Prototypical Associations in the vocabulary input of EFL textbooks through the identification of cultural patterns

Our Research

• Prototypes:
The most ideal example of a given category (Kleiber,1995)
• Prototypes in EFL:
Neglected area
• Intercultural Competence:
Included in the CEFR (2001, 2018) and the Spanish curriculum (Decree 24/2014)

Prototypes in a category depend on the specific geographical context owing to factors such as observation and experience, cultural influence, memory and imagination (Aitchison,1994)

What for?

• Do EFL textbooks evidence semantic prototypes by means of the identification of cultural patterns in their vocabulary input?

• Does the development of the intercultural competence make reference to the international, target and source cultures through the analysis of a semantic category by the use of prototypical associations?

How we did it

• Semantic Category: Food and Drinks (Hernandez Muñoz,2006)
• Two 6th Primary EFL textbooks in La Rioja, Spain
• Content Analysis (Haggarty, 1996)

What we found

Mission Accomplished:
Tuna, tuna pasta, chicken soup, salad bowl, American pancakes, pizza (in NY) (decontextualized vocabulary)
Big surprise:
Toffee apples, figgy pudding, Christmas pudding, mince pies, roast potatoes (contextualized vocabulary)

What we expect

• Evidence of prototypical associations regarding cultural patterns
• Imbalance with reference to the amount of words found in each textbook
• Evidence of cultural commonalities rather than specific prototypes concerning specific cultures
• Intercultural competence is not fostered since the words found exclusively refer to the target culture

In the future ...

• Culture should be integrated into EFL/ESL teaching materials since both the L1 and L2 languages cannot exist without the influence of each other (Alptekin, 1993, 2002; McKay, 2000; Kılıçkaya, 2004)
• Semantic prototypes enhance the learning of vocabulary in a category (Rosch, 1975)

REFERENCES

Decree 24/2014, de 13 de junio, por el que se Establece el Currículo de la Educación Primaria en la Comunidad Autónoma de La Rioja, available at https://web.larioja.org/normativa?n=1973