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Expanding and Outer Circle Cultural Content in English Coursebooks Commonly Used in Serbia

Extended summary

The three core culture areas commonly covered by modern coursebooks are Inner Circle cultures (culture of countries where English is the first or dominant language), Outer Circle cultures (post-colonial countries where English is spoken as the second language), and Expanding Circle cultures (other countries where it is spoken as a foreign language). The aim of this paper is to analyze how Expanding and Outer Circle cultural content is represented in English coursebooks commonly used in Serbia. The coursebooks used for this analysis are available throughout Europe and on other continents and were published by eminent British publishers: Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Pearson, and Macmillan. In order to establish cultural elements found in the coursebooks we decided to analyze, we examined texts, tapescripts and other activities and tasks which utilize the elements of Expanding and Outer Circle cultures. Descriptive analysis was used in the research. We opted for cultural elements which could be easily identified as such and used in a minimal context which can be easily associated with a particular culture. For the purpose of this research the coursebooks we analyzed were divided into three categories according to the degree of presence of Expanding/Outer Circle cultural elements: 1) zero or minimum degree presence; 2) medium degree presence and 3) high degree presence. The coursebooks that fall under the first category are the following: Language to Go, Complete Advanced, Face 2 Face, Objective First, FCE Result, Ready for FCE and Advance Your English, whereas Complete Advanced and Framework 4 fall under the second, and English Unlimited and New Framework 5 under the third category.

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ry. After analyzing the coursebooks, we can state that other cultures, i.e. the cultures of non-anglophone countries are represented in all textbooks from the Anglocentric perspective. As far as the representation of other cultures (Outer and Expanding Circles) is concerned, we observed that the Expanding Circle cultures mostly amount to the cultures of the Western countries, which means that Eurocentrism is another common characteristic of all coursebooks. An identical, Inner Circle discourse in all analyzed materials is yet another common characteristic. It was also observed that all coursebook authors avoid any mention of cultural taboos. If teachers have to choose a coursebook based on the presence of the cultures from the three described circles, they must take into account several factors – learners’ needs, their motivation for learning English, as well as their educational and linguistic background. The coursebooks that focus on the Inner Circle are the best choice if most of the students plan to function in an Inner Circle environment or wish to integrate. The coursebooks focused on the other two circles can sometimes pose a problem for students who do not come from Western countries and cultures, since they might need additional explanations if certain cultural phenomena are unknown to them. It would be ideal if a teacher could find a coursebook which provides a good balance among the cultures of all three circles and enough information about the cultures that learners are unfamiliar with, which can facilitate life in the globalized and multicultural world of today, as well as in foreign cultures.

Keywords: Inner Circle, Outer Circle, Expanding Circle, cultural content, English coursebooks.

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