CULTURAL TERMS IN EFL TEXTBOOKS FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

TÉRMINOS CULTURALES EN LIBROS DE TEXTO DE INGLÉS PARA JÓVENES

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Abstract

This paper analyses the Festival/Cultural section of the four most used 6th Primary EFL textbooks in La Rioja (North of Spain) to examine whether (i) festivals is a topic covered in the syllabi of these four materials, (ii) the topics and terms refer to British and American celebrations, represent festivals in other English-speaking communities or allude to students' own culture, and (iii) songs and rhymes are included in the materials and related to the celebrations represented in them.

Our findings show that the most recurrent cultural topics are everyday living, values, beliefs and attitudes and ritual behaviour. As for the cultural terms, our sample mostly portrays references to the target culture. Songs and rhymes are part of the teaching materials, but are barely related to the festivals. These data seem to show that sociocultural aspects are gaining importance in ELT primary materials, but they mostly focus on the target culture and omit references to students' own culture.

Key Words: Festivals, 6th grade Primary, EFL textbooks, cultural terms, songs.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la sección *Festivals/Culture* de los cuatro libros de texto de inglés como lengua extranjera más utilizados en 6º de Educación Primaria en La Rioja (Norte de España) para examinar si (i) los festivales son un tema cubierto en el programa de estos cuatro materiales, (ii) los temas y los vocablos utilizados se refieren a celebraciones británicas y estadounidenses, representan festivales en otras comunidades de habla inglesa o aluden a la propia cultura de los estudiantes, y (iii) se incluyen canciones y rimas en los materiales y se relacionan con las celebraciones en ellos representadas.

Los resultados muestran que los temas culturales más recurrentes son la vida cotidiana, los valores, las creencias y actitudes y las costumbres. En cuanto a los términos culturales, nuestra muestra presenta mayoritariamente referencias a la cultura de la lengua meta. Las canciones y las rimas forman parte de los materiales didácticos, pero apenas se relacionan con las fiestas abordadas. Estos datos parecen mostrar que los aspectos socioculturales están ganando importancia en los materiales para la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa en educación primaria, pero se centran principalmente en la cultura meta omitiendo referencias a la cultura en la que el alumnado desarrolla su aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: Fiestas, 6º de Educación Primaria, libros de inglés como lengua extranjera, términos culturales, canciones.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural awareness implies the exposure to different sets of ideas, values, beliefs, and ritual behaviours associated with the target language (Byram, 1997; Nizegorodcew, 2011). Thus, students acquire a given language together with its cultural framework (enculturation) (Alptekin, 2002). This process may be arduous as students might encounter cultural aspects difficult to be accepted and understood. For this reason, the Spanish national curriculum and its regional policies stress the importance of the introduction of culture in EFL classrooms (*Organic Law 8, 2013; Decree 24/2014; CEFR 2001*). This regulation also places more demands on foreign language teachers as they are required to include intercultural competence in their lessons even when they may lack knowledge about the field. Therefore, there is a general reliance on textbooks to work as a guide to introduce intercultural competence in their teaching practice (Castro, Sercu & Méndez García, 2004; Clavel-Arroitia & Fuster-Márquez, 2014). Hence, EFL textbooks are expected to tactfully introduce culture without causing any misunderstanding or cultural shock (Kramsch, 1993).

In order to comply with the aforementioned regulations, primary education EFL textbooks are expected to foster students' curiosity about traditional festivals (ritual behaviour [CEFR, 2001: 102]) in the target culture by incorporating information about them in their teaching units. As stated in the Spanish curriculum (*Decree 24/2014*), EFL materials should specifically work on certain expressions used by people taking part in the events and associated with them. Textbooks should also present songs or rhymes which are part of those celebrations. Hence, this paper focuses on the cultural terms included in the *Festival section* of the four most frequently used 6th Primary EFL textbooks in La Rioja (Spain). Our main objective is to explore whether cultural contents are introduced in EFL instruction at this educational stage as specified in the curriculum of La Rioja. The first section reviews the existing literature on culture with a specific focus on EFL textbooks used in Primary Education worldwide. The concept of Intercultural Competence in Spanish Primary Education is, then, explained. A report of the study conducted with main results found and interpretation of the same follows. This paper concludes by pointing out some lines for further research trying to overcome its main limitations.

2. CULTURE IN EFL MATERIALS AND CURRICULA

EFL materials' portrayal of the different cultures seems to be vital since both, students and teachers, rely on the information they provide. What is more, Ndura (2004) supported that textbook content has the power of acculturating students and eliciting positive or negative feelings towards the foreign language and its culture. In fact, Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) reported that textbooks cover in their pages a hidden curriculum which contains diverse values and ideologies. There is an increasing evidence suggesting that a balance in the representation of the three types of culture –target, source and international– may be beneficial for the acquisition of intercultural competence (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Labtic & Teo, 2020). On the basis of this assertion, the cultural content of ELT textbooks should carefully display cultural elements and integrate different cultures in order to avoid comparisons and misunderstandings (Baker, 2011). However, Ulrich (2004) claimed that there is no consensus on how culture should be represented as there are several ways to approach it in teaching materials.

Overall, there is an agreement on the prioritization of elements from the target culture (the culture/s of the language they are learning) over any other culture (source or international) in most EFL materials. As Alptekin (1993) remarked this common practice relies on three main factors: (i) it is more economic for textbook publishers to produce one edition of their textbooks globally; (ii) these books are usually compiled by English native speakers who will always tend to include their own culture; and (iii) historically, there has been this tendency of emphasising the target language culture over the source and international ones. Méndez García (2005) highlighted the need of students to get familiar with the most important characteristics and behaviours of the target society. In this vein, Méndez García (2005) and Gray (2010) asserted that being in contact with the target language and culture will promote a sense of empathy and respect, it will help create reflexive knowledge about students' own culture and will foster intercultural communication. Nevertheless, according to Gómez Rodríguez (2015), EFL researchers have drawn insights into textbook analyses and suggested that the representation of the target culture may still be unrealistic and limited and concurs with Matsuda´s (2002) argument that the underlying approach within EFL textbooks is usually limited to American and British as the main representations from the target culture.

Although the aforementioned approach to culture seems to be accurate, McKay (2003), Nault (2006) and Sudartini (2012) advocated for a greater presence of the local culture (source culture) over other cultural aspects since learners should preserve their national identity and be able to communicate their cultural values in the target language. Moreover, as Duñabeitia (2017) claimed, the source culture may appeal to the most emotional side of the language building a tighter emotional bound with the new language and would lessen the feeling of rejection that may arise in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT).

International cultures have gained relevance in the last decades as English has become a crucial element in international encounters. According to Kachru (1985; 1992) English is a linguistic code commonly used in international communication. However, English is no longer considered as belonging to a unique identity (e.g. British or American), but to a wider community, which led to the introduction of the concept of *World Englishes* to explain there may be as many English varieties as nationalities (Kachru, 1985, Crystal, 2002). Nowadays, English is considered as an international language (EIL) since it serves a great variety of international purposes in a broad range of contexts (e.g. economy, education, travel or broadcasting) (Crystal, 2000; McKay, 2003).

In the light of these three different approaches to culture (target, source and international), a growing body of literature has investigated the representation of the source, target and international cultures in EFL materials at different educational levels and in different countries worldwide. Aliakbari (2004), Wu (2010), Su (2014), Pasand and Ghasemi (2018) and Alshenqeeti (2020) reviews revealed an unbalance regarding the inclusion of source, target or international cultural elements in EFL textbooks. Additionally, Gómez Rodríguez (2014) and Canga Alonso & Cifone Ponte (2015) purported a large presence of elements from the target culture while the source and international cultures were usually overlooked. However, this tendency seems to vary regarding the nature, and purpose of the textbook. Saeedi & Shahrokhi (2018) in a study conducted in Iran concurred with these assertions since four ELT materials from two different series approached culture differently. Thus, one of the book series contained more L1 and neutral-cultural contents, whereas the second series included L2 and L1 cultural contents.

In this same vein, locally-produced textbooks made more references to students' source culture, whereas internationally-produced textbooks tended to emphasize the target culture (Canga Alonso & Cifone Ponte, 2015).

In regard with primary school education, a study conducted in Turkey (Kikgoz & Agçam, 2011) and another one in Indonesia (Hermawan & Noerkhasanah, 2012) with locally-produced textbooks concluded that references to the source culture outnumbered those of the target and international cultures. The type of representation also appeared to differ depending on the cultural topic. In this regard, Hermawan & Noerkhasanah (2012) observed that aspects related to a touristic view of the source culture were abundant, whereas Kikgoz & Agçam (2011) stated that the presence of features from the source culture were less predominant in EFL textbooks published after 2005. Both studies reported that the USA and the UK were the main, if only the unique, focus of the cultural information regarding the target culture with an overflow of references to famous characters, media and geography. International culture was mainly represented by geographical awareness and famous characters from history and literature.

Kikgoz and Agçam's (2011) findings suggested that the cultural content also varies depending on the age of the intended students. Thus, the textbooks addressed to 4-5 grades contained relevant topics about everyday life experiences. For that reason, the source culture was mainly included by means of references to food, daily routines and introductions. On the other hand, those textbooks addressed to upper primary grades (6-8) focused on famous people and celebrations from the source culture.

Once the role of culture in primary education EFL textbooks has been discussed, we move to review previous literature on intercultural competence in the Primary Education Curriculum in Spain

Spanish educational legislation considers intercultural competence as part of the English curriculum in primary education. At the end of this stage, sociocultural aspects seem to play an important role to define the contents, learning standards and assessment criteria young learners should be exposed to in their formal instruction (*Decree 24/2014*). Thus, intercultural competence is present in the four blocks in the last year of Primary education curriculum (i.e. comprehension of oral texts, production of oral texts, expression and interaction, comprehension of written texts and production of written texts).

The curriculum also makes constant reference to the relevance of raising students' curiosity and interest in the target culture. It explicitly refers to traditional festivities from the target culture (e.g. Halloween, Valentine's Day, Christmas, Saint Patrick's Day, Pancake Day or Easter). On the other hand, the role that vocabulary acquires in the instruction of these traditional events is promoted in the curriculum since students should be able to recognize and produce words and expressions related to festivals in English speaking countries. Hence, students at this stage should learn expressions, songs and rhymes associated with those festivities (e.g. "trick or treat?", "Happy New Year!"). As stated by Curtain & Pesola (1994) and Reina Arévalo (2010), the inclusion of songs and rhymes may be one of the most appropriate ways to break down the limits between teaching a language and its culture, especially at these ages. In fact, songs and rhymes should be an approach to display authentic texts full of cultural elements from the target culture to young EFL learners. However, to our knowledge, there is a scarcity of research in regard with the treatment of festivals and cultural terms with a sample of 6th (last grade)

primary education EFL textbooks. This paper, then, intends to explore whether (i) festivals is a topic covered in the syllabi of the four most frequently used 6th Primary EFL materials in La Rioja (North of Spain), (ii) the topics and terms used to describe traditional rituals refer to British and American celebrations, represent festivals in other English-speaking communities or allude to source culture festivities, and (iii) songs and rhymes have been incorporated to the materials and related to the celebrations represented in our textbook sample.

3. METHOD

The present study examines the Festival Section of four 6th grade primary EFL Class Books in La Rioja (North of Spain). This grade corresponds with the end of primary school education in Spain and students' age ranges from 11-12 years old. The sample was selected according to the textbook list available at all the websites of the Riojan primary schools. The textbooks were, then, ranked according to their use on the aforementioned schools and the four most common were analysed in the present study. These materials were widely used in public and private schools supported with public funding all around the region of La Rioja in the academic year 2019-2020.

Two of the books (*New Tiger 6* and *Big Questions 6*) were published by international publishing houses (Macmillan and Oxford University Press) whereas *Missing Accomplished with Vaugham 6* and *Wonders 6* were compiled by national publishers (Richmond and Anaya).

The Common European Framework´s (CEFR) (2001) lists of topics (see table 1) was used to conduct the analysis of the vocabulary and topics present in our sample of textbooks. We focus on aspects related to everyday living (food and drink), values, beliefs and attitudes [iconic historical personages, arts (music, visual arts, literature, drama, popular music and song)] and ritual behaviour (celebrations and festivals).

Cultural topic	Descriptors
Everyday living	Food and drink; public holidays; working hours and practices; leisure activities.
Living conditions	Living standards; housing conditions; welfare arrangements.
Interpersonal relations	Class structure of society and relations between classes; relations between sexes (gender, intimacy); family structures and relations; relations between generations; relations in work situations; relations between public and police, officials, etc.
Values, beliefs and attitudes	Social class; occupational groups; wealth; regional cultures; security; institutions; tradition and social change; history, especially iconic historical personages and events; minorities (ethnic, religious); national identity; foreign countries, states, peoples; politics; arts (music, visual arts, literature, drama, popular music and song); religion; humour.

Body language	Knowledge of the conventions governing such behaviour form part of the user/learner's sociocultural competence.
Social conventions	Punctuality; presents; dress; refreshments, drinks, meals; behavioural and conversational conventions and taboos; length of stay; leave-taking.
Ritual behaviour	Religious observances and rites; birth, marriage, death; audience and spectator behaviour at public performances and ceremonies; celebrations, festivals, dances, discos, etc.

Table 1. Cultural topics and descriptors [adapted from CEFR (2001, pp. 102-103)].

Cultural terms were extracted from the sample of textbooks according to the following definition: "terms used for special kinds of "things", "events" or "customs" […] that cannot be translated literally, because translation will distort its meaning" (Hapsari & Setyaningsih, 2013: 76). They were, then, classified according to the culture they represented: source, target or international as well as the cultural topic they stand for (everyday living, values, beliefs and attitudes or ritual behaviour).

4. RESULTS

Our data evinced that all the reviewed materials include specific units on festivals, therefore they meet the requirements of the regulations in force as they provide learners with a view of different festivals worldwide. However, they approach cultural topics on festivals (Ritual behaviours) from different descriptors. Thus, *Big Questions 6* (OUP) and *New Tiger 6* (Macmillan) include references to everyday living as they show words related to the foods associated with the festivals they introduce in the texts (e.g. Christmas cake or roast turkey).

Values, beliefs and attitudes (see table 1) are illustrated in *New Tiger 6 and Mission Accomplished 6* (Anaya) since they include fictional characters (Sherlock Holmes and Molly Malone) or iconic historical personages (e.g. Columbus).

As for the descriptors (see table 1) employed to depict festivals, *Big Questions 6* reports international festivals (e. g. Carnival and Christmas) whereas *New Tiger 6* focuses on traditional festivals held in English speaking countries mainly the UK and Ireland (e.g. April's Fool Day, Saint Patrick's Day or Pancake´s Day). This material also reports information about Thanksgiving Day in Canada to provide 6th grade primary school students with new insights on this celebration which is traditionally associated with the USA. On the contrary, *Wonders 6* (Richmond) presents a wider approach to the topic by referring to worldwide celebrations (e.g. World Peace Day and World Earth Day). On the contrary, *Mission Accomplished 6* focuses on a national (source) culture event (Columbus Day/*Día de la Hispanidad*) which is also celebrated in Latin America. This book also gives voice to the target culture (the USA) by referring to Martin Luther King Day. Both festivities also introduce young EFL leaners to two iconic historical personages (Columbus and Martin Luther King) as suggested in the CEFR (2001) (see table 1). Finally, *Mission Accomplished 6* includes a global approach to festivals by introducing the Day of Reconciliation which is only held in South Africa.

The second aim of this paper was to analyse the terms used to describe traditional rituals to explore whether they refer to British and American celebrations, represent festivals in other English-speaking communities or allude to source culture festivities. As could be expected, the cultural references belonged to the three cultural topics which are recurrent in the four EFL materials i.e. everyday living, values, beliefs and attitudes (iconic historical personages) and rituals and behaviours.

In regard with the terms about everyday living, they are rendered in 75% of the materials analysed (*Big Questions 6*, *Mission Accomplished 6* and *New Tiger 6*). Our data also revealed that cultural words described foods that are usually cooked when the aforementioned festivals are held (e.g. Christmas pudding, Christmas cake, mince pies, pretzels, cockles and mussels, pancake or roast turkey). As illustrated in the examples, young Spanish EFL learners' source culture is not depicted in our sample of textbooks since the terms represent target (Christmas pudding, mince pie, cockles and mussels and pancake) and international culture (Christmas cake, pretzels and roast turkey).

Terms about values beliefs and attitudes are included in two books (*Big Questions 6 and Mission Accomplished 6*). However, they are addressed differently. *New Tiger 6* alludes to iconic literary characters in the target culture (Sherlock Holmes and Molly Malone), whereas as abovementioned *Mission Accomplished 6* focuses on iconic historical characters.

Terms from rituals and behaviours are extensively represented in *Big Questions* 6, *Mission Accomplished 6* and *New Tiger 6*. They refer to international celebrations, mostly Christmas, Carnival and Easter and, thus, introduce terms such as carnival queen, Christmas Tree, New Years' Eve, carnival parade or Lent. Black Friday, which has recently gained international recognition, is included in *Mission Accomplished* 6 and *New Tiger 6* introduces food terms to depict target culture rituals (pancake for Pancake Day and roast turkey for Thanksgiving Day). The international rituals displayed in *Wonders 6* (World Peace Day World Earth Day) do not elicit any specific cultural word. Table 2 illustrates these findings.

Textbook	Cultural topic	Descriptor	Cultural Terms
Big Questions (OUP)	Everyday living- food Popular culture- traditions, celebrations, festivals	Christmas, Carnival	Carnival, Christmas pudding, Christmas cake, mince pies, pretzels, Christmas Day, tradition, traditional, carnival queen, New Year's Eve
Mission Accomplished 6 (Anaya)	Cultural heritage- Famous people Popular culture- traditions, celebrations, festivals	Columbus Day Martin Luther King Day Day of Reconciliation	Black Friday, Christopher Columbus, Martin Luther King, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas, Easter

| New Tiger (Macmillan) | 6 | Everyday living
Values, beliefs and attitudes
Ritual behaviours- | Thanksgiving Day (Canada)
Advent and Christmas (New Zealand)
Pancake Day (Wales and the UK)
Carnival (Jamaica)
St. Patrick's Day (Ireland)
April's Fool Day (England and the UK) | Pancake Day, Molly Malone, Sherlock Holmes, carnival, pancakes, Thanksgiving day Cockles and mussels. Lent, Easter, roast turkey |
| Wonders (Richmond) | 6 | Ritual behaviours | World Peace Day
World Earth Day | |

Table 2. Cultural topics, descriptors and cultural terms

The third goal of the present research aimed at exploring whether songs and rhymes were incorporated to the materials as suggested in the curricula. Our findings purport a twofold explanation for this statement: (i) songs and rhymes are part of the materials as they all include a section on songs and/or rhymes, but (ii) they are scarcely related to the festivals described in the sample since there is only one textbook which relates them to their correspondent celebration.

5. DISCUSSION

The first aim of this paper tried to give us insights into the coverage given to festivals in the syllabi of the four most frequently used 6th Primary EFL materials in La Rioja (North of Spain). Our data show that they follow the requirements of the regulations in force (Decree 24/2014) to provide learners with an overview of different festivals worldwide. Besides, these materials help to raise young EFL learners' curiosity and interest in traditional festivities in the countries and cultures where the target language is spoken.

Our second purpose was to explore whether the cultural topics and terms used to describe traditional rituals/festivals focused on British and American celebrations, represented festivals in other English-speaking communities or introduced source culture festivities. Our results evince that three cultural topics (everyday living, values, beliefs and attitudes and ritual behaviour based on the list provided by the CEFR (2001) (see table 1 in Section 3) were present in the materials, but their prevalence varied according to the textbooks. As abovementioned, ritual behaviour was represented in the four textbooks. References to everyday living (foods) were shown in *Big Questions 6* and *New Tiger 6* whereas values, beliefs and attitudes were illustrated with the introduction of famous fictional characters in *New Tiger 6* (Sherlock Holmes) or iconic personages in *Mission Accomplished 6* (Columbus). This inclusion of historical or well-known fiction personages seems to be a common trend in EFL materials worldwide as reported in Kikgoz and Agçam (2011), Hermawan and Noerkhasanah (2012) and, Saeedi and Shahrokhi, (2019).

As for the origin of the festivals depicted in the textbooks, the materials analysed seems to have left aside learners' own culture regardless of the scope or the publishing house which compiled them: national (Anaya or Richmond) or international (Oxford University Press or Macmillan). In the same vein as Kikgoz and Agçam (2011) and Hermawan and Noerkhasanah (2012), our findings reported that the USA and the UK were the main focus of the cultural information regarding the target culture, but for the reference to Thanksgiving Day in Canada comprised in *New Tiger 6*.

These outcomes also concur with previous studies conducted with nationally-produced EFL textbooks from the same educational level in Turkey as Kikgoz and Agçam (2011) identified that the presence of features from the source culture were less predominant in EFL textbooks published after 2005. However, this outcome cannot be generalized since former studies with nationally-produced materials concluded that certain elements from the source culture outnumbered the references to the target and international cultures (Nault, 2006; Hermawan & Noerkhasanah, 2012; Sudartini, 2012; Pasand & Ghasemi, 2018). These results might account for the inclusion in *Mission Accomplished 6* of Columbus Day/*Día de la Hispanidad* which is a bank holiday in Spain.

However, previous analyses of EFL materials for secondary school in Spain purported that locally-produced textbooks portrayed more references to the students' source culture. This tendency is also followed in Iran (Pasand & Ghasemi, 2018) and Pakistan (Mahmood, Asghar, & Hussain, 2012).

On the contrary, internationally-produced textbooks tended to emphasize the target culture (Gómez Rodríguez, 2014; Canga Alonso & Cifone Ponte, 2015). This claim may contradict Kikgoz and Agçam's (2011) assertion that the cultural content also varies depending on the age of the intended students, those textbooks addressed to 4-5 grades contained relevant topics to everyday life experiences, as in the case of Spain higher level textbooks (secondary school education) depict certain features of the source culture (Canga Alonso & Cifone Ponte, 2015) while in Turkey (Kikgoz and Agçam, 2011) textbooks refer to the source culture at lower educational levels. Nevertheless, we should take these assertions with caution since none of the reviewed studies focused on the cultural vocabulary of festivals sections in EFL textbooks as it is the scope of this paper so we cannot come to definite conclusions. We can only report that, contrary to previous studies, our research does not show a connection between the potential users of the book (national or international students) and the references to students' own culture or that of the target language. Further research is, then, called with a wider sample of materials to find evidence to clarify this controversy.

International culture is only included in *Wonders 6* by referring to worldwide celebrations (e.g. World Peace Day and World Earth Day). This finding seems to oppose former studies with secondary school EFL textbooks in Spain and Iran which reported that nationally produced materials, as is the case of *Wonders 6*, retrieved more references to the students' source culture (Gómez Rodríguez, 2014; Canga Alonso & Cifone Ponte, 2015; Pasand & Ghasemi, 2018). As abovementioned, this comparison should be taken cautiously since the studies were conducted in different countries and educational levels and in the case of the present study, we explored only two nationally-produced textbooks. Further research is needed to verify or refute this assertion.

Our study purports that cultural terms, as could be expected, belonged to the three cultural topics which are recurrent in the four EFL materials i.e. everyday living, values beliefs and attitudes (iconic historical personages and literary characters) and rituals and behaviours.

Everyday living was the most recurrent descriptor as it appeared in 75% of the materials analysed *(Big Questions 6*, *Mission Accomplished 6* and *New Tiger 6)*. This outcome concurs with previous literature at high school education in Iran (Pasand and Ghasemi, 2018) as personal life and identity were recurrent topics in their research. However, it does not correspond with previous studies developed in the same region with secondary school (10th Form) (Canga Alonso & Cifone Ponte, 2015) and Baccalaureate (12th Form) (Canga Alonso & Cifone Ponte, 2016) EFL textbooks whose most frequent descriptor referred to literary characters and celebrities. These iconic personages were also present in pre-university Iranian textbooks (Saeedi & Shahrokhi, 2019). These findings lead us to conclude that different educational levels may imply a higher intercultural knowledge on the part of the students. However, one of the nationally-produced textbooks from our sample (*Mission Accomplished 6*) focuses on iconic historical characters who belong to source (Christopher Columbus) and international (Martin Luther King) cultures which seems to refute our previous assertion. Further research should be, then, conducted with a wider sample of nationally-produced textbooks to test whether iconic personages (literary, historical or celebrities) for the source, target or international cultures are represented in the teaching materials.

Our data also revealed that cultural terms described foods from the target culture as most of the festivals mentioned in the books are celebrated in English-speaking countries. As happened with the cultural topics, young Spanish EFL learners' were not exposed to specific references to their source culture. This data concurs with previous studies which advocate for a greater presence of the local culture (source culture) over other cultural aspects so that learners could be able to reflect on their own cultural values in the target language (McKay, 2003; Nault 2006; Sudartini, 2012).

References to rituals and behaviours are extensively represented in the sample to describe international celebrations, mostly Christmas, Carnival and Easter. Thus, they introduce words related to these celebrations which allude to international culture. This inclusion seems to foster a sense of empathy and respect, it will help create reflective knowledge about students' own culture and will foster intercultural communication, as well as an appeal to the source culture as learners may build a tighter emotional bound with the foreign language as they are presented with festivals which are part of their own culture (Méndez García, 2005; Gray, 2010; Duñabeitia, 2017).

Our final concern was to ascertain whether songs and rhymes were incorporated to the materials as suggested in the curricula. Our data purport that songs and rhymes are part of the materials as they all include a section on songs and/or rhymes, but they are scarcely related to the festivals described in the sample since there is only one textbook which relates them to their correspondent celebration. This absence of ties between songs and the festivals studied in the book may break the links between traditional songs and the festival/s associated to them (e.g. Christmas and Christmas Carols) and to put the limits between teaching a language and its culture, songs and rhymes seem to be one of the most powerful tools to link teaching a language and its culture, especially at these ages (Curtain & Pesola,

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1994; Reina Arévalo, 2010). They also seem to be an approach to display authentic texts full of cultural elements (words and images) from the target culture to young EFL learners (Reina Arévalo, 2010).

6. CONCLUSION

This study has tried to explore the role given to cultural topics and cultural vocabulary in four 6th Primary education EFL textbooks in Spain, to review whether they follow the recommendations of the educational regulations in force and the culture they are mostly addressed at (i.e. source target or international). Three main findings stand out from this research. First, our sample of textbooks includes references to festivals as recommended in regional and national educational policies. Hence, young EFL learners are introduced to cultural features from the target language community. Everyday living, values, beliefs and attitudes and ritual behaviour are the most recurrent cultural topics in the sample and they mainly focus on target or international events. This approach to target and international cultures is reflected on the cultural input they provide learners with which leaves aside students' own culture/s. This prevalence of terms from international and target cultures constitutes our second main outcome. Finally, songs and rhymes are part of the materials, but they are not contextualised with the festivals included in the reviewed materials.

As has been stated all through the paper, its main limitation is that the book sample, though relevant because it is used in a significant number of Primary schools in La Rioja, is reduced as it encompasses four materials. Therefore, further research is called with a wider sample of Class Books to delve into the representation of festivals in each unit. Activity books, videos and online resources should be also explored to proven whether they reinforce the cultural topics and cultural terms presented in the Class Book or they omit allusions to cultural issues. EFL teachers' approach to culture in the EFL classroom would be of interest to be explored together with scrutinizing students' cultural vocabulary knowledge by implementing productive vocabulary tests based on the cultural input they have been exposed to in their EFL instruction. This will provide researchers and educators with a broader picture of the degree of insertion of intercultural communicative competence in Spanish primary education and would be of interest for academics worldwide to contrast it with its development in other countries where English is the first foreign language taught in primary school education.

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