Keywords |
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| EFL, culture and language learning, cross-cultural pragmatics, textbook analysis, content analysis |

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The development of English to a global lingua franca has posed new challenges to the field of English language teaching around the globe. There have been discussions especially about the role of culture in language teaching for quite some time, and, as Hinkel (1999: ix) mentions, cultural aspects affect language use and the language acquisition process to a great extent. For example Lange and Paige (2003: xi) argue that culture teaching provides the language learner with the opportunity to connect to the target language community, and culture itself provides the context and content for any communication. Thus, cultural aspects need to be taken into consideration in language teaching. However, the matter of culture, or the target language community is not entirely straightforward in the case of the English language today. For example Nault (2006: 315), and House (2010: 363) point out that English today cannot be regarded as being only the property of a specific nation or national culture, but rather a global lingua franca used for different purposes by speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, scholars, educators, textbook writers and policy-makers must take this complex relationship of culture and language into consideration when making decisions regarding the cultural content that is being presented to the learners.

In the Finnish context, as there has been an emerging interest in teaching English as an international language, and even the new national core curriculum emphasizes the role of English as a global lingua franca (Ministry of Education 2014), the teaching of pragmatics, and especially cross-cultural pragmatics, has increased its importance. However, as Shin, Eslami and Chen (2011: 261) point out, cultural content in English language teaching materials and textbooks are still dominated by "inner-circle countries", which, according to Kachru (1985: 12) are countries where English is the native language of the general population, usually meaning the USA, the UK, Canada, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, to name some. Taking the global status of English into consideration, a greater variety of cultural content is needed in EFL textbooks, in order to develop the learners' intercultural competence (Cortazzi and Jin 1999: 217). In addition, as English is used mostly as a mean of intercultural communication, according to McKay (2009: 227), teaching pragmatics of EIL in language classrooms has become increasingly important. If such need has indeed emerged, it feels inevitable that the teaching materials, especially the textbooks, used in language classrooms would reflect this need, and provide resources for such teaching. As Harwood

(2010: ix) points out, although using authentic materials in language teaching is emphasized to great extent today, many teachers and classroom practices still rely heavily on commercial or teacher-made materials, and textbooks continue to dominate the teaching and learning processes.

Cultural presentations in textbooks have been studied widely, as it is an important aspect of language teaching and thus interests scholars around the world. For example Weninger and Kiss (2013: 712) found that Hungarian beginner-level textbooks did not adequately foster the development of intercultural competence and mainly portrayed simplified, monolithic conceptualizations of cultures. Similarly, Shin et al. (2011: 217) argue for a greater variety of cultural content in EFL textbooks, as cultural content is still often dominated by inner-circle countries, which does not reflect the reality of language use, although some attempts of internationalizing cultural content have been made. In the Finnish context, however, research is somewhat scarce, and, therefore, a textbook was chosen as the focus of the present study, which investigates and discusses the presentations of culture and pragmatic knowledge in a current and most widely used Finnish secondary school EFL textbook, *Spotlight 9*.

# 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this section the concept of culture and its role in language teaching will be briefly discussed, as it provides the basis for investigation in this study. In addition, the global role of the English language will be elaborated on, and the features of English as an international language (EIL) will be discussed. Lastly, the concept and role of cross-cultural pragmatics in the EIL paradigm will be discussed to provide a basis for later discussion and investigation.

## 2.1 The concept of culture

When culture is discussed, it is important to understand the complexity of the term and the concept itself. Culture, as a term, can be somewhat problematic to define, and its uses greatly depend on the context. *The Oxford Dictionaries* (2016) define culture as "the ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular people or society". This definition, however, does not necessarily reflect the complexity of the matter. Nault (2006: 315) lists some definitions of the term culture, for example culture as the framework determining one's actions, reactions, relations and perceptions (Hall and Hall 1990, cited in Nault 2006: 315) and culture as the program of the mind distinguishing members

of groups from other groups (Hofstede 1984: 21). Even between these definitions it is possible to see the complex nature of culture and its conceptualizations. With the term culture it is possible to refer to national cultures, for example "the Finnish culture", cultures of ethnic groups "the African-American culture" or to different sub-cultures, such as culture of a community of practice. For the sake of clarity and because of limited space, in the present study the phenomenon is discussed in terms of national cultures, that is, the beliefs, values and behavioral systems of a specific nation, and will not specify between sub-cultures, unless explicitly mentioned. Although this is a somewhat monolithic conceptualization of culture, and does not accurately represent the cultural variety of the real world, using nations as units in discussions about culture is still common in research literature (see e.g. Shin et al. 2011, Weninger and Kiss 2013).

## 2.1.1 Culture and language teaching

As culture is considered to be the framework within which human behavior takes place, it would be disadvantageous to separate language from culture in the educational context. In addition, as language is the primary means of communication for humans, language use is situated in a cultural context. Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 196) state that the inclusion of cultural content into language teaching and language textbooks is generally expected, and that developing a learner's cultural awareness is a major goal of language teaching. However, as Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 217) point out, there is often a lack of variety in the cultural content of EFL textbooks, and the focus of teaching cultural aspects is usually on the United Kingdom and the United States. Thus, the textbooks often do not support the development of the learners' intercultural competence, that is, the ability to communicate effectively with a person of a different cultural origin (McKay 2009: 227), or reflect the variety of cultural contexts in which English is used. This topic of culture in textbooks has been studied extensively even on an international level, and most of the findings point to the same problem: mainly inner-circle countries and cultures are usually presented. For example, Shin et al. (2011) investigated cultural presentations in seven internationally distributed EFL textbook series, and found a lack of variety in cultural content in all of them.

Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 207–209) emphasize that in order to serve the learners' needs efficiently, textbooks should include a mixture of source culture content, target culture content and international target culture content. Their division relies heavily on Kachru's (1985: 12) circle model of English, in which countries where English is used are situated into three concentric circles: the inner circle, outer circle and expanding circle. Kachru (ibid.) identifies inner circle countries as being the ones where English is used as the primary language. The outer circle includes

countries where English has an official status, or it is used as the language of government or education, for example, but is not spoken as a L1 by the general public, for example Nigeria and India. The expanding circle, on the other hand, includes countries in which English has no official role, but is used as a means of intercultural communication. Cortazzi and Jin's (1999: 207–209) notion of source culture content refers to presentations of the learners' own culture. Target culture content can, in the case of English, mean the inner-circle cultures, that is, the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, among others. International target culture content, however, would include the use of English in outer and expanding circle countries, and in contexts where it is not the L1 of the speakers, for example in China, Japan, Nigeria or Germany. In the present study Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) categorization will be utilized, albeit with minor changes, to distinguish between instances of different cultural content in a Finnish secondary school EFL textbook.

Kachru's model has faced criticism from many linguists, as it presents language usage in a fairly simplified way. For example Leppänen and Nikula (2008: 15) argue that the model neglects individual and regional variation in language use and proficiency within a country, and that as nations are used as units of examination of language use, it fails to reflect the reality of language in a globalized world. In addition, as Schmitz (2014: 377) mentions, placing native speakers in the center of the model implies that the native speaker is considered to be the ideal model for language use. However, as Schmitz (ibid.) explains, being a native speaker does not automatically mean that the rules of a prestigious variety are obeyed in daily language use, and, moreover, it is possible that a non-native speaker uses the language more professionally than native speakers. Although the model has received criticism, Schmitz (2014: 373) explains that it nevertheless continues to be widely used in applied linguistics, and that any model simple enough to use cannot capture the dynamic reality of language use. Thus, Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) categorization based on Kachru's model is chosen to provide the basis of categorization in the present study, as it provides a sufficiently clear way of examining a complex issue in a limited space.

## 2.2 English as an international language

The development of the English language to a global lingua franca has its roots in colonization, and the spread of the language has continued somewhat steadily to this day. Currently English is in a highly unique position of being the world's lingua franca, with an estimated 1,500 million speakers around the world (Statista 2015). However, as House (2010: 363) points out, non-native speakers of English make up the majority of the speakers, and vastly outnumber native speakers. Thus, according to House (ibid.) it is reasonable to expect that English is, in fact, used more for native –

non-native or non-native – non-native communication than between native speakers of the language.

McKay (2002: 132) defines the concept of English as an international language as English that is used for cross-cultural communication between both bilingual users and native speakers of the language. House (2010: 363) notes that use of EIL can occur internationally and within countries, where cross-cultural communication often occurs between people of different ethnicities and cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Through its increasing international uses over the last several decades English has acquired unique linguistic and pragmatic features, and a new international variety of the language has emerged.

The features of EIL have been studied to some extent, but the most distinguishable features compared to for example Standard English, are in phonology, grammar and pragmatics. Seidlhofer (2004: 215) lists some of these common features, which include for example omission of specific sounds, varying stress patterns, assimilation and intonation, dropping the third person –s, non-standard use of prepositions and tag questions, and omission of articles. All of these linguistic aspects can, according to Seidlhofer (2004: 217), vary in the use of EIL without affecting intelligibility crucially. The features of EIL pragmatics or cross-cultural pragmatics will be further elaborated on in the following section.

When the amount of global EIL use and these unique features of EIL communication are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that English language teaching needs to reflect the current uses of English in order to prepare the learners for real-life language use. Many scholars, for example McKay (2002: 132), argue that in the current situation, English should be taught as an international language rather than relying on the native speaker model or features of Standard English. EIL teaching takes on a new perspective of language teaching, where the emphasis is on communicative strategies, accommodation strategies, language awareness and intercultural competence. Specifically, the role of cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills are emphasized to great length, as the language is mostly used as a means of communication between speakers from different cultural backgrounds.

## 2.3 Cross-cultural pragmatics

McKay (2009: 227) emphasizes the importance of teaching pragmatics in the English language classroom, as pragmatic competence is a crucial part of communicative competence, and, also one's intercultural competence. As most English language learners in Finland are non-native speakers of

English, they are likely to encounter uses of EIL during and after school. Thus, it can be argued that a working knowledge of cross-cultural pragmatics is vital to ensure effective intercultural communication and use of EIL.

McKay (2009: 229, 239) states that learners' intercultural competence could be developed most efficiently by focusing on features of cross-cultural pragmatics, or meaning in interaction which takes place in a cross-cultural context between speakers of different cultural backgrounds. Traditionally, the native speaker has been considered an ideal model for pragmatic features such as appropriateness of language use. However, as McKay (2009: 231) states, in EIL communication there is a variety of contextual factors, and not all speakers share the native speaker set of norms for appropriateness. Therefore, the native speaker model does not work in the EIL paradigm.

House (2010) lists some features of cross-cultural pragmatics which have been found to occur often in EIL uses. These features include transfer of communicational patterns, code-switching to ensure intelligibility, repetition of own and conversational partners' utterances, self-repair, and specific uses of different discourse markers such as 'so' 'you know' 'yeah' and others, to signal hesitation, understanding and other messages. Meierkord (2000, cited in McKay 2009: 237), on the other hand, mentions features such as discussing safe topics and avoiding controversial or challenging ones, keeping topics short and avoiding detailed discussion, long pauses and frequent use of simple politeness devices such as 'how are you'.

McKay (2009: 239) suggests that the teaching of pragmatics should focus on introducing and practicing repair strategies such as rephrasing and repetition, meaning negotiation strategies such as clarification requests and confirmations, and introducing and practicing different conversational strategies. If these strategies and features should, indeed, be taught in classrooms, it would seem inevitable that the primary teaching materials, textbooks, needed to provide material for teachers and students to use. As a contribution to this discussion, the present study discusses the pragmatic content in the most used secondary school EFL textbook in Finland.

# 3 THE PRESENT STUDY

It has been pointed out in the previous sections that in the case of English the role of culture in language teaching is a particularly complex one, and that materials and textbooks should reflect the variety of cultural contexts in which English is used today, and the features of cross-cultural

pragmatics that are at play in EIL communication. However, there is not much recent research on Finnish secondary school textbooks, or their cultural content or role in developing the learner's competence in cross-cultural pragmatics and, in a broader sense, one's intercultural competence. In the present study I investigated the variety of cultural presentations in an English textbook for Finnish secondary school students, *Spotlight 9*. In addition, I examined the resources the textbook offers for the development of the learners' cross-cultural pragmatic competence. The aim was to find out what kind of cultural content is presented in the textbook, whether there is variety in the cultural content, and whether the presentation of pragmatic knowledge is aimed at developing the learners' cross-cultural pragmatic competence. The research questions I addressed were:

1. To what extent are 'source', 'target' and 'global cultural content' presented?
2. To what extent are features of cross-cultural pragmatics, specifically repair strategies and meaning negotiation, presented, and how?

With the first research question I wanted to find out the proportion of the presentations of source, target and global cultural content in *Spotlight 9*. Based on earlier research, for example Shin et al. (2011), I expected that while there is some variety in the content, inner-circle cultures, especially the UK and the USA still dominate. With the second research question I examined the presentations of pragmatic instructional content in *Spotlight 9*, and whether or not features of cross-cultural pragmatics were presented explicitly in the data, more specifically focusing on two features identified by McKay (2009: 239): meaning negotiation and repair strategies.

## 3.1 Data

The data I examined is a Finnish secondary school EFL textbook *Spotlight 9*. This particular textbook was chosen as the object of my investigation for three reasons: firstly, it is currently one of the most used textbooks in Finland (Vuorinen, personal communication, November 9, 2015). Secondly, it is used in the 9th grade of comprehensive school, when most students have already been studying English for five or more years, and their level of English is expected to be quite good, and focus can be shifted towards pragmatic knowledge. Thirdly, the course includes topics of globalization, culture, travel and others. Thus, I expected to find a fair amount of cultural content in the textbook.

## 3.2 Methods

The data was analyzed through a process of content analysis. This method was chosen because it provides the opportunity for examining the textbook closely, and analyzing the relationships between the texts and the cultural contexts. Content analysis enables the examination of existence and frequency of instances of cultural content in the data. As Krippendorff (2013: 10) explains, content analysis entails a set of techniques with which one is able to draw conclusions and yield inferences from a body of text. Content analysis can entail both quantitative and qualitative aspects, and in the present study content analysis was carried out both quantitatively, by counting and categorizing instances of cultural content, and qualitatively, by analyzing the data carefully in a descriptive manner. Content analysis also allows the analysis of the data and its significance in the Finnish cultural context and in relation to real-life teaching practices, as content analysis is context-sensitive as an approach (Krippendorff 2013: 46). In addition, content analysis is ideal for categorizing data and analyzing the meaningfulness of the findings.

The first research question was addressed and answered by counting the instances of cultural content and categorizing them into three categories. All separate explicit instances of cultural content in the instructional text which in some way presented aspects of a culture to the reader, or provided material for the reader to draw conclusions about the culture, were counted as instances of cultural content. This, then includes, texts and exercises providing explicit information about a culture, and texts where the character or speaker were representatives of a specific culture and provided portrayals of aspects of their culture to the reader. In other words, for example a text where a Canadian character explains the relationship between Canadians and nature was counted as an instance of cultural content, as it provides the reader with material from which to draw conclusions about how Canadian people think, feel and act. Similarly, a text about Indian festivals would be an example of an instance of cultural content, but a simple mention of a city or country, with no additional information would not be considered one.

The categories introduced by Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 207-209) served as the basis of analysis, but instead of international target culture content, global cultural content was used, as the term global cultural content is more accurate in describing multiculturalism in an international and intra-national context. The categories used were thus instances of source culture content, instances of target culture content, and instances of global culture content.

What needs to be noted here is that in order to analyze the data in the clearest possible way, a fairly monolithic conceptualization of culture, that is, national culture, was used. Discussing

cultures in terms of countable entities that are property of a specific country does not, of course, reflect the dynamic nature of culture, or cultures' realizations in the real world. National cultures are, however, mainly used as units of discussion in language textbooks, where cultures are often portrayed as clearly distinguishable, countable entities. Thus, it was the clearest way to discuss the phenomenon in the present study.

The second research question was addressed similarly to the first one, by identifying instances of pragmatic instruction, but each instance was then analyzed in relation to culture and the paradigm of cross-cultural pragmatics. The analysis here focused on whether or not repair strategies and meaning negotiation were presented to the reader.

# 4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this section, the results of analysis will be presented, compared and contrasted. Firstly, presentations of source, target and global culture contents will be presented and analyzed. Then, the results of analysis of pragmatic content in the data well be reported and situated into a wider cultural and educational context.

## 4.1 Presentation of cultural content

There were altogether 134 instances of cultural content in *Spotlight 9*. As can be seen from Table 1, target culture content was most prominent, as 44.8% of all instances were related to target cultures. Global culture content reached almost as much coverage, as 43.3% of all cultural content was related to global cultures, meaning outer and expanding circle countries and other instances of global culture. Source culture content, or the Finnish culture, was least represented, as it only accounted for 11.9% of all cultural content in the data.

However, the percentage of instances does not tell the whole truth. The 134 instances of cultural content in the data included altogether 41 different nations or groups whose cultures were presented, but not all of them received the same amount of attention or prominence in the textbook. As Table 1 shows, the number of cultures featured in the global culture content category was 35, while in the target culture category it was only 5. This imbalance will be elaborated on in

the following sections, as source, target and global culture content in the data will be examined in more detail.

*Table 1. Instances of cultural content in Spotlight 9*

|  | Number of instances | % of instances | Number of cultures |
|---|---|---|---|
| Source culture content (Finnish) | 16 | 11.9% | 1 |
| Target culture content (inner-circle) | 60 | 44.8% | 5 |
| Global culture content (outer and expanding circles) | 58 | 43.3% | 35 |
| TOTAL | 134 | 100% | 41 |

**4.1.1 Source culture content**

There were 16 instances where the Finnish culture, the source culture, was presented in some way. As can be seen from Table 1, source culture content made up 11.9% of the cultural content. In eight out of 16 instances, the cultural content was presented by offering general knowledge about Finland as a country and as a cultural climate. For example, in Unit 5, which discusses environmental issues, there were mentions about everyman's rights in Finland and the role of nature in the Finnish culture. In addition, general information about the average carbon footprint of a Finn was provided and compared with other cultures. In six out of 16 cases the cultural content was more descriptive, as it was presented through characters telling their experiences about the Finnish culture. For example in Unit 2, the Finnish educational system was presented, as a Finnish character tells about what it is like going to school in Finland. This was again contrasted with other countries, in this case the UK and the USA. Two of the instances were exercises in which the student is supposed to tell about the Finnish culture and life in Finland in English. In Unit 1, there was a conversational exercise with several questions about Finland and the Finnish culture, including for example *What are Finnish people like?* and *What's Finnish food like?*, among others.

According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 205) source culture content in textbooks aims at increasing awareness about the learner's own cultural identity, and practicing that identity. In

*Spotlight 9*, the source culture content provides opportunities for the learner to compare and contrast their own cultural framework to those of others, through different contrastive texts and exercises. The oral exercises also provide material for practicing telling about one's own culture to people of other cultural backgrounds. Thus, the learner's cultural identity is taken into consideration in the texts and exercises, and the learners are given an opportunity to reflect on their culture in relation to the global world.

### 4.1.2 Target culture content

As expected, most of the cultural content in *Spotlight 9* was target culture content, or content related to the cultures of some inner-circle countries, namely the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia and Ireland. As Table 1 shows, there were 60 instances of target culture content, meaning that 44.8% of all cultural content was related to inner-circle countries, from which a great deal was content related to the UK and the USA. From Table 2 it can be seen that instances of British culture made up approximately 24.6% out of all the cultural content in the textbook, so in almost one out of four instances of cultural content, the British culture was represented. The USA was not left far behind, as content related to the culture of the US was presented 20 times, or 14.9% of all instances.

*Table 2. Instances of cultural content related to the UK and the USA*

|  | Number of instances | % out of all instances |
|---|---|---|
| The United Kingdom | 33 | 24.6% |
| The United States | 20 | 14.9% |
| TOTAL | 134 | 100% |

In comparison, other target cultures received much less attention. In addition to the UK and USA only three other cultures or countries were presented: Australia, Canada and Ireland, while for example South African culture was not included in the contents of the textbook. Even the three other countries or cultures which were included, received very little attention. Australian culture was presented in only three occasions, as was Canadian culture. Irish culture only received one passing note.

In addition to the number of the presentations of target cultures, what needs to be taken into consideration is that the prominence of all cultural content instances was not equal. In addition to outnumbering other cultures, the prominence of the content related to the USA and especially the UK, was much greater than that of other countries. Some cultures were given

prominence as they were presented with a large body of text stretching to two or three pages, and with multiple images, while some were presented briefly with one or two clauses in the running text. For example in Unit 1, there was a three-page *Spotlight on London* chapter, where London was presented with multiple pictures, pieces of text and a map. The chapter is written to function as a kind of a tourist guide to London. Allotting this much space for London implies that it is in some way more important for the learners to know. Similarly, the American and British educational systems were presented in much detail in Unit 2, *Spotlight on education*, in addition to the presentation of the Finnish educational system mentioned in the last section. In each instance, British and American characters explain the educational culture of their country, and in addition to text, there are charts about the educational systems.

On the other hand, the Irish culture was only presented once in the textbook. In the reference section of the textbook there was one instance of the UK culture and Irish culture, stating that *British people are very polite. And so are the Irish.* Statements such as this can be seen as very insufficient and stereotypical, as the portrayal not only relies on specific norms of politeness, but also makes unfounded generalizations. In addition, Australian and Canadian cultures were presented much less than British and American cultures, and others, such as New Zealand, were ignored completely. Thus, there was a clear imbalance in the way cultures were presented in the data.

### 4.1.3 Global culture content

There were altogether 58 instances of global culture content in *Spotlight 9*, which amounts to 43.3% of all cultural content. Although the percentages of target and global culture content instances were almost as high, the prominence of different cultures remains unequal. The 58 instances of global culture content presented 35 different cultures. This means that most of the cultures in the global culture category were only presented once or twice, and, in addition, these instances were rarely extensive. The cultures of which there were most instances in the global culture category were Japan, with 7 instances, and People's Republic of China with 4 instances. In addition, some cultures received more prominence despite being referred to only once or twice, as they were presented in detail with a large body of text or a separate chapter. These instances include for example Nauru and Senegal. Nauru was presented with a two-page section in Unit 1 titled *Palm trees, coconuts and western junk*, which explained the culinary culture and environment of the country, and life on the island in a general manner. Senegal, on the other hand, was discussed with an equally long section titled *A day in the life of a Senegalese schoolgirl,* in which the culture of Senegal was presented

through a story of a Senegalese 14-year-old. In addition, Indian culture had its on *Spotlight on India* section in Unit 4, where aspects of Indian culture were presented. All of these instances received much more prominence compared to other cultures in the global culture category, as there was more text, and often multiple images in the chapters. In comparison, most cultures were only presented in one or two instances with brief mentions. These cultures included for example many Nordic countries such as Sweden, Norway and Iceland, and countries such as Russia, Argentina and Italy.

In addition to 50 instances of national cultures in the global culture category, there were eight instances of cultures which could not be neatly categorized as national cultures, but where nevertheless examples of global culture content. These included four instances of bicultural characters: Pakistani-British, Jamaican-British, Japanese-American and Korean-American. In addition, there where two instances where the Arab culture was presented, once through a Muslim character and once by presenting food traditional for Arab cultures. In addition, there was one instance of North American food culture and one of South American food culture. However, none of these instances were very prominent. Biculturalism and prominent world cultures such as the Arab culture were thus largely neglected in the contents of the textbook.

## 4.2 Instructional content presenting features of cross-cultural pragmatics

A careful analysis of the data revealed that features of cross-cultural pragmatics, specifically repair strategies and meaning negotiation, were not included in the contents of the textbooks. There were several instances of content directed at developing the learners' pragmatic competence, but there was a heavy reliance on native speaker norms. For example, *Spotlight 9* includes separate *Chat* sections, where specific uses of language and appropriate language use in specific setting are presented and practiced. Politeness was discussed in ten different contexts in the textbook, but in none of these occasions was cultural variation in politeness explicitly stated. As House (2012: 287) points out, notions of politeness and impoliteness are deeply ingrained in the cultural framework of the individual, and thus there is variation in cross-cultural realizations of politeness. For example, as Nguyen (2011: 26) notes, making suggestions may be more acceptable in cultures which are more involvement-oriented, such as Vietnam, while it may be considered face-threatening in cultures where personal space is valued more, such as Australia. Portraying politeness only in relation to inner-circle cultures does not, then, foster the development of one's intercultural competence. Taking this into consideration, relating politeness norms only to one's own culture and the target culture may not be beneficial in the case of English, as its uses are manifold and situated in many

cultural contexts. However, in *Spotlight 9*, notions of politeness relied greatly on notions of politeness in the Finnish context and native speaker norms.

Only in two occasions in the grammar section of the book, the possibility of variation was taken into consideration while discussing the use of indirect questions and conditional forms as politeness devices. With indirect questions, the instruction stated that *A direct question can sound impolite in English*. This note takes cultural variation in the use of indirect questions as politeness devices into consideration, but does not elaborate on the topic. Similarly, in relation to the conditional form, and instruction stated that *The conditional is often used in polite requests*. This, again, leaves the option open that conditional is not used as a politeness device in all contexts, but the instruction still remains vague, and does not explain any possible culture-dependent variation.

On the other hand, in one occasion the reliance on native speaker politeness norms was explicitly stated. In a Unit 3 *Chat* section, titled *How to sound polite*, a separate box stated that *The English use each other's first names more often than Finns, while speaking with their acquaintances*. Here, the instruction neglects all other cultural contexts and focuses solely on politeness strategies commonly used by the English. Conversational cultures vary, and the ways of addressing people are culture-dependent. For example Chen (2010: 898-900) notes that terms of address are a feature of language which is closely related to culture, and that language learners need to be aware of differences in address systems and the cultural and social factors underlying them, in order to communicate efficiently in an intercultural context.

In addition to explicit politeness instruction in Unit 3, there were several instances where politeness devices such as *please, sorry,* and *I'm afraid* were introduced, but not labeled as politeness devices. In three separate instances, however, the textbook instructed the learner to *Be polite* or *say it nicely* in different situations, the first one being an interview and the second a disagreement. As these instructions are not explained or elaborated on, it is reasonable to expect that the notion of politeness or a "nice" way of saying things refer to the Finnish politeness culture. Thus, the learners' source culture is emphasized here, but it is not situated in a wider global or cross-cultural context.

The native speaker being the basis for presentations of pragmatic knowledge was explicitly stated in some occasions, and in others the native speaker model was more implicit. However, as McKay (2009: 231) argues, the native speaker is no longer an ideal model for language use and pragmatic competence. In *Spotlight 9*, there was no explicit mention of cultural differences for example in instances of politeness instruction or appropriateness of language use in specific settings. If cultural differences are not made explicit to the reader, there is a danger of

neglecting those differences in communicational situations, which may, according to Nguyen (2011: 23) hinder intercultural communication.

What also needs to be noted is that the textbook included texts in which people from different cultures conversed with each other, or characters explained their experiences abroad. For example in Unit 1, an Estonian character explains his experiences of using English in an intercultural context in Spain, and the difficulties he faced in communicating in English with another non-native speaker. There were, however, no mentions of communication problems which would have resulted in self-repair such as rephrasing or repetition, or meaning negotiation between the participants, for example clarification requests or confirmations. These kinds of texts could have been designed to include also features of cross-cultural pragmatics such as self-repair, repetition, rephrasing, clarification requests or confirmations in a communication breakdown situation, and therefore to present these strategies to the readers.

# 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that *Spotlight 9* includes a surprisingly wide variety of cultural presentations, compared to earlier research on Finnish EFL textbooks (see e.g. Lindström 2012). In total, there were 134 instances of cultural content, in which 41 different cultures were represented. However, the proportions and prominence of content was unequal, and the analysis revealed that inner-circle countries, especially the UK and the USA are still represented over others. The variety of cultures included in the textbook offers a great deal of material for learners, teachers and classroom practitioners to use in developing intercultural competence and increasing awareness about the global role of the English language and its manifold uses. However, the extent to which this content aids learning greatly depends on the ways it is used in and outside the classroom.

Although a variety of cultural content is presented in the textbook, there are still some aspects which need to be taken into consideration. Even when cultures are presented to learners, the relationship between language and culture, and especially English in the specific cultural context is often not presented or elaborated on. If the relationship between language and culture was made explicit, it could help increase the learners' intercultural awareness and aid in the development of intercultural communicative competence. In addition, although inclusion of multiple cultures in the material is helpful, there is always a danger of stereotypical portrayals of cultures, when multiple countries and cultures are presented in limited space. The responsibility here lies also with the

learners themselves and with the teachers to ensure that portrayals that are given are as accurate as possible, and if stereotypical portrayals are found, they are also challenged.

The findings about the pragmatic content in *Spotlight 9* indicate that cross-cultural pragmatics is still not included in teaching materials to the extent that it could, and should be. When pragmatic knowledge is presented and taught only in relation to one's source culture or target cultures, with the native speaker regarded as the model for appropriate language use, the reality of the manifold uses of English is not reflected to the learners. If the textbooks used in classrooms do not offer material for teaching cross-cultural pragmatics, there is a danger that it is neglected completely, as textbooks are often relied upon in teaching. It would be the textbook designers' duty to include materials to be used for presentations and discussion in classrooms, so that learners have a possibility to develop their intercultural competence. Currently, if textbooks offer little to no materials for teachers, it is the teacher's responsibility to pay attention to features of cross-cultural pragmatics, and ensure that different features, such as meaning negotiation strategies and self-repair strategies are presented and practiced in the classroom. Further research is needed on whether or not, and how, these strategies are actually presented and practiced in Finnish secondary school EFL classrooms.

However, as the scope of this study was limited, and the data only comprised one textbook, generalizations about cultural or pragmatic content in all Finnish secondary school EFL textbooks cannot be made. In addition, the data in question was published in 2011, and there will be a revised version of the textbook will be published in 2017 (SanomaPro, 2016). The findings of this study nevertheless suggest clear implications for the authors of *Spotlight 9* that the revised version could be improved by distributing emphasis of cultural presentations more equally. For example, the Arab culture is a very prominent culture in today's globalized world, and it would deserve more than two passing notes. Language teaching does, after all, aim at preparing learners for real-life language use, and materials used in teaching should thus reflect that reality as accurately as possible.

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