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Portraying the language-culture link through spatial representation in three US language textbooks

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This paper investigates the representation of “linguistic space”, in three recent foreign language textbooks published in the United States of America. It follows a tradition of textbook research concerning ethnic community stereotyping and the objective of peaceful and just nation-state representation. This perspective intersects with principles of multicultural education, an important tenant of teacher education, teaching practice, and education research in the United States (cf. Banks, J. A. and McGee Banks, C.A, 2004). The premise is that no textbook is neutral, but disseminates political positions. Greater awareness of how these positions are depicted may help teachers and students to create more critical and reflective learning experiences and judgment.

This paper examines the representations of where English, French and Spanish language communities are geographically situated through illustrations in language textbooks for adults published by an influential firm. A brief review of the goals and issues of both textbook research and multicultural education research will set the context for this case study. A quantitative analysis bridges three overlapping spatial facets: nation representation, land-use, and time-period. Space, which can be divided into spatial gradients for analysis, has been accorded attention in the fields of geography and sociology. Sociologists Lobao *et al* (2007) summarize four existing trends in discipline-wide research when considering space inequality: (1) space distribution, use, and experience across lines of class, gender, and race/ethnicity; (2) as a channel or amplifier of inequality, such as in schools; (3) its creation through uneven development by

actors such as capitalists, labor, the state or citizens; and (4) finally spatial processes as being intertwined with inequality processes. This study concludes that “linguistic space”, that is to say the spatial areas in which the language is spoken, is represented in contrasting ways within the three textbooks, connoting contrasting political perspectives.

Multicultural issues of textbook research

Textbook research examines both the portrayal of a given topic and how one or more learning communities might read the textbook’s portrayal. It has received international attention for several decades, as highlighted in UNESCO documents including *Recommendation concerning education for international understanding, co-operation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms* (UNESCO, 1974), which calls for a global approach justly representing local and national aspects of different subjects; *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education*, which recommends the imparting of knowledge about “the history, traditions, language and culture of existing minorities to majority groups” (UNESCO, 2006: 33); and the *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision* (Pingel, 2009), which specifically addresses models of textbook analysis. The field is rich, including such topics as modifications of Turkish textbooks as part of the political move to enter the European Union (Çayır, 2009), the over representation of blacks as “poor” in 15 US government college textbooks (Clawson and Kegler, 2000), narrow stereotypes of Native Americans that are geographically limited to Reservations in US history textbooks (Hawkins, 2005: 53), the construction of negative images of French Canadians within Canadian history textbooks (Igartua, 2008), and modifications to secondary school textbooks that were thought to enhance the peace process following the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Torsti, 2007). Although textbooks typically portray knowledge legitimized by official institutions, they continue to be modified following demands by both conservative and progressive groups. Apple and Christian-Smith highlight the political quality of textbooks when explaining that in [those nations that have sought to overthrow their colonial or elitist heritage] “the politics of the text takes on special importance, because the textbook often represents an overt attempt to help create a new cultural identity” (1991: 11).

Textbooks have also been of interest to educators of the multicultural education reform movement who believe that race, ethnicity, culture, social class, and often gender are salient aspects to education and that ethnic and cultural diversity enrich all members of society. In 1997, the US National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education revised the 1977 multicultural standard which stimulated multicultural education in teacher education. Today, there is a substantial multicultural education textbook market and many US universities include this topic in their teaching programs. Banks

has described the major role of textbooks from a multicultural education perspective:

Textbooks have always reflected the myths, hopes, and dreams of the people in society with money and power. As African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and women become more influential participants on the power stage, textbooks will increasingly reflect their hopes, dreams, and disappointments. [...] Because textbooks still carry the curriculum in the nation's public schools, they will remain an important focus for multicultural curriculum reformers (Banks, 1999: 10).

A race-neutral or colorblind perspective to curriculum does not in any way guarantee a neutral position. Ladson-Billings (2004) remarks that this perspective may result in a “homogenized ‘we’ in a celebration of diversity”. She suggests that in the United States, this is often reduced to the concept that everyone is an immigrant, and as a result African American, Indigenous, and Chicano students inherit the responsibility for the failure to overcome their immigrant status as Anglo and other migrants have done (Ladson-Billings, 2004: 60). In a similar vein, Williams (1997) reflects on the institutional inclusion of Maori literary works in mainstream New Zealand literature as part of complex political movements towards biculturalism and national identity, but against assimilation policies. Furthermore, as Blair suggests, research is not neutral as the “myth of neutrality may well serve to hide processes which exclude from publication the work of black and antiracist researchers who write about sensitive (and emotive) issues around ‘race’ and ethnicity” (2004: 250).

Language teaching has often traditionally been viewed as reserved for “well-to-do” students who prepare for interaction with members of a foreign culture (Herman, 2002: 2). This notion of elitism is echoed by Reyes (2002) who suggests that in the case of Spanish language teaching in the US, the accent, literature, culture, and study abroad in Spain have traditionally been more valued than the accent, literature, culture and study abroad from the Americas. She advocates broadening these limits by introducing authentic experiences within Spanish-speaking contexts, such as to offer assistance in translation. Similarly, Guerrieri (2007) proposes combining a Spanish literature and community service learning experience in the San Diego-Tijuana borderlands as a means to develop student *conscientização*, Paulo Freire’s concept of centering critical consciousness at the heart of literacy learning. Commenting on higher education courses taught by imported instructors in on-site transnational education, Leask discusses the need for building relationships within and beyond the classroom in the context of “intercultural space” (2008: 130). These proposals underline both the cultural boundary crossing that occurs when acquiring a new language and also the fluidity of language community borders. These crossings of borders also lead one to question the validity of statistics which limit the category “language-speakers” to native, second language learners, or heritage speakers, while excluding individuals who learn a foreign

language. Furthermore, they underline the deeper shades of language and culture awareness, by going beyond superficial manifestations of culture. Nieto insists on the positive impacts of a critical multicultural education compared to a superficial one:

But generally [students of all backgrounds] can see through a superficial focus on diversity that emphasizes only cultural tidbits and ethnic celebrations. A critical multicultural education builds on students' interests without trivializing (or essentializing) the meaning of culture. This is important to remember because if we are serious about developing a truly liberating pedagogy, it means moving beyond an understanding of culture as a product or as the static symbol of a people (cf. Kalantzis and Cope; May, 1999). In the words of Frederick Erickson, "I am convinced that our pedagogy and curriculum become genuinely transformative, not just cosmetically 'relevant'" (1990, p. 23) (Nieto, 2004: 193).

Notions of space and nation

One of the most basic and often heated divisions of space was the creation of national borders. Following centuries of monarchies, colonization, and self-determination movements, new stereotypes linked to local and global representations of national identity exist. In his description of image studies and "national stereotypes", Chew reflects that:

Recent international developments, finally, marked by continued regional conflicts and a global terrorism characterised by apparent ethnic and religious incompatibilities – famously stylised by some as a "clash of civilisations" – has lent added urgency to the deconstruction of complex stereotypes that seem to obscure and hinder understanding "the other" rather than provide the true understanding and insight that can lead to a peaceful co-existence, characterised by humanistic values and common respect (Chew, 2006: 180).

As Hedetoft explains while discussing the paradoxes and tensions of contemporary cinema caught between local origin and an unlevel global playing ground:

Concepts like cultural "hybridity", "creolization", "clashes of cultures", and "ethnic diversity"; actors like a host of different national institutes set up to promote the global spread of national cultures (the British Council, Alliance Française, the Goethe Institutes, even the Danish Cultural Institutes...); and the processes like the ongoing struggle between the EU and the USA to curb American influence on the European audio-visual market for mass communications – all indicate that cultural globalization process at the intersection between nation exceptionalism and universal influence cannot be reduced to a series of simplistic relations between one assertive "sender" and a (number of) passive "receivers" (Hedetoft, 2003: 91-92).

European colonization and the ensuing spread of European languages is a worldwide phenomenon. Referring to W. E. B. Dubois, Leonardo (2004) notes that few places on earth remain untouched by European colonization including the more recent turn-of-the-century colonization by Europeans and Americans of the Philippines, Hawaii, and the West Indies. Murray (1997) notes that the

break-up of the Empire was a factor in the three key phases of nation building: Latin American countries in the nineteenth century, post-World War I Europe, and post-World War II self-determination movements in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. He highlights that the concept of “postcoloniality” stresses “a common heritage of colonial oppression and subsequent decolonization, of the struggle for the right to produce, rather than consume, images of self and the local.”

In Africa, the heritage of shared languages and new communication technologies “created a regional, as well as a national, dimension to the issues of cultural decolonization” (Murray, 1997: 9). Within this evolution, the notion of “space” is recurrent as in Fhlathúin’s (1997: 67) statement that in “the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Indian community in India was compelled to inhabit the uneasy outer limit of Englishness, the space where it became associated with the opposing quality of Indianness” (1992: 67). Thomas (1997) also questions the very restricted notion of “national” literature within the radically different sociological realities of the recent neo-colonial African context.

Traditionally, language and culture are intertwined within language teaching and learning. The global history of colonization has created intricate layers of cultures that cross language boundaries. At an international level, organizations such as UNESCO offer context-specific guidelines to reduce tensions through textbook content in areas such as East and Southeast Asia, in the Middle East, Latin America, Southeastern Europe and Northern Ireland:

With the emergence of nation states in the last century it became quite obvious that schoolbooks contain statements that glorify their own nation and disparage others, that glorify the ruling groups within one nation or society and disparage so-called minority groups. During this time concerned educationalists and politicians had already noticed that textbooks, especially history textbooks, didn’t and don’t only convey facts but also spread ideologies, follow political trends and try to justify them by imbuing them with historical legitimacy (Pingel, 2009: 8).

New approaches to teaching and learning include helping students to acquire critical reading skills in order to examine the subjectivity of documents, even those presented as factual. For example, Gerwin and Osborn (2002) suggest connecting history and foreign language teaching to offer multi-vocal narration brought through documents containing contrasting perspectives in the target language as a means towards developing evaluative frameworks. Comparative analyses are fruitful methods of cultural studies that can be integrated into both research and language studies.

Once more easily seen in terms of imperial reach, in terms of colonization, conquest, and migration, racial space is becoming *globalized* and thus accessible to a new kind of comparative analysis. [...] Meanwhile such phenomena as the rise of “diasporic” models of blackness, the creation of “pan-ethnic” communities of Latinos and Asians (in such countries as the UK or the US), and the breakdown of borders in both Europe and North America all seem to be internationalizing and

racializing previously national politics, cultures, and identities (Omi and Winant, 2004; 12).

The notion of “nation” is employed in this study as a commonly understood notion of place with (generally) recognized physical boundaries. However, the concept of “space” encompasses here a broader and richer notion, for example, one in which members speak a common language.

Linguistic spaces

The methodologies of estimating the number of speakers of a given language and their ensuing estimates vary. According to UNESCO, 478 million people speak English, 392 million speak Spanish, and 125 million speak French (Ouane, 2003). *Ethnologue* finds that English as a first language is spoken by 328 million people, Spanish by 329 million, and French by 67.8 million people (Lewis, 2009).

Citing UNESCO, Fernández and Roth (2006) relays the statistic that in 2005, 26% of Spanish speakers live in Mexico with 104 million people, 10.5% live in Spain (41 million speakers) and some 5.6% percent of Spanish speakers live in the United States (22.5 million). However, they suggest that a more precise number of speakers should include partial speakers. In this case, for example, the number of Spanish speakers in the United States would nearly double to 42.7 million people. Taking these wider populations into account, the sum of native and non-native speakers of Spanish plus students of Spanish as a foreign language would be closer to 438.9 million people (Fernández and Roth, 2006: 33-48).

According to the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (2010), French is the official language in 29 countries and is spoken by 200 million people across the globe, including 72 million partial speakers and 96.2 million who live in Africa, the continent inhabited by the largest number of French-speakers. Arabic-speaking countries including Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia do not recognize French as an official language, but it continues to be commonly spoken there. Thus, large numbers of people continue to speak these three languages across the globe.

Corpus of study

The set of this case study includes the fifth edition of the French textbook *Motifs: An Introduction to French* (2011), the third edition of *Plazas* (2008) and *World English: Real People, Real Places, Real Language* (2010). All of the textbooks are the most recent edition and are published by Cengage Learning by the multinational firm Heinle publishing company based in Boston, Massachusetts. The textbooks were selected from a single publisher in order to examine textbooks with a common publishing perspective. All three textbooks were designed for adult learners. *World English: Real People, Real Places, Real Language* (2010) was chosen among the publisher’s three main English

textbooks for adults because it contained photographs of places. The publisher's other English textbooks for adults contained mainly sketches of different people or generic places, such as an unidentified school or library. Hence, all three textbooks for this case study contain photographs of real-life settings.

The clientele for these textbooks includes language teachers in higher education. In the United States, college textbooks have become an "international commodity" in an "open" market, as the publishers are often multinational firms, (Altbach, 1991: 248-249), are under the authority of high-level executives who consider its profitability (Silverman, 1991). Thus, they are artifacts not of society or a society, but of a product of commercial forces that must consider social or political perspectives (Apple, 1991).

All of the photographs and nation-scale maps from the inside cover and chapters portraying exterior settings are included in this study. Only maps of nations, multiple nations, or world maps are coded, excluding city or neighborhood maps. Close-up photographs of individuals or vehicles in which the setting is insufficiently detailed to be clearly identified, hand drawings, and comic strips are not coded in this study. Also not included are occasional images found on the front and back covers, indexes, appendices, as these were often copies of images present in the chapters and already counted in this study.

A total of 304 illustrations are examined in this study, comprised of 245 photographs (80.6%) and 59 maps (19.4%). The textbook *World English*, which draws upon *National Geographic* magazine as a source, contained the greatest number of entries including 105 photographs (84.7%) and 19 (15.3%) maps. The French language textbook *Motifs* had fewer illustrations falling into the two categories of maps (12.5%) and photographs of exterior settings (87.5%) with 88 entries. A total of 92 illustrations are included in this study from the Spanish language textbook *La Plaza* which contained 63 photographs of exterior settings (68.5%) and proportionally almost twice as many maps (31.5%) than the other textbooks.

Methodology

Categories within the overlying themes of nation and language communities, land use or development, and time were created in order to analyze the content of the maps and photographs of exterior settings. Both the types of categories and the coding of images are open to interpretation and other studies might find differing results if other characteristics are taken into account.

The history of colonization by Spain, France, and England has largely influenced which languages are spoken in many countries today. In order to better understand how the geographic spaces of the three linguistic communities are represented in these three textbooks, I first examine which nations are represented through photographs and maps. This is the first spatial category included in this study.

Second, is the question of the language spoken following colonization in the form of either official or commonly used languages. England, France, and Spain are the mother countries of languages now spoken in daughter countries. For example, one of these new language communities is the United States of America which has no official language. On the other hand, Morocco's only official language is Arabic, yet the French occupation of this country and continuing political and social ties have resulted in a large French-speaking population in this country. Images representing countries that do not belong to the given language community are found in the French and English textbooks. This is discussed later as are the many photographs which cannot be associated with a given nation and are coded as nationally "undetermined" settings.

Third, the photographs depict multiple types of land development. Common categories of urban, rural and nature land use were insufficient in conveying the richness of spatial types. Urban areas are often defined as any settlement of more than 1,500 to 2,000 inhabitants. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development delimits rurality at 150 persons/kilometer². However, this definition tends to consider villages located in rural areas or remote settlements as "urban" (Ferranti *et al*, 2005: 46). The images coded as "rural" in this study have scattered or low-density construction. Agriculture or farming tends to take place in rural areas and is a modified form of the natural environment. Given the importance of agriculture in contemporary society, the category "agriculture" was coded. Finally, sport activities were a common theme in all textbooks. These settings are typically outdoors, yet the surrounding environment, whether rural or urban, is often obscure. As the main focus of the pictures was land use for sport or physical activity, a category was added for these types of illustrations.

Fourth, the buildings or constructions within the illustrations evoke differing time periods. Given the historical importance of colonization on current language practices, history was divided into three major periods for analysis. Spanning thousands of years, the first timeframe used here is the "pre-contact" period before 1492. Next comes the period labeled "recent history" when colonizing monarchies from present-day Europe spread across the globe. Last is the "modern" period which covers the last century, a period of decolonization, post-colonization and neo-colonization. Some illustrations contain images of, for example, both older stone buildings from "recent history" next to modern concrete structures. In this case, the illustration was classified under the predominant focal point of the photograph. Some older buildings, such as Notre Dame, were begun during the "pre-contact" period. Although work may have continued during later dates, the original period of construction is coded. Photographs of nature are not included in this section on time.

National or regional space

The French textbook *Motifs* most closely associates the language taught with the “mother country” as more than two-thirds ($n = 56$, 72.7%) of its photographs represent France, and only 14.3% ($n = 11$) are from the French-speaking areas. The maps include two of Europe, three of France, plus one world map. The photographs evoked several regions including Sub-Saharan Africa ($n = 5$), Quebec ($n = 3$), North Africa ($n = 2$), and the Caribbeans ($n = 1$). There are no photographs from French speaking regions in Europe outside of France, such as Belgium, Switzerland, Andorra, or Monaco. The co-text to the image of the Alps evokes sport in France. Numerically, the maps offer a wider view of French-speaking countries than the photographs of exterior settings.

This emphasis on the representation of France contrasts with the statistics on French speakers across the globe. As mentioned earlier, more French speakers are found in Africa than any other continent. The accent on France mirrors the French tradition of separating French literature from Francophone literature. Hence, while a range of places are evoked, a quantitative analysis highlights how the language-space representation revolves essentially around the *Hexagone*.

The authors of the Spanish textbook *Plazas* adopted a contrasting approach to representing the many nations where Spanish is spoken. They had encouraged teachers of Spanish to submit photographs of *plazas* of their region. The first chapter addresses learners in the United States and portrays areas of this country where Spanish speakers have or continue to influence society, such as San Augustine in Florida. Within the textbook, 6.5% of the illustrations ($n = 6$) are of the United States, which is slightly greater than the UNESCO estimated number of 5.6% percent of the world’s native Spanish speakers who live in the United States, but less than other estimates (cf. Fernández and Roth, 2006). Spain is represented ten times or in 10.8% of the maps and photographs. This percentage is almost equivalent to the actual weight of estimated native hispanophones from Spain (10.5%).

Hence, the nations represented in *Plazas* tend to mirror actual hispanophone populations worldwide. The Spanish language is grounded, literally, in the many countries where it is spoken as an official or common language.

The title *World English* is an interpellation of English as a *lingua franca* taught and spoken with no national boundaries. This is confirmed by the photographs and maps within its covers. In the maps and photographs, England is represented only 10 times (8.1%), the United States 25 times (20.2%), but these countries are far from constituting the nexus of the geographical grounding. On the contrary, several chapters are devoted to countries in which English is not an official language such as the Netherlands and Morocco. In fact, 27.4% of the studied illustrations from this textbook represented areas where English was not an official language, while the French textbook contained only

two images of predominately non-French speaking area and the Spanish textbook none. Furthermore, the English textbook also had the greatest number of photographs coded as being of “undetermined” national setting (25.8%, $n = 32$) compared to the French (9.1%, $n = 8$) and the Spanish (9.8%, $n = 9$) textbooks. These illustrations included, for example beaches or cityscapes with insufficient markers for codage and the absence of co-text rendering the subject difficult or impossible to locate on a map.

Thus, in *World English*, the English language is disconnected from a specific English-speaking culture. People and culture remain the nexus of the textbook, but without linking the language taught to any determined geographical place. In this way, there are no borders placed on the spatial community of English speakers.

Spatial development

The images in these textbooks portray varying place settings, ranging from congested urban centers, to Renaissance constructions, to impressive pre-contact edifices of monumental scale. Three common types of land use include urban areas of commerce, industry and housing, rural areas where agriculture plays a central role, and nature parks or other areas where the environment has been preserved. These representations evoke, and hence ground the language taught, in differing spatial or development types. However, the representation of land use differs across the three textbooks.

Slightly more than half (52.7%) of the photographs within the three textbooks were of urban areas. However, the French textbook contained considerably more illustrations of urban areas (72.7%, $n = 56$). While the *Plazas* contained 37 images of urban areas (58.7%), *World English* contained much fewer with only 34.3% ($n = 36$) of the photographs representing urban areas. However, the latter had proportionally almost twice as many portrayals of rural areas with 21.9% ($n = 23$) compared to the French 7.8% ($n = 6$) and Spanish 11.1% ($n = 7$) textbooks. These figures of rural areas is confirmed by the number of farming or agricultural scenes as *World English* contains 7.6% ($n = 8$) farming scenes compared to those in the French 3.9% ($n = 3$) and Spanish 1.6% ($n = 1$) textbooks.

These percentages are lower than the actual estimated number of 50% of the people worldwide who live in rural areas and 38% of the world’s land which is dedicated to agriculture according to the World Bank (2010). However, the numbers of Latin Americans and Caribbean who live in rural areas are contested by Ferranti *et al* who, using a different methodology, estimate that 42% of this population live in rural areas, as compared to the World Bank estimate of 24% (2005: 30-60). Although it does not have the same rural occupation as Latin America, there are almost twice as many people living in rural areas of France than in the other original European countries. In 1999, 18% of the mainland population lived in rural areas, with an increased migration towards those areas

since 1990. As in Latin America, the services of many of these populations are of notably lesser quality than in urban areas (Ferranti *et al* 2005, & DATAR, 2003).

All of the textbooks contain fairly equal number of representations of sport activities, such as hang gliding, rodeos or bicycling, that often take place in natural settings. *Motifs* has slightly more portrayals of sports or physical activities at 10.4% ($n = 8$) than *World English* 9.5% ($n = 10$) or *Plazas* 6.3% ($n = 4$). However, much greater differences are found in non sport related nature scenes. While almost one quarter of the photographs in the English 26.7% ($n = 28$) and Spanish 22.2% ($n = 14$) textbooks portray natural settings such as the beach or mountains, the French textbook contains only four such images (5.2%). Perhaps the US language instructors are not perceived by the textbook industry as correlating France to touristy natural areas, as may be the case for, especially Latin American countries and nature.

Time and space

Lastly, the photographs were coded for the timeframe they evoked. The percentages of illustrations from each time period of the French *Motifs* and the Spanish *Plazas* were similar. Approximately half the photographs from both textbooks portrayed modern settings, with slightly more found in the French textbook (53.2%, $n = 41$) than in the Spanish one (50%, $n = 27$). In comparison, 62.6% ($n = 57$) of the settings portrayed in *World English* were modern. Hence, all textbooks place the language taught in a modern context.

Less than half of the photographs from the French (40.3%, $n = 31$) and Spanish textbooks (38.9%, $n = 21$) were from the period of recent history. In contrast, only 17.6% of the photographs from the English textbook depicted images from the colonial period of “recent history” ($n = 16$).

However, if the maps, which all offer a “modern” viewpoint, are excluded from the analysis, these comparisons are altered. The considerable amount of maps in the Spanish textbook increases its figure of “modern” settings. If one examines only the photographs, the percentages for “modern” and “recent” settings in *Plazas* are nearly reversed as there are proportionally more illustrations of “recent history” in the French textbook with 35.2% ($n = 31$) of all the illustrations studied, compared to 25.3% ($n = 21$) of the total illustrations studied in the Spanish textbook or 14.5% ($n = 16$) of those in the English textbook.

The textbook *World English* contained proportionally more photographs representing pre-contact constructions than the other two textbooks. These 18 photographs included images from predominately English-speaking countries such as Stonehenge in England, rock carvings in Australia and from countries that are not predominately Anglophone including the Djemaa el Fna market place in Marrakech, Morocco, Incan pueblo Chinchero in Peru, the Pyramids of the Giza Necropolis in Egypt, and the Easter Island statues in Chile. These

photographs of pre-contact settings make up 19.8% of the photographs in *World English*, compared to only 11.1% ($n = 6$) for *Plazas* and 6.5% ($n = 5$) for *Motifs*. So, the illustrations in *World English* occupy the exterior ranges of the timescale, both modern and pre-contact. Thereby relying heavily upon culture as a center of interest, but not limiting its scope to Anglophone regions. On the contrary, *Motifs*' illustrations evoke the "recent history" timeframe in which France played a major international role.

Discussion

While language textbooks are often designed to help learners discover a new culture or cultures, issues of motivating students and offering themes related to students' realm of understanding are also key to their conception. One example of this is the recurrent topics of sport or physical activity that are found in all of the textbooks. However, textbooks also serve as windows into cultural worlds.

The Spanish textbook had the greatest number of maps. This presence reflects the authors' decision to represent the many countries across the globe where Spanish is a commonly spoken or official language. The French textbook displayed a greater number of images evoking the colonial period. Many of these correspond to famous French monuments such as the Arc de Triomphe, the Luxembourg Palace, and the Louvre. In contrast, the English textbook corresponds to Ziguras (2008) description of globalized curricula which are:

generic, universalized programs produced in one location for global consumption. This relies on removing specific references to local experiences and examples that may confuse or distract remote students, and focusing on universal approaches that can be applied in any context. (2008: 49)

This study finds that these three textbooks portray contrasting "language spaces". Although there are traces of international speakers of French, the French textbook *Motifs* revolves mainly around France and its attractive historical monuments. In contrast, the Spanish textbook, *Plazas*, crosses multiple national borders to portray the many urban voices of this language, while sidestepping farming or rural spaces. Although the English textbook, *World English*, contains many pictures and maps of the United States, it breaks the traditional language and culture link by evoking many regions where English is not a commonly spoken or official language. This break is embodied in portrayals of modern settings and couched in the depiction of pre-contact space. In this way, it counters UNESCO affirmation that language "is at the heart of issues of identity, memory and transmission of knowledge" (2006, UNESCO). In fact, the textbook contains a chapter on outer space, thereby projecting language outside the borders of our universe.

The importance of these contrasting perspectives touches on issues of globalization and learning.

As Jelfs (2008) highlights, globalization has led to the phenomenon of higher education now becoming a market commodity. For example, United Kingdom transnational education translated into 111.5 million euros (£99 million) provisions to higher education institutions in 2001-2002. According to the *Atlas of Student Mobility*, some 3 million students studied abroad in 2008, 21% in the United States, 13% in the UK, 7% in Australia and 9% in France. Among those 3 million students, 624,000 were from the United States. Of the 266,448 international students enrolled in France, many came from former colonies, notably Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal, Cameroon, Vietnam, and Lebanon. Students from China, Germany, and Italy also make up a major part of the foreign student population in France (Institute of International Education, 2010).

Many fewer international students travel to Spanish-speaking countries, as Spain counted 18,206 enrolled foreign university students in 2006 and Mexico 2,880 in 2007 of which 34% came from the United States and 15.5% from France (Institute of International Education, 2010). Students need high-level language skills to participate in in-country or distance learning university programs. If Spanish and French are portrayed as restricted to a non-global space, the interest in learning the language diminishes when compared to English which is conveyed as borderless.

Second, the research in multicultural education has highlighted the necessity to evoke the multiple voices in educational settings. It is through multiple perspectives that students have the opportunity to construct questioning or critical approaches. In the language classroom, issues of language, literature, history, politics, culture, or the self as member and agent of overlapping communities benefit from multiple perspectives. The advantage of this to student development is not limited to marginalized students, but profits students from all backgrounds. The conclusions of this study raise important issues about the language and culture link. This study finds that French is not represented as a fully international language, especially of francophone regions – including many areas of Africa or Latin America. Spanish is represented in a broad range of countries, yet again is not portrayed as spoken outside these limits. While the lack of localising information in the English textbook may encourage student identification with the subject matter, it does not encourage the discovery or respect of local identities. These considerations may alert teachers to consider the international scope they wish to convey in the language classroom.

It appears that the anchoring of a language in a given spatial region is linked to overriding political powers. The longstanding French dichotomy dividing France/Francophone based on a colonial history that considers some members as “Other” actually sets the ground for the loss of French language as an international *lingua franca*. This position contrasts significantly with the perspective found in the Spanish textbook that embraces multiple national representations. In its usurping of international cultural icons such as the

pyramids of Giza or the Mayas and display of unidentified locations, the English textbook trivializes the significance of culture by creating a homogenised “we”.

The foreign language classroom and foreign language research are promising spaces for a sincere exploration of the diversity of cultures and international realities. Apple places the realities of people worldwide at the very center of meaningful educational frameworks:

The denial of basic human rights, the destruction of the environment, the deadly conditions under which people (barely) survive, the lack of a meaningful future for the thousands of children [...] – all of this is not only or even primarily a “text” to be deciphered in our academic volumes as we pursue our post-modern themes. It is a reality that millions of people experience in their very bodies every day. Educational work that is not connected deeply to a powerful understanding of these realities (and this understanding cannot evacuate a serious analysis of political economy and class, race, and gender relations without losing much of its power) is in danger of losing its soul. (Apple, 2004: 222).

The intricate link between language and culture as well as the introduction of subjects that build relationships between cultures, mean that these two aspects should be represented in language textbooks. The increased international teaching of *lingue franche*, especially English, requires that we examine what cultures and knowledge are being taught. The risk remains that less taught cultures and knowledge, especially from the Third World be trammelled once again in the marketplace economy of education that should not be designed to uniquely serve elite populations.

Corpus of case study

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