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SECONDARY SCHOOL EFL LERANERS' RESPONSE TO COURSEBOOK CULTURE-FOCUSED TEXTS

Foreign language and culture teaching have recently been widely addressed by theoreticians and practitioners alike. This paper sets out to report a classroom-based study which explored EFL learners' reception of coursebook culture-focused texts. The data collected in the study was used to identify different dimensions of learners' interest stimulated by the texts they read. The findings have some potential implications for taking an intercultural perspective in foreign language teaching.

KEYWORDS: foreign language teaching, intercultural competence, FL coursebook, reception of culture-focused texts, dimensions of interest

INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that what L2/FL language specialists currently decide on is not whether culture should be incorporated into a language course, as this view is commonly accepted, but how to define it and conceptualize its relationship with the language component of a given course. Yet, so far no clarity in delineating the scope of the concept of culture with reference to language instruction has been reached, and such diverse terms as "speech acts, rhetorical structure of text, social organizations, and knowledge constructs" have been associated with it (Hinkel 2006: 1). Since the 1980s the interconnection between the cultural dimension and language has been extensively debated on. One of the views that gained broad support concerned the integration between language as a system and cultural information. It was reflected in the following terms that aimed to handle this relationship, namely 'language-and-culture', 'language-culture', and 'culture-and-language' (Risager 2005, Pulverness 2011). Problems in integrating the two components in FL teaching were described, among others, as resulting from the marginalization of the role of culture due to excessive reliance on language functioning as self-expression and a transitional tool by the dominant communicative approach as well as a simplistic interpretation of communication (Corbett 2003, Pulverness 2011).

Another perspective that has emerged in the search for an adequate interpretation of language-culture relationship underscored the mutual interrelatedness and inseparability of language and culture. Such a conviction is put forward by Kramsch (1995: 3), who states that culture is "mediated, interpreted and recorded – among other things – through language", as well as by Risager (2005: VII), who describes language and culture as coalescing into one entity. In a similar vein, Dakowska (2015) posits that language as "the code of verbal communication is used as a most versatile material of cultural creation", adding that "culture permeates verbal communication as much as it is propagated by verbal communication; it imposes a kind of network on social institutions and human behaviour, a network of meanings constructed, stored and activated for social purposes" (p. 200). A noticeable point was also made that second language learners automatically become second culture learners, which results from a direct influence of the community of the users of that language they become part of their social norms, beliefs, and value systems (e.g. Kramsch 1993, Brown 1994, Hinkel 2006). As for foreign language instruction, Katra A. Byram (2011: 525) claims, it is capturing the link between "communicative, form-focused, and cultural instruction" as well as promoting learner's critical awareness that is the most important requirement.

With advances in exploring language-culture learning and teaching processes at the time of growing globalization, people's mobility, and the use of new technologies, it has proved necessary to take a broader perspective so as to cover a multitude of cross-cultural language learning and teaching experiences. Thus the concept of 'intercultural competence' has gained widespread acceptance, despite the fact that a number of other terms were employed as its alternatives, e.g. 'intercultural interaction', 'transcultural communication', 'cross-cultural awareness', 'international communication', 'cultural competence', and 'multiculturalism', just to mention a few. As their meanings were not fully interchangeable, they have naturally brought about some discrepancies in interpreting the concept (Sinicrope/ Norris/ Watanabe 2007: 3).

The term intercultural competence received considerable support on the part of European educationists and helped in redefining the role of language teachers as that of teaching both "a knowledge of a particular culture or country" and "skills, attitudes and awareness of values". As intercultural and linguistic competences are to prepare language learners for future interaction with people from other cultures with a perceptive understanding and acceptance of their values and behaviours, it is not "the transmission of information about a foreign country" that teachers can aim at (Byram/ Gribkova/ Starkey 2002: 10). Corbett (2003: 30) emphasizes the need for "redefining the aims of language education to acknowledge 'intercultural communicative competence' rather than 'native-speaker proficiency' as the ultimate goal." In order to enhance the teaching of intercultural competence Byram and Feng (2005) postulate adopting three major perspectives: an ethnographic perspective (referring to naturalistic and structured settings), a critical

perspective (considering a political role played by foreign language education in the educational system), and one that includes preparing learners to live in another country.

Despite the intricacy of the language-culture relationship and the considerable variety of issues investigated in the area, some general framework is needed in order to provide basic background knowledge to practising classroom teachers and learners involved in the culture teaching/learning process. A simple and informative dichotomy has been proposed by Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), namely a distinction between cultural and intercultural orientations. In the former, a better established one, culture is treated as an object; learners aim to develop a static body of knowledge, and their practices, values, attitudes, beliefs, worldview, and identity are not expected to undergo any transformation. Adopting the latter means that learners get engaged in the process of learning languages and cultures by responding to meanings and confronting multiple interpretations on the way to acquiring intercultural competence.

Theoretical considerations of culture and its relationship to language learning have undoubtedly had a substantial impact on the approach to culture teaching reflected in teaching materials, as well as on the understanding of the principles for instructional practice. Coursebooks still constitute the main resource for EFL teachers, despite their criticism, and it is materials writers who establish main principles for the selection of topics and language to be dealt with (e.g. McGrath 2002, Tomlinson/ Masuhara 2010). Thus it is coursebook designers who determine the scope and structure of the cultural content and provide basic grounds for learning and teaching the target language and culture in classroom settings. The provision of good quality EFL teaching materials, however, cannot be limited to the problems connected only with their design, development, evaluation and adaptation, as their actual use by teachers and learners in the classroom is of equal importance in achieving the intended learning and teaching goals (Guerrettaz/ Johnston 2013, Garton/ Graves 2014).

As for the potential coverage of culture elements in EFL coursebooks, Cortazzi and Jin (2005) propose their classification into three major types based on: (1) source culture rather than target cultures, (2) target culture with a considerable amount of social cultural realism, and (3) international target cultures, that is, those referring to cultures of English-speaking countries or other countries where English is spoken internationally. Nowadays many EFL textbook writers are restricted to adopting a pluralistic representation of culture problems as it has become a common trend to design materials for the global market. Yet, even though such coursebooks attempt to follow an intercultural approach, they are typically used in monocultural contexts (Pulverness 2011, Liddicoat/ Scarino 2013). What is also problematic is that they lack localization, that is connections between the coursebook content and the students' lives in terms of the familiarity of cultural references, which has a serious bearing on how learners respond to them (Guerrettaz/ Johnston 2013).

Although contemporary EFL coursebooks do not approach intercultural teaching in the same way, some general principles to follow can be derived. The most important recommendation concerns involving learners' in deep cognitive and affective processing of culture-focused materials. Learners' awareness of thinking and understanding processes can be particularly heightened by reflection (Risager 2005, Liddicoat/ Scarino 2013). Reflection contributes to creating cognitive grounds for learning such concepts as diversity, identity, or interculturality. It also triggers affective states in analyzing one's attitudes, as well as assumptions underlying communication with other interlocutors and the perception of self and other relationships. Reflecting on learning and teaching processes helps L2/ FL learners interpret their general educational experiences gained in expanding culture-oriented knowledge. As a consequence, learners improve the skills of analyzing, evaluating and creating knowledge, but also become aware of their own emotions and those of others, which contributes to their emphatic involvement and the ability to communicate effectively (Sroka 2010). Cortazzi and Jin (2005) postulate that reflective and ethnographic stance should be treated as a crucial strategy in teaching culture content and culture processes in L2/FL learning contexts.

With such guidelines for intercultural teaching, it is worth finding out how FL teachers as practitioners perceive their role. Castro and Sercu (2005: 26), for example, revealed that whereas teachers classified and ranked their objectives across knowledge, attitudinal, and skills dimensions, knowledge proved to be their preferred category. They interpreted reflection on cultural differences as getting students acquainted with the knowledge of a foreign culture, and making comparisons between cultures as cultural knowledge expansion instead of understanding learners' own cultural identity. Cortazzi and Jin (2005) noted that when foreign language teachers have not developed the target language culture knowledge, skills, and awareness themselves, they may not perceive their role in mediating the textbook in classroom interaction properly and be able to help learners in understanding the relationship between the source and the target culture. Likewise, the study by Moirano (2012) showed that teachers are not able to compensate for the textbooks' limitations in dealing with culture identity problems as they are not aware of them themselves.

Another study by Davcheva and Sercu (2005) probed practising teachers' perceptions of "the potential of textbooks and teaching materials for promoting intercultural learning" (p. 91). They collected the data on how satisfied the respondents were with their textbooks, and which were their positive and negative features. The negative features the teachers identified pertained to the scarcity of content information, narrow selection of themes, topics of general interest, content restricted to factual, history and geography information, lack of authentic materials, and an excessively international nature of the books. On the positive side, they mentioned their preference for up-to-date materials, presenting a diversity of life

in TL countries, as well as a variety of customs, traditions, and historical topics discussed.

The discussion on positive textbook features by Davcheva and Sercu's (2005) leads to the problem of motivating learners and stimulating their interest in the materials provided in the classroom. The researchers emphasize that generating learners' interest in new cultural information is indispensable for making comparisons with learners' preconceptions, beliefs, and attitudes. The teachers participating in the study highly evaluated the textbooks whose cultural content could match the interest of the students. At the same time, they criticized the choice of culture-oriented texts dealing with superficial or general interest topics, which did not correspond with learners' interest. Generally, they found supplementary texts to be more interesting to FL learners than those offered by the coursebooks.

It clearly follows that especially with culture-focused language learning in mind, the concept of interest needs to be adequately defined and explored both as learners' individual interest and as learners' situational interest that develops in particular learning contexts, including those based on reading and learning from content-area texts. Readers can approach a text with some stable orientation toward a topic or may generate interest while reading if they find it appealing. Thus by exposing learners to diverse reading materials teachers can promote their situational interest but also impact the development of their domain-specific knowledge (for further discussion see Chodkiewicz 2016). Empirical research has provided grounds for compiling a list of sources of situational interest in view to answering a straightforward question 'What makes a text interesting to read?'. The list comprises: ease of comprehension (a text is easy to remember and concentrate on), text cohesion (text organization and clarity), vividness (presence of exciting details), engagement (a text is stimulating), emotiveness (the text evokes strong emotional responses), and prior knowledge (degree of the reader's familiarity with the content) (Schraw/ Bruning/ Svoboda 1995). Referring to those dimensions of situational interest provides the teacher with a possibility of exploring learners' reception of coursebook texts used in the EFL classroom, which has become a focus of discussion in this paper.

THE STUDY

The study reported in this paper is a part of a larger classroom-based research project that aimed to investigate different dimensions of learner interest generated by texts read in an EFL secondary classroom. The texts chosen for investigation included narratives, general interest, and culture-focused texts. As the culture-focused texts were found to be the least interesting for the participants, the present study

was undertaken in order to conduct a deeper analysis of the students' responses to those texts.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The general intent of this exploratory study was to contribute to the understanding of EFL learners' opinions, perceptions, and evaluations associated with different dimensions of interest that can be potentially developed in response to culture-oriented content. The participants of the study were asked to respond to four culture-focused texts, which were part of their EFL coursebook, after they have worked on them in natural classroom conditions. The students rated 8 Likert-type statements which matched 5 dimensions of interest, namely:

– text cohesion, prior knowledge of the topic, engagement, and text emotiveness, which were identified as potential sources of interest (5 statements),
– and the students' perceived interest in the texts read (3 statements).

METHOD

Participants

The study was designed and carried out by the authors of the paper. It involved 28 learners (25 girls and 3 boys aged 16-17 years) and took place in an upper secondary state school in Lublin, Poland. The students attended a class with an extended foreign language course programme in English and French. At the time of the study they were second grade learners preparing for their secondary school leaving exam (The Matura Exam), which they were to pass in the year to come. Although this was a mixed-ability class, with an average grade of 3.74 out of 6 (according to the Polish grading system), the level of proficiency for the group was estimated as upper-intermediate. The students had studied English for over 10 years on average, and they were familiar with the text types and tasks used in the study.

Materials

Texts. The four culture-based expository texts the students read were selected from the main coursebook used by the students entitled *New Matura Solutions* (Falla/ Davis/ Sobierska 2013), and they were supposed to contribute to the development of learners' intercultural awareness. They abounded in content that was appropriate for introducing elements of the L2 culture and dealt with issues concerning different English speaking countries. The titles of the four texts chosen for the study are presented below with the respective sets of culture-oriented topics proposed in the coursebook.

Table 1. The titles of the target texts and the sets of the culture topics covered by the coursebook (Falla, Davis and Sobierska, 2013).

	Text titles	Culture-oriented sets of topics
1	*Northern Ireland*	facts about English-speaking countries – Northern Ireland; religion; politics; violence; riots; military conflicts; international organisations (IRA)
2	*Partition*	facts about English-speaking countries – India; religion; politicians; military conflicts
3	*Who's afraid of designer babies?*	latest developments and inventions in medicine; ethics of testing for genetic disorders; disabilities
4	*Overweight USA*	facts about English-speaking countries – the United States; types of meals; dieting; obesity; addictions; government health policies; healthy living

Language practice activities. The language and communication activities which accompanied the texts were mostly carried out during the lessons. The guidelines and notes available in Teacher's Book were also taken into consideration by the classroom teacher. The activities were basically intended to contribute to enhancing reading, listening, and speaking skills, as well as vocabulary and the use of English. In performing speaking activities the students were encouraged to make cultural comparisons which aimed at developing intercultural competence. Such a procedure received special emphasis in the case of Text 4 (*Overweight USA*), which was to stimulate a discussion on the issues of unhealthy lifestyle in the readers' own town or country and required suggesting government initiatives that might help tackle those problems.

Comprehension tests. The two 5-item tests were constructed not only in order to measure the comprehension of the selected passages, but also to make the students' learning more effortful and the processing and retention of the culture-oriented content more effective as a result of test expectancy. The sentence completion test assessed the understanding of the main ideas of the texts, and the true/false/no evidence statements referred to the knowledge of supporting ideas. All the items used in the tests were passage-dependent and required the retrieval of factual data. As for the scoring procedures, each correct answer in the sentence completion test was awarded two points, and answers to the true/false/no evidence statements were awarded one point.

Likert-type statements. The set of 8 statements associated with different dimensions of interest which were chosen for the study served as a self-report measure of the students' perceptions of the four texts. This type of assessing reader-text interest has been employed in research by educational psychologists (Chodkiewicz 2016), and the statements used in the present study were borrowed from the questionnaires constructed by Brantmeier (2006), who aimed to develop

a measure of the interest component for L2 reading. Whereas five statements referring to text cohesion, prior knowledge of the topic, engagement, and text emotiveness are classified as sources of interest, the remaining three statements represent the so-called perceived interest, that is the reader's interest itself (see Table 2 below). The statements were rated by the students using a 5-point Likert scale with five response choices: 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree.

Table 2. The main categories defining students' text perceptions and the corresponding Likert-type statements (based on Brantmeier, 2006).

	Dimensions of interest	Corresponding Likert-type Statements
1	Text cohesion	The text's main ideas were presented clearly.
2	Prior knowledge	The text covered a topic I have read / heard about before.
3	Engagement	The text was thought provoking. The text dealt with highly relevant issues.
4	Text emotiveness	The text stimulated positive emotions.
5	Perceived interest	I thought the text was very interesting. I'd like to discuss this text with others at some point. I would like to read more texts like this in the future.

Procedure and data collection

The setting for the study was a regular EFL classroom, where four culture-focused lessons, each lasting 45 minutes, were conducted. The texts were interspersed with other material in the syllabus material, and for that reason the data were collected over the period of three months. The students worked on the texts by performing a sequence of activities based on them and doing reading comprehension tests. Finally, they filled in a questionnaire by responding to a set of Likert-type statements, which constituted the basic data for the study. Owing to the learners' satisfactory command of English, the statements chosen for the questionnaire could appear in their original form, yet, some lexical items were carefully explained to the students so as to make sure they understood all of them properly.

The numbers of responses to the eight statements obtained from the students were first calculated and coded into five basic Likert scale ratings of agreement (1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree) and then converted to percentages. As the percentages in some adjacent categories were very low, to simplify the presentation of the results and make the analysis of the main tendencies in the students' ratings more explicit, the data were collapsed and further recoded into three categories of responses: 'negative' (1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree), 'neutral' (no change), and 'positive' (4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to analyse how the students self-reported their perceptions of the target texts with respect to the dimensions of interest expressed by 8 statements, the percentages of the students' positive, neutral, and negative responses to the particular statements will be presented graphically. In this way the research questions set out for the study will be addressed, and some interesting findings concerning the students' reception of the content of the target texts will be pointed out.

First, the students assessed the extent to which they thought that the main ideas of the texts were expressed clearly (Figure 1). The underlying assumption behind providing such a statement is that a text characterised by good rhetorical organisation and clarity of its ideas can stimulate readers' interest and ultimately help them gain better learning results (Schraw et al. 1995).
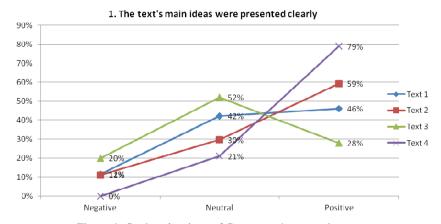

Figure 1. Students' ratings of Statement 1 across the texts.

The results show that the highest ratings of agreement (79%) were given to Text 4 (*Overweight USA*), which earned no negative responses. In other words, the majority of the learners believed that they were able to follow its contents successfully. The texts whose main ideas were expressed the least clearly in the students' opinion was Text 3 (*Who's afraid of designer babies?*), which obtained the most neutral and negative ratings, with only 20% positive ones. The students were relatively satisfied with the presentation of ideas in Text 2 (*Partition*), which received 59% positive ratings and only 11% negative ones.

Getting the information about the students' prior knowledge of a given topic has been found important to researchers due to its relationship with learners' personal interest and topic knowledge, as well as contributing role in the process and product of reading comprehension. FL teachers often attempt to find out if their students are familiar with and interested in the targeted topics, yet even though teachers can modify the tasks around the texts, they may be obliged to stick to curriculum

materials (Hedge 2000). This was the rationale for submitting Statement 2 to the participants of the present study.

It is interesting to note that more than half of the students reported a high degree of familiarity with the topic discussed in Text 4 (*Overweight USA*) (58% responses). The same percentage of ratings, yet negative ones appeared with reference to Text 1 on Northern Ireland, which indicated a low familiarity of this topic. On the whole, the topics connected with the history and religion of Northern Ireland and India (Text 1 and 2) proved to be poorly known to the students (26% and 27% positive responses respectively). Even proportions of the students (40% responses) declared familiarity vs. unfamiliarity with the topic of designer babies.
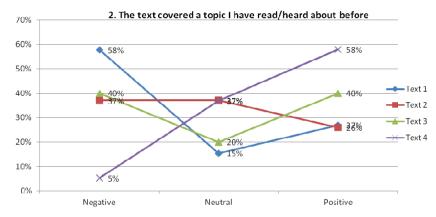

Figure 2. Students' ratings of Statement 2 across the texts.

The next three statements rated by the students referred to engagement, which is seen by educational psychologists as a construct based on motivational and cognitive mechanisms which may positively affect deep content learning (e.g. Guthrie/ Wigfield 2000). The statements that probed the students' ratings of their engagement with the message of the text were: 'The text was thought provoking', 'The text dealt with highly relevant issues', and 'The text stimulated positive emotions'. The students' rating of their agreement with these statements is shown in Figures 3, 4, and 5.

It is noticeable that neutral ratings predominated in the students' responses to the third statement. Text 1 was characterised by the highest number of neutral responses (62%). Both Text 1 and 2, containing an extensive amount of factual information on the issues on Northern Ireland and India, scored the highest amount of negative and neutral ratings combined (89% and 81% respectively), and Text 2 received the most of negative responses (37%). On the whole, the students seemed not to be willing or interested to think more deeply about the problems of other cultures and juxtapose them against their views and own culture experiences.

The students' responses to Statement 4, which concerned the relevance of the issues discussed in the texts, showed a different variation of the students' ratings
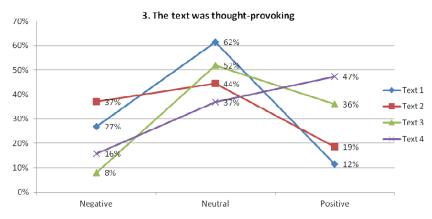
3. The text was thought-provoking

Figure 3. Students' ratings of Statement 3 across the texts.

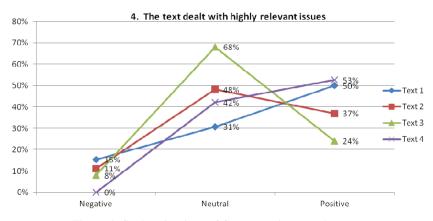**4. The text dealt with highly relevant issues**

Figure 4. Students' ratings of Statement 4 across the texts.

than in the case of the previous statement. Whereas the students gave only 12% positive ratings to Text 1 (*Northern Ireland*), assessing it as being thought provoking, the number of those who evaluated it as dealing with relevant issues increased to 50%. Also, a slight rise in positive ratings (from 19% to 37%) was observed with reference to Text 2 (*Partition*). However, no negative responses and the highest ranking of relevance (53%) were given to Text 4 (*Overweight USA*). In assessing the relevance of the content of Text 3 the majority of the students chose the neutral option. It can be concluded that the students found some relevance in the culture-based topics presented in their coursebook, even though the texts did not make them reflect more deeply on the issues they raised.

In responding to Statement 5 the students were to rank their agreement with the statement concerning emotions stimulated by the texts (Figure 5).

As shown in Figure 5, significant differences between ratings concerning particular texts could be found, and intense emotions were aroused in connection
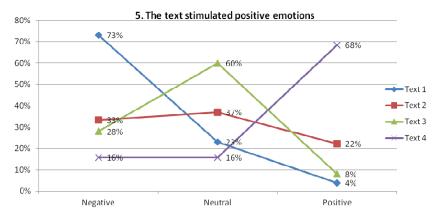
Figure 5. Students' ratings of Statement 5 across the texts.

with Text 1 (*Northern Ireland*) and Text 4 (*Overweight USA*). Whereas the students clearly developed negative feelings while reading the text on Northern Ireland (73% responses), the text on obesity was a source of mainly positive emotions (68% responses). As in the case of the two previous statements, the students' responses to Text 3 were characterised by neutrality.

The intention of the remaining three statements was to survey the participants' 'perceived situational interest', that is to gauge their feelings of interest by asking them directly whether they found the particular texts very interesting, and whether they would like to discuss those texts with others at some point and read more texts like those in the future (Figures 6, 7, and 8).

The distributions of the students' responses concerning the three rating categories across the four texts were fairly similar. Relatively few students declared having perceived the texts as very interesting to read, their reponses ranging from as low as 20% to 31%, while many students took a neutral stand (40-48%). The text
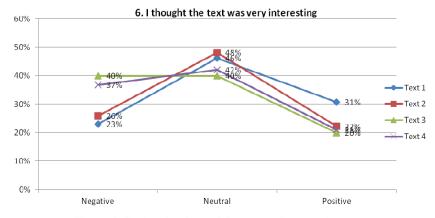
Figure 6. Students' ratings of Statement 6 across the texts.

assesed as the least interesting by the students was Text 3, with the least positive ratings (20%) and the most negative ones (40%).

The percentages of the students' markings further revealed that few students might consider discussing the texts with others or reading similar texts in the future (Figures 7 and 8 below).
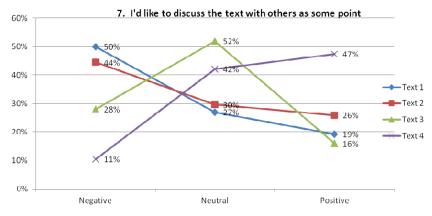

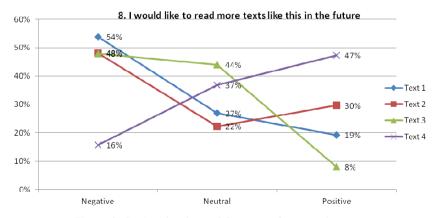Figure 7. Students' ratings of Statement 7 across the texts.

Figure 8. Students' ratings of Statement 8 across the texts.

The results obtained for the seventh and eighth statements were comparable. They were characterised by a high percentage of negative and neutral responses. As for Text 1 and 2, about half of the participants would not be willing either to discuss the texts or read similar ones in the future. Text 3 scored the lowest percentages of positive responses for both statements – 16% and 8%. Only in the case of Text 4 (*Overweight USA*) did some learners show interest in discussing or reading about the topic in the future. The text received the highest percentage

of positive ratings (47% for both statements) and the lowest of the negative ones (11% and 16%, respectively).

As mentioned above, the two reading comprehension tests given to the students were not only to check how successful their text comprehension was but also to make them invest more effort in processing the texts. The combined scores the students gained were as follows: Text 1 – 55%, Test 2 – 48.5%, Test 3 – 59.5%, and Text 4 – 64.5%. It can be noticed that the students reached the highest degree of comprehension with the last text, which scored the highest percentage of the positive responses in the students' ratings of all the Likert-type statements, apart from Statement 6. Text 2 (*Partition*), on the other hand, appeared to be the most problematic to the students – most of its ratings in the positive categories were low. Even though 59% students self-reported the text's ideas to be presented clearly, its comprehension result was the lowest of all the texts.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The statements which elicited the participants' ratings with reference to the potential sources of interest (5 statements) and the students' perceived interest itself (3 statements) provided useful grounds for exploring the students' response to the culture-focused coursebook texts. Major findings can be summarized as follows:

– responding to a set of statements made the students reflect on their perceptions of selected aspects concerning the texts they read;
– a descriptive analysis of the students' ratings of agreement to the eight statements has made it possible to trace some tendencies in their responses to the particular statements as well as to the individual texts;
– the students declared having little knowledge concerning the political and religious issues of Northern Ireland and Indian history (Text 1 and 2) and the two texts received the least favourable reception with many low ratings on different categories;
– the students generally perceived the main ideas of the texts to be presented clearly with the exception of Text 3 which obtained the lowest amount of positive responses (yet gained the second highest comprehension result);
– having assessed some issues discussed in the texts as relevant, the students did not consider them to be thought-provoking to the same extent (41% vs. 28.5% for all the texts); avoiding to take positive or negative sides, they frequently opted for a neutral alternative (almost half of the responses), which may be interpreted as low cognitive engagement in text processing;
– the students tended to react emotionally to some of the issues raised in the target texts, as proven by 68% of them reporting positive feelings generated by Text 4 and 73% declaring negative ones stimulated by Text 1;

–   the texts were not generally found to be very interesting – only 23.5% students were of a different opinion; with the exception of Text 4 on the issues of obesity, the students were not ready to further discuss the target texts or read similar ones in the future.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study reported in this paper is an exploratory classroom-based study. As it involved only one group of learners in a particular educational context, no general conclusions concerning the reception of culture-oriented texts in foreign language teaching or a particular EFL coursebook can be made. The decision to carry out the study in natural classroom conditions and rely on coursebook materials made it impossible to use texts of the same length or the same types of practice tasks. The data obtained was limited to the students' ratings of eight statements matching five dimensions of interest, and for some of the statements, such as those concerning texts being thought-provoking, relevant, or stimulating positive emotions, it would be recommendable to additionally ask the students to account for their answers. This line of investigation can be pursued in the future to gain more insight into factors that can influence learners' processing of culture-oriented content and performing classroom tasks aimed to develop intercultural competence. More research seems to be needed into the role of individual interest of FL learners and its impact on the acquisition of culture knowledge, as well as intercultural skills and attitudes.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The results of the study presented seem to be insightful to classroom teachers responsible for preparing and/or incorporating culture-based materials into EFL instruction. An intercultural approach is difficult to implement as it requires an adequate understanding of an interplay of many factors that impact the roles of coursebook writers, classroom teachers, and FL learners themselves as well as different forms of their participation in classroom discourse. FL materials writers have been attempting to integrate the issues of knowledge, skills and attitudes into teaching culture elements through school textbooks, yet it is often so that the addressees of teaching materials designed for global markets, that is learners that will ultimately use them, are not explicitly defined, nor are potential teachers and their professional teaching skills.

Second/foreign language teachers should be fully aware of how to make their scaffolding effective for their learners involved in the process of L2 cultural

knowledge construction, the development of intercultural skills, and affective qualities. They also need a thorough understanding of an interrelationship between students' cognitive and emotional processing of the targeted content and their purposes, abilities, prior knowledge, and motivation, with a vital part played by individual and situational interest. The crucial role of interest in EFL culture learning and teaching, however, has so far been given no systematic consideration (Chodkiewicz 2016). Yet, it is worth noting that as early as in 1975, Widdowson, an outstanding British scholar, convincingly argued that: "To present someone with a set of extracts and to require him to read them not in order to learn something interesting and relevant about the world but in order to learn something about the language being used is to misrepresent normal language use to some degree" (p. 80). Garton et al. (2014) quote another important Widdowson's (1975: 90) remark, namely that classroom materials "have to engage the learner's interest and impress him as being somehow relevant to his concerns" in order to point out that there is no recent research into "the characteristics of materials that encourage learner connection, or authentication" (p. 655). Undoubtedly, drawing on FL learners' individual interest, including topic interest, as well as stimulating their situational interest can help increase their engagement in processing and reflecting on coursebook texts and significantly contribute to the development of intercultural competence and students' positive response to the teaching materials.

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