FROM CULTURAL ALIENATION TO INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN EFL TEXTBOOKS

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Abstract:

The study highlights the development in attitudes towards cultural contextualization in three locally designed Algerian EFL textbooks; Think it Over (1989), Comet (2001), and New Prospects’ (2007) used in High School to teach pre-university students. While the first two textbooks broadly aim at developing the learners’ communicative competence, the last one shifts objectives and aims at developing the learners’ intercultural competence as stated by its designers in the foreword. Thus, this study tries to explain, through the analysis of the reading texts used in the materials, how the included cultural content which was mostly targeting the foreign cultures (Other) changes to include some aspects of the learners’ local culture (Self) in an attempt to include intercultural aspects. It further investigates how the contact of cultures, previously seen as negative because leading to the cultural alienation of the learners, is reinforced in the recent textbook (New Prospects) as a means to develop the learners’ intercultural competence allowing them to function in cross-cultural contexts. The analysis consists of the examination of the representations of the Self (learners’ local culture) and the Other (Foreign language culture) as conveyed by the reading texts selected by the designers as teaching materials.
Introduction

English language teaching in Algeria has an important place in the overall school curriculum. It is based on locally designed EFL textbooks which are subject to approval from Ministry of National Education. These textbooks reflect the authorities’ double challenge of implementing an efficient teaching methodology and providing an appropriate cultural contextualization of content. The textbook designers are aware that English cannot be taught in cultural vacuum but do not always agree about what type of cultural content best fits the Algerian school; whether it is the learners’ local culture (Self) the foreign language target culture(s) (Other), or the international culture (both Self and Other). However, they recognize that the political and sociocultural developments taking place both at the local and global levels create the need for people from distinct cultures and backgrounds to interact with each other. Therefore the education reform launched in 2002 shifts objectives from developing the learners’ communicative competence to developing their intercultural communicative competence which resulted in designing new EFL textbooks.

The study explores the development in attitudes towards cultural contextualization in three successive EFL textbooks *Think it Over* (1989), *Comet* (2001), and *New Prospects’* (2007) used in High School to teach pre-university students during the 1990’s to the present day. It shows, through the analysis of the reading texts used in the textbooks, how the included cultural content which was mostly targeting the foreign culture(s) (Other) changes to include some aspects of the learners’ local culture (Self) in an attempt to implement intercultural competence. It further investigates how the contact of cultures, previously seen as negative because leading to the cultural alienation of the learners, is reinforced in the new textbook (*New Prospects* 2007) as a means to develop the learners’ intercultural communicative competence allowing them to function in
cross-cultural contexts. The analysis consists of the examination of the representations of the Self (learners’ local culture) and the Other (Foreign language culture) as conveyed by the reading texts.

Review of literature

1. Culture in foreign language teaching

Culture is often a matter of language, and learning the one relates to the learning about the other either explicitly or implicitly. Swiderski (1993) believes that “saying that we can learn about culture is saying that we should. Language learning is the starting point and the focus but culture learning is the aim” (Swiderski, 1993: 09). Often one acquires a second culture in learning a second language. However, the two processes of learning a second language and acquiring its culture are not identical. “Culture is not learned as language is, yet language is not learned until culture is.” (Swiderski, 1993: 06)

To understand language satisfactorily and use it fluently learners need not only linguistic, pragmatic, discourse and strategic competences but also socio-cultural and world knowledge (Willems, 1996). To become proficient target language speakers, foreign language learners need to be aware of the cultural dimension of the language they are learning. It is a prerequisite for any successful interpersonal interaction they may engage in.

Sometimes the language classroom offers the possibility of culture transmission that coordinates with language learning. Yet, the issue remains problematic and challenging because if “language learning is gaining a skill, culture learning as assimilation is transforming identity” (Swiderski, 1993: 23) Exposure to a foreign culture involves rethinking one’s identity by comparing one’s culture to that of the target language either explicitly or implicitly. It is a concern in many foreign language contexts where attitudes towards the target culture are sometimes controversial going from total rejection to reluctant acceptance Kramsch (1998) explains that the teaching of culture as a
component of language has traditionally been caught between the striving for universality and the desire to maintain cultural particularity.

2. Types of cultural contextualization in EFL textbooks

Cultural contextualisation in foreign language teaching materials is an issue of debate. Two reasons are advanced to explain the controversies it raises mainly in post-colonial contexts. The first relates to the view that culture is what makes the Other different from us (Duranti, 1997) and at the same time a process that both includes and excludes. Kramsch explains that “…words and their silences contribute to the shaping of one’s own and Other’s culture” (Kramsch, 1998: 09). The second relates to the intricate relationship which exists between language and culture and which evokes the ‘uncomfortable’ question of the relation of the Self to the Other. Any cultural content included in textbooks provides specific representations of identity construction/negotiation when the learners’ source culture meets the foreign target culture(s). Processes of ‘otherisation’ take place and influence the learners’ attitudes because they are required – either implicitly or explicitly - to rethink their representations of themselves.

The question of which culture best fits as a context of teaching/learning a foreign language is still subject to debate because of the desire to provide learners with safe learning environments. This worry is felt most in post-colonial contexts where cultural identity issues are essential. The challenge is that “…effective learning begins with making learning culturally relevant and meaningful to learners” (Hall, 2002: 75).

The type of cultural content included in a given EFL textbook depends on whether it is a global textbook or a local one. Whilst global EFL textbooks are produced for the international market and “are centred on topics with fairly transnational appeal” (Pulverness, 1995: 07) local textbooks are generally designed as part of a given country’s national
curriculum. They have different requirements from the global textbooks. Skopinskaia (2003) believes local EFL textbooks usually aim at developing learners’ awareness of their own cultural identity and promoting their awareness of the target culture.

According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999) EFL textbooks are grouped under three categories depending on the type of their cultural content.

2.1. Textbooks Based on Source Culture

EFL textbook based on source culture are textbooks “produced at a national level for particular countries that mirror the source culture rather than target cultures, so that the source and target cultures are identical” (Cortazzi and Jin 1999: 205). They teach the learners how to speak about their own culture to potential visitors to their countries rather than preparing them to encounter other cultures.

2.2. Textbooks Based on Target Culture

Textbooks based on target culture often focus on British and American cultures. They follow social cultural realism and aim at representing the target culture as it is and not as a homogeneous entity of selected facts ready to be packaged. They generally include “…materials designed to promote awareness of race, gender, and environment issues.” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999: 208) However, they remain subject to market pressures and are seen as part of their ‘publisher’s promotional materials’.

A further characteristic of target culture based textbooks is that they exemplify Luke’s (1989) distinction between ‘closed’ and ‘open’ texts. Whilst closed texts attempt to confirm and reinforce the learners’ views and beliefs by portraying an unproblematic world, open texts provide opportunities for more interpretations and encourage learners’ responses. Indeed, “an open text encourages cognitive or emotional involvement and draws on what students bring to the text” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999
what allows them to think about the target culture not only concentrate on their own culture.

**2. 3. Textbooks Based on International Culture**

EFL textbooks based on international culture focus neither on learners’ source culture nor on target language culture but aim at including a variety of cultures. The latter are set either in English-speaking countries such as Britain and America or in other countries where English is not a first or second language but, is used as an international language. Cortazzi & Jin (1999) explain that the rationale for such international cultures is found in the fact that English is often used in international situations by non-native speakers from different backgrounds as a lingua franca.

By dealing with a variety of themes, these textbooks give the learners opportunities to develop their intercultural skills instead of simply raising their awareness about their own cultural identity or familiarizing them with the cultural realities of mainstream target English cultures focusing on Britain and America. They contribute to provide the learners with real opportunities to negotiate cultural identities and review their representations of the self and the other. They allow for learning culture as a dialogue by equipping the learners with an intercultural competence.

**3. Culture Teaching and language learners’ ‘Third Space’**

The teaching of culture as part of foreign language education has known many stages. Each stage reflects a given ideology and a related view of culture as teachable content.

**3. 1. Models for Teaching Culture**

A review of the place culture has been granted within the relatively long history of foreign language teaching curricula development shows that it went through three main phases (Kramsch, 1993, Risager, 2007). Until the 1990’s, the teaching of culture has followed two main traditions. The first tradition adopts a historical stance towards culture seen as a set of facts
whereas the second tradition adopts an ethnographic stance and considers it as a set of meanings.

Proponents of culture as facts tradition elaborated a model which focused on three types of information about the target culture to include in EFL teaching materials (Thanasoulas 2001); a) **Statistical information** dealing with institutional structures and facts of civilization, b) **Highbrow information** relating to the classics of literature and the arts in general, and c) **Lowbrow information** tackling the food, fairs, together with folklore of everyday life. This tradition, which favors facts over meanings, lets the learners be well-informed about the target culture’s history, arts, achievements, customs, and traditions but fails to enable them to understand foreign attitudes, values, and mindsets.

The second tradition locates culture in an **interpretative** perspective originates from cross-cultural psychology/cultural anthropology. It uses universal categories of human behavior and inference procedures for making sense of foreign reality. Therefore, language learners are provided with a key to interpret phenomena in the foreign culture, which is often generalized to mean national culture. The limitation of this perspective consists in the fact that learners are still considered as the passive recipient of cultural knowledge.

Starting from the 2000’s and following on issues of globalization, a new trend to teaching culture in foreign language classrooms has emerged. It adopts a **dialogic** stance and does not see culture as facts and meaning only but mainly “as a place of struggle between the learners’ meanings and those of native speakers” (Kramsch, 1993: 24). This trend is advocated by scholars taking a cross-cultural/intercultural stance such as Byram (1997) and Holliday (1997) and aims at developing the learner’s third space. According to Byram et al. (2004) the construction of cultural “third spaces” is essentially a critical activity, as it forces learners to become aware of ways in which language is socially and culturally determined.
3. 2. Learners’ Third Space

Learners’ Third Space appears as an appropriate alternative to essentialist views of culture, identity, and otherness as it claims a ‘Third Culture’ in education (Kramsch, 2009). It goes beyond the traditional dualities characterizing foreign language education contexts such as individual/social, Self/Other native/nonnative speaker, source culture (C1)/target culture (C2). It is a place that preserves the diversity of styles, purposes, and interests among learners, and the variety of local educational cultures. This place has to be carved out against the hegemonic tendencies of larger political and institutional structures that strive to coopt the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the name of such ill-defined terms as ‘the national interests or ‘economic competitiveness’. (Kramsch 1998: 06)

Learners have more opportunities to construct their own meanings in their language classrooms where their own home culture meets the foreign target culture. Bakhtin insists that the Self has no meaning and cannot define itself without the Other.

The major contribution of Bakhtin’s thirdness as dialogue to foreign language learners consists in providing them with incentives to question the different texts they work with as relates to who is talking, for whom and in answer or reaction to what or whom (Kramsch, 2009). By entering into a dialogue with those texts they can negotiate their identities and interact with the target culture.

For Bhabha third space is linked not only to semiotic meanings and dialogic interactions but mainly to enunciation. Therefore, culture itself is located in the discursive practices of speakers and writers living in post-colonial times. So, “Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, ... constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the signs can be appropriated, translated rehistoricized and read anew.” (Bhabha, 1994: 37) Discursive
practices construct culture and foreign language learners as speaking subjects create themselves a location in the very space of enunciation.

In short, foreign language educators following post-structuralist principles claim that learners who are often placed in oppositional contexts where their own source culture competes with the foreign culture find themselves a third space. Their awareness of the cultural struggle results in their Third Culture which emerges out of their appropriation of discursive practices translating their own meanings. It also allows them to develop intercultural competence.

4. Developing intercultural communicative competence

Interculturality is best described as an active process of interchange, interaction and cooperation between cultures emphasizing the similarities and considering the cultural diversity as an enriching element. It promotes the coexistence between several groups of different cultures. Welsch (2000) emphasizes the ways in which cultures get on with, understand and recognize one another. Rose (2004) argues that interculturality has to be thought of as “the process of becoming more aware of and better understanding one’s own culture and other cultures around the world. The aim of intercultural learning is to increase international and cross-cultural tolerance and understanding”. Groups of different cultures within which equal relations take place should reach an enriching interdependence based on valuation and mutual recognition. Interculturality is then a set of processes generated by the interaction of cultures in which participants are positively impelled to be conscious of their interdependence.

Taken in the field of language teaching, interculturality allows for the development of the learners’ intercultural awareness and cross-cultural communicative competence, which are considered by recent pedagogy of paramount importance to successful learning.
4. 1. Intercultural Awareness and Cross-Cultural Communicative Competence

Intercultural awareness can be viewed as the process of becoming more aware of and developing better understanding of one’s own culture and others cultures all over the world. It aims mainly at increasing international and cross-cultural understanding. For Byram (1997) the implicit theory of culture learning can be defined as follows;

- Exposure to documents and interaction with people from another country leads learners to notice similarities and differences between themselves and others;
- Noticing differences leads to taking up the perspective of others and beings able to understand how they experience the world;
- Experiencing the world from a different perspective leads to a new understanding of one’s own experience. (Byram, 1997: 06)

Foreign language teaching which aims to raise intercultural awareness, starts from the learners’ point of view and takes their experiences as a starting point. In fact, “[It] is no longer relevant to merely present the target culture from within. One has also to provide for the perspective of the learner” because it is important that the selection, presentation and treatment of material “should take into consideration the learners’ conception of the “other” as well as their indigenous culture” (Wallner, 1995: 09)

Better described as a competence in itself, intercultural awareness consists of a set of attitudes and skills among which Rose (2004) lists the following:

- Observing, identifying and recording
- Comparing and contrasting
- Negotiating meaning
- Dealing with or tolerating ambiguity
- Effectively interpreting messages
- Limiting the possibility of misinterpretation
Defending one’s own point of view while acknowledging the legitimacy of others

• Accepting difference.

This competence (intercultural awareness) is more than a set of knowledge about various and distinct cultures that language learners need to master. It is rather “an attribute of personal outlook and behaviour...it emerges as the central but diversely constituted core of an integrated curriculum.” (Crawshaw, 2004)

As Kramsch (1996) rightly points out, a fundamental methodological problem confronting language educators aiming to develop this intercultural competence is whether the emphasis should be on stressing commonalities or the differences between native and target culture. Hence, the move towards exploring culture through personal contact with native target language speakers can be seen as a necessary consequence of viewing intercultural education as a dialogic process. That is why “Other forms of intercultural education refer to a process of decentring of relativising self and other in an effort to understand both on their own terms and from their own perspective, as well as from the outsider’s perspective” (Kramsch, 1996:07) as something between individuals and something “at the rupture or disjuncture between interlocutors’ assumptions and expectations” (Kramsch, 1996: 07)

Bakhtin (1986) views intercultural competence as “intercultural understanding”, simultaneously entering another culture and remaining outside it. The concept of “outsideness” allows him to consider intercultural dialogue in such a way that it does not threaten the identities of participating cultures. For Bakhtin (1986) outsideness is not a limitation but an incentive toward the broadening of one’s perspective and subsequently the development of an intercultural competence.
In order to implement intercultural understanding, one could only adopt a cross-cultural approach to foreign language teaching. Kramsch (1998) believes that such an approach implies the crossing of any boundaries between generations, ethnic groups, and social classes. The single possible way to build a more complete and less partial understanding of both native culture (C1) and target foreign culture(s) (C2) is to develop a third perspective, that would enable learners to take an insider’s and an outsider’s view on C1 and C2.

5. Cultural contents of three Algerian EFL textbooks

In their quest for an efficient teaching methodology and an appropriate cultural contextualization of English teaching in Algeria, the education authorities have conducted three successive reforms during the 1990’s and the 2000’s. These reforms have resulted each time in the design and adoption of a new textbook.

5.1. Think it Over (1989)

Think it Over is designed in 1989 and used as the official textbook during the 1990’s. It was meant to cater for the pre-university students’ needs in English. It had a twofold objective. It aimed at developing the learners’ linguistic skills on one hand, and at consolidating the implementation of the Communicative Approach as the new paradigm of foreign language teaching in the country on the other hand. It is thematically oriented and departs from the structural approach which dominated previously.

Think it Over includes eight main reading texts which illustrate the themes developed by the eight teaching units. These texts are the ones selected and used for teaching/learning reading skills. They are the texts both teachers and learners interact with study, and discuss in the classroom. However, each teaching unit contains further reading passages included under the rubric ‘Reading for Leisure’ which the learners are invited to read for their own pleasure. Taking into account this distinction in the role of the reading passages, our analysis is going to focus only
on the eight main reading texts as they are the ones around which the learning/teaching activities are actually built. It is, indeed these texts – more than any other aspect of the textbook – which bring the cultural issues into the forefront of the classroom in a context where the textbook was the main teaching material. Most of the linguistic and cultural semiosis that takes place in the classroom results from the learners’ interaction with these texts (see Table 1 in appendix).

These texts do not only illustrate the themes of the teaching units but also include culturally loaded topics. As classroom materials they serve to teach both linguistic structures and cultural aspects. They are all adapted extracts taken from authentic texts written by foreign authors. None of the texts is written by an Algerian author or deals explicitly with an Algerian context or issue.

Relating to their cultural content the texts can be divided into culture-specific ones with topics explicitly highlighting a given culture and non culture-specific ones with topics relevant to universal issues going beyond any specific culture. Whilst text 1, text 3, and text 4 are culture-specific exemplifying the foreign target culture (C2) and deal respectively with British and American cultures the rest of the texts are non culture-specific and portray rather a universal culture (C3). The non culture-specific texts deal either with scientific facts such as text 2 which explain how memory functions from a neurological point of view or with global issues such as text 5 which deals with pollution as a global problem affecting all countries. In addition, most of the texts present culture as a combination of facts and meanings. They either provide a set of facts about the foreign target culture (C2) (e.g.; Text 3 which portrays the problem of juvenile delinquency in Britain and Text 4 which highlights the American supremacy on the field of science and technology), or a set of values and meanings prevailing in the foreign target culture (e.g.; Text 1 which exemplifies British values and life style). Only Text 7 and Text 8 portray culture as
a dialogue by considering the contact of different cultures through immigration issues and the content of mass media respectively.

5. 2. Comet (2001)

Comet is designed in 2001 as part of the language teaching reform engaged by the Ministry of Education. It is subtitled as ‘A Communicative English Teaching Course Book for all Streams’ and is meant to cater for the communicative needs of the pre-university students and to reinforce the implementation of the Communicative Approach as paradigm for teaching English. It follows the same teaching principles that underlie the design of Think it Over as its authors explain in the foreword.

Comet includes eleven main reading texts which illustrate the themes dealt with in each teaching unit. Like in Think it Over, these main reading texts are the ones around which all the teaching activities in the classroom take place. Each text is meant to illustrate the theme of the unit and include the language points required. The textbook, however, includes further reading passages the learners are invited to read for their own pleasure but not study in the classroom. These texts fall into two categories according to their position in the textbook. The first category includes eleven texts which are part of the teaching units and used as further illustrations of the themes. The second category includes thirteen texts grouped at the end of the textbook under the heading of ‘More Reading Passages’. Like in Think it Over, only the main reading texts are actually used by the teachers and the learners as the centre of the learning teaching semiosis wherein the linguistic and cultural interaction takes place. (See Table 2 in appendix)

These texts are used to illustrate the various themes covered in the textbook and introduce the teaching units. In addition, all teaching activities are based on them. Therefore they not only include the targeted linguistic structures and functions meant to develop the learners’ linguistic skills and communicative competence but also provide them with the
cultural aspects of English. All the texts are adapted - sometimes even simplified - extracts taken from authentic texts written by foreign authors.

There are four culture-specific texts which explicitly aim at familiarizing the Algerian learners with typical aspects of the foreign target culture (C2). Therefore Text 1 tells about the speaker’s corner in Hyde Park in London. It describes specific aspects of British culture including facts and values. Text 3 exposes the reasons which made English an international language emphasizing the contributions of Britain and the United States of America to its supremacy. Text 4 illustrates the British humor as well as other cultural specificities using Shakespeare as an iconic figure. And Text 5 brings to the front the American economic supremacy and the scientific grounds on which it is based together with highlighting the values of the American dream.

The rest of the texts are non culture-specific and mainly refer to international culture (C3) even if in some illustrating examples they do refer to Western countries. They generally portray culture as facts and meanings. Text 2 for example deals with the importance of transportation to modern life explaining how important it is to mankind. Text 6 gives a user friendly non-specialist account of what a computer is and explains what are its main uses as well how it can facilitate the work of people be they engineers or businessmen. It also shows, in popular science style, what are the main components of computers referring both to hardware and software. Text 8 deals with the theme of automation and computation discussing both their positive and negative effects on the life of humans mainly as relates to issues of employment. Text 10 explains how the business letter is very important to all business affairs, describes its evolution though time as a writing genre, gives instructions about how to write an appropriate business letter, and provides examples of forms of address and salutations used in different countries (cultures). Text 11 describes the problem of pollution
which all countries in the world face but which is often made more prominent in Western societies compared to other parts of the planet.

Text 7 and Text 9 are the only texts which portray culture as a dialogue. They show the contact of cultures either directly through issues of immigration or indirectly through the influence of mass media and cultural transmission. Text 7 belongs to the type of committed writing and deals with the danger of impoverishment of humanity’s cultural heritage as a result of the cultural invasion faced by Third world countries. Whilst Text 9 deals with the problem of immigration and the cultural complexities it creates in Europe. It belongs to the field of humanities and conveys a socio-political discourse which attempts to understand the cultural and other difficulties immigrants and their children face in the host country taking France as an illustrative instance.

5.3. New Prospects (2007)

*New Prospects* is the textbook in use in Algeria since 2007. It is designed by the Ministry of Education as part of the Education Reform initiated in 2002. It replaces *Comet* and implements a new syllabus as it is meant to implement the Competency-Based Approach to teaching, the new paradigm of English language teaching in Algeria. It also shifts objectives from developing the learners’ communicative competence to developing their Intercultural Competence.

*New Prospects* includes six reading texts. Each text relates to the theme developed in the teaching unit it is extracted from and serves as an illustrative instance. In addition to the reading text, within each unit there is another text included under the rubric ‘Reading and Writing’ and which serves for the development of the language skills. By the end of the textbook there is a section which includes a resources portfolio with further reading texts. The latter are thematically grouped and related to the six teaching units. As in the two previous
textbooks, the main reading text is the one which is used for study in the classroom constituting then the semiotic resource by means of which the cultural semiosis operating between the local and the foreign takes place. (see Table 3 in appendix)

The examination of the six reading texts’ cultural components reveals that they present each a different conception of culture either as facts, as meanings, or as a combination of facts and meanings though not often as dialogue. Culture is then presented as historical fact, a set of shared values, facts and traditions determining stereotypes, practices and behaviours defining a life style, human achievements and scientific discoveries, and social attitudes and behaviours. In addition to this, they can be grouped into three categories translating distinct attitudes towards the type of cultural contents to include in foreign language teaching/learning materials.

The first category consists of materials that use the learners’ local culture (C1) as a vehicle to teach the foreign language. An instance of this in New Prospects is well illustrated by text 1 which explicitly deals with the Algerian local culture. However, because it considers culture as historical facts, it sets the Algerian local culture in the midst of other cultures in a kind of dialogue highlighting the positive influences of such diversity. Taken from an encyclopaedia the text mentions different ancient civilisations such as the prehistoric civilization of the Sahara, the Phoenician, the Roman, and the Ottoman civilizations. So even if concentrating on the learners’ local culture (C1) or Self, this text cannot be said to favour enculturation attitudes. On the contrary it invites the learners to value their culture and see it as part of the human Culture.

The second category comprehends materials that favour the foreign target culture (C2) as a relevant context to teach the foreign language. In New Prospects this category is best illustrated by text 3 and text 6, extracted from The Oxford Guide to British and American Culture, and dealing respectively with culture as facts and traditions determining stereotypes and
culture as social attitudes and behaviours specific to the target foreign culture as met in British and American societies. Though focussing exclusively on the target culture running the risk of creating in the learners acculturation attitudes justified by a desire to identify with the foreign cultural model, they are useful in breaking some assumed attitudes towards the Other’s culture (C2). In fact, by setting the British and the American cultures in a contrasting stance the two texts help the learners to accept cultural diversity within the same English culture. This would help them get rid of stereotyped positions by which they view culture as a homogenous body of facts or behaviours common to all English language speaking countries. More important than this, such texts would make the learners review their conceptions of culture and subsequently accept their local cultural diversity looking at it as a fact common to different cultures in the world. In other words, such content provides space to Small Cultures to be introduced into EFL teaching materials which generally favour the Large Culture.

The third category relies rather on universal themes representing trans-cultural materials (C3) as appropriate means to teach the foreign language within a cross-cultural perspective. Likewise, texts 2, 4, and 5 are the instances which correspond to such materials in *New Prospects*. These texts respectively look to culture as shared values (ethics), practices and behaviours (lifestyle), and human achievements and scientific discoveries. Therefore, these texts set the learners’ in considerably fair contexts where they can recognise that fundamental human values underlie all cultures even if concrete practical aspects vary significantly from one social group to another. A further advantage of this type of texts is that they give the learners an opportunity to shape their own place (their third space) in the present world that is characterised by a growing globalisation. The latter requires, above all, intercultural competency to achieve cross-cultural understanding.
In the whole it appears that the three types of texts are included in *New Prospects* though the third category significantly outnumbers the first and the second ones. However it is worth to note that in illustrating instances there is an explicit focus on the British and American cultures as compared to local culture and to the other English speaking countries which are not at all mentioned in the reading texts. The focus on the British and American cultures incorporated within a universal dimension, in most of the texts, may be interpreted as a way to raise the learners’ awareness about the target culture without getting them lost in the content of discourse. This is actually reinforced by Halliday’s (1985) conception of language as embedded in its cultural context and hence sustaining that learning a language implies the systematic learning of its underlying culture. All the texts are very didactic and distanced from the readers.

6. Discussion

Although the three textbooks are locally designed materials they do not reflect the learners’ local culture. Therefore, they do not fit Cortazzi and Jin’s (1999) description of textbooks based on source culture. The Textbooks include more elements of international culture (C3) mainly because they focus on scientific texts and avoid literary texts and do highlight specific facts about the target culture (C2). British and American cultures are considered the legitimate contexts for the teaching of English in Algerian classrooms.

6. 1. Post-Communicative teaching and Intercultural communicative competence

The examination of the materials shows that there is a move towards intercultural teaching in *New Prospects* which was not targeted in the two previous textbooks where the focus was just to develop the learners’ linguistic skills and provide them with some factual knowledge about the foreign target culture (C2). The learners’ local culture (C1) is more highlighted and used as a starting point to speak about different cultures.
A further move is that there are less scientific texts and more texts dealing with social topics in New Prospects than in the previous textbooks. And the learners are often asked to compare between their local culture and the foreign culture(s) they read about in the textbook (e.g., Schools in UK & USA). The comparison however, is not meant in an evaluative sense but as a means to connect the Self (C1) and the Other (C2). Actually whilst exercises in *Think it Over* and *Comet* deal exclusively with linguistic practice in *New Prospects* they have also a cultural content and the learners are asked to compare/contrast between different cultures i.e., (C1) and (C2) or two different versions of (C2) (e.g., Text about education and feeling which compare British and American cultures).

Moreover, there are texts based on international culture (C3) which ask the learners to think about global issues (e.g., Ethics and Healthy diets) and consider the ways in which they are addressed in their local contexts. This helps them establish connections between different countries and peoples. Unlike *Think it Over* where the contact of cultures is portrayed as negative because conceived according to power relations between the Self (C1) and the Other (C2) in which the foreign target culture is portrayed as a threat to the local one, in New Prospects this relationship is made more positive and insists on the mutual influences minimizing differences though not denying them.

6. 2. Revaluing the Self and moving towards the Other

In *Think it Over* and *Comet* there is a complete invisibility of the Self (C1) which is a form of negative representation. They both portray self denial attitudes since there are only two indirect references to the local culture through issues of immigration in France (e.g., “The Dilemma of Second Generation Immigrants”) and third world countries facing cultural invasion by western mass media culture (e.g., “Communication in the Service of Man”). In addition, only these two texts refer to culture as
dialogue but unfortunately both of them represent the contact of cultures in a negative way. They portray cultural imperialism showing how the local culture is endangered by the dominant foreign culture.

However, in *New Prospects* the Self (C1) is portrayed in a positive way (e.g., “Algeria across civilisations”). The local culture is in fact granted a place among the other different foreign cultures which are included in the textbook.
Conclusion
The study shows that English language teaching in Algeria moves towards developing integrated competences which allow learners to successfully engage and participate in modern life where people from different cultural backgrounds work together and share interests. The textbooks include culturally loaded reading texts which refer to different cultures and which move towards considering the connections between Self (C1) and Other (C2). There is also a move from alienating representation that denies the Self to a more intercultural stance which values both the local and the foreign cultures focusing on the ways they connect what promotes intercultural communication.

Bibliography

Appendix:

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<td>Unit 6: Development</td>
<td>Text 6: “Development”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 7: Emigration</td>
<td>Text 7: “The Dilemma of Second generation Immigrants”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 8: Mass Media</td>
<td>Text 8: “Communication in the Service of Man”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Table 1: Reading texts in Think it Over

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Units</th>
<th>Main Reading Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Modern Life in English Speaking Countries</td>
<td>Text 1: “Speakers’ Corner”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Inventions and Discoveries</td>
<td>Text 2: “Transportation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 3: English in the World Today</td>
<td>Text 3: “English as an International Language”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 4: Humour and Leisure</td>
<td>Text 4: “Shakespeare’s House”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 5: Trade and Development</td>
<td>Text 5: “Market Research”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 6: Computing</td>
<td>Text 6: “Computers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 7: Media</td>
<td>Text 7: “Communication in the Service of Man”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 8: Automation</td>
<td>Text 8: “Robots, Society, and the Future”</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 11: Great Challenges to Mankind</td>
<td>Text 11: “What the Future Might Hold for Us: Pollution”</td>
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</table>

- Table 2: Reading texts in *Comet*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Prospects’ Teaching Units</th>
<th>Main Reading texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Exploring the Past</td>
<td>Text 1: “Algeria in the Crossroad of Civilizations”; from The Encyclopedia of Africana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 3: Schools: Different and alike</td>
<td>Text 3: “Education in Britain”, from <em>Guide to British and American Culture</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 4: Safety first</td>
<td>Text 4: “How is Your Energy Balance?” written by the designers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Table 3: Reading Texts in *New Prospects*