

Developing Intercultural Competence at Slovak Secondary Schools

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Abstract: The importance of developing intercultural competence as one of the key competences in today's rapidly changing and multicultural society has been spoken of often. The requirement of preparing interculturally competent communicators has therefore become one of the goals of today's foreign language education. The aim of the present paper is to shed light on the practice of fostering intercultural skills in teaching English as a foreign language at Slovak secondary schools. The findings of the research, including observations of lessons, interviews with teachers, as well as analysis of teaching materials, reveals that the development of intercultural competence is still not integrated into foreign language education in Slovakia.

Keywords: intercultural communicative competence, intercultural competence, secondary education, English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) education.

1. Introduction

Liu et al. (2011: 26) write, "intercultural knowledge and intercultural communication skills do not come naturally; they have to be acquired through conscious learning"; in the last decade, due to massive migration flows and growing ethnocentrism the necessity of developing intercultural competence has been increased worldwide, since "only by competently interacting with others who are culturally different from us can our global village survive". This need, however, is not always reflected in everyday teaching practice in Slovakia, as can be concluded from the research carried out by Reid (2014), which focused on the integration of intercultural aspects in English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) lessons at Slovak primary schools. The findings reveal that less than half of the fifty observed lessons included intercultural aspects, despite all the teachers being informed about the aim of the research in advance. They were even asked to include some cultural teaching into their lessons.

The objective of the present study was to investigate intercultural education at Slovak secondary schools. The paper is divided into two main parts -- theoretical and practical -- of which the former represents the theoretical platform for the latter. The empirical part of the study is divided into five parts, offering insight into the methodology and results of the investigation carried out by use of three research methods: content analysis, observation and interview.

1.1 Understanding intercultural communicative competence

A discrepancy can be detected among intercultural scholars in relation to the use of the term "intercultural communicative competence". Some scholars find it important to distinguish between communicative competence, cultural competence, intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence. On the other hand, as in the examples below, some scholars use the terms "communicative competence" and "intercultural communicative competence" interchangeably. According to the Common European Framework for

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Languages (CEFL: Council of Europe 2001: 9), communicative competence refers to “a person’s ability to act in a [foreign language] in a linguistically, socio-linguistically and pragmatically appropriate way”, while cultural competence can be defined “as knowledge of the life and institutions of the target culture” (Corbett 2003: 31). Intercultural competence (IC) is the ability to interact in one’s own language with people from another country and culture, using one’s knowledge of the given country and culture (Byram 1991). Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) means the ability to interact with people from another country in a foreign language (FL). “The knowledge of another culture is linked to the language competence through the ability to use language appropriately – sociolinguistic and discourse competence – and the awareness of the specific meanings, values and connotations of the language” (Byram 1991: 71). Similarly, Sercu (2005) argues that ICC is based upon communicative competence and enriches it by incorporating IC.

All skills acquired by a person can contribute to the development of ICC; however, one must differentiate between more closely connected abilities and less closely related skills. In these terms, one must distinguish between general and communicative language competences (Council of Europe 2001).

General competences consist of declarative knowledge (*savoir*), skills and know-how (*savoir faire*), “existential” competence (*savoir être*) and the ability to learn (*savoir apprendre*). Declarative knowledge comprises knowledge of the world, sociocultural knowledge and intercultural awareness. Skills and know-how stand for a sum of practical skills and know-how together with intercultural skills. Existential competence is connected to an individual’s personality. Ability to communicate is affected by factors such as attitudes, motivations, values, beliefs, cognitive style and personality type. Ability to learn refers to language and communication awareness and general phonetic awareness and skills, together with study and heuristic skills (Council of Europe 2001).

Communicative language competences are a sum of language-related components that can be divided into linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. Linguistic competences include lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonological, orthographic and orthoepic competences. Sociolinguistic competences involve “linguistic markers of social relations, politeness conventions, expressions of folk-wisdom, register differences and dialect and accent” (Council of Europe 2001: 118). Finally, pragmatic competences refer to the ability to use language appropriately for particular purposes with regard to sociocultural context; they can be further divided into discourse, functional and design competences.

The above-described structure of ICC – defined in the Common European Framework for Languages (Council of Europe 2001), the main curricular document of the European Union in the field of FL education – is based on Byram’s model (1997: 73) consisting of four dimensions: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and intercultural competence. According to Byram, intercultural competence comprises five factors: attitudes (*savoir être*), knowledge (*savoirs*), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*).

In this context, attitudes refer to “curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own” (Byram 1991: 50). It means, for example, that an intercultural speaker is interested in others’ opinions on familiar or unfamiliar issues or takes into consideration expectations about appropriate behavior in a particular situation. Knowledge means knowledge “of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction” (Byram 1991: 51). For example, an intercultural speaker has familiarity with the historical events, cultural products and geographical features of her own and her interlocutor’s country. Skills of interpreting and relating refer to the “ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one’s own” (Byram 1991:

52); these skills include readiness to identify the sources of misunderstandings and address them. Skills of discovery and interaction stand for the “ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction” (Byram 1991: 52): for example, behaving in accordance with the conventions of verbal and nonverbal interaction. Critical cultural awareness (Byram 1997:63) refers to “an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries”: for example, in terms of identifying and interpreting values in events or being aware of potential conflict between ideologies.

To become an interculturally competent speaker of one's target language, in addition to the linguistic issues, one must be aware of the culture-related aspects of language use. The goal of FL education nowadays is to equip FL learners with knowledge and skills that make them able to communicate with people from other cultures.

1.2. Developing intercultural skills through foreign-language education

Since the 1980s in the field of FL education, the close relationship between language and culture has often been verbalized and, indeed, stressed (Risager 2006). According to numerous intercultural scholars, “the key to appreciating cultural differences is acquiring intercultural knowledge and developing intercultural skills” (Kramsch 1998: 26). The majority of intercultural communication scholars share this viewpoint and consider culture a natural part of FL learning. As Sercu (2005: 1) puts it, “FL education is, by definition, intercultural”. FL education can enhance acquiring these competences by integrating intercultural aspects into teaching linguistic issues systematically, given that culture and language are interrelated (Risager 2006). “The perspective of culture as a dynamic, vital and emergent process located in the discursive spaces between individuals links it inextricably to language. That is to say, language is at the same time a repository of culture and a tool by which culture is created” (Hall 2002: 19).

“Bringing a FL to the classroom means connecting learners to a world that is culturally different from their own” (Sercu 2005: 1). Byram (1989) writes that, by introducing an intercultural element into FL education, learners are given the chance to encounter and understand otherness both in linguistic and cultural terms. Similarly, Skopinskaja (2003:54) sees the benefit of incorporating intercultural aspects into FL teaching in terms of gaining “access to more diverse ways of seeing the world, better understanding of the first culture” as well as becoming less ethnocentric and more culturally relativist.

Since FL coursebooks “present the country in a nut-shell” (Risager, 1991: 191), they can have a great impact on FL learners’ intercultural knowledge and skills, as well as their attitudes towards the target culture. Buttjes (1991) claims that the acquisition of the target language can be enhanced by culturally rich textbooks with a socially realistic presentation. Davcheva and colleagues (2003:91) emphasize that “FL textbooks can significantly influence the way culture is taught in the FL classroom”. Byram (1991) writes that the role of FL coursebooks in developing ICC should be taken seriously by all those involved in foreign-language education. These opinions are supported by empirical research on the extent to which FL textbooks are used to teach cultural aspects in FL classrooms and what impact they have on learners’ perception of the target culture (Byram 1991, Davcheva et al. 2003).

Despite the agreement among scholars on the need to incorporate cultural aspects into FL education including FL textbooks, viewpoints with regard to everyday practice in FL classrooms are rather divergent, especially when it comes to the extent to which cultural aspects should be treated in FL lessons. Risager (2006) claims that there has been a significant recent shift in FL teaching towards an intercultural and culture-comparative perspective, resulting in the inclusion of issues related to FL learners’ first culture. Brooks (1997) reports

that the majority of teachers regularly deal with cultural aspects in their FL lessons; however, the results are not always satisfactory. Richards (1985) reports a shift in FL teaching away from a focus only on grammar to the communicative use of language, which has been reflected in textbooks organizing their content around speech acts instead of grammatical forms. Lafayette (1997:120) observes that, in the FL classroom, most time and energy is spent on grammar and vocabulary, whereas culture “remains the weakest component due to its uneven treatment in textbooks and to the lack of familiarity, among teachers, with the culture itself and with the techniques needed to teach it”.

Valdes (1990: 20) writes that even though “the inclusion of culture in the FL curriculum has become more prevalent in recent years”, there are teachers who still ignore or deny its importance”. Without realizing it, teachers teach culture. Teaching culture is present in FL education from the first day of the course; as an example, he mentions greetings: a reliable agenda in the first lessons of every beginner group. By recognizing the cultural nature of what is being taught – whether it be word order, tense or aspect – Valdes holds that by adding interpretation and explanation of underlying values, learning can be more effective.

What is everyday practice for integrating cultural aspects into FL teaching in Slovakia? Reid (2014) found that many teachers teaching EFL at Slovak primary schools lack necessary knowledge of ICC and do not realize the importance of integrating intercultural aspects into FL education. The present study investigates whether and to what extent intercultural competence is developed in EFL classrooms at selected Slovak secondary schools.

2. Methodology

The research question is this:

Which aspects of intercultural competence are promoted in the curricular documents of EFL education in Slovakia and what attention is paid to these aspects in the everyday practice of EFL education in secondary schools?

The study draws on the methodology of selected empirical studies (Aliakbari 2005, Byram 1989, Reid 2014, Risager 1991) especially in terms of the combination of research methods and coding schemes and the units of analysis. Reid investigated how aspects of ICC were implemented in teaching EFL at Slovak primary schools. Through document analysis, she compared Slovak curricula with the CEFR, which served as a core document for establishing her coding scheme. Byram (1989) investigated the diversity of topics and image of the target country presented in EFL classes (including stereotypes) through the triangulation of content analysis, observation and interviews.

The focus of the study is rather qualitative; IC is certainly not a precisely measurable phenomenon. Even though the data were mainly processed quantitatively, by counting frequency of code occurrences, they served as the basis for drawing qualitative inferences and making comparisons. The goal was to find a deeper meaning beyond the numerical data: whether the various aspects of IC were taught suitably (implicitly and explicitly) and whether the codes occurred to a sufficient extent (at least ten times). The goal was to get a holistic picture, as characterized by description, induction, generation of theory, construction and subjectivity.

Document analysis was followed by investigation of the coursebook materials. Observations took place after becoming familiarized with the intercultural content of the coursebook materials. Each method is discussed separately.

2.1 Content analysis

Content analysis – originally applied in communication, journalism, sociology, psychology, and business (Neuendorf 2002) – is today considered one of the primary methods of

educational research. As defined by Weber (1990: 117), “it is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text”.

2.1.1 Document analysis

The first step was analysis of the main curricular documents in the field of EFL education in Slovakia. The aim was an in-depth study of the requirements for EFL education (including teaching materials) to be deemed suitable for European B1-level language instruction in terms of intercultural competence (IC). Toward this end, a secondary research question was formulated:

In accordance with key European and the Slovak curricular documents, what requirements should be fulfilled by EFL education to deem the education suitable for B1-level instruction with respect to developing IC?

For purposes of document analysis, four documents were selected: two key European documents concerning FL education, the CEFL (Council of Europe 2001) and Threshold 1990 (Van Ek & Trim 1998); and two Slovak documents: the Slovak national curriculum for the English language (Gadušová et al. 2011) and the goal standards for students taking school leaving exams of English language at level B1 (*Štátny pedagogický ústav* 2012).

Numerous scholars (e.g., Flick 2010, Weber 1990, Zhang & Wildemuth 2009) emphasize that creating and applying a coding scheme is crucial amongst to content analysis, influencing the outcomes of the whole study. The present study applied two codes from the category of *intercultural competence* defined in the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001: 103-105): *intercultural awareness* and *intercultural skills and know-how*.

The European documents provide no descriptors of these aspects. The requirements for them provided in the Slovak curricular documents can be summarized under four perspectives (see Table 1):

1. The role of the source culture (Slovakian) in developing IC while reinforcing learners' cultural identity;
2. Understanding the similarities and differences between the target (English-speaking countries) and source culture (Slovakian);
3. Overcoming stereotypes;
4. Fostering cultural sensitivity towards other cultures.

Table 1: IC codes used for the content analysis.

No.	Code	Function
1	role of the source culture in developing IC	raising FL learners' awareness of the values of their own and of the target culture; interpreting events and documents of the source culture and other cultures, critically evaluating the products of both
2	understanding similarities and differences between the source and target culture	bringing the source and target culture into relation; identifying differences and similarities between the target and source country; being alert to cultural differences; establishing a proper basis for communication by raising cultural differences to consciousness
3	overcoming stereotypes	minimizing unwanted generalization, bias and stereotyping
4	fostering cultural sensitivity to other cultures	tolerating differences between the target and source culture; fulfilling cultural intermediary roles; fostering intercultural attitudes such as openness and curiosity;

		accepting people from other cultures together with their behaviour and values; thinking prosocially including fighting against egocentrism and ethnocentrism; being open when communicating with others; having an open attitude towards cultural and ethnic diversity
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According to Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) model, culture as presented in EFL coursebooks can be classified as follows:

- C1.** source culture, also referred to as home culture or first culture: i.e., the learner's culture
- C2.** the target culture, where the target language is used as a first language
- C3, C4, C5.** cultures that are neither the source nor the target culture; they can be cultures from both English and non-English-speaking countries; in using English as an international language, they are called international target cultures (Aliakbari 2005)

"Stereotype" can be defined as a "conventional or formulaic conception or image that we create about other people and situations. To stereotype somebody means to treat or classify according to the mental stereotype we have created" (Benčíková 2007: 71).

2.1.2 Analysis of coursebook materials

The results of the document analysis served to fine-tune the research instrument (Table 1) for application to analysis of the coursebook materials, the aim of which was to find out which intercultural aspects in the curricular materials used during the observed lessons were relevant and treated suitably for developing IC at B1 level. Suitability was investigated with respect to the results of the document analysis: i.e., the requirements found in the European and Slovak documents. Suitability was also identified in relation to the explicit (conscious and intentional: e.g., being asked to discuss similarities and differences between the target and source culture thinking regarding transport in Britain vs. Slovakia) and implicit (unconscious and unintentional: e.g., overcoming stereotypes through being shown a photo of a man cooking in the kitchen) character of the treatment. The examined teaching materials comprised ten modules; the treatment of a particular code was considered sufficient if it occurred at least ten times in the given material, either implicitly or explicitly.

For purposes of analysis of the coursebook materials, the "New Opportunities" pre-intermediate and intermediate coursebook materials were chosen. According to the results of a questionnaire survey conducted in February 2013, "New Opportunities" was the second most widely used EFL coursebook in Slovakia, preparing students for achieving the B1 level in English (Sándorová 2013). The two levels (pre-intermediate and intermediate) covered the four years of EFL education at those secondary schools where observations took place. They were used as the primary teaching materials to prepare students for the school-leaving examination in B1-level English. The secondary research question here was:

Which intercultural aspects in the "New Opportunities" pre-intermediate and intermediate coursebook materials are relevant and treated suitably (implicitly and explicitly) and to sufficient extent (at least ten mentions) for developing IC at the B1 level?

Each level of the coursebook set comprises a student's book with mini-dictionary, "Language Powerbook" (CD-based workbook), teacher's book, class CDs, DVDs, test book, and quick tests. The present research used only the student's book (Harris 2006a, 2006b), Language Powerbook (Sharman 2006), teacher's book (Muggleston 2006a, 2006b). Only these were used by all four schools where observations were carried out.

Sometimes referred to as the “course book” (Cunningsworth 1995) or “pupil’s book” (Gower et al. 1995), the student’s book is often considered the central element of the coursebook package and the “main point of contact with the student” (Cunningsworth 1995: 25). The student’s book is primarily designed for classroom use but can also serve as a source of homework tasks. Workbooks, sometimes referred to as *activity books*, can be “useful for supplementary classwork, individual work or homework” (Gower et al. 1995: 77). The teacher’s book provides help for teachers through methodological guidance and practical ideas (Cunningsworth 1995; Malíková 2003; Straková 2001).

2.2 Observation

Lesson observation followed, the aim of which was to reveal which of the examined intercultural aspects were developed suitably and sufficiently in the EFL lessons. The secondary research question here was:

Which of the examined intercultural aspects are developed implicitly or explicitly to a sufficient extent (at least ten mentions) in the EFL lessons?

As the aim of the present research was to count frequency of predefined codes (Table 1), it can be regarded as structured observation. To assist the researcher, an observation scheme was also developed, serving to note information that seemed useful for explanation of results or when frequency of occurrence was difficult to count: e.g., during listening-comprehension activities or when teachers modified the tasks provided in the coursebook. When necessary, field notes were taken. Though teachers were told the purpose of the research in advance, they were not specifically instructed to deal with intercultural aspects, so that the researcher observer might get an objective picture of everyday practice for integrating intercultural issues into EFL lessons.

As with the previous two steps, purposive sampling was used, the objective being to explore which intercultural aspects were addressed at EFL lessons at Slovak secondary schools. The sample comprised fifty lessons taught by twelve teachers so that four or five lessons were observed per teacher. All observations took place in Nitra at four secondary schools, where approximately eight hundred students learned English as their first foreign language using the New Opportunities pre-intermediate and intermediate student’s books and Language Powerbooks. These materials were used during all fifty lessons, either as the only teaching source or as supplemented by other materials. Analysis was carried out through applying the same set of codes as with the coursebook package and interview analyses.

3. Results

3.1 Analysis of the coursebook materials

3.1.1 Intercultural competence and the textual content of the student books

The student books' text paid attention to students' source culture (Table 2): in each unit, there was at least one activity focused on it (Code 1). It may further be assumed that the student books effectively foster understanding similarities and differences between the target and source culture (Code 2), as this is a regular issue in nearly every unit.

Table 2: Occurrence of IC codes in the student books.

No.	Code	Implicit	Explicit	Examples
1	role of the source culture in developing IC	0	138	Are there any famous outlaws in your country? What did they do?
2	understanding similarities and differences between source and target culture	0	161	Think of 3 differences and 3 similarities between transport in Britain and your country.
3	overcoming stereotypes	0	0	-
4	fostering cultural sensitivity to other cultures	9	0	When in another country, respect the culture and its differences.
	Total	9	299	

The treatment of overcoming stereotypes and fostering cultural sensitivity towards other cultures (codes 3 and 4) is neglected, though some advice is provided on becoming culturally sensitive. Although attention is frequently drawn to cultural differences, the extent to which these are exploited depends heavily on both teachers' and students' abilities and knowledge.

3.1.2 Intercultural competence and the paratextual content of the student books

The paratextual content did not attend to the role of the source culture (Code 1) nor understanding similarities and differences between the target and source culture (Code 2). See Table 3.

Table 3: Occurrence of IC codes in the student books.

No.	Code	Occurrence
1	role of the source culture in developing IC	0
2	understanding similarities and differences between the source and target culture	0
3	overcoming stereotypes	3
4	fostering cultural sensitivity to other cultures	14
	Total	17

Only two aspects of IC can be traced in the semiotic content of the student books: overcoming stereotypes and cultural sensitivity to other cultures (codes 3 and 4). The three examples found for Code 3 supports overcoming gender stereotypes: one shows a man cooking in the kitchen; the other two portray sportswomen breaking records in extreme sports. Fourteen photos were identified that contribute to fostering cultural sensitivity toward immigrants and toward other ethnicities and nationalities (Code 4).

3.1.3 Intercultural competence in the New Opportunities Language Powerbooks

It seems that the New Opportunities Language Powerbooks do not support the development of IC, either for understanding the similarities and differences between the target and source culture (Code 2), or for overcoming stereotypes or fostering cultural sensitivity towards other cultures (codes 3 and 4); see Table 4. That said, the role of the source culture in fostering IC (Code 1) was prominent (26 occurrences).

Table 4: Occurrence of IC codes in the Language Powerbooks.

No.	Code	Implicit	Explicit	Examples
1	role of the source culture in developing IC	0	26	Write some keywords for your country under these headings.
2	understanding similarities and differences between source and target culture	0	161	Match the words below with the country.
3	overcoming stereotypes	0	0	-
4	fostering cultural sensitivity to other cultures	9	0	-
	Total	9	299	

3.1.4 Intercultural competence in the New Opportunities teacher's books

The teacher's books provided little methodological support for developing IC; see Table 5. There was not a single piece of advice either for to overcoming stereotypes or fostering cultural sensitivity. The pedagogical guidance on IC may be regarded as at set partially sufficient.

Table 5: Occurrence of IC codes in the teacher's books.

No.	Code	Occurrence	Examples
1	role of the source culture in developing IC	14	Encourage students to give examples and discuss what is said in their own language in shopping and other service situations.
2	understanding similarities and differences between source and target culture	17	Suggests that students may find it helpful to have information about transport problems in Britain before they compare transport in Britain and their country.
3	overcoming stereotypes	0	-
4	fostering cultural sensitivity to other cultures	0	-
	Total	31	

3.1.5 Summary of analysis of the coursebook materials

Even though the student's and teacher's books paid attention to the role of the source culture (Code 1) as well as understanding similarities and differences between the target and source culture (Code 2), little attention was paid to overcoming stereotypes (Code 3) or fostering cultural sensitivity towards other cultures (Code 4) was almost negligible. The Language Powerbooks paid a little attention only to the role of the source culture (Code 1).

Based on the findings, the answer to the research question is that, in terms of developing IC at the B1 level, in none of the coursebook materials were any of the investigated aspects of IC treated both to a sufficient extent and suitably (explicitly and implicitly) across all three components. Codes 1 and 2 were treated sufficiently in at least one of the components. Codes 3 and 4 were treated insufficiently or unsuitably throughout.

3.2 Observation analysis

Code 1 (the role of the source culture) appeared 18 times. The observed lessons did not pay sufficient attention to the cultural differences between the target and source culture (Code 2); see Table 6. Overcoming stereotypes and cultural sensitivity to contact other cultures (codes No. 3 and 4) were not dealt with, at all. The lessons paid attention only to the role of the

source culture, while the other three aspects examined were treated neither suitably (implicitly or explicitly) nor sufficiently (at least ten mentions).

Table 6: Occurrence of IC codes in the observed lessons.

No .	Code	Implicit	Explicit	Examples
1	role of the source culture in developing IC	0	18	Think of celebrities in your country who had problems with fame.
2	understanding similarities and differences between source and target culture	0	2	What are the similarities and differences between your country and Wales?
3	overcoming stereotypes	0	0	-
4	fostering cultural sensitivity to other cultures	0	0	-
Total		0	20	

4. Conclusions

While none of the investigated aspects of IC were observed adequately across the course materials and classroom observations, it cannot be said they were not addressed at all. Even though the Language Powerbooks and teacher's books did not devote significant attention to them, the role of the source culture and understanding of similarities and differences between the target and source culture were treated sufficiently in the student's books.

Three of the four IC codes essentially did not occur during the observed EFL lessons, either when the New Opportunities coursebook materials or supplementary materials were used. It might be concluded that, in terms of teaching objectives, IC was not the teachers' priority. It is possible that the teachers were not completely aware of those aspects of IC that the coursebook materials address: comparing the target and the source culture and making students aware of their own culture, both regular issues in the so-called "Culture Corner" sessions in each unit.

In line with the results reported by Reid (2014) revealing a lack of IC aspects in EFL lessons at Slovak primary schools, the present study found that EFL courses at secondary schools in Slovakia do not really cater for IC issues. The situation may be partially explained by the attitude of teachers in terms of their teaching priorities; it can also be the consequence of a lack of in-service training on fostering IC. Though integrating IC into FL education is becoming more and more popular in Slovak higher education, the number of courses, workshops and seminars offered for in-service training is negligible. Teachers should be encouraged to improve their IC skills as well as constantly expanding their knowledge of the target country culture. Authors of teacher's books should be reminded of the necessity to provide detailed methodological guidance and sufficient background knowledge on IC.

The results reported here should be considered in the light of limitations that should be addressed by future research. The purposive sampling method is one possible area to address.

Our objective was to investigate materials that, based on a questionnaire survey, were identified as the second most popular in secondary education in Slovakia (Sándorová 2013). It would be advisable to carry out content analysis of other widely used coursebook materials in Slovakia, such as New Headway, New Horizons and Solutions (Sándorová 2013), to map their own potential for fostering IC and to carry out comparative analysis between them.

The number of schools and teachers taking part in the observations and interviews should be increased. In line with Byram's (1989) research, one might conduct interviews or questionnaires with the students using the selected materials. The sample should be carefully selected and the research instruments carefully constructed; otherwise, the data might be

distorted by factors such as the personality and skills of students and teachers, or the time spent with a particular coursebook. It might be useful to focus on the role of teachers in the implicit-vs.-explicit teaching of IC: e.g., whether they try to make explicit what is treated only implicitly in the course materials or address cultural differences between Slovakia and the English-speaking world, differences that might be perceived differently by Slovaks than by residents of the English-speaking world (Sándorová 2017). Finally, it would be advisable to look at IC in teacher training for EFL.

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