

Analysis of EFL elementary textbooks in Syria and Germany: cognitive, affective and procedural aspects in their inter-cultural context

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Abstract

This study attempts to explore and compare the cognitive, affective and procedural aspects of EFL elementary textbooks in Syria and Germany. It analyses a corpus which consists of three Syrian elementary textbooks, *Starters I-III*, and their German counterparts, *Kooky I-II*. Based on the paradigmatic change from instructivism to constructivism, a descriptive-analytical approach is used to examine the content-material in terms of teacher vs. pupil orientation, product vs. process orientation, virtuality vs. authenticity, cognitive learning vs. learning by doing which represent the essential parameters of learner autonomy. Results indicate that the Syrian material focuses on the cognitive element of language learning without ignoring affective and procedural factors, whereas the German material tends to put special emphasis on affectivity and process-orientation. Culturally, the Syrian textbooks confine their view to the domestic background before opening up to British culture in book III, whereas the German textbooks are keen to introduce the British dimension right from the start. For the Syrian material, the study suggests the inclusion of pronunciation exercises and a stronger consideration of learner autonomy. For the German material, close attention should be paid to a well-balanced relationship between the three parameters mentioned above.

Keywords: Elementary textbooks: Syria, Germany, Cognitive learning, learning by doing, Product/process orientation

1. Introduction

Textbooks constitute a central component in the educational process; they provide the basic sources of information to learners, especially at elementary school. Textbooks teach the subject content and other issues such as social and cultural topics as well as the values and beliefs of society. It is not surprising, therefore, that textbooks are, to some degree, under the supervision of the government and are written in accordance with the policy of the educational system in the country concerned. Thus the dominance of the textbook seems to be connected with the educational policy of a certain society, especially when classroom practice is determined by a national curriculum.

One feature of a national curriculum is the maintenance of the homogeneity of the curriculum; the more the state controls the educational content and instructional practice, the more the teacher relies on the textbook. In Syria, for example, where there is very tight state control, the textbook plays a paramount role in education as it is considered the primary instrument for carrying out the subject syllabus. In the national school certificate examinations, students are evaluated on the basis of information contained in the textbook. So, the content of the textbooks determines the students' examination results.

In the absence of such a national policy, however, one can find a greater number of teachers who do not use a textbook-based teaching approach. In Germany, for example, it seems that the teacher enjoys a much wider scope of selecting and developing his own material beyond the textbooks which are

approved of by the educational authorities of Germany's federal states. This means that any investigation of school textbooks must concern itself with the social and institutional context in which it is produced.

Intrinsically, the study will focus on the effects brought about by the paradigmatic change from instructivism to constructivism, such as teacher-centred vs. pupil-centred, product-oriented vs. process-oriented, closed and open forms of teaching and learning, conceptual learning vs. learning-by-doing or virtuality vs. authenticity (to name but the most important parameters).

To render justice to the complexity of foreign language teaching, the cognitive, affective and procedural dimensions, embodied in the content of the textbooks, will be examined and illustrated. In addition, the cultural aspect will be focussed on, because cultural knowledge plays an important role in the EFL classroom as an indispensable aspect of communicative competence to the extent that language and culture cannot be considered separately.

2. Theoretical background and review of literature

Textbooks govern almost all classroom practice. They are useful educational tools for both learners and teachers as they have been designed along the lines of current research and approaches. Learners use the textbook to organize their learning process by a variety of methods and strategies in order to perform tasks and activities in terms of lexical, grammatical and cultural progression. Interestingly enough, it is the communicative approach which continues to advocate the use of tasks based on spoken and written material. By providing an affirmative structure, the textbook gives pupils directions, guides their practice and facilitates their learning – thus ensuring a meaningful and reliable environment. Teachers, on the other hand, depend on the textbook as they do not have time to collect and adapt material for their classes. In addition, they find it extremely difficult to develop new material and they might face external pressure which may restrict them from doing so. Therefore, teachers tend to use a textbook as a main source of information and guidance, and they move through it lesson by lesson – leaving, however, enough scope for supplementary material.

In view of the arguments stated above, textbooks continue to play a major role in classroom interaction despite the controversial debate on their significance. Hutchinson and Torres (1994), for example, consider the role of the textbook in teaching and learning and in the process of change. They challenge the anti-textbook view and argue that the textbook has a vital and positive part to play in the everyday job of teaching and learning English (especially at elementary level) and that the textbook becomes even more important in periods of change. They call for a closer link between textbook creation and professional teacher training.

On the **cognitive** level, Reda (2003) examined topics of a sample of six EFL textbooks including the well-known *Cambridge English Course* and *Headway*. These topics cover food and drink, clothes and fashion, colours and shapes, animals and plants, time and dates, family relationships, leisure and sports, countries and nationalities and many others. In particular, using materials from *Headway*, the study draws attention to the prototyping pattern of moving the lexical syllabus from general interest topics to higher levels. It shows that the expansion of vocabulary in EFL programmes broadens the horizon of basic English by incorporating lexical items with reference to developments in the life of the English nation. Reda recommended to enlarge the basic area of English vocabulary to include an unlimited range of purposes, especially in a period of globalisation..

On the **affective** level, Peacock (1997) investigated whether authentic materials increase the classroom motivation of learners. Two beginner-level EFL classes used authentic and artificial materials alternatively. The findings of the study indicate that overall class motivation significantly increased when the learners used authentic materials.

On the **procedural** level, Jacobs and Ball (1996), focussing on the interactive quality, examined the use of group activities in EFL textbooks published since 1990. Surprisingly, they found that such activities are widely used. Rivas (1999) investigated the reading component in a representative sample of ELT course books. The analysis focussed on the attempts to develop both lower-level processing skills and higher-level comprehension and reading skills of learners. She tried to find out how far current course books meet the requirements of an interactive approach to reading.

Summing up this brief survey, it can be said that the above-mentioned studies deal with individual aspects of the teaching-learning process concentrating on separate issues such as vocabulary expansion, classroom motivation and interactive reading. However, these issues are not explicitly related to any of the three parameters which the present study aims to explore. Special care has been taken to investigate the textbook material along the lines of cognitive, affective and procedural dimensions which are examined not in isolation, but closely interrelated.

3. Aims

The purpose behind this investigation is to keep up-to-date with current developments in the field of EFL, and to suggest certain ways of improving the materials available. To achieve this, we have decided to analyse and compare textbooks from Syria and Germany – two systems which differ considerably in their history, culture, language and education. With regard to foreign language teaching, it will be interesting to find out how these systems relate to the paradigmatic change from instructivist to constructivist approaches specified above and, in particular, how such aspects as the cognitive, the affective and the procedural are dealt with.

4. Methodology

4.1. Sample

The sample of this investigation includes EFL elementary textbooks from Syria and Germany.

The Syrian textbooks 1,2 and 3 include classes 3,4 and 5 (age groups 8-10), the German textbooks 1 and 2 include classes 3 and 4. The Syrian textbooks are produced and approved of by the Ministry of Education and they are prescribed all over Syria. They are called "English for starters" and have been classified into "teacher's guide"; "pupil's book" and "activity book". The pupil's book contains texts supported by coloured pictures, and the activity book contains exercises for the pupils to copy. The teacher's guide is written in English. German textbooks 1 and 2 include classes 3 and 4 (age groups 8-9).

The German material is called "Kooky" (after the Kookaburra, the Australian national bird) and it has been classified into "handbook" (which equates the teacher's book), "pupil's book" and "activity book" . The pupil's book includes no text as such, but only coloured pictures and songs which leave room for the pupils to think imaginatively and construct their own texts. Few hints are meant to trigger off pupils' thoughts. The activity book supports the pupil's book in that it encourages them to learn by doing via colouring the pictures and constructing things. They are helped by the teacher who uses his teacher's guide which is written in both German and English.

With regard to the almost ten-year gap of the textbooks (1993-2002) we used, this has been a conscious decision because the German textbook (kooky) was the first-ever attempt to introduce EFL as a national and compulsory policy on an elementary level.

4.2. Approach

The descriptive-analytical approach will be used in this study. The implicit cognitive, affective and procedural linguistic and cultural factors will be examined by the use of content-analysis (words, phrases, sentences, texts, stories, tasks, exercises, visual illustrations)

5. Definitions

5.1. Cognitive

The cognitive aspect is meant to refer to the system of the language ("langue") which includes pronunciation, spelling, lexis, grammar and the four skills. Culturally, it comprises the wealth of information on the lifestyle of a community which shares the same language, values and history.

5.2. Affective

The affective factor refers to both the material and the pupils' response to it. By referring to the pupils' personal background and experience, the material appeals to and motivates them in that they develop varying degrees of curiosity. They respond to it by acting and by showing their emotions, such as compassion, love, hate, empathy (sensitivity for others). They also display their attitudes and beliefs, and they seize the opportunity to adopt changing identities offered to them by various means of personification (games, role play).

5.3. Procedural

The procedural aspect refers to the methods and techniques used by the teacher when interacting with the material and the pupils. We also mean by "procedural" the ways that pupils recognize specific information, match jumbled items, store and recall acquired knowledge. Moreover, it refers to the way pupils develop grammatical awareness, acquire lexis, perform the four language skills, activate their prior knowledge ("top down – bottom up"), guess, infer, transfer, analyse their tasks and solve problems through interaction (learner autonomy). Consequently, the procedural aspect involves errors and mistakes which effect, at varying degrees, the quality of communication in terms of understanding and misunderstanding (message vs. accuracy). The procedural dimension also requires constant attention on feedback, i.e. the verification or falsification of the learning process through the teacher and his pupils. This is achieved by a number of techniques (both instructivist and constructivist), such as transfer exercises, evaluation of pupils' responses and a wide range of applications exposing the pupils to the experience of trial and error.

The constructivist paradigm of "learner autonomy" also includes the whole range of social forms of learning such as cooperation and tolerance which are learned in the classroom discourse.

6. Data Analysis

The following survey of the Syrian and the German EFL textbooks for elementary school will find both similarities and differences on the cognitive, the affective, and the procedural level. Irrespective of the nature of such findings, it should be remembered that the above dimensions cannot be looked at separately, but are closely inter-related. Nor should it be forgotten that they are of equal importance and must not be dealt with at each other's expense. Research findings (Allwright 1984; Stern 1983) indicate that focusing too much on either of the three aspects mentioned above will jeopardize the learning process altogether. For instance, an emphasis placed on cognitive factors (spelling, lexis and grammar) alone will lack the affective quality of motivation and authenticity. From the procedural point of view, these factors should also be taken into consideration in classroom interaction.

6.1. The cognitive dimension

Owing to the entirely different system of the pupils' mother tongue (Arabic), the **Syrian textbooks** devote a good deal of time and space to the English alphabet: pronunciation and, even more so, spelling exercises continue to appear throughout the material in growing size and complexity.

Apart from that, the first lexical and grammatical units are introduced to provide the basic tools of communication: simple affirmative statements referring to one's own identity ("I am Nabil") as well as to somebody else's identity ("Good morning, girls" – "Good morning, Miss Najjar"). These basic speech acts result in the gradual acquisition of communicative skills, such as speaking and listening: mini-dialogues related to interactive classroom discourse. The grammatical items of, say, questions (simple inversion, question tags, interrogative pronouns) and answers, requests, imperatives ("Come in" – "sit down") and negations are consistently related to the pupils' personal interests and backgrounds which provide the situational context: beginning with individual features such as the members of the body, and advancing to more collective notions such as the pupils' environment (members of the family, friends, sports and leisure, meals, markets, institutions such as schools and hospitals, aspects of time proceeding from the course of the day to the days of the week, the months of the year and the four seasons).

The close interrelation between language and its context can be illustrated both lexically and grammatically. In terms of lexis, the teaching of colours, for instance, is contextualized by popular games (football, balloon, kite) and favourite objects in the pupils' immediate environment (houses, trees); the teaching of numbers is closely related to the ability to count, say, family members or classroom realia. In

terms of grammar, the teaching of possessive pronouns is related to the pupils' personal belongings, and the teaching of the adjectives in their base, comparative, and superlative forms enables the pupils to express their personal preferences ("the tallest in the class"). The knowledge of modal verbs (can, may, will, should) often refers to the pupils' imagination and wishes. The simple past is contextualized in personal (individual) narratives which focus on small adventures, family outings and birthday celebrations. And, to finish this brief cross-section, the continuous form is contextualized in instantaneous, close-up observations of the pupils' activities, such as walking in a circle, catching the ball, or waiting for a call.

Culturally, the material tends to reflect the domestic, i.e. Syrian background which provides almost every situation for the above-mentioned language exercises. To begin with, the initial forms of introducing oneself to others take place between Syrian pupils and their Syrian teachers (Nabil, Samira, Sami, Salwa / Mr Haddad, Miss Najjar; I, 4) without any reference to the English-speaking world. Even outside school, Syrian names and cultural traditions continue to dominate the material: invariably, they apply to the members of the family, to the circle of friends, to private and public places and activities, such as playgrounds, birthday parties, markets, doctors' surgeries, farmhouses, in short: to the wide range of urban and rural life which even includes the Syrian cotton industry. It is only in the last stage of the elementary textbooks that the material opens up and widens its perspective to include some aspects of English culture, such as pupils' names (Johnny) and place names (London) which are meant to provide the first steps towards an inter-cultural pen friendship (Samira and Carol).

With regard to the language teaching units, the **German textbooks** proceed along lines similar to their Syrian counterparts. Grammatically, they also begin with short affirmative statements (mostly introductions) and exercises in listening comprehension which are continued and emphasized throughout the material. Questions (simple inversion, question tags, interrogative pronouns), answers and negations are taught and practiced to supply the pupils with the basic tools for enquiries in an unfamiliar environment. Lexically, the choice of topics resembles the Syrian selection in that it is also guided by the constructivist reference to the pupils' background and experience (e.g. parts of the body, members of the family, school activities, sports and leisure, learning how to count and to express the various aspects of time including the days of the week, the months of the year and the four seasons).

However, it becomes evident that, culturally, the German material is keen to present impressions of the English lifestyle right from the beginning. Whereas, say, the Syrian pupils learn how to introduce themselves in their familiar domestic environment (i.e. communicating in English with their Syrian friends and relatives), the German pupils are constantly exposed to various aspects of English culture. The range of such topics and situations includes names (the Jackson family), individual celebrations (birthday parties, Hallowe'en) and public holidays (the English way of celebrating Christmas) as well as the school system (daily hours, compulsory uniforms) and the public transport (London double-decker buses, English traffic signs, the obligation to drive on the left side of the road) plus introductions into the different parts of the U.K. (e.g. Wales). This consistent focus on the culture of the target language (with a minimum reference to the German culture) is meant to promote, at a very early stage of elementary education, the ability to perceive the world from more than one angle.

6.2. The affective dimension

The **Syrian textbooks** provide a wide range of motivational features. To begin with, it is the multimedia factor which attracts the pupils' attention and ensures their long-term persistence and enjoyment. To illustrate this, the colourful pictures (in particular the picture dictionary where pupils have to colour the drawings), the tape-recorded material including music ("I can play the guitar") and drama ("Act out the story"), the reference to the pupils' preferences and dislikes ("Sami likes potatoes", "Samira likes fish", "Samira doesn't like chicken") play an important role in motivating the pupils.

What adds to the motivational quality of the multimedia is the authenticity of the material provided reflecting genuine experiences and events, such as organizing parties and choosing one's clothes or favourite meals. It should be noted, however, that the demand for authenticity in foreign language teaching does not only focus on the material itself, but also refers to the given tasks ("Samira writes to her pen pal Carol", "Samira gets a reply from Carol").

This example of international correspondence also shows the affective quality of the reading and writing skills which offer the pupils authentic interactive situations that enhance motivation further. Likewise, listening and speaking skills enable the pupils to carry out a dialogue which is equally stimulating (A: "Let's go on a picnic on Wednesday." B: "Oh yes! That's a good idea." A: "What are you going to bring for the picnic?" B: "I'm going to bring a ball. We're going to have a great time!") This also illustrates the affective human qualities of curiosity, anticipation and surprise which are basic prerequisites of any learning process.

A significant aspect of affectivity is provided by the pupils' feelings and emotions which, invariably, accompany the cognitive learning process. There is a wide range of examples including affection and sadness ("In this photo, my mother is holding Assia, my baby cousin. She is three months old and cries very loudly! Here, my mother is singing, so Assia is sleeping peacefully." III, 53), pride and disappointment ("I was first. I was the fastest! - I was last! I was the slowest!" II, 50), compassion and gratitude ("Nurse! Can I have a drink, please? - Of course. Here you are. - Thank you." II, 58), embarrassment and regret ("I'm sorry, mum, I'm late. - It's half past six!" II, 11). In particular, it is the spirit of helpfulness and cooperation which is represented most frequently. Here are just a few examples: "I'm thirsty! Can I have a drink, please? - Of course. - Thank you." II, 22 / "I haven't got a pen. - I've got two. Here you are. - Thanks very much." II, 14 / "The bag was very heavy. Sami helped Mona. They carried the vegetables to Mona's house. Mona's mother smiled at them." II, 67. (It will become obvious that, through their interactive quality, such observations also relate to the procedural dimension which will be discussed later.)

Last, but certainly not least, there are several manifestations of empathy, i.e. a sensitivity for others (or "otherness") changing the pupils' perspective to overcome their own ethnocentricity. As already indicated in the cognitive analysis, it is only in the last stage of the Syrian textbooks that the material opens up and widens its view to include some aspects of English culture. On the level of affectivity, this change of perspective is best illustrated by two examples from the pen friendship between Carol (English) and Samira (Syrian) which reflect a great deal of curiosity, anticipation and surprise on both sides:

Dear Samira,

it is autumn here. It is rainy and foggy and very windy. I'm sure you are having nicer weather. Is it hot and sunny where you are? Do you go to the beach? I think that you are very lucky. Write to me soon.

Love,
Carol (III, 36)

Dear Carol,

we want to know about Great Britain. ... Please answer our questions: Are there any mountains in Scotland? Are there any deserts in Wales? Are there any rivers in England? Is there any oil in Scotland? Are there any elephants in London? Are there any big pyramids in Wales? Are there any pears in Scotland? Write to us soon! We are looking forward to your letter.

Best wishes.
Mona, Magda, Samira, Malak, Ahmed, Sami, Raouf (III, 63)

To conclude this brief survey of affective elements in the Syrian material, it should be pointed out that the structure of book III provides a sequence of units (consisting of five parts) entitled "The Puppet Theatre". Apart from their emotional quality (displaying affection, loss of friendship, sadness and happiness regained), the units encourage pupils to adopt a variety of different identities offered to them through animals and puppets. By turning into kings and queens, husbands and wives, clowns and fools (or elephants, lions and tigers), they overcome their personal inhibitions (manifested by the halo-effect or by self-fulfilling prophecies) and are able to participate more freely in the interactive learning process. Here is part five, unabridged:

THE PUPPET THEATRE

In part four, Nada and her father found princess Amira and took her home. - Nada was very happy. The princess was her favourite toy. Princess Amira liked Nada very much, but she was sad. - She missed the puppet theatre, the musicians, and Mr Gibran. -Meanwhile, in another town, Mr Gibran and his puppets were very unhappy, too. They missed the princess. - A month later, Nada saw a poster in the street. "Look, Daddy!" she said. "A puppet theatre in the park! Can we go?" "Yes," said her father, "and we must take the puppet princess. Maybe we will find her owner." "Oh," said Nada, sadly. - On Saturday, Nada and her family went to the park. Nada carried the princess, who was very excited. "Maybe I will find my friends," she thought. - The music started, but suddenly the musicians stopped playing. There, in the audience, was the princess! - "There's Amira!" said Mr Gibran. Everyone looked at Nada and the princess. Nada got up and went to Mr Gibran. "Is she yours?" she said. "Yes, she is," said Mr Gibran. "I'm so glad to see her again!" "She's so beautiful," said Nada. "I will miss her very much." "You can come and see her often," said Mr Gibran. "We play in the park every month." "Oh, thank you," said Nada. And she kissed the princess goodbye. - Princess Amira was so happy. She sang and danced on the stage. The musicians played beautifully. Mr Gibran smiled, and the children clapped loudly. Everyone was very happy! (III, 69 ff.)

The **German textbooks** motivate the pupils first of all by introducing Kooky, the central character whose experiences (adventures, successes, failures) represent an affective guideline throughout the multimedia material. From the very beginning, the pupils are encouraged to identify with him by sharing his child-like curiosity as well as his joys and sufferings, his embarrassments and his narrow escapes. The whole range of emotions is triggered by and directed towards this figure who is regarded by the pupils with interest, gratitude and admiration, but also with compassion and - sometimes - bewilderment. For example, Kooky helps the pupils to count (I, 25), but he also plays tricks on them by removing some of the material necessary to construct a toy ("Naughty Kooky." I, 29). Kooky is extremely inquisitive and demanding ("I want a telephone, too." I, 33) On his birthday, the pupils take him by surprise: they sing a song and give him some presents which he receives with joy and gratitude (I, 41). Later, Kooky attracts admiration when he is presented with his many talents (singer and songwriter; II, 14), hobbies and skills (swimming, playing cards, football, riding a bike; II, 15 f.) Later still, the pupils' compassion is aroused when Kooky falls ill and begins to pity himself ("I'm ill. Poor Kooky." II, 35 - "Get well, Kooky." II, 41) (It should be noted, incidentally, that all the affective situations mentioned above result in transfer exercises asking the pupils to apply their newly acquired language skills - and their emotional commitment - to similar situations.) With regard to identity changes, Kooky turns into a gardener, a responsibility that fills him with great pride (II, 87).The pupils' imagination is even more stimulated when Kooky becomes an astronaut and flies to the moon (II, 71). Ultimately, Kooky adopts the role of a teacher who conducts a lesson for his pupils who have turned into animals (Marcus Mouse, Harry Hamster, Diana Duck). What happens here is a double change of identity resulting in a double change of perspective to promote the playful experience of otherness. (I, 57)

Along with Kooky's multifunctional appearance, other instances of affectivity can be encountered throughout the German material. Curiosity is satisfied through questions and answers ("What's your name again?" I, 22 / "Have you got a telephone number?"; I, 30 / "How old are you?"; I, 42 / "What have I got?"; I, 51). Compassion is aroused when a leg is missing from "poor Jumping Jack" (I, 28) or when accidents occur ("Mark's accident"; II, 29 / "Grandma's accident"; II, 31). Anticipation and surprise are the typical features of a birthday celebration in the Jackson family whose members are also the subject of yet another change of identity (five pupils play the roles of Jenny, Mark, Ben, Mr and Mrs Jackson (I, 45 ff.). "Winning a prize at the fair" (I, 51) provides the experience of trying one's luck and, hopefully, obtain a reward - or fail. Enjoyable and adventurous elements are implied in "I like to fly my kite" which appears in the context of the four seasons (I, 76). Set in the same mood, the pupils' imagination is further stimulated and challenged by a fictional text entitled "The leaf, the wind and the girl" which is accompanied by excerpts from Vivaldi's "The Summer", "The Autumn" and "The Winter". (I, 82 f.). The following unit on Christmas provides anticipation and surprise (I, 89 ff.). Both themes, the seasons and the Christmas festivities, are taken up again by book II where the elements of surprise and imagination are further expanded ("The Snow Princess"; II, 56).

6.3. The procedural dimension

As mentioned above, the procedural dimension is interrelated with much of the cognitive and affective material discussed so far. A birthday present, for instance, can be looked at cognitively (in that it provides new lexis such as "ball" or "cake"), affectively (in that it evokes emotions such as "surprise" or "happiness") and procedurally (in that it is placed in an interactive context such as a birthday party).

Along these lines, the **Syrian textbooks** provide a host of examples with regard to procedural knowledge. Most importantly, it is the exercises which require the pupils to apply their cognitive skills to communicative situations. Such exercises focus on listening and speaking, but they also include some references to reading and writing in growing complexity:

"Listen and ask questions"; I, 12 / "listen and say the numbers"; I, 14 / "talk about the pictures"; I, 39 / "ask and answer the questions"; I, 41 / "listen and say the days of the week"; I, 58 / "listen and say what the children do"; I, 59 / "listen and talk about the animals"; II, 41 / "listen and act out the conversations"; II, 23 / "listen and talk about families"; II, 16 / "listen and complete the sentences"; II, 25 / "listen and practice with your friend"; II, 17 / "listen and play a game"; II, 14 / "listen and count the animals"; II, 17 / "listen, read and match"; III, 32 / "listen, look and read"; III, 51 / "look, listen and check"; III, 61 / "look, listen and answer"; III, 67 / "look, listen and sing"; III, 73 / "look and write"; III, 11)

Guessing ("Guess the object in picture A." III, 26), matching ("match the pictures and the sentences", II, 27 / "match the pictures and the people"; II, 29 / "match the job with the place", III, 32 / "listen, read and match", III, 32), completing sentences (II, 55), talking to one's friends (II, 54), continuing a story imaginatively (III, 42) - these are just a few instances of the procedural, i.e. interactive quality of the four skills. Going beyond these individual examples, the following passage combines the procedural (guessing, interactive dialogue) with the affective (curiosity, suspense) and the cognitive (question tags, comparative form of adjectives). Culturally, it also shows a change of perspective (the prerequisite of empathy) in that the frame of reference includes countries other than Syria, especially from the English-speaking world.

A LETTER

"I've got a letter. - Who's it from? - It's from my new friend. She lives in a foreign country. Guess where! - Does she live in Russia? - No, she doesn't. - Does she live in China? - No, she doesn't. - So where does she live? - Let me help you. ... She lives in a country that is colder and wetter and greener than here. And they speak English there. - Does she live in Scotland? - No, she doesn't. - Does she live in Canada? - No, she doesn't. - Does she live in England? - Yes, she does. (III, 35)

The range of application becomes even more obvious when the skills are associated with games which represent the most significant feature of constructivism. Games, irrespective of their particular nature, invariably meet all the requirements of the pupil-centred, process-oriented and authentic paradigm of learner autonomy. A large number of examples can be found in the Syrian textbooks ranging from simple guessing games ("What's in my hand?"; I, 13), matching games ("Join the words and pictures"; I, 21, 31) and cognitive games ("What's the time?"; I, 49) to the more complex games of interactivity ("Listen and play a circle game"; II, 46) and role-play ("A story for reading and acting"; II, 64 / "Now play Salwa and Malak's game with your friends." III, 24).

Apart from games, other manifestations of the procedural can be found in the "learning-by-doing" approach which is based on the empirical evidence that the success of a learning process (i.e. the long-term memory) largely depends on the close interaction between theoretical understanding and practical application. Examples include simple tasks to be fulfilled on one's own ("Draw your room"; I, 20 / "Draw and label an animal." I, 63) and tasks involving several pupils who can interact with each other ("Now make your own calendar." III, 46 / "Now make your own list and go shopping in the town." III, 62).

Finally, it is the "Puppet Theatre" which, once again, makes a most valuable contribution to the learning process. Whereas its cognitive and affective merits have already been shown and discussed, its procedural significance still remains to be illustrated. This can be done on two levels: firstly, the "Puppet

"Theatre" forms a sequence of five units which, interspersed in between the other units, provides a unique opportunity for the pupils to become immersed in a fictional text, a fairy-tale ("to be continued ...") offering them an alternative to their grammatical and lexical exercises in real-life-situations. Didactically, this is a change of methods to enhance the pupils' motivation. Looking at these five units more closely, a large number of procedural observations can be made referring to the transfer of learning from fiction to reality and from fiction to imaginative and creative writing.

The puppet theatre (fiction)	Transfer of learning (real life)
This is Mr Gibran. He's got a puppet theatre. He's got fifteen puppets. His favourite puppets are: Amira ... Adil, Abdullah and Ali are the musicians. Said is the clown. ... Every summer Mr Gibran goes to many towns and villages. (III, 9 and 12)	TELL THE STORY. Last August, Leila, Sami and their parents went on holiday. They visited their grandparents. Write sentences to say what they did, for example: <i>Sami and Leila put their clothes in their suitcases.</i> (III, 13)
Princess Amira was under a bush, lost and alone. She was very scared. She started to cry. Suddenly, there was a noise. She heard footsteps, she saw a shadow. Who, or what, was it? (III, 41)	CONTINUE THE STORY. Imagine what happened to the princess. What was the shadow? Was it a person or an animal? What did she say to it? Tell the story in your own words. (III, 42)

The **German textbooks** organize a good deal of procedural activities around the central character of Kooky whose curiosity, inquisitiveness, humour and sense of adventure provide a constant stimulus for learning-by-doing which is closely linked to pupils' interaction. The most prominent examples include the making of a "Jumping Jack" (a collective task with a practical division of labour guaranteeing everybody's participation; I, 29), followed by the making of a clock (I, 55), a kite (I, 74), a crib (II, 46) and, ultimately, a moon-rocket (II, 70). To illustrate the high degree of interactive learning, here is the relevant passage quoted from the textbook:

LET'S MAKE A ROCKET.

1. Draw a circle on the coloured paper. Cut out the circle.
2. Draw a line to the middle of the circle. Cut the line to the middle.
3. Make a cone out of the paper, glue together. You've got the top of your rocket.
4. Stick the cone on the top of your rocket / cardboard tube.
5. Cover your cardboard tube with coloured paper.
6. Your rocket is ready.

T: Susan / Sam, tell us about your rocket.

P: My rocket is green and blue.

T: Put your rockets on the floor in front of you.

Hold your rockets. Ready for lift-off. Listen.

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, zero.

We have lift-off!

Class: Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, zero.

We have lift-off!

T: Ready for landing. Landing on the moon now.

Whoosh! Whoosh! A perfect landing.

Class: Landing on the moon now. Whoosh! Whoosh!
A perfect landing.

It should be noted that this procedural strategy of collective experience incorporates both cognitive and affective elements: The numbers 1-10 are learned in a highly stimulating environment.

Other forms of partner activities include telephone conversations (I, 34), birthday and Christmas preparations (I, 42 ff. / I, 93 ff.) and repairing one's bicycle with the help of one's friends (II, 23).

Games, apart from their affective quality, also play a vital part in procedural terms. By constant role-changes (which, as illustrated, often amount to a change of identity), they promote the transfer of learning through a network of interaction and not through the linear progression of, say, a behaviouristic drill. To begin with, there is a "name game" (I, 4) followed by games reflecting the methods of "silent way" and "total physical response" (I, 24). Later, the frame of reference is playfully widened to the "Jackson family" (with an ensuing transfer to the pupils' own families; I, 45 ff.). Also, guessing games can be observed frequently ("The schoolbag game; I, 66 / "Guess the boy or girl"; II, 64). Process-oriented in its most literal meaning is the unit on "Traffic" which provides both a physical and mental challenge to the pupils to cooperate interactively through trial-and-error which is a particularly rewarding form of learning-by-doing ("Game: Find the way"; II, 28 / "Game: The bike race"; II, 29)

7. Conclusion and Implications

The above survey of the Syrian and the German EFL textbooks for elementary school has revealed both similarities and differences in cognitive, affective and procedural terms. However, such similarities and differences are not evenly distributed across the board. Whereas the cognitive elements have a good deal in common, the affective and the procedural dimensions differ significantly. The most obvious discrepancy, however, is located in the perception and representation of culture.

Cognitively, the Syrian and the German textbooks proceed more or less along the same lines. Both sets of material follow the traditional pattern of linear progression with regard to pronunciation, lexis and grammar - with the notable exception of a large number of spelling exercises to meet the specific needs of the Syrian pupils.

Affectively, the Syrian and German textbooks take extreme care to relate their cognitive content-material to the pupils' personal background and experience. By selecting authentic people and situations in a multimedia environment, they manage to secure a high degree of intrinsic motivation which tends to express itself in boundless curiosity and in a wide range of emotional responses.

However, this common denominator does not apply to intercultural empathy which has become a widely acknowledged educational objective and EFL teaching aim. Surprisingly enough, most of the Syrian material focuses on the domestic rather than the foreign background so that the quality of the (English) language as a cultural vehicle and its function for inter-cultural understanding is hardly exploited. This means, to put it differently, that the dialectics of "self" and "other" have little bearing on the Syrian concept of foreign language teaching, even though book III eventually widens its frame of reference and begins to include some aspects of English culture.

In sharp contrast, the German material is designed to provide, from the very beginning, a British environment and a general atmosphere of "Britishness", not only by its choice of people, but also by its emphasis on values and lifestyles. This consistent focus on the culture of the target language (with a minimum reference to the German culture) is meant to promote, through the highly stimulating and inquisitive character of Kooky, the ability to perceive the world from more than one angle - which is an indispensable constituent of empathy.

Procedurally, it could be observed that the Syrian textbooks prefer to use a standard pattern of instructivist tasks and exercises - interspersed with some constructivist elements such as games and learning-by-doing - a policy which they adhere to throughout books I and II before introducing structural modifications in book III ("The Puppet Theatre" turns out to be a rich resource for constructivist alternatives). The German material, largely with the help of multi-talented Kooky, offers a large number of constructivist tasks and exercises which emphasize a pupil/- and process-oriented classroom discourse

with a preference for learning-by-doing through games and other forms of social interaction (partner-, group- and project-work).

There are several implications derived from this study.

As far as the **Syrian textbooks** are concerned, the cognitive aspect is given much consideration. In fact, the lexical and grammatical material throughout the three books is abundant with instructivist examples of increasing complexity. However, there is an obvious lack of phonetic transcription which suggests to the reader (and the user) that there is no focus whatsoever on the issue of pronunciation. In view of the notorious lack of correspondence between pronunciation and spelling in the English language, it is strongly recommended that this dimension be included in the Syrian textbooks. On a general level, more consideration should be given to some features of constructivism, such as process-orientation and pupils' creativity.

With regard to culture, more scope and weight needs to be given to English lifestyle and institutions starting as early as book I. Such an initial acquaintance with another culture would also help to increase the pupils' motivation, e.g. their curiosity, their change of perspective and their intercultural sensitivity (empathy).

Because the Syrian textbooks have been introduced only recently and cannot be revised at short notice, it is recommended that much effort should be invested into teacher training programmes to use constructivist and creative techniques more effectively.

As far as the **German textbooks** are concerned, they strongly and widely reflect the constructivist position that reality cannot be taught ("instructed") and learned as a ready-made product of objective facts and experiences, but that pupils perceive and construct their own "realities" individually, subjectively and interactively, through negotiation of meaning. Consequently, the cognitive element finds itself in competition with the affective and, more so, with the procedural element which highlights, most of all, the constructivist idea of learning as an interactive process and a constant falsification of interim hypotheses ("trial and error") with regard to the target language and the target culture. Historically, the German EFL textbooks, after being subjected to a critical revision, have come a long way to achieve this threefold perspective which keeps the cognitive, the affective and the procedural dimension in the balance. Future generations of textbooks should make sure that such a balance is maintained, especially with regard to the cognitive as an indispensable paradigm in language teaching.

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