

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS IN
ELEMENTARY GERMAN TEXTBOOKS

by

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(Under the direction of Dr. Brigitte Rossbacher)

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to provide a comparative analysis of cultural presentations in current elementary German textbooks designed for colleges and published in the U.S.A. After the introduction, chapter 2 explains why the integration of culture into language teaching has been a difficult task from its start in the late 1960s up to now. In the subsequent chapter I discuss critical evaluations of German textbooks that reflect the general difficulties of teaching culture. The main chapter of the thesis contains an analytical description of cultural presentations in the most recent elementary German textbooks accomplished by a close cultural analysis of one theme represented in all examined textbooks.

INDEX WORDS: Textbooks, Elementary German Textbooks, Teaching Culture, Foreign Language Teaching

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1960s the concept of culture and how to teach it has been one of the most prominent in the profession of foreign language teaching in the U.S.A.. American language teachers have had to struggle to maintain an appropriate place for languages in school and college curriculums, and to integrate the teaching of culture into language teaching. There are two main changes that occurred during this time.

The first real revolution was caused by a new communicative approach, the origins of which are to be found in the changes in the British language tradition dating from the late 1960s.¹ According to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the goal of teaching languages started from a theory of language as communication that obviously meant to change the material towards authenticity connected with real-life tasks. In addition to being able to read, write and understand the foreign language, it has been expected from students that they can also speak. Thus, the formula for language education has been expressed as followed: a communicative approach, four skills plus culture.

Effective resources for teaching culture in the foreign language classroom were also offered in the U.S.A. in the 1970s and the 1980s². Lafayette, for example, developed principles for the coherence of language and culture in instruction. Stern provided a

¹ Richards, Jack, and Theodore Rodgers. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.

² Lange, Dale L. "Planning for and Using the New National Culture Standards." *Foreign Language Standards: Linking Research, Theories, and Practices*. Ed. June K. Phillips. Illinois: National Textbook Co., 1999. 57-120.

concept of the integration of linguistics, culture, communication, and language learning into one subject; and Seelye created a system of teaching culture from the development of objectives for the language learning curriculum towards principles of their assessment.

The second major change in the teaching of culture in the context of foreign language teaching became obvious in the 1990s, which witnessed the need for a strong commitment to the development of cultural understanding. The political changes in Europe and the united Germany contributed in particular to a reassessment of teaching German in the U.S.A.. From then, the dilemma how to teach culture and which aspects of it to teach became a challenging topic for all language teachers and led to the development of new cultural techniques, formats and contexts. However, the teaching of culture has remained a difficult and controversial task.

In my thesis I first explain why the integration of culture into language teaching has been a difficult process requiring new curricula, a change from teacher-centered to student-centered approaches, dealing with student attitudes towards foreign cultures, and common criteria on the range of cultural topics to be taught. Finally, with the emergence of the *Standards for Foreign Language Teaching in the 21st Century* in 1996 some professional consensus in teaching language and culture has been achieved.

In the next chapter of my study I discuss historical evaluations of elementary German textbooks linked to the general difficulties of teaching culture. My interest here lies in the dimension of the textbooks (number of pages and chapters), cultural content (the range of topics presented and omitted; and also the relationship between student interest and cultural content in the textbooks), and cultural formats (the ways culture is presented in the textbooks).

The fourth chapter contains an analytical description of cultural presentations in the most recent elementary German textbooks published in the U.S.A.. As criteria I use the breadth of the cultural content, depth of its presentation, and the variety of cultural entries. I accomplish this by a close analysis of one cultural theme presented in every examined textbook.

It should be pointed out that the examined textbooks come in a package, i.e. the textbooks are accompanied by supplemental material such as a workbook, lab manual, video program, CD, and a web site. These components extend the content and formats of cultural presentations, and one should take them into account while choosing a textbook.

Finally, in the conclusion I briefly sum up the results of my textbook examination and give advice on the use of the examined textbooks in terms of their cultural presentations.

CHAPTER 2

DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING CULTURE

Omaggio Hadley indicates four difficulties in teaching culture³. First, the study of culture requires additional time that few teachers have to spare in the language curriculum. Secondly, some language instructors do not possess strategies for integrating culture into language teaching as they are not trained specifically for teaching culture. A third reason lies in student attitudes. Sometimes students expect to understand the target culture in the framework of their own culture, and when they notice differences, they might react to them negatively. Finally, many instructors wish to have a document that would help them to organize cultural content to be taught. Let us look closer at these claims.

The first reason why it becomes so difficult to integrate culture into the foreign language curriculum is the curriculum itself. The language curriculum is overcrowded and many teachers do not feel they can spare time for culture. Often teachers think that students should first learn the grammar and vocabulary and leave culture for later. Responding to this point, Bernhardt and Berman from Stanford University questioned the outcomes of language learning of first-year students, who were conventionally supposed to finish the language course knowing more about the nature of the first subjunctive in German than about Germany⁴. This dilemma led Bernhardt and Berman in 1996 to

³ Omaggio Hadley, Alice. *Teaching Language in Context*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 2001. 346-49.

⁴ Bernhardt, Elisabeth, and Russell Berman. "From German 1 to German 001: A Chronicle of Curricular Reform." *Die Unterrichtspraxis* 32.1 (1999): 22-31.

change the language course “German 1” to the language course “Germanic Studies 001”. The objectives of the new course were to introduce students to the culture of German-speaking countries with emphasis on history, geography, politics, society, education, economics, and religion, and at the same time to bring them to the intermediate level in four language skills: listening, writing, reading and speaking. The study was carried out over three years. In the first year by using the textbook *Alles Klar!* (Karl Otto) and reading *The Germans* (Gordon Craig) the course had promising results. In the second year, language and culture were taught separately by a language instructor and a graduate teaching assistant who engaged students in cultural discussions. The results turned out to be less satisfactory than expected as the cultural discussions were not integrated into the teaching of the language and considered an “add-on”. In the third year, the department adopted the textbook *Deutsch. Na klar!* (Robert Di Donato) and the previous format with *The Germans* and also added texts by Goethe, Kafka, and Rilke. This time the cultural discussion was most interactive, and “bridging the language and literature curriculum” (Berhardt and Berman 29) impacted students in remarkable ways. In other words, the study proved the importance of enhancing the cultural component of elementary language courses.

Difficulties in teaching culture also stem from the way learners acquire and address cultural issues. One research study in this area was undertaken at the University of Arizona in 1996 and is described by Wright⁵. The study focused on two ways of teaching culture in beginning German language courses. The impetus for this project came from teachers and students complaining that “the format of teaching in the

⁵ Wright, David. “Culture as Information and Culture as Affective Process: A Comparative Study.” *Foreign Language Annals* 33.3 (2000): 330-41.

beginning language program for German bore little resemblance to the way culture looks and feels in real life” (Wright 330). Beginning language teachers tend to teach language and culture through a one-way transmission of knowledge where a student gains the teacher’s knowledge in a passive way. In the study, two groups were created to test two different approaches to learning culture using the textbook *Sprechen wir deutsch!* (Jurasek 1995). The teaching of culture for the first group was very teacher-centered: it was based on a “culture capsule” (a short description of one minimal difference between American culture and the target culture) where students just needed to recollect what was given in a cultural text. The treatment group learned about German culture via a process- and learner-centered approach: the instructors encouraged students to address the problems in their own way, gave students an opportunity to reflect on the cultural topic, and helped them to put their own reasoning into words by sharing opinions. The conclusion of the experiment was informative: in the treatment group the dimensions of comprehension were gained by a process-oriented approach providing students with the options to analyze the culture and bond them with people from other cultures. As Wright points out, one of the methods applied in the learner-centered approach was comparison where students demonstrated their understanding of concepts through comparisons of the culture they study and the native culture. In this framework, students did not only learn the language, but also laid a basis for successful interaction with members of another culture, and created more objective ways of thinking about another culture. Wright comes to the conclusion that those students who have a possibility to consider their personal approaches and experiences have a more positive attitude toward other cultures and greater understanding of cultural differences.

Jourdain argues that “difficulties in broaching cultural material, including boredom on the part of the students and frustration on the part of the instructors, arise when we follow the classic model of teacher-centered instruction” (Jourdain 440). Once again, the author insists on a student-centered approach and presents its advantages over a teacher-centered approach. The student-centered model advocated by Jourdain involves three phases to help students build connections: students gather information about a cultural topic; students transfer that knowledge to their peers by communicating in the target language; students think critically and discuss the values represented in the target language as reflected in the information they have gathered⁶. Jourdain advocates making these components of a student-centered approach the basis of teaching culture. By helping students to discover the foreign culture through their own value system, language educators may help them to go beyond a superficial knowledge of culture.

Thirdly, some teachers do not feel comfortable teaching culture because they must deal with student attitudes. Mantle-Bromley indicates that ethnocentrism and national identity may make students refuse to learn about another culture as it seems somehow unpatriotic⁷. If students view the U.S.A. as dominant in standards of living, education, or political power, the success of second language and culture acquisition could be decreased. Bennett, however, believes in ethnorelativism which refers to “being comfortable with many standards and customs and having an ability to adapt behavior

⁶ Jourdain, Sarah. “Building Connections to Culture: A Student-Centered Approach.” *Foreign Language Annals* 31.3 (1998): 439-450.

⁷ Mantle-Bromley, Corinne. “Preparing Students for Meaningful Culture Learning.” *Pathways to Culture*. Ed. Paula R. Heusinkveld. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, 1997. 437-60.

and judgments to a variety of interpersonal settings” (Bennett 26)⁸. Bennett developed a model in which the process of ethno relativism is described in six stages: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration. In the first stage many people are unable to perceive the foreign culture as they assume that everyone is like them. In the second stage they consider other cultures less developed than their own culture and produce negative attitudes towards them. At the minimization level people recognize and accept cultural differences, but only on a superficial level, like eating habits or social norms. Then, in the acceptance stage, they respect cultural differences by knowing that there is no right answer. On the adaptation level people adjust themselves to the foreign culture by intentionally using the knowledge of the target culture. In the final stage people can see themselves as “multicultural” in addition to their own national identity or ethnic background.

Bennett’s model explains why students might have unpleasant experiences with the language and stereotyped ideas about its culture. It also advocates that we should be cautious while dealing with students’ cultural stereotypes. However, the notion of stereotypes comes not only from students, but also from teachers themselves. Teachers with no experience of studying or living abroad might be afraid to teach culture as they fear they do not know enough. In that case they rely on stereotypes, which are a subject of Webber’s discussion⁹. Traditionally, he says, culture was seen as a number of facts about the country (countries) whose language the students were learning. As these facts were treated as background information for the mastery of the language, student

⁸ Bennett, Milton J. “Intercultural Communication: A Current Perspective.” *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication*. Ed. Milton J. Bennett. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, 1998. 26-30.

⁹ Webber, Mark. “Intercultural Stereotypes and the Teaching of German.” *Die Unterrichtspraxis* 23.3 (1990): 132-39.

knowledge of culture was limited to stereotypes with which Webber strongly disagrees. From the example of German and English images that do not overlap – for instance, while the German notion of good luck is connected to a pig (*Schwein haben*, *Glücksschwein*), in English it is a symbol of dirt and filth – Webber concentrates on cultural interference in the language classroom. As a response to common ways of approaching stereotypes, with the example of German *Oktoberfest*, Webber introduces new strategies which help students to acquire German culture through meaningful analysis and discussion.

Finally, the last problem that slows down the successful teaching of culture is a lack of agreement between language teachers about what cultural topics should be taught. Teachers might be uncertain which topic to choose as there has been no consensus on criteria how the topics should be chosen. Yet, a certain progress in this area has been achieved. The reassessment of teaching culture found its expression in the *Standards for Foreign Language Teaching in the 21st Century* (1996) created by the U.S. Department of Education, and the National Endowment for the Humanities in collaboration with ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language), AATG (American Association of Teachers of German) and other language teaching organizations¹⁰. Even though the *Standards* do not describe the current state of foreign language education in the country and do not function as a curriculum document, they provide language teachers with general teaching guidelines and examples of cultural approaches, formats and content. The *Standards* stress the importance of the communicative paradigm, that is,

¹⁰ *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*. Ed. American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Lawrence: Allen Press, 1999.

giving students opportunities to explore, develop, and use communication strategies appropriately.

The *Standards* indicate five goals: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. *Communication* is claimed in the *Standards* to be “the heart of second language study” (Standards 31). Through the study of a foreign language students also gain the understanding of the *culture*. More specifically, under “culture” students demonstrate an understanding of the relationships between perspectives (meanings, attitudes, values, and ideas), practices (patterns and social interactions: what to do, when and where), and products (books, tools, foods, laws, music and games) of the target countries. At the same time learning a foreign language enables students to make *connections* to other subjects or foreign languages and cultures and to *compare* or contrast their own language with that which is studied. Finally, the study of a foreign language offers students participation in local and international *communities* and brings them to cross-cultural understanding.

In addition to general principles, the *Standards* include language-specific guidelines for Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and classical languages. The German language section follows the general principles of the *Standards* document, and applies these principles to the teaching of German, which is a project of the AATG.

The *Standards* for German set up cultural goals for students at different learning levels from grades 4 to 16. These could be summarized as follows: while learning a language students are supposed to observe and identify certain information, discuss connections, and participate in cultural practices in various context settings. Possible topic areas include school, family, community, verbal and non-verbal behavior (driving,

Schulabschluss, Heiraten), environmental issues, results and reactions to *Wiedervereinigung*, living or studying abroad, the rise of *Gewerkschaften*, the concept of *Mitbestimmung*, personal ads, and *der grüne Punkt*.

To be able to understand the relationship between products and perspectives, students search, identify, and investigate the functions of products from German-speaking countries. They analyze, interpret, and evaluate other topics such as *Gesundheit*, housing, toys, foods (*Spätzle, Knödel, Schnitzel*), types of works made by students within German-speaking cultures (Easter eggs, *Papierlaterne*, flower boxes), famous people (Wilhelm Tell, Hans and Sophie Scholl, Pastor Martin Niemoeller), utilitarian products (BMW, Mercedes, VW), sports equipment, household items, tools, clothing, religion (church and state), intangible products (school system, the German market), political institutions (parties and the 5% rule), expressive products (radio, newspapers, TV, film, advertising, literature, folklore, art, music, opera, theater, dance, propaganda, national anthem, museums), economic systems (GmbH, AG) and political systems (federalist structure), patriotism and national identity through German history, feudal system, National Socialism, Holocaust, and the role of minorities. Students should also be able to compare the political/economic systems, and the cultural traditions of Austria, Germany, and Switzerland.

In brief, performing as a guide for present-day foreign language teaching, the *Standards* emphasize the integration of culture into language learning and urge language instructors to fulfill their principles.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL EVALUATIONS OF CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS IN LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS

The area in which teachers, *Standards*, and the curriculum come close is the textbook. Together with a blackboard and media, a textbook is an essential tool in foreign language teaching. The selection of a textbook should suit the objectives of the course, its length, the age and geographical location of learners. The textbook embodies a specific teaching methodology and set of goals, and it is a main source of guidance for both students and teachers. It is essential to see the teacher and the textbook as partners where the job of the teacher is to provide what the textbook fails to provide and the function of the textbook is to guide teachers in their teaching presentations. In terms of teaching culture, the textbook becomes one of the tools used by language instructors together with audio and video material, native informants, realia, and, increasingly, the World Wide Web.

Although most textbooks published in the last decades dedicate considerable space to culture and cultural topics, the variety of topics and the quality of cultural presentations vary greatly. As a result of difficulties in teaching culture examined in the first part of this project, over the last years language instructors have been experiencing problems not only with cultural contents, but also in the choice of formats, manners and the language of cultural presentations. The evaluation of textbooks, particularly those for German, has been accentuated in articles by Hook and Kahn, Lafayette and Schulz.

Hook and Kahn criticize the elementary German textbooks published in the 1980s in the U.S.A. for being too packed¹¹. “They are mostly too long and too complex, too riddled with the ever-changing ideas of their makers” (Hook and Kahn 156). Compared to the length of courses, it is almost impossible to get through the whole textbook in two required semesters, they say. Their suggestion is to reduce the number of pages and additional materials and allow students and teachers to have a nice thin textbook of the German language. In their survey the authors took six of the most common German textbooks from the late 1980s and compared the number of pages, chapters, and units, as well as samples of additional material. The results were overwhelming: *Deutsch für alle* (1987) had 585 pages and 18 chapters, *Deutsch natürlich* (1986) had 589 pages and 14 chapters, *Deutsch heute* (1988) had 587 pages and 14 chapters, *Deutsche Sprache und Landeskunde* (1989) contained 510 pages and 18 chapters, *Wie, bitte?* (1989) had only 382 pages, but 26 chapters, and *German: A Structural Approach* (1989) had 600 pages and 18 chapters.

On the one hand, as Hook and Kahn argue, German textbooks are too packed. On the other hand they introduce a narrow range of current and trendy topics and lack in sophistication and depth. Ariew, describing language textbooks in general, sees the main reason for this in the compromises of the textbook publishers for whom a textbook is a product, a subject of financial reward¹². An extremely innovative textbook would not claim a financial profit, and this is why so many popular textbooks look alike not only in terms of visual aesthetics, but also in the way they approach the teaching material. Ariew

¹¹ Hook, Donald, and Lothar Kahn. “Should Our Textbooks Go on a Diet?” *Die Unterrichtspraxis* 23.2 (1990): 156-58.

¹² Ariew, Robert. “The Textbook as Curriculum.” *Curriculum, Competence, and the Foreign Language Teacher*. Ed. Theodore Higgs. Illinois: National Textbook Co., 1982. 11-32.

disagrees with the textbook publishers about avoiding certain issues that are relevant to the target cultures. In German language textbooks, for example, mention of alcohol consumption is often omitted, even though in reality it is hard to imagine the German culture without the conventions of alcohol drinking. In Ariew's view, if students are interested in the taboo topics, and they are not presented in the textbook, it becomes difficult to stimulate a discussion in the classroom and motivate cultural learning. As Ariew points out, "texts often treat the foreign language itself not in its own *milieu*, but in an American cultural context" (Ariew 14). The tendency to provide the public with what it expects can lead to generalizations or misrepresentations.

In this context, Dechert and Kastner carried out research at the University of Arizona and the University of Texas in 1985 to compare student interest in cultural issues¹³. They introduce the results of student ratings of cultural topics and then compare them to cultural items in German textbooks. The cultural topics are divided into the following categories: Culture (literature, music, art, history, and politics), current issues, ethnography, geography, history, language and communication, ordinary daily life activities, and the social system. Overall, students had the highest interest in ordinary daily life, communication, current issues, and ethnography. Regarding tourist attractions, students were mostly interested in the FRG, then Austria, Switzerland, and least of all, the GDR. The interest of students in social and political structures first focused on the GDR, second on the FRG, third on Austria. In history the highest interest was in the Nazi regime, then relationships between Germany and the U.S.A, and then postwar history. In Culture the first place was taken by literature, then theater, then folk art, music and fairy

¹³ Dechert, Christiane, and Peter Kastner. "Undergraduate Student Interests and the Cultural Content of Textbooks for German." *Modern Language Journal* 73.2 (1989): 178-91.

tales of all German-speaking countries. Within the ten cultural categories, the overall order of country preferences was: Federal Republic of Germany, German Democratic Republic, Switzerland, and Austria.

When Dechert and Kastner compared the results of student interests with the cultural content of the German language textbooks used in the U.S. high schools and post-secondary institutions (*Deutsche Sprache und Landeskunde* 1985, *Deutsch Aktuell* 1985, *Deutsch heute* 1984, *German today* 1982, *Sprechen wir Deutsch!* 1985, *Alles Gute* 1986, *Deutsch für Alle* 1986, *Neue Horizonte* 1984, *Unsere Freunde/Welt der Jugend* 1978 and *Wie geht's?* 1984), they found a “weak relationship between student interest and cultural content” (Dechert and Kastner 190). The examined textbooks tended to omit topics essential to students, and extend the information about topics in which students expressed little or no interest.

A report by Schulz that addresses how the FRG and U.S. are portrayed in foreign language textbooks touches on related issues¹⁴. Schulz’s project examines the image of the U.S. and FRG in textbooks from the mid-1980s. Her starting point is the main weakness of elementary German textbooks published in the U.S.A.: “They [textbooks] try to do too much in too little time and space, resulting in a rather superficial, simplistic, and at times trivialized portrayal of the cultures” (Schulz 98). The author criticizes the textbooks for taking a tourist perspective by presenting primarily information on daily life, landscape, weather and tourist attractions. At the same time, the textbooks do not give enough information about Germany as a leading industrial nation. The textbooks often omit the issues of World War II, National Socialism, and the status of Berlin.

¹⁴ Schulz, Renate. “The FRG and the U.S. as Portrayed in Foreign Language Textbooks: A Comparative Study.” *Die Unterrichtspraxis* 20.1 (1987): 95-101.

Sometimes, Schulz argues, the FRG is pictured as an idyllic place without any history, social, political, or economical problems. Thus, U.S. textbooks give an uncritical picture of life in Germany and even generalize the life style in the GDR with other major German-speaking countries, which turns out to be misleading and controversial. One of Schulz's conclusions is that the implication of live styles in the FRG cannot be copied in the chapters on Austria, the GDR, and Switzerland.

In another work Schulz insists to some extent on a cultural approach even in grammatical drills¹⁵. According to the scholar, instead of comparing the height of a fictitious Melanie and Max, the textbook could lead to a comparison of the geographical features of various countries and the U.S.A. When teaching adjective endings, rather than describing some fictitious table or chair, an exercise could lead to the description of adjectives of specific landscapes, artistic creations, homes or festivals. Similar to the first study, the author agrees with other critics of U.S. language textbooks on "the need to change the content from the bland, middle class, sanitized tourist focus to information that offers an intellectual challenge" (Schulz 169).

Following the same idea, Olsen undertook in 1998 a survey of German first- and second-year textbooks (*Kontakte* 1996, *Neue Horizonte* 1999, *Deutsch heute* 1992, *Deutsch: Na Klar!* 1999, *Wie geht's?* 1995, and *Treffpunkt Deutsch* 1999)¹⁶. In terms of cultural content, "almost half the respondents expressed the desire for less trivial information," Olsen stated (Olsen 142). Additionally, survey respondents deplored a

¹⁵ Schulz, Renate. "Bridging the Gap Between Teaching and Learning: A Critical Look at Foreign Language Textbooks." *Challenges in the 1990s for College Foreign Language Programs*. Ed. Sally Magnan. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1991. 167-179.

¹⁶ Olsen, Solveig. "First- and Second-Year Textbooks: Which Ones We Use and How." *Die Unterrichtspraxis* 33.2 (2000): 138-147.

narrow range of current and sophisticated topics and criticized publishers for reducing the content to the lowest common denominator. Criticism of content focused on general reading sections, which failed to convey significant cultural information.

In terms of cultural formats in language textbooks, Lafayette and Schulz present the most important formats of teaching culture to be included in a language textbook, e.g., artifact, dialogue, reading passage, culture capsule, mini-drama, film, photograph, song, newspaper advertisement.¹⁷ Omaggio Hadley offers more specific and descriptive formats, which she terms “teaching techniques”.

Omaggio Hadley describes cultural formats introduced in the 1960s and 1970s but still used commonly in language teaching, especially in textbooks. The first format to be named is a “culture capsule”, a short description of one minimal difference between an American and a target-culture custom, accompanied by illustrated photos, ideas, or realia. First developed in the early 1960s, the technique gained popularity, but its success declined in the 1980s and 1990s. Even though culture “capsules” and “clusters”, which consist of about three illustrated capsules developing related topics, still can be found in foreign language textbooks, they have been strongly criticized, as in the previously mentioned work by Wright. A culture “capsule” is a facts-only format connected to a teacher-centered approach because it does not require active student participation in cultural learning.

Another technique, a culture “assimilator”, which contains episodes taking place between an American and a member of the target culture, in which misunderstanding develops, was created in 1971. It integrates the information in the capsules and

¹⁷ Lafayette, Robert, and Renate Schulz. “Evaluating Cultural Learning.” *The Culture Revolution in Foreign Language Teaching*. Ed. Robert Lafayette. Illinois: National Textbook Co., 1975. 104-108.

dramatizes it through a skit or situational role-play. Additionally, an assimilator provides feedback paragraphs which clarify the cultural point around which the miscommunication occurs. A culture “minidrama” works in the same way as the “assimilator”, just that the explanation of miscommunication is given not in extra paragraphs, but in the last scene of the role-play.

Two other important formats to be mentioned here are “hypothesis refinement” (enables students to refine their knowledge of the target culture through research skills when students question and compare the sources of cultural situations, examining them for publication date, audience, and purpose, and then report their findings to the audience), and “artifact study” (involves giving descriptions and forming hypotheses about the function of the unknown object). Other formats mentioned by Omaggio are a part of the general formats described above and include “deriving cultural connotations”, where students learn to associate cultural images with words and phrases they learn in the new language, “decreasing stereotyping perceptions”, which help students understand the dangers of making generalization described by Webber, and “using proverbs and humor”.

CHAPTER 4
CURRENT STATE OF CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS IN ELEMENTARY
GERMAN TEXTBOOKS

In order to analyze how current language textbooks reflect the goals of the national *Standards* and the interests of students in a foreign language culture, I compared the cultural presentations of six elementary German textbooks published in the U.S.A. and designed for colleges. The textbook titles and publication dates are:

Deutsch heute. 7th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.

Kontakte. 4th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000.

Vorsprung. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002

Treffpunkt Deutsch. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, 2003.

Wie geht's?. 7th ed. Boston: Thomson & Heinle, 2003.

Deutsch: Na Klar!. 4th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004.

In my examination I will first concentrate on the content of presentations analyzing the range and depth of topics presented. Then I will focus on cultural formats, i.e., how culture is presented, for example, in cultural sections, reading passages or grammatical structures.

To gain an objective picture of a variety of cultural topics presented in the textbooks, I designed a table where I marked the presence of certain topics by an “X”. Table 1 is followed by a close explanation of the content of every examined textbook.

Table 1: Range of Cultural Topics Presented in the Textbooks						
Category	<i>Deutsch heute</i>	<i>Kontakte</i>	<i>Vorsprung</i>	<i>Treffpunkt Deutsch</i>	<i>Wie geht's?</i>	<i>Deutsch: Na Klar!</i>
Everyday Life	X	X	X	X	X	X
University and School Systems	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vocational Training		X	X	X		
Tourist Attractions	X	X	X	X	X	X
Famous People	X	X	X	X	X	X
Environment	X				X	X
Social Policy	X	X	X	X	X	
German Language	X	X	X	X	X	
Politics	X	X	X	X	X	X
Foreigners in Germany	X	X	X	X	X	X
Germans in America	X	X	X	X		
Women in German Society	X	X		X	X	
GDR	X		X	X	X	X
Austria	X	X	X	X	X	X
Switzerland	X	X	X	X	X	X
Luxembourg				X	X	
Lichtenstein				X	X	
National Socialism				X		X
Holocaust			X	X		
Unification	X		X	X	X	X
EU	X	X	X	X	X	X
Technological and Industrial Systems		X				
Church and Religion						

According to the date of publication, the first book that I discuss is *Deutsch heute* published in 2000. *Deutsch heute* presents the following topics: everyday life with postal and phoning services, etiquette, sport and leisure activities, climate, holiday and vacations, food, currency, shopping, television, tourist accommodations, public transportation, theaters, films, and housing. Interestingly, in the everyday life category the textbook also gives information about the difference between friends and acquaintances, and the habit of closed doors in Germany. The further cultural topics are the (former) GDR (German Unification, making and breaking of the Berlin Wall), the German language, tourist attractions (Berlin and Vienna), university and school systems (BAFöG, foreign students, vocational training), famous people (the Habsburgs, Doris Dörrie, Margarethe von Trotta, Bertolt Brecht), politics (Austria in Europe, German form of government, EU), the environment, social policy, and foreigners in Germany. *Deutsche heute* also includes more specific topics like Germans in America and women in German society.

Deutsch heute deals not only with information on Germany, but also on German-speaking countries. In regard to Austria, the textbook introduces Vienna, Austrian coffee houses, and political neutrality. Regarding Switzerland, it focuses on Swiss dialects, the history of Switzerland, and Swiss political institutions. However, the book fails to provide information on other German-speaking countries such as Luxembourg and Lichtenstein. The Holocaust and National Socialism, the technological and industrial systems, church and religion in German-speaking countries mentioned by the *Standards* and indicated by Dechert and Kastner from the previous chapter as topics with high student interest, are also absent in the textbook. On the other hand, the topics on divided Germany and German unification are very substantial, and cover a lot of aspects of

present day social and political difficulties in the Federal Republic. The absence of these topics in the German textbooks from the 1980s criticized by Schulz has been rectified in this textbook. By taking not only an historical, but also a contemporary perspective, *Deutsch heute* encourages students in further learning.

The second textbook to be discussed in my study is *Kontakte*. In the introductory section of this textbook the authors refer to the 1996 national *Standards* (Terrell xiv), providing solid information on the five “C”s: Communications, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. To meet the “Cultures” criteria the textbook presents a range of topics, describing the culture of German-speaking people mentioned in the *Standards*. In other words, *Kontakte* includes such settings as everyday life with etiquette, newspapers, magazines and books, weather and climate, landscape, personal information, daily routines, postal and phone services, leisure activities, shopping, holidays, housing, public transportation, food, films, traveling, vacations, and even natural remedies. The further themes in *Kontakte* are more diverse than in *Deutsch heute* and include the social system (health insurance and *Jugendschutz*), women in society, youth in Germany and Austria, school and university systems, vocational training, politics (EU), tourist attractions (this time not restricted to Vienna and Berlin, but broadened to Bad Harzburg, Leipzig, Greifswald, Bonn, Zürich, Husum and Nürnberg), Germans in America, multicultural Germany and Austria and, finally, the German language. *Kontakte* goes beyond the themes in *Deutsch heute* and introduces economics (production, enterprises), architecture (German styles and Hundertwasser), literature (*Lorelei*, Theodor Storm, fairy tales), sculpture and German fashion design. The GDR is mentioned in two topics: housing and foreigners in Germany.

Not only the general topics in *Kontakte* contain a lot of cultural information, but also the subtopics introduce a large amount of cultural material. The section on famous people is extensive and includes Wilhelm von Humboldt, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Ingeborg Bachmann, Hannah Arendt, Clara Schumann, Carl Spitzweg, Walter Gropius, Caspar David Friedrich, Hans Riegel, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Ivan Illich, Alfred Dassler, Käthe Kollwitz, and Hedwig Dohm. To avoid a heavy load of these names, it would have been useful to group personalities in sections like famous architects, musicians, painters, scientists, etc., or to reduce the number of names to make space for other topics such as general portraits of other German-speaking countries: the former GDR, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein; German history including National Socialism, the Holocaust, and unification, as well as technological and industrial systems, religion and church.

In general, *Kontakte* functions as a textbook of culture with a main focus on cultural presentations while it also practices the four skills of foreign language learning: writing, listening, speaking, and reading. As *Kontakte* is based on the Natural Approach, where “there is an emphasis on exposure, or input” (Richards 179), students need to be exposed to a wealth of vocabulary and certain grammar structures to be able to express their own meaning in a communicative context. This explains the heavy load of cultural material in German.

The next textbook to be examined is *Vorsprung* published in 2002. *Vorsprung* presents the following topics: everyday life with etiquette, postal service, food, public transportation, weather and climate, housing, shopping, holidays, and the value system (acquaintances vs. friends). The other topics include German immigration to North America, the German language, foreigners in Germany, university and school systems, politics, social policy, administrative system, and vocational training. Additionally, it is

interesting to find information on the *Goethe-Institut* and Higher Institution Exchange Programs (DAAD), which is one of the possibilities for American students to study abroad. Compared to *Deutsch heute* und *Kontakte*, the focus of the tourist attractions topic in *Vorsprung* changes to Heidelberg, Mannheim, Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Tübingen, Stuttgart, Leipzig, Dresden, and Berlin. The famous people section is limited to the Brothers Grimm. The German history section, however, includes a substantial amount of information on the Holocaust, unification, and the EU. An essential part of the cultural material is the introduction of German-speaking countries since unification and the opening of the European Union borders (Lo vik 527).

In *Vorsprung* the history of the GDR is presented separately from the history of Germany. The textbook also gives portraits of Switzerland and Austria, but does not go beyond general overviews. The textbook still fails to provide information on the economic system and religion in Germany, and portraits of Luxembourg and Liechtenstein. National Socialism, the environment, and women in German-speaking societies are also not presented. In general, in terms of cultural content, *Vorsprung* is similar to *Deutsch heute*, yet more up-to-date, as *Vorsprung* was published 2 years later than *Deutsch heute*. The textbook takes not only a tourist-appeal perspective, but also presents other topics covering a wide range of student interests.

Similar to the previously examined textbooks, *Treffpunkt Deutsch* introduces everyday life topics, which include postal and phone services, landscape, climate and weather, sport activities (soccer), public transportation, vacations and traveling, holidays, housing, food, shopping, currency, newspapers and magazines. Similar to *Deutsch heute* and *Vorsprung*, *Treffpunkt Deutsch* gives examples of the value system in Germany introducing *Mitbringsel* and the cuckoo clock as a part of German traditions. The housing

topic includes not only student housing, but also the concept of *Schrebergärten*. Other topics are vocational training, the university system, history of the German language, foreigners in Germany, the social system, women in society, immigration from German-speaking countries to North America, tourist attractions (Munich, Southern Tyrol, Berlin), German history (1918-1990), politics (EU), and the GDR (Berlin Wall and GDR social policy). German writings from the Middle Ages are included. The “Leute” sections present famous people of German-speaking countries: Mozart, Nicolas Hayek, Ludwig II. von Bayern, Margarete Steiff, Walter Gropius, Robert Kalina, and the Brothers Grimm, as well as ordinary people: Fatma Yützel (a German citizen of Turkish origin), Christian Köchling (a German immigrant to North America), Ulrike and Matthias Sperber (a dentist family from the former GDR), and Doris Ziegler (a social worker for women’s rights). The portraits of German speaking countries go beyond Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and include Lichtenstein and Luxembourg. Except for the environment, technological and industrial systems, church and religion, *Treffpunkt Deutsch* succeeds very much in terms of cultural content.

The fifth elementary German textbook to be discussed here is *Wie geht’s?*. Everyday life topics related to Germany and included in this textbook are etiquette, shopping, postal and phone services, food and beverages, housing (including *Schrebergärten*), public transportation, traveling, accommodations, currency, holidays and vacations, landscape and climate, sports and clubs, countryside life, films, music, art, television, and cabaret. The value system with friends and acquaintances previously mentioned in *Deutsch heute*, *Vorsprung* and *Treffpunkt Deutsch* is extended by role of flowers, and love and marriage values. The other topics on Germany include social policy, tourist attractions (Frankfurt am Main, Regensburg, Berlin, and Weimar), the

environment, politics (EU), foreigners in Germany, the school and university system, and women in German society. The famous people sections include Rose Ausländer, Wolf Biermann, the Brothers Grimm, Goethe, Schiller, Eva Strittmatter, Suna Gollwitzer, Bertolt Brecht, and Erich Kästner. The GDR is not presented fully as a concept in one unit or a chapter, yet there is mention of the GDR in the topics of housing, German currency, and German unification. There is a variety of topics related to the German language for a beginning German linguist: German in Europe and throughout the world, the history of the German language, German dialects, idiomatic expressions, language and gender bias, the Goethe-Institut as an institution of German language promotion, and even the recent spelling reform.

The main feature that differentiates *Wie geht's?* from other examined textbooks is that the information on the German-speaking countries of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Lichtenstein focuses effectively on the differences between them. *Wie geht's* includes a wide range of topics on Austria such as everyday life with food and beverages (coffee houses, regional specialties, wine), holidays and vacations, sport and clubs, tourist attractions (Vienna), architecture (*Jugendstil*), famous Austrians (Friedensreich Hundertwasser), and landscape. The Switzerland sections are structured in the same pattern as the Austrian themes: everyday life topics with food and beverages (regional specialties and wine), holidays and vacations, sports and clubs, languages and tourist attractions (Bern), famous Swiss (Wilhelm Tell and Hermann Hesse), and landscape. Luxembourg and Lichtenstein are portrayed only with general overviews. The topics of vocational training and Germans in America included by *Deutsch heute*, *Kontakte*, *Vorsprung*, and *Treffpunkt Deutsch* are not presented here, and church and

religion are not mentioned as well. German history, including National Socialism and Holocaust, are also omitted.

The most recent textbook among those being examined is the 4th edition of *Deutsch. Na Klar!* which came out in 2003. Like *Kontakte, Deutsch. Na Klar!* refers in the preface to the five “C”s of the national *Standards* and explains in this context the choice of activities, exercises, readings, culture and language tips. The textbook presents the following topics: everyday life with etiquette, housing, holidays, theaters, shopping (including European sizes for clothing), places to eat, leisure activities (including German health spas), vacations, traveling, radio, television, and currency. The other topics are foreigners in Germany, school and university systems, famous people, the environment, and tourist attractions. Compared to all discussed textbooks *Deutsch: Na Klar!* covers only about half the cultural topics. The omitted topics are vocational training, the German language, social policy, Germans in America, women in German society, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, technological and industrial systems, church and religion. Moreover, those topics that are introduced do not vary in a range of subtopics. For example, the category famous people includes only Bertolt Brecht and his poem “Vergnügungen”; the school and university systems gives the explanation of BAföG, and even the tourist attractions section includes only the description of Berlin. Furthermore, German history does not appear until the end of the textbook, where in the section “Übergang: Gestern und heute” we find an overview of German history (1939-1991) with emphasis on National Socialism, women in the Third Reich, and the *Wende*.

From *Deutsch. Na Klar!* students would not get an impression that German is a state language in other European countries, such as Austria, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, and Luxembourg. Only a hint at the beginning of the introduction section of the textbook

mentions other German-speaking countries, and the place of Germany in the EU. All “Kulturtipps”, except for the first coffee houses in Vienna and regional culinary specialties in Switzerland, refer exclusively to Germany. *Deutsch. Na Klar!* satisfies student interests only on the surface of cultural concepts, and does not reflect their interest in German history, politics, technology, religion and economic production mentioned by the *Standards*. Except for a couple of charts which compare the student budget in the eastern and western parts of Germany (Di Donato 351), the books fails to present the GDR and its historical relations to the FRG. As the perspective of cultural presentations in *Deutsch: Na Klar!* is very much focused on the present and on tourist appeal, *Deutsch. Na Klar!* on one hand performs as an appealing guide for young people going abroad. On the other hand, the lack of more sophisticated topics might fail to spark student interest in further learning German in a college classroom.

The next criterion used in my cultural evaluations of the textbooks is the way culture enters the textbooks. In this context I rely on Omaggio Hadley’s explanation of cultural formats described in the second chapter of this study.

The main point in presenting the cultural material is in the dimensions of cultural formats which can be divided into main cultural sections, additional sections, and “enrichment” sections. Culture can also be a part of reading, listening and grammar sections. The cultural input could also be facilitated by a cast of fictional characters. Table 2 presents a close picture of different formats in the examined textbooks.

Table 2: Textbook Sections with Cultural Input								
Textbook	Main cultural Sections	Additional Sections	“Enrichment” Sections	Characters	Reading Sections	Listening Sections	Grammar Sections	Realia, Illustrations, Graphs, etc.
<i>Deutsch heute</i>	Land und Leute				Beim Lesen	Bausteine für Gespräche	integrated throughout	integrated throughout
<i>Kontakte</i>	Kulturecke: Kulturprojekt Porträt	Kultur. Landeskunde. Information.		Groups of characters	Lesecke	integrated throughout	integrated throughout	integrated throughout
<i>Vorsprung</i>	Brennpunkt Kultur		Deutsch im Beruf	Groups of characters	Absprungtext	Anlaufertext	integrated throughout	integrated throughout
<i>Treffpunkt Deutsch</i>	Kultur	Infobox Vorschau		Groups of characters	Leute	Zum Hören	integrated throughout	integrated throughout
<i>Wie geht's?</i>	Fokus	Vorschau			Einblicke	Gespräche + Wortschatz	integrated throughout	integrated throughout
<i>Deutsch: Na Klar!</i>	Kulturtyp		Zwischen- spiel		Lesen	integrated throughout	integrated throughout	integrated throughout

The main cultural material in *Deutsch heute* is presented in culture clusters called “Land und Leute” that consist of a couple of passages about living styles in German-speaking countries. The topics in “Land und Leute” are related to the overall chapter theme. Each “Land und Leute” section is accompanied by a photo and additional exercises asking students to express their opinion about cultural information and compare it with American culture. Another important format of presentation in *Deutsch heute* is a culture minidrama constructed of a couple of episodes in which a cultural conflict or miscommunication occurs. The minidrama is placed at the beginning of every chapter and is at the same time a listening activity called “Bausteine für Gespräche”. The main reading sections “Beim Lesen” also contain cultural material related to the main cultural theme. In terms of the language of the presentations, it should be pointed out that the “Land und Leute” sections are consistently in English. Since most of them are up to 1 page long, the switch from English to German would require a shortening of the cultural information.

In comparison with *Deutsch heute*, the culture in *Kontakte* is presented in more diverse formats. One of the formats is an artifact study entitled “Kultur. Landeskunde. Information,” which aids students in comparing and contrasting their own culture with that of the German-speaking countries. The artifact study format involves giving a description of unknown object(s) and motivates students to speculate on the answers. The number of artifact study sections varies from 3 to 5 per chapter, and this is without counting the main cultural presentation called “Kulturecke” introduced at the end of each chapter. In “Kulturecke” the formats of presentation include hypothesis refinement entitled “Kulturprojekt”, in which students explore the target culture via encyclopedias,

newspapers, magazines, and the Internet. There are also culture capsules called “Porträt” that feature historical figures from German-speaking countries, along with profiles of the cities from which they come. Reading sections called “Lesecke” also contain some cultural material. Culture is also represented in listening and grammar activities. By comparing the choice of languages of the cultural presentations in *Deutsch heute* and *Kontakte*, we get two extremes. While *Deutsch heute* keeps English throughout the whole book, the language of presentation in *Kontakte* is German from the very beginning.

To facilitate the cultural and language tasks, *Kontakte* invents a group of characters. For example, first we encounter 8 fictional students who learn German at the University of California, Berkeley, with their professor Karin Schulz. This helps students to reach an appropriate identification while learning German in the classroom. The geographical location and the diversity of the German language are represented by narrators from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Hence, we are introduced to Silvia Mertens and her boyfriend Jürgen Baumann from Germany, as well as the Schmitz family, and an American student Claire Martin accompanied by her friends Melanie Staiger and Josef Bergmann from Regensburg. Other characters are Renate from Berlin, Mehmet from Turkey, and Marta from Poland, all of whom live in Germany. Further, we meet two families from Munich: the Wagners and the Rufs. Günter Thelen, Alexander Siebert, Sybille Gretter, Judith Koerner, Michael Pusch, and Maria Schneider are among their neighbors. In Austria, students meet Richard Augenthaler, and in Switzerland, they meet the Frisch family. Invented primarily to help students with cultural input, the characters might fail to create a rich context, as it is easy to lose track of their origins.

Similar to *Kontakte*, *Vorsprung* presents an invented character, Anna Adler, an American student from Fort Wayne, Indiana, who studies in Tübingen, Germany, for a year. Together with Anna, her aunt Uschi, uncle Hannes, and grandparents Kunz, as well as German friends Barbara and Stefan, students discover the differences between American and German culture.

Vorsprung presents culture in main cultural clusters entitled “Brennpunkt Kultur”, which provide general information on German-speaking countries. The number of culture sections increases gradually with the proficiency of the learners. Culture enters not only through culture clusters, but also through listening exercises (Anlauftexte), and main reading passages (Absprungtexte) which increase in cultural focus towards the end of the textbook. The “Anlauftext” at the beginning of each chapter is supported by a text featuring Anna and designed like an American cartoon, which helps students to personalize the target culture by identifying it with an American student, Anna. For example, in chapter 3 the “Anlauftext” called “Was halten wir von Anna? Was hält sie von uns?/What do we think about Anna and what does she think about us?” (Lovik 81) shows the stereotypical ideas that Americans have of Germans and vice versa. The notion of stereotypes described in the first chapter by Webber is dismantled after Anna visits Germany and meets “real” Germans. Additionally, *Vorsprung* has three complex cultural sections entitled “Deutsch im Beruf”, which highlight advantages of learning German for use in a working environment. The language of the culture clusters is English throughout the textbook.

The development of cultural competence in *Treffpunkt Deutsch* is also facilitated by invented characters of various ethnic backgrounds. Two main sets of characters are

four friends, Claudia, Martin, Stephanie, and Peter, who all study in Munich, and the Ziegler family from Göttingen.

In *Treffpunkt Deutsch* culture is presented in “Kultur” and “Infobox” sections, both culture capsules. The main difference between them lies in the extra activities of the “Kultur” sections which give students an opportunity to explore and analyze German culture through a personal approach as these sections contain post-reading activities that require active student participation. The “Leute” sections, which are simultaneously main reading sections, spotlight famous as well as ordinary people in the German-speaking countries. The “Vorschau” section at the beginning of every chapter also introduces cultural reading related both to cultural and grammatical themes. Placed in the beginning of every chapter and expressed through cultural “assimilators” or “clusters”, “Vorschau” has the same function as the “Anlaufertext” in *Vorsprung*: it serves as the first cultural input of the general cultural theme. “Zum Hören” listening sections also have post-listening activities for detailed (cultural) comprehension.

As in *Vorsprung* the language of presentation in *Treffpunkt Deutsch* depends on the language proficiency of learners. The “Kultur” and “Infobox” cultural sections are in English until chapter 8 of a total of 12 chapters, thereafter they are in German. Even though the *Vorschau* sections are exclusively in German, the range of their formats – culture clusters, capsules, and assimilators – helps to make the cultural and grammatical input smoother.

Like *Treffpunkt Deutsch*'s “Vorschau”, the “Vorschau” sections of *Wie geht's?* are also at the beginning of every chapter. However, the feature that affects the cultural content of *Wie geht's?* in a negative way is a lack of student-centered activities. Together

with “Fokus”, main culture capsules in English, which are interspersed throughout the textbook, “Vorschau” sections (also in English) have a facts-only approach and require from language instructors additional cultural exercises in order to provide students with options to analyze and interpret the target culture. *Wie geht’s* is an example of the teacher-centered approach criticized in works by Wright and Jourdain and discussed in the first part of this study. Only the main reading passages “Einblicke” have pre-and post-reading activities and also feature one or more of cultural aspects referred to the chapter topic. The listening sections “Gespräche + Wortschatz” are similar to “Zum Hören” listening sections from *Treffpunk Deutsch* in containing post-listening (cultural) activities.

In *Deutsch: Na Klar!* culture is presented in culture capsules entitled “Kulturtipps”, which are enhanced with photos and other visuals. The rest of the cultural information is spread throughout the book in listening, readings (Lesen) and grammar exercises. There are also five “Zwischenspiele” similar to the “Deutsch im Beruf” sections in *Vorsprung*. These sections introduce process-centered cultural activities with personalizing, analyzing and interpreting cultural material. As they can be seen as supplemental sections, their effectiveness depends on a teacher’s choice when constructing a syllabus. The language of the cultural tips changes gradually from English (chapters 1-3) to English and German (chapters 4-9) to exclusively German (chapters 10-14).

In terms of other formats, all examined textbooks offer illustrations, photographs, maps, registers, advertisements, menus, authentic bills, receipts, tickets, extracts from brochures and prospectuses, etc. Every chapter of each textbook opens with a photograph

related to the chapter's cultural topic. However, not every textbook offers large, colorful and attractive pictures. Among the examined textbooks, *Kontakte* looks bland and out-of-date.

Some of the images in textbooks make students think that Germany looks more like the U.S.A. than it does. As was established before, a textbook is a market product. That is why in looking for customers, teachers and students, many publishers and textbook authors try to appeal to learners with visuals resembling American culture. On the one hand, such visuals might help students to smooth over cultural differences. For example, in *Vorsprung* in the topic friends vs. acquaintances there is a picture of two young women, one of whom is black, sitting on a bench in front of a German university (Lovik 199). Apparently, the textbook tries to represent Germany as a multicultural society and it succeeds. However, on the other hand this visual creates an inadequate representation as Germany is, in fact, not as diverse as the U.S.A.. *Deutsch: Na Klar!* also contains a picture of a wheel-chair user in a German restaurant (Di Donato 184). One can state that a disability does not necessarily restrict one's life in Germany more than in the U.S., but I would argue that the percentage of German restaurants with wheel-chair access is less than in the U.S.. Another picture in *Vorsprung* uses a menu from a McDonald's restaurant as a context for the topic "Job perspectives in Germany" (Lovik 262). In this case, McDonald's appears as one of the most popular German restaurants. Some images of cultural themes are also one-sided such as a list in *Vorsprung* of German universities, which covers the universities only in Western Germany which no longer exists as a separate territory (Lovik 339).

To show specifically how culture enters into textbooks and what students actually learn from a cultural topic I now turn to a close analysis of the topic “Feste und Feiertage/Celebrations and Holidays”. This topic is presented in the middle of all 6 textbooks, though under different titles.

In *Deutsch heute*, chapter 6 is entitled “Was hast du vor?/What are your plans?” and contains 5 main cultural “Land und Leute” sections, which present work vs. leisure time in Germany, meals in German-speaking countries, bringing gifts (when one is a guest), requirements for a driver’s license, theater in the German-speaking countries, holidays and German film. Each cultural section is a culture cluster in English with follow-up activities. For example, in the section “Feiertage” students are introduced to both secular holidays (New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day, Day of Unity) and religious holidays (Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, Christmas Eve, 1st and 2nd Christmas Days). The names of some holidays are given in English and then translated into German, the others are written in German with their English counterparts in parentheses. The discussion section includes two questions: the first question requires students to do some historical research and find out why May 1 is a popular date to honor workers, and the second makes students think about whether it is good for business to be closed on holidays. The section contains a colorful picture of New Year’s Eve fireworks in Mittenwald (Moeller 220).

Furthermore, culture in this chapter is a part of the listening comprehension “Bausteine für Gespräche” and the reading section “Beim Lesen”. While the listening comprehension is based on an invented dialogue between German students about free-time activities, the reading section provides an authentic interview with other German

students on the same topic. In the grammar sections culture is not an object of the grammar exercises presenting present perfect tense, but there is some culturally related vocabulary connected to a trip to Austria or Switzerland. Interestingly, a writing section “Zum Schreiben” requires students to write a paragraph about their future year in Germany describing people, weather, leisure, sport, music, concerts, etc. The chapter opens with a large colorful photograph that portrays young people standing in front of a movie ad. The chapter also contains 10 other photographs showing different types of leisure activities and celebrations in Germany, a menu from “Café an der Uni”, 9 advertisements (from shopping ads to theater and movie tickets), and 6 cartoon pictures.

The “Feste und Feiertage” topic can be found in chapter 4 “Ereignisse und Erinnerungen/Events and Memories” of *Kontakte*. The main cultural section “Kulturecke” offers a hypothesis refinement called “Kulturprojekt” about German immigrants and a culture capsule “Porträt” about Hannah Arendt. The other 3 sections “Kultur. Landeskunde. Information” are culture capsules that introduce the university system of Germany, shopping hours, holidays and traditions. All of the main and additional cultural sections in this chapter are in German.

The section about German traditions opens with a springboard where students are asked about their native holidays and the way they celebrate them (Terrell 149). Then, after the question about holidays in Germany, students’ attention is drawn to a picture, a reproduction of P. Bauer’s “Auf dem Christkindlmarkt in München im Jahre 1987.” The next set of questions asks students about their Christmas traditions followed by a comparative chart that shows the percentage of Germans who spend Christmas at home,

with parents, children, friends, and on vacation. The reproduction of an *Adventskalender* is also provided.

Culture also enters into a reading section called “Lesecke” where an authentic newspaper article is presented. In comparison to the chapter “Was hast du vor?” from *Deutsch heute*, the grammar section of “Feste und Feiertage” in *Kontakte* presenting the perfect tense does not contain cultural components. The chapter opens with a mid-sized photograph of *Fachwerkhäuser* in Marburg. In contrast to *Deutsch heute* with 10 photographs, the chapter has only 3 other photographs presenting markets in Freiburg and Hannover and riding a bicycle in Germany. Yet the chapter contains 9 line drawings including cartoon pictures, and a small map of Germany. There are no advertisements, though these are usually present in other chapters.

Vorsprung’s chapter 10 called “Fest- und Feiertage” contains 4 main “Brennpunkt Kultur” cultural sections that present in English information on the Brothers Grimm, carnival and the beginning of Lent, Switzerland, and holidays. In the section about holidays students first encounter different names for a carnival celebration in some regions of Germany, as well as in Austria and Switzerland. Then, as an example of a carnival, the section introduces a description of a carnival season in the Rhineland. The description is complimented by a large colorful photograph of a costumed music group in Cologne (Lovik 429).

The next section on German holidays contains the description of religious and non-religious holidays (New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day, Beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Easter, International Labor Day, Ascension Day, Pentecost, and Corpus Christi Day). Also, the section provides information on German annual

festivals, such as *Vogelwiese* in Dresden, *Zwiebelmarkt* in Weimar, *Cannstätter Wasen* in Stuttgart, and *Oktoberfest* in Munich. Special attention is given to the description of the Day of German Unity and also to the Christmas traditions. The section closes with a photograph of a Christmas market in Nürnberg.

Culture also enters into the “Anlaufertext” with the German version of the fairy-tale “Cinderella”, as well as into grammar activities presenting simple past and past perfect tenses, which are based primarily on fairy-tale motives or on Switzerland. Culture is explicitly presented in the reading section “Absprungertext”, which describes a vacation in Braunwald, Switzerland, and contains an authentic text in one of the Swiss dialects and follow-up strategies for its understanding. The reading section also has post-reading activities requiring students to fill in the blanks from the reading text, to interpret this text and to make associations with Switzerland. The chapter opens with a large photograph of carnival in Mainz, and also has 13 other photographs presenting mostly carnival traditions and Swiss ski runs. It also has numerous caricatures of fairy tales, some of which are colorful, the others are in black and white; also a picture of the Brothers Grimm, a map of Switzerland, and a reproduction of the Swiss coats of arms, as well as an extract from a hotel brochure with the description of hotel accommodations. It should also be pointed out that cultural formats in this chapter take a humoristic approach mentioned by Omaggio Hadley previously, for example the picture of Snow-white and the dwarfs. In the picture a snow-white in the image of a modern woman says angrily to seven traditional fairy-tale dwarfs: “Zum letzten Mal! Haut ab! Ich bin nicht Eure Schneewittchen!/For the last time: Scram! I am not your Snow-white” (Lovik 417).

The 7th chapter in *Treffpunkt Deutsch* “Feste und Feiertage” presents in English holidays and celebrations in the German-speaking countries in the main cultural section “Kultur”. This section opens with Christmas traditions including Christmas Eve, *Adventskalender*, Christmas tree, gift-giving, the 1st and 2nd Christmas Days, and a Christmas goose, followed by New Year’s Eve, and spring religious holidays: Easter (including Good Friday, *Ostersonntag*, and *Osterhase*), and Pentecost. The secular holidays in German-speaking countries include Labor Day, *Tag der deutschen Einheit* in Germany, *Tag der Fahne* in Austria, and *Confoederatio Helvetica* in Switzerland. The section also contains two follow-up activities. In the first activity students compare German holidays with their native holidays, and in the second activity they read an ad about Easter holiday in Potsdam and answer related to it questions. There are two photographs in this section, one of Christmas in Stuttgart and the other of a first communion in Austria (Widmaier 232).

The other cultural topics such as Berlin and *Mitbringsel* (a small gift for a hostess/ host or for people at home when one has been away) are presented through other culture capsules called “Infobox”. Culture also enters through culture assimilators or capsules in the “Vorschau”, an introductory section in German with the first cultural input at the beginning of the chapter, and also through grammar exercises requiring students to use preposition in destinations around German-speaking countries, and also in the speaking activity about traveling by train in Germany. Culture is also part of the reading section called “Leute”, which presents Margarete Steiff and the teddy-bear. The chapter opens with a colorful mid-sized photograph of carnival costumes. It also has 12 other photographs, mostly little images of different aspects of German culture from a picture of

a bakery to a traffic light and a train. It also has 5 cartoon pictures, a couple of advertisements and a copy of a train ticket. Similar to *Vorsprung's* chapter, the chapter in *Treffpunkt Deutsch* contains humorous pictures, for example a photo of a bicycle being used as a means of transport in Germany with a sign "Ihr Auto stinkt mir/I am fed up with your car" (Widmaier 244).

In *Wie geht's?* the chapter in which we are interested is called "Feste und Daten/Celebrations and Dates", and is the 4th chapter of the textbook. Four main cultural sections called "Fokus" present in English congratulatory expressions, German holidays, traditions, wine festivals, harvest time, and traditional garb. Culture also enters through "Vorschau", which presents the cultural theme "German holidays" related to the title of the chapter. Both "Fokus" and "Vorschau" are culture capsules, but unlike in *Treffpunkt Deutsch* they are in English. The "Vorschau" section contains the description of secular holidays (New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Labor Day, Day of German Unity, Austrian *Nationalfeiertag*, and Swiss *Bundesfeiertag*) and religious holidays (Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, and All Saint's Day). The section also points out the difference between vacation (*Urlaub*) and school vacation (*Ferien*). There is a photograph of *Lebkuchenherzen* at a Christmas market (Sevin 103).

Two other "Focus" sections give detailed descriptions of celebrations in German-speaking countries. The first "Focus" section, for instance, underlines the importance of Christmas and the traditions related to it: Christmas Eve, *Christkind* in Southern Germany, and *Weihnachtsmann* in the Northern part of Germany, *Nikolaustag*, and Christmas markets. The *Christkindlmarkt* in Nürnberg is named the most famous German outdoor Christmas market. The second "Focus" section describes German festivals:

Oktoberfest in Munich, *Meistertrunk* in Rothenburg ob der Tauber, and *Karneval* in Cologne. Both “Focus” sections contain pictures related to the description.

Similar to *Kontakte*, the grammar exercises in this chapter do not include a cultural component, but the reading section “Einblicke” presents an authentic text about German holidays and celebrations. The chapter opens with a colorful photograph of New Year’s Eve in Innsbruck. It also contains 9 other photographs of the *Oktoberfest* and other celebrations, 3 cartoon pictures, two schedules of performances in Bremen Theater and of Christmas entertaining in Leipzig, signs of the zodiac, and a map of the federal states of Germany. Some pictures appear humorous as a photo of a boat fight in Tübingen where we see funny little boats occupied by people with long poles with which they are trying to reach their rivals (Sevin 110).

In *Deutsch: Na Klar!* chapter 3, entitled “Familie und Freunde/Family and Friends”, contains the main cultural section “Kulturtipps” written in English and presenting German holidays and celebrations: Christmas, Easter, Day of German Unity, and Carnival. It is also mentioned that Germans go all out for family celebrations such as weddings, silver and golden wedding anniversaries, and birthdays. In the “Kulturtipps” there is a picture of a carnival parade in Cologne.

Culture also enters through birthday wishes taken from German newspapers which function as cultural, vocabulary and grammatical input for one of chapter’s 3 subtopics called “Feste und Feiertage”. The description of holidays in family Thalhoffer (including Valentine’s Day, wedding, birthday, Christmas, and the New Year’s Eve) performs as a reading section for this subtopic because it contains information in German. Culture also enters through 2 special grammar sections called “Analyse” where students

are required to identify certain grammatical features taken from the authentic advertisements. The main reading section “Lesen” is an authentic questionnaire about favorite German celebrations. The chapter opens with a large colorful photograph of a family, and also contains 7 other photographs, 5 cartoon pictures, 12 advertisements, and a picture of Goethe in the context of a “kennen und wissen” exercise.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In the selection of a textbook with effective cultural presentations, *Deutsch heute* and *Treffpunkt Deutsch* meet my first choice because they satisfy most of the aspects of student interest and the national *Standards* criteria in terms of their cultural themes. Even though there are some topics which *Deutsch heute* does not offer (Luxembourg and Lichtenstein, the Holocaust and National Socialism, the technological and industrial systems, church and religion), the other topics like everyday life, the German language, tourist attractions, university and school system, famous people, the environment, Austria and Switzerland are very substantial. Especially rich in content are topics on divided Germany, German unification, and present day social and political difficulties in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Treffpunkt Deutsch has the same strong point. Firstly, it covers the topics in *Deutsch heute*, and then introduces not only Germany, Austria and Switzerland, but also Lichtenstein and Luxembourg. Except for the environment, the technological and industrial systems, church and religion, which are not included, *Treffpunkt Deutsch* succeeds very much in terms of cultural content. By taking not only a historical, but also a contemporary perspective, both *Deutsch heute* and *Treffpunkt Deutsch* encourage students in further learning about German culture.

The formats in these textbooks, such as culture clusters, minidramas, and assimilators allow students to analyze and interpret the target culture by comparing it

with American culture. Culture enters into these textbooks not only through main and additional cultural sections, but also through listening, reading and grammar activities. Additionally, both textbooks contain authentic visuals and colorful illustrations.

Vorsprung also covers a lot of the cultural themes and even refers in the introduction to the national *Standards*. An essential part of the cultural material in the textbook is the introduction of German-speaking countries since unification and the opening of the European Union's borders. The German history section includes a substantial amount of information on the Holocaust, the history of the GDR, unification, and the EU. However, the textbook fails to provide information on the economic system and religion in Germany, Luxembourg and Lichtenstein, National Socialism, the environment, and women in German-speaking societies. In general, in terms of cultural content, *Vorsprung* is similar to *Deutsch heute*, as the textbook takes not only a tourist-appeal perspective, but also presents other topics covering a wide range of student interests.

Vorsprung also contains effective cultural formats especially in reading and listening sections. Cultural input is facilitated in this textbook by cartoon characters and enriched with the sections which offer American students up-to-date information on the German and the world job market. However, in regard to visuals, the textbook does not earn a high ranking as some of the images in the textbook create an inadequate representation of Germany by making Germany look more like the U.S.A..

Wie geht's? differs from other examined textbooks through the rich information on Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Lichtenstein and focuses effectively on their differences. The other topics introduced in *Wie geht's* are everyday life, social

policy, tourist attractions, the environment, foreigners in Germany, the school and university system, famous people, German history and the German language. Even though *Wie geht's* could be rated high in the range of covered topics, its weakness is in the teacher-centered cultural formats that are not facilitated by pre- and post-cultural activities. In this textbook students do not really get the possibility to experience the differences and similarities between their own culture and the target culture unless they encounter it in listening or reading sections.

In the same way *Deutsch: Na Klar!* relies on a facts-only approach where culture is presented in culture capsules without any pre- or post activities. Additionally, the textbook fails because of a narrow range of presented topics. The variety of topics in this textbook does not go beyond superficial travel-guide topics and does not vary in subtopics. Even though *Deutsch. Na Klar!* refers in the preface to the five “C”s of the national *Standards*, it satisfies student interests only on the surface of cultural concepts, and does not reflect their interest in German history, politics, technology, religion and economic production mentioned by the *Standards*. In terms of visual aesthetics, however, this textbook has a breadth of illustrations and is similar to *Deutsch heute, Treffpunkt Deutsch, Vorsprung*, and *Wie geht's?*.

Finally, *Kontakte* has a variety of cultural themes and formats which include not only main, but also additional sections and the “enrichment” sections. *Kontakte* goes much beyond the themes from other textbooks and also introduces economics, architecture, literature, sculpture and German fashion design. Not only the general topics in *Kontakte* contain a lot of cultural information, but also the subtopics introduce a large amount of cultural material. Culture enters into the textbook through artifact study,

hypothesis refinement, culture capsules, and also through listening, reading, and grammar exercises. Among the examined textbooks, *Kontakte* stands out as it is based on the Natural Approach that makes the load of input, including cultural material, very heavy. This textbook could be useful for instructors who are looking for extended cultural input.

Ultimately, it is the choice of a language instructor which textbook to use and how. Although there is no perfect textbook, making a reasonable selection will be enhanced if the amount of cultural material presented is balanced with other textbook components that effectively develop four skills of foreign language acquisition: reading, writing, listening and speaking. After all, only the use of the textbook in the classroom can prove that it is the right selection.

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