
This is the **accepted version** of the journal article:

Bori Sanz, Pau. «Local and International Cultures in Catalan as a Second Language Textbooks». *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 1 (2014), p. 207-218

This version is available at <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/335153>

under the terms of the  ^{IN}COPYRIGHT license.

LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL CULTURES IN CATALAN AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS

Pau Bori

University of Belgrade (Serbia)

paubori@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on specific elements of local and international cultures in two collections of Catalan as a second language (CSL) most widely used textbooks. Adapting a methodology used by Ramirez & Hall (1990), the study firstly gives quantitative analysis of all the geographical references related to Catalonia and the rest of the world in form of a large text (more than 50 words) or an image.

The results show that Catalan culture is favored over international cultures, but that, in most cases, textbooks give a simplified view on both Catalan and international cultures. Catalonia and the rest of the countries mentioned are very often presented from a tourist-consumer point of view, without any substantial cultural information. Furthermore, the study suggests that textbooks avoid cultural comparisons therefore giving little space for cultural understanding. The results presented in this paper form part of a wider research about the sociocultural models that current CSL textbooks transmit.

THE AUTHOR

Pau Bori is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Translation and Language Sciences at the University Pompeu Fabra of Barcelona. From 2005 he is a lecture for Catalan language at the University of Belgrade. His research interests include second language learning and teaching, and didactic materials. His PHD research investigates the socio cultural content of of Catalan as a second language textbooks.

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to examine how local and international cultures are presented in textbooks designed for adult learners of Catalan as a second language (CSL). As its starting point, this study takes the view that the textbooks are never neutral (Apple, 1999) and that CSL textbooks give learners a certain vision of a culture of their host country as well as the international cultures.

Since the Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence, cultural aspects have increasingly been incorporated to second language (L2) pedagogy. The relation between L2 learning and culture has been acknowledged in the works of Kramsch (1993), Byram (1997), and Moran (2001), among others.

The increased emphasis on the teaching of culture in recent decades has led to the introduction of cultural elements in most textbooks (Santos, 2007). Several researches (Alptekin, 1993; Batteman & Mattos, 2006; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Ramirez & Hall, 1990; Risager, 1991; among others) have analyzed the cultural component of second language textbooks. However, textbooks for learning Catalan as a second language have rarely been a subject of any kind of analysis, especially a one that takes a socio-cultural perspective.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This article is just an initial step in the direction of analyzing constructions of culture in CSL textbooks following the four dimensions of analyzing culture proposed by Byram & Esarte-Sarries (1991):

- analysis at the micro-social level of the social identity of individuals, of their social environment, of their personality.
- analysis at the macro-social level of socio-economic, geographic and historical representations.
- analysis of the viewpoint taken by the author, either explicitly or implicitly.
- analysis at the inter-cultural level of mutual representations and recognition by the nature and foreign cultures (p.180).

In this paper, the focus will be on the macro-social level of socio-economic, and more specifically on geographic representations that appear in textbooks. To this end, this study will try to answer the following research questions:

1. Which kind of representation of local and international cultures appears in large texts and images that refer to a geographical reference?

2. Which are the differences and similarities in representations of local and international cultures?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 CORPUS

Three criteria for the selection of textbooks were followed: a) that they are widely used; b) recent; c) and for A1 to B1 levels.

Two collections from two different publishing houses from Barcelona were analyzed:

1. *Veus 1, 2, 3* (Mas & Vilagrassa, 2005-2008)
2. *Nou Nivell Bàsic 1, 2, 3* (Guerrero, Mercadal, Roig, & Rovira, 2010) and *Nou Nivell Elemental 1, 2, 3* (Anguera, Roig, Tomàs, & Verdugo, 2010)

3.2 PROCEDURES

The methodology used for this study was adapted from Ramirez & Hall (1990). Firstly, every large text and image that refers to a Catalan or a non Catalan geographical reference was counted. Then, the content and form of each image and large text was briefly described to be later grouped into bigger categories. Finally, the qualitative analysis of the results was made.

For the purpose of this analysis we considered as a large text a text with more than 50 words in form of a narrative text or a dialogue while as images we considered all photographs, maps and drawings that were related to geographical references.

4. RESULTS

4.1 LARGE TEXTS

The number of large texts recorded which refer to Catalonia is almost the double the large texts which refer to non Catalan countries.

Table 1. Large texts in collections *Veus* and *Nou Nivell Bàsic/Elemental*

	CATALONIA	NON CATALAN COUNTRIES	TOTAL
Tourist information	12	6	18
Journeys	2	12	14
Brief news	7	4	11
Cultural information	9	-	9
Reportages	7	-	7
Everyday life	2	-	2
TOTAL	39	22	61

Among texts which refer to Catalan territories, the most important category is tourist information, followed by cultural information and brief news and reportages.

The texts belonging to the category tourist information are more or less impersonal texts that contain tourist information about a place. These texts resemble the ones that we usually find in a travel magazine or a travel guide. Cultural information texts are texts that contain information about geography, demography, culture or language of a place. Brief news category includes texts about news that happened just before the text was written, while reportages include texts which have no relation with latest news. They are quite longer than the ones belonging to brief news category.

Among large texts which refer to non Catalan countries, the most frequent category is journeys, as can be seen in table 1. They are texts written in first person where different people explain their experience about a journey. This category also includes texts that give recommendations to go to a place.

In large texts which refer to non Catalan countries, we did not find any text which may belong to the category cultural information, reportages or everyday life.

4.2 IMAGES

As we can see in table 2, we recorded more images of Catalonia than images of non Catalan countries. In both cases, the majority of images are similar to the images we find in a postcard. However, among the images representing Catalan culture, we find a greater variety of content. Apart from postcards and maps, among images representing Catalan culture we also found a significant number of pictures of institutions (city councils, parliament, museums, cinemas) and establishments (popular bars, shops, bakeries), which we did not find on images representing non Catalan countries.

Table 2. Images in collections *Veus* and *Nou Nivell Bàsic/Elemental*

	CATALONIA	NON CATALAN COUNTRIES	TOTAL
POSTCARDS	39	36	75
MAPS	16	3	19
INSTITUTIONS	13	-	13
PHOTOGRAPHY IN NEWS	2	7	9
ESTABLISHMENTS	8	-	8
TRAVEL PHOTOS	3	4	7
OTHERS	6	-	6
DRAWINGS	-	4	4
ARTISTIC PHOTOGRAPHY	1	-	1

TOTAL	88	54	142
-------	----	----	-----

Apart from the categories mentioned above, other categories with a significant presence are photography in news and travel photos. The first category contains pictures that usually go together with news, while travel photos are the ones that tourist usually make on their journeys.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 LARGE TEXTS

5.1.1 Tourist information

Most large texts dedicated to Catalan territories belong to the category tourist information. This category also appears in large texts which refer to non Catalan countries. In both cases, they talk about impressive natural beauty, describing the countryside.

These kinds of texts resemble the ones that we find in travel magazines or tourist brochures where idealization of a certain tourist destination is a primary objective. This ideal representation of place is in the line of a trend that appears in most second language textbooks (Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991).

In texts about Catalan territories we find more detailed and extended information than in the texts about tourism in non Catalan territories. For example, in texts about Catalan territories we found information about accommodation, restaurants, history and traditions, which do not appear at all in large texts about non Catalan countries.

It can also be noticed that the tourist attracted to these places are the wealthy ones, especially in the texts about non Catalan countries. In a text about the Caribbean islands we can read: “The best way to go from one island to the other is, without a doubt, in a comfortable and luxurious yacht” (*Veus* 3, p. 13).

5.1.2 Journeys

Unlike the previous category of texts that are quite neutral, journeys are mostly written in first person and describe personal travels. The great majority of texts about non Catalan territories belong to this category, while only two texts belonging to this category talk about Catalan countries.

After the analysis of the 12 texts belonging to this category dedicated to non Catalan countries, we found that they present mainly a Western perspective, the majority of

them focus only on the tourist attractions of the place and information about the country, its people or its culture is very scarce. Moreover, they do not give the voice to the local people, they are presented from only one perspective, the one of a Western tourist.

The texts that give a little bit of information about the people and the countries are the ones dedicated to India, Burkina Faso and Mongolia.

In the text about India where a Catalan tourist gives advice to a friend going to India, this country is mentioned as “a very poor country” (*Veus 3*, pp.16-17) We also can read: “you should know that there will always be a lot of people surrounding you, but don’t worry, the country is not dangerous” (*Veus 3*, pp.16-17).

Similarly, in the text about a NGO volunteer in Burkina Faso, we find that: “Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the World” (*Veus 3*, p.115) and, again in the similar fashion like in the text about India, that “the people from here are not violent at all” (*Veus 3*, p.115).

The text about Mongolia is about a Catalan cyclist (Xavi) on a tour through the country and his experience after his bicycle broke down. This text is all about complaints Xavi makes about certain elements of (Mongolian) life. At the beginning he discovers that there are no regular buses that could take him to the place he wants to go so he has to hire a personal driver who does not appear at the time they agreed to meet. When he finally gets into the minibus he is surprised with the lack of space. He says: “we’re on our way with two drivers sitting in front [...], and twelve, yes twelve people in the back” (*Nou Nivell Elemental 2*, p. 36). Xavi also informs us about the reaction of Mongolians to this, from his perspective, very unpleasant situation. In his words: “The Mongolian (students) are supporting it with incredible stoicism, with radio cassette playing Mongolian music and them singing together as if going on an excursion” (*Nou Nivell Elemental 2*, p. 36). Xavi is not trying to understand the reasons behind some of the social and cultural practices of people different from him. Instead, he is viewing the Mongolians with a superiority and distance giving us only his own opinion. It would certainly be interesting to hear (read) how the Mongolians saw the actions of Xavi and explained us their view on what happened. However, in the texts belonging to this category and all the other ones we did not find one single example of cultural comparisons.

5.1.3 Brief news and reportages

There is a total of 11 texts belonging to category brief news for both Catalan and non-Catalan countries. The majority of news is about natural disasters, accidents, robberies and so on. These texts are very brief with the basic news information.

On the other hand, the large texts recorded as reportages are quite longer than brief news and contain more detailed information. All reportages refer to Catalonia. The majority of them are texts about charismatic establishments in Barcelona that appear in the same textbook: *Veus 2*. They contain information about the nowadays establishments together with some details about the history of these places.

Unlike all other texts analyzed reportages contain a degree of dialogicality, because they include different voices. For example, the text about the last town crier in a small village in Catalonia (*Veus 2*, p. 98) includes not only the voice of the author of the text, but also the voices of the town crier and the mayor of the village.

5.1.4 Cultural information

All the texts belonging to this category are the ones that talk about Catalan countries. They are mainly texts which are addressed to non-Catalan speakers with basic information about Catalan language and dialects, Catalan geography and Catalan institutions which may be relevant for foreigners in Catalonia such as the Catalan Consortium for Linguistic Normalization, the biggest institution for learning Catalan language.

5.2 IMAGES

The majority of images found belonging both to Catalan and non Catalan territories fall into category postcards. They are high quality images of beautiful places that transmit a tourist vision of the place. In these pictures we see spectacular nature or famous monuments like the Sagrada Família in Barcelona or the Big Ben in London.

Although the category postcards is the largest one in both Catalan and non Catalan countries, the vision of Catalonia is richer because there is a significant number of images that belong to other categories, like maps or pictures of institutions and establishments.

Non Catalan countries are presented almost always as ideal images of countryside. For example, one unit dedicated to tourism abroad opens with a large photograph of two British tourists on the top of a 4x4 land cruiser looking through their binoculars to the distance (*Veus 3*, pp. 6-7). They are obviously on a safari trip, but symbolically this

image can give us the idea how the non-western cultures are portrayed in these textbooks: From the binocular distance of a western, well off tourist looking for some interesting exotic animals.

A significant exception is a large photograph of African women and children standing in front something which could be an aid camp, or a field hospital (*Veus 3*, pp. 112-113). Textbooks decide to illustrate Africa and their people with a photograph that reinforces some of the stereotypes about this country like poverty, lacking modernity, backwardness, and so on. In this picture and some other large texts about non-western countries (like the ones about Mongolia, India or Burkina Faso mentioned above), we have seen a trend to present the other (the non-Western cultures and people) as “being distant, different, absent or more or less subtly inferior to Us Europeans” (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 63).

6. CONCLUSIONS

In general, Catalan and international territories appear from a tourist-consumer point of view. We find a highly idealized representation in both large texts and images. The information that we have about the cultures and the local people is very scarce.

The results show that Catalan culture is favored over international cultures. While we have different kinds of large texts and information about Catalonia, the great majority of texts about foreign countries are related to tourism. Similarly, we have different types of images of Catalonia (postcards, maps, pictures of establishments and institutions, among others), whereas the great majority of the images of non-Catalan countries resemble postcards. Moreover, while is possible to hear the voices of different Catalan people in texts, there is a lack of voice of foreigners in all texts recorded.

In texts and images about non Catalan countries, we find the point of view of a well-off Catalan tourist and sometimes a subtle superiority of the western culture over the non-western cultures.

CSL textbooks analyzed avoid cultural comparisons, therefore giving little space for cultural understanding, and falling to promote intercultural understanding among students.

7. REFERENCES

- Alptekin, C. (1993). Target-language culture in EFL materials. *ELT journal*, 47(2), 136-143. doi: 10.1093/elt/47.2.136
- Apple, M. (1999). Cultural politics and the text. In M. Apple. (Ed.), *Official Knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age* (pp. 42–60). 2nd edition. New York: Routledge,.
- Anguera, X., Roig, M., Tomàs, N., & Verdugo, M. (2010). *Nou Nivell Elemental 1, 2, 3*. Barcelona: Castellnou.
- Batteman, B., & Mattos, M. (2006). An Analysis of the Cultural Content of Six Portuguese Textbooks. *Portuguese Language Journal*, 1.
- Byram, M. & Esarte-Sarries, V. (1991). *Investigating Cultural Studies in Foreign Language Teaching*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied linguistics*, 1(1).
- Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (1999). Cultural mirrors: Materials and methods in the EFL classroom. *Culture in second language teaching and learning*, 196-219.
- Guerrero, I., Mercadal, T., Roig, M., & Rovira, M. (2010a). *Nou Nivell Bàsic 1, 2, 3*. Barcelona: Castellnou.
- Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mas, M., Vilagrassa, A. (2005-2008). *Veus 1, 2, 3*. Barcelona: PAMSA.
- Moran, P. (2001). *Teaching culture: Perspectives in practice*. New York: Heinle & Heinle.
- Santos, D. (2007). Reconceptualizing textbooks in culture teaching. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 11(1), 36.
- Ramirez, A. G., & Hall, J. K. (1990). Language and culture in secondary level Spanish textbooks. *The Modern Language Journal*, 74(1), 48-65. doi:10.1111/j.1540 - 4781.1990.tb02553.x
- Risager, K. (1991). Cultural references in European textbooks: an evaluation of recent tendencies. In Buttjes, D. and Byram, M. (eds.) *Mediating Languages and Cultures* (pp. 181-192). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Van Dijk, T. (2005). *Racism and discourse in Spain and Latin America* (Vol. 14). Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

