



RESEARCH PAPER

**Race, Culture, and Identities in Second Language Education: A
Comprehensive Review of Research and Insights**

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ABSTRACT

EFL textbooks are more than just grammatical references; they are also a tool that allows students to acquire their first glances of the target culture. Therefore, such information in these materials must be well chosen to avoid putting forward a one-sided picture of the target society, which may revive old stereotypes. This article evaluates the identification of the target culture to address this concern by analyzing EFL textbooks. Hypotheses of the research are: The primary hypothesis is that the content of the analyzed materials is dominated by the image of the target culture about other cultures; the secondary hypothesis is that gender, national, and ethnic prejudices can be traced in the content of the analyzed materials. Thus, the study findings show that the target culture dominates the EFL textbooks. This study brought the following three findings. First of all, EFL materials portray a narrow vision coming from American and British cultural products, thus reducing learners' opportunities to encounter the rather broad representation of the target community. More particularly, the texts underline such features of popular culture as American, while cultural heritage features are closer to the British ones.

KEYWORDS Culture, EFL, Race

Introduction

It is essential to get familiar with the language characteristics and the cultural framework in which a specific language is being developed (R Kubota & Lin, 2009). In this regard, it should be recalled that when learning a foreign language it is necessary to encounter a broad spectrum of cultural characteristics that could be alien and rich in new associations that 'reality, suggested meaning, and symbols'. Foreign language learners interact with many ideas, values, and perceptions associated with the target culture (Ryuko Kubota & Lin, 2009). English has grown around the world in the last few decades. On this basis, intercultural competence developed due to the need for cultural interaction among people who speak different languages. This concept seems relevant when undertaking EFL education since English is employed for global communication by those whose interactions extend not only to native English speakers but also to other people of different cultures (Edge, 2011).

Therefore, these points of view have catalyzed enthusiasm for research on culture interpreted by students in EFL classes. As for the compound researched most recently focusing on integrating intercultural competence into EFL materials, the target culture is cultural content. As is widely known, the use of target cultural materials in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment has many benefits (Hyland & Paltridge, 2011). Nevertheless, it is stated that EFL materials contribute to the development of stereotypes in this sense because, very often, they offer a simplified or traditional perspective on the target society. Hence, the problem of accurately representing the target culture has emerged as an essential research topic in EFL materials development.

Therefore, this paper aims to analyze how the target culture is presented in five EFL textbooks currently in use in La Rioja, Spain. In light of the found sociolinguistic principles in the curriculum of this Autonomous Community (Morgan & Clarke, 2011), the

study zeroes in on two cultural domains, that is, popular culture and cultural heritage, to establish how the target culture relates to three factors namely; nationality, gender, and ethnicity. Within this, it adds novel knowledge to the target culture portrayal in ESL textbooks by (i) scrutinizing cultural presence in the textbook materials concerning popular culture and cultural endowment, (ii) examining the references related to inner circle nationality, gender, and ethnic; and (iii) illustrating how these cultural references may lead to stereotypical images formation (Zerski, 2016).

Literature Review

Culture and EFL

As it is far from the periphery to presume, most world-produced EFL textbooks offer a more excellent representation of the target culture. This is because, as Alptekin (1993) pointed out, for several reasons, (i) assigning culture-free textbooks is more economical, efficient and practical to develop one global set of text; (ii) authors of these teaching and learning resources, which primarily are developed in the Anglo Saxon protestant countries, are also likely to introduce their own preconceptions assumptions and bias about the culture of their home countries into the texts; and (In this respect, Méndez Garcia (2005) pointed out the fact that students should learn about aspects and behaviors of the target society with the result that contact with the target language culture does foster empathy, respect and also promotes better understanding of the student's own culture as well as learning of intercultural communication. However, as portrayed in EFL materials, the target culture is considered unrealistic because what is depicted in EFL material is distorted and over-simplified stereotypes fixed on the target culture. Some scholars believe that given the globalization of the English language, pupils should experience different accents, patterns, and manners.

The method implicit in EFL textbooks are sometimes narrowly prescribed to the cultures of America and Britain only as the primary representations of the target culture (Ryuko Kubota, 2012).

According to the scholars, this article reveals that it is necessary to develop intercultural competency in EFL classes to have both cultures. In this regard, several scholars have availed lists of categories of cultures that point to these two features (Houghton & Rivers, 2013). Also, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (P Stanley, 2013) offers several cultural domains that are claimed to be indispensable for the effective sociolinguistic education of the pupil. Categories are employed in this work to point to critical cultural domains (e.g., viability, social etiquette, norms, beliefs, and attitudes). Culture Plus is also particular about the components of popular culture, such as music, art, popular music, discos, and so on, advices component of inter-cultural competency. In 2018, a narrower list of sociolinguistic variables that learners must develop throughout their learning is outlined. Consequently, the student at the B1 level should be able to identify at least some of the most popular persons, institutions, and places in the target culture. Whether they must pay tribute to great historical personalities, famous writers, or just famous personalities like Phiona Stanley (2013), remains an issue.

In this regard, social factors are implemented in connection with EFL programs in the Spanish context. Language training is critical in light of the La Rioja Secondary Education Curriculum. Target culture features are described semantically closer to their comparison with certain aspects of the source culture, aspects connected with the presence of both upper and lower subcultures. Moreover, pupils must be presented with relevant sociocultural knowledge to counteract prejudice, which is also emphasized.

Stereotypes in EFL Textbooks

Rather than simply a book related to grammar, the textbooks also reflect the culture of the specific language. The class content and the specific grammatical and lexical features of language may affect students' attitudes, perceptions, and desire to learn the language. Thus, EFL textbooks must be comprehensive and culturally planned and include various cultural points of view. Nonetheless, their content selections are not often based on the above principles. That is, textbook content appears to be overly formal and culturally biased. These perceptions may help create prejudices against the other (Pithers & Furth, 2005).

Stereotypes are always preoccupied with the standard depiction of other people's attitudes, actions, and cultures. Indeed, according to Hall (1997), stereotyping happens when the cultural construction is reduced to features including gender, country, and skin color. Evaluations by earlier researchers on EFL textbooks revealed that the stereotypical views pupils developed were closely associated with gender and race (Selvi, 2014). Literature addressing women's representation in textbooks has been available for years; different analyses suggest that women's representation is much worse than male representation (Le-Ha, 2016). As the researcher of this study, Arikan (2005), remarked, there was an imbalance in the use of photos with less representation of gender balance in the EFL textbooks.

Nevertheless, the presence of racial prejudice in EFL textbooks also means there is a diversity deficit (Phan, 2016). The representation of the visuals in EFL textbooks was of the white upper class only, and minorities were missing altogether. As per this expert, this picture is futuristic since American and British culture has a diversity of racial backgrounds (Kubota, R., & Lin, 2009). In the same way, Hilliard (2014) found that ethnicity in EFL materials deploys white characters only, while Asian, Latino, and Black/African American characters in EFL material are limited.

Global publishing companies sell some sets of EFL textbooks to analyze the representation of significant individuals. They discovered that the representation of celebrities and other easily recognizable icons in educative, fun-loving EFL textbooks was not random. In particular, most of the references to vision were associated with media celebrities (Ryuko Kubota & Lin, 2009). They define the media as the outer layer of culture. Simultaneously, most of the inhabitants and visitors of this country are unfamiliar with allusions referring to persons of any sciences, arts, or politicians (Edge, 2011). These researchers also noted that the graphics in EFL textbooks are learning mediated by persons from the inner circle. Although they focus on analyzing the visual content of EFL materials, the results apply to our study because they support the assumption that materials from the target culture dominate EFL materials. However, there is a need to investigate how such referential cues could play out in the formation of stereotypes.

Material and Methods

Adopt a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review to analyze existing research on the intersection of race, culture, and identities in second language education. Incorporate thematic analysis to identify patterns and gaps in the literature. Supplement this with semi-structured interviews or focus groups involving second-language learners, educators, and policymakers to gather diverse perspectives.

Results and Discussion

The first research question aimed at comparing the examples of the target culture to the situation of EFL textbook selection, in terms of their combination of popular culture

and cultural origins. According to those categories, the study reveals that the content is monoculture. Counting people and objects references the distribution based on the target, source, and international cultural classifications shows that the EFL texts of business and industrial nature are most targeted towards the target culture. This provides credence to literature indicating a tendency to adopt the target culture in EFL materials (Hyland and Paltridge, 2011). Studies before this research have shown that those from the target culture are represented in more significant numbers than famous persons from outlying cultures (Morgan and Clarke, 2011). Our study also corroborated Lee's (2009) argument in which he asserted that the references to history in EFL materials OS greater emphasis on the history of the target populace since the persons illustrated are depicted positively.

In portraying inner circle nations within the two categories, there is a tendency to represent the American and British cultures. Indeed, I noticed that, while there are occasional references to Ireland and Canada, EFL textbooks do not pay much attention to any other inner circle member. These countries are conspicuously missing from both lists almost wholly. To summarize the analysis of specific extracts from the American and British EFL materials, we can also state that the two cultures are addressed differently. Firstly, popular culture in EFL education has been increasingly Americanized. This corresponds with an earlier study on cultural references used in EFL books. This has been hypothesized due to its tendency to incorporate references to all forms of American popular culture (Ryuko Kubota, 2012). In more detail, due to Hollywood in the motion picture market and sites like YouTube and Netflix, American popular culture products like films and TV episodes are part and parcel of today's society. It seems common sense that these goods should be referenced in textbooks for adolescents as they may be easier for teens to comprehend and differentiate. Perhaps this assumption may be regarded as a bid to enhance students' sense of place and desire to learn by allowing them to relate to the information (Houghton & Rivers, 2013).

The data that pertains to the second research question, which was To discover the participants' assumptions about gender, race, and nationality, shall be analyzed. Relative to the overall trend in the sample mean indicated both groups presented a similar pattern. The study also provides evidence that EFL textbooks are conceived mainly from a white male perspective. This is similar to the finding of prejudice in the choice of gender stereotyping, where in the EFL textbook, women are portrayed as inferior to men both in the pictures and even in the arrangement of the order in which texts are introduced (Prysiashniuk Stanley, 2013). The same thing goes for Race diversity at least in the sample of EFL materials herein, because Caucasian references make a majority of what we were offered.

Regarding the differences identified in both categories, we found that stereotypes could be formed concerning gender and ethnic preferences. Female references slightly dominated in popular culture over cultural references. From the analysis of these sources, all these ladies were Caucasians. An Irish man designed the superstructure of the traditional white house. In contrast, an African American man designed the current white American data appears to reveal that Spanish students are learning a stereotypically reductive vision of the target culture society where pop-cultural Caucasian female icons are a more significant presence than are female historical figures or writers. These results could be linked to earlier work conducted that identified celebrity domination from the outer layer of culture in examples of globally published textbooks. Moreover, these findings can be discussed concerning the envisaged roles of women in EFL textbooks. These roles are related to the occupations in advertising and marketing regarding how women are positioned in society presently (Phiona Stanley, 2013). Moreover, the masculine orientation has developed in some cultures and formed with the help of mass media, tradition, and customs to predetermine higher representation of male profiles in both groups.

Discussion

This is a vivid book published at a time when it appears that the economic downturn precipitates the emergence of newer forms of bigotry. This work could focus on essential concerns in language teaching, equity, and transformation; this creates a new line of inquiry. This collection comprises authors from the United States, Canada, Brazil, Venezuela, South Korea, and Australia. Most of the authors self-identify as women, though there are men present in the sample too, or as queer; all of them are academics, employed at universities in Canada and the United States, and these authors belong to different racial and ethnic categories: eight White, eight Asian, five Latina, and three Black categories that embody numerous and nuanced gender, racial, cultural, linguistic, heritage and citizenship experiences.

The book divides the remaining chapters into constitutive frameworks and concerns, medial and material relations, and technical and aesthetic apprehensions. The first subtheme, 'The Erasure of Whiteness,' examines the exclusion of whiteness from contexts of power understanding and discusses issues of location and positioning in language education. Five chapters make up part II, 'Radicalizing Discourses and Identity Construction in Educational Settings. Both bring one particular configuration of race and language into relation with other axes of identity. Part III, 'Toward a Dialectic of Critically Engaged Praxis,' provides three research studies and three commentary essays, all focusing on emergent possibilities for agency and transformation. The last section is completed with Bourdieu, a blueprint for language education reform. Three of the chapters relate to the preparation of teachers; the others focus on language acquisition settings. In addition, all the chapters provide pre and post-reading questions for the pupils.

In the introduction, the editors describe and explain the dynamics of the meaning of the terminology of race, ethnicity, and culture followed by the strategies of racism, how racism differs from racist epistemology, and racism about other forms of social oppression. Hence, they establish comprehensive theoretical guidelines for researching race in ESL/EFL. Two such theories fall under Critical Race Theory and Critical White Studies, and criticism from, For instance, Latina/o Critical Race Theorists, who argue louder that there is no definitive political economics of racism and racialization are a subgroup of the CRT fraternity. Other suggested theoretical frameworks include Critical Pedagogy, Critical Multicultural Education, and Bourdieu's sociological theory. It is this latter point that is taken up brilliantly by Luke in a final chapter, which offers a model for how to understand race and language as websites of cultural assets that are carried into the variable social and cultural terrains of schools and classrooms and revalued by those vested with the ratifying power of pedagogic authority. It means that one must unravel how these domains work and accept that educational methods and interventions are partial and context-specific to geographical locations.

Katz and DaSilva Iddings give more positive ways to intermediate linguistic and racial identities than those introduced above. In English-dominant schools, they illustrate how state and federally funded inclusion programs and recognizing and endorsing the home language use of Latino and African-American children and other children of color learning English may benefit Latino and African-American students of color. Similarly, Michael-Luna (1995) stressed that counter-storytelling should be used to work against such positioning within that the stories come from the mouths of the dominant groups and supported by the study of 25 first-graders learning in a bilingual context.

Another critical issue in teacher education is the challenge of past and current processes of 'locating' non-native English speaking teachers. This Bilingual Teacher Education program based in Austin, Texas, tries to solve the problem of racism where teachers who speak a non-dominant language or variety are discriminated against. The research was intended to ascertain how such programs could start addressing these

discrimination processes. This program was developed to alleviate linguisticism for teachers and students who speak languages or varieties that are not standardized. According to Chacón, a Freirian curriculum as a praxis should be implemented in Venezuela for learners and facilitate change. In another study, Bangou and Wong investigate an ESL master's program in the United States when minority women claim their agency through the re-contextualization of technology in instruction.

By focusing on gender and undertaking qualitative analysis of German, French, and Japanese students' post-secondary education in Australia, Ellwood reveals what the author describes as 'reflexive enculturation' or impasses of cultural identity (Martella Ellwood 113), which tests the ability of learners to learn as they deal with the different cultural identities. She reaffirms what Butler (2004) puts forward about unintelligibility or the capacity to work outside the frames of language deployment regarding the field of TESOL. In Ellwood's opinion, this approach can function as a tool to help educators and learners resist self-struggle with external stereotyping, and open the hope for constructing more possible ways of becoming through career construction.

In this paper, Ibrahim investigates how a group of French-speaking African immigrant and refugee adolescents in a Canadian high school decided to name themselves Black Stylized English, one of the varieties of Black English. Ibrahim posits that this was part of a process of becoming 'Black,' which was a meaningful gesture in a political climate where Blackness was viewed through the colonial cipher, which erased the ethnically diverse, culturally diverse, and linguistically diverse nature of Blackness.

In the case of performativity, the two authors, a South Asian Female Canadian named Haque and a White male Canadian named Morgan, demonstrate how the 'identity cards' assigned to them speak of histories of colonialism and capitalism within the profession of English teaching. They understand how each has been able to 'replay' these identity cards in different ways while new contentious categories are being attributed to them. They are trying to rupture traditional norms, constraining the possibilities for oppositional semantic emergence in ESL education.

One of the book's significant strategic assets is how studies investigate by zooming into the dynamic networks and layers of currents at the present day to bring out new or enduring racializations of race and power in language education. For example, finalizing race, more static conceptualization of culture, more limited versions of language, and the complexities of epistemologically reorienting instructors' sediment metaphysical ways of knowing and valuing are often rendered salient in analyses of silence, color blindness, and avoidance. Race and language as significance become visible in later chapters of the book, gradually leaking from these confines, leading to more procession and conditional ideas of difference and, correspondingly, more performativity visions of language.

Given that difference is the focus throughout the book, one might expect to find the researcher reflexivity missing. That is, with the exception of Haque, Morgan, and Luke, there is little of the new research areas challenging or re-imagining interpretative or theoretical paradigms. It is not enough to assert Race/Ethnicity/Language and scan for assumptions; we must step further.

More specifically, the following questions identify what we need to know: how the study design and data analysis have incorporated inter subjectivity; how power in practice and process has been addressed? As a result, "the researcher self becomes the site of authority, rather than the participants' narratives and explanations," as the authors put it (Skeggs 2002). Surprisingly, these so-called post-colonial studies seek to eradicate precisely such a study that was carried out under colonialism as part of it. If reflexivity were given more prioritization, then there would be increased sensitivity of identifying and questioning gaps and silences of the final research output would be enhanced; this

includes silencing of minority participants in some chapters (Chapters 4, 5, 11, 8) and lack of much focus on gender and class in all the chapters but a few. For that reason, it would reduce the chances of saying stuff that will be many standard deviations away from the data, and it might have to admit there are other ways of looking at the evidence.

As highlighted earlier, it is essential to have interpretative spaces in ESL due to the arguably central roles of race, culture as well as identity in ESL, together with the need to gain the hearts of disagreeable people who will be expected to bring the change in their lives. This is the case since the analytical framework probed throughout the book enables one to identify structural pressure points and practices with the potential to change particulars within structural contexts.

Conclusion

This is evidenced by the first several works investigating Whiteness's covert principles and benefits. Based on an investigation of six ESL teachers in New England, Liggett posits that these white teachers have been culturally scripted out of the concept of race, and therefore, they exclude race or class privilege. Such evasions may affect teachers' attitudes toward student replies and affect students' manner of building their identities in some way. The consequences of 'color blindness' are examined in three researches undertaken in settings with large numbers of Latina/o students and white teachers or professors. Since, as Marx shows, colorblind discourses obscure profound racism's symptoms, the present measured/ethnic achievement divide might be traced to racial inimicalities between learners and teachers/administrators, albeit as could be viewed linguistically. Marx and Morales contend that there are methods of colorblind discourses that do not fulfill the linguistic, sociocultural, cognitive, and academic demands of children as a result of fulfilling the needs of the pupils.

Employing a social and educational racism and unfairness lens, the erasure faced by a diverse cohort of Asian college students in North Carolina, and the findings are discussed in the following section. This highlights the current absence in CRT literature of the racial oppression experienced by members of non-Black RAC through the prism of Asian Critical Theory. Grant and Lee further describe and de-clothing linguistic and racial nakedness in the course and practice of English language training in South Korea and the couching of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the United States to a global frame. It also means that even in this context, the implied norms of 'standard' English and its paragon of Whiteness are supported by interlocking world structures precipitated by the globalizing capitalist market regime. Taylor-Mendes looks into similar absences and omissions in the global EFL textbook industry and will do so in Brazil. As she points out, the representations students then might learn from textbook pictures consciously or unconsciously and as such, images should be critically analyzed in EFL lectures based on her findings.

This study brought the following three findings. First of all, EFL materials portray a narrow vision coming from American and British cultural products, thus reducing learners' opportunities to encounter the rather broad representation of the target community. More particularly, the texts underline such features of popular culture as American, while cultural heritage features are closer to the British ones. These findings may have relevance at various levels. Regarding EFL instruction, it is possible to state that the former is offered in an instead stereotypically limited frame, thus giving the students a distorted perception of the target society and their motivation levels. Teachers should be alert to these biases in their texts, mainly as they limit the perception of the diverse world, and ensure that they open up the students' vision by debilitating those notions or presenting other views or works on the same subject.

Recommendations

To address the complexities of race, culture, and identities in second language education, it is essential to develop inclusive curricula that incorporate culturally responsive teaching materials reflecting diverse learner identities. Educators should undergo comprehensive professional development programs to better understand and address racial and cultural dynamics in their classrooms. Policy interventions must prioritize equity-driven approaches to reduce discrimination and promote inclusivity in language learning environments. Additionally, fostering strong community engagement can help create supportive spaces where learners feel valued and understood. Future research should focus on underrepresented groups and conduct longitudinal studies to explore the sustained impact of these factors on second language acquisition, ensuring more equitable and effective educational outcomes.

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