

*“Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself (...)”*:

## **Representing intercultural encounters in two Finnish history textbooks**

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**Abstract:** This chapter compares the ways intercultural encounters are introduced in two upper secondary textbooks published for teaching history in Finland. As in all textbooks, the authors are dependent on different factors in the texts they have produced: curricula, publishing companies, editors, negotiations between team members, beliefs about what both students and teachers need, etc. The two textbooks deal with the topic of intercultural encounters by covering different geopolitical areas (Africa, the Americas, Australasia). In this chapter we are interested in how the authors (and their editor) discourse around interculturality. The latter term, which is polysemic and controversial, can be approached from multifaceted angles. Our perspective is critical, co-constructivist and somewhat postcolonial. Being in research and practice on the ‘intercultural’, scholars have noted variations in the ways interculturality is introduced between and within texts (in its general sense), leading to contradictory and unstable discourses on the hyphen between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Using a critical discourse analysis method, our chapter examines these phenomena in the textbooks: How do the authors (and their editor) talk about interculturality? How are different others treated in the textbooks? What about ‘self’, i.e. Finnishness? And finally, does their approach relate to current discussions around the theme – bearing in mind that they have to respect the Finnish curriculum?

## Introduction

“Intellectuals should be the ones to question patriotic nationalism, corporate thinking, and a sense of class, racial or gender privilege.” (Said, 1996, p. xiii)

It has become a truism to say that we live in an era of intercultural encounters. Too easily scholars, decision-makers and the general public make the claim, ignoring the fact that such encounters have taken place on large scales before. Of course it would be naïve to compare the different historical periods. If intercultural encounters are not new, it is true that they appear to be many and varied, and fast, thanks to digital technologies and the hypermobility of certain categories of people, services, ideas and goods ‘across cultures.’ Yet this argument can appear to be very biased, depending on how one understands the notion of the ‘intercultural.’ More exchanges and interactions do take place today but it does not mean that people understand each other better.

As we shall see in this chapter, many scholars and practitioners admit today that the notion of the ‘intercultural’ is polysemic and empty at the same time, highly political and that it can easily lead to the ideological mistreatment of the self and the other (Holliday, 2010). They are also critical of the simplistic equation of *interculturality equals crossing national boundaries*. This has been problematized by Glick-Schiller (2009), among others, as “methodological nationalism.”

In the various fields of study that deal with the intercultural – applied linguistics, business, education, health care, etc. – a certain awareness of these problems has led ‘intercultural professionals’ to review their perspectives and approaches. Dervin and Tournebise (2013) note for instance that teachers of intercultural communication in Finnish higher education tend to oscillate between discourses about the intercultural as something ‘solid’ based on the encounters of national cultures and discourses of openness and fluidity that encompass more aspects such as gender and age and take into account the importance of contexts of interaction.

In this chapter we examine how the idea of intercultural encounters is dealt with in Finnish upper secondary education by analysing two history textbooks that are dedicated specifically to the

theme. The article is structured as follows: Firstly we discuss the notion of the ‘intercultural’ and present a ‘renewed’ way of examining it which is becoming increasingly recognized in research worldwide; a section reviewing research on intercultural aspects in textbooks follows; the two textbooks under scrutiny are then presented as well as the publishing context; finally the analytical sections review the way(s) the textbooks construct the other under the guise of different figures – but at the same time what they say about *us*, the Finns. Our main interest lies in the first part of the title of this chapter – *Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself (...)* – which is borrowed from a poem by Walt Whitman (*Song of myself*, 1855): Do we find signs of coherent discourses around the idea of intercultural encounters? Do the textbooks position the ‘intercultural’ in a clear paradigm? If not, is it made clear to the textbook users? Finally, what do our results tell us about the way intercultural encounters are viewed in Finnish society if textbooks convey, implicitly and/or explicitly, societal discourses?

### **Theoretical Positioning: Interculturality in Textbooks**

#### **What Interculturality?**

The title of this section might appear strange to some readers. Yet as hinted at in the introduction this is a valid question. Since the word *intercultural* appeared in both scholarship and practice in the 1950s – though the main accepted paradigm derived from American culturalist anthropology and business-oriented research has tended to be essentialising – critical approaches to the intercultural have multiplied, especially since the 1990s. In France, the main critical voice, Martine Abdallah-Pretceille (e.g. 1986), has advocated a shift from an overemphasis on national cultures to a more complex approach in education since the 1980s. Today researchers such as Shi-xu (China), Zhu Hua (UK), Adrian Holliday (UK), Prue Holmes (UK), Regis Machart (Malaysia), Ingrid Piller (Australia), Karen Risager (Denmark) and Fred Dervin (Finland) – to name just a few – follow a similar path by revising the way the intercultural is dealt with in both research and practice. Adrian

Holliday's work on intercultural communication and ideology (2010) has been extremely influential in pinpointing the damaging effects of overly culturalist and differentialist perspectives. Dervin (2013) argues that the intercultural is often victim of what the sociologist Heinich (2009, p. 39) calls 'conceptual anthropomorphism,' or the fact that concepts such as *culture*, *community*, *group*, *countries*, etc. are treated like human beings. In other words these concepts are made to act, behave and think, instead of the individuals who interact with each other in specific contexts. This has led to ignoring that 'cultural identities' are not enough to construct interaction and that other identity markers play at least as much importance as them (e.g. gender, profession, social class, capitals, etc.). This is why the aforementioned scholars propose to concentrate on processes and the co-construction of identities rather than on the 'governance' of culture. Peter Wood (2003, p. 29) explains the caveat this way: "the gulf between the real diversity of the world and the artificial and often imaginary diversity of our social experiments is very large." He adds that the idea of diversity should not contribute to "imagin[ing] the world as divisible into neatly defined social groups, each with its own thriving cultural traditions." As such behind every individual lies many potential others (Pieterse, 2007, p. 139).

While these ideas are gaining momentum in research and, up to a point, in practice, one can question an approach – as the one proposed in this chapter – where this intercultural paradigm serves as a template for analyzing how two Finnish history textbooks deal with intercultural encounters. As we shall see, the construction of the textbooks depends on instructions found in the Finnish National Curriculum for history and laws of the textbook market in Finland. Yet we feel that many of the arguments found in this renewed way of problematising interculturality have been used in (teacher) education for some time now in mainstream socio-constructivist and interactionist approaches in Finland.

## Research on Interculturality in Textbooks

For Sleeter and Grant (2011, p. 186), the textbook is “the major conveyor of the curriculum.” At the same time Schlisser (1990, p. 81) adds that textbooks transmit knowledge and “seek to anchor the political and social norms of a society.” Discourses on otherness and interculturality in the European Union are very much influenced by political discourses created in Brussels and Strasbourg, the two decision centers for the 27 member states. Today’s EU keywords include: tolerance, respect of other cultures, anti-racism, anti-xenophobia and social justice. As a member of the EU since 1995, Finland is very much influenced by this parlance. Discussions on how textbooks can contribute to these ‘noble’ objectives – but confusing objectives, see our discussions in the previous section – have been a priority in Europe and beyond. There is actually a long history of fighting against prejudice and stereotypes, two of the main goals of the ‘intercultural,’ in textbooks. In the UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision, Pingel (2009, p. 9) details three events in this regard that took place after the First World War in 1918. For example, in the Nordic countries an association asked publishing companies to remove any sort of stereotypes about neighbouring countries.

Textbooks are potential ‘breeding grounds’ for essentialism, especially in history textbooks that deal with intercultural encounters. In her article entitled *Intercultural education and the representation of the other in history textbooks*, Kirstín Lofsdóttir (2010, p. 29) explains that “schoolbooks aim to transmit knowledge that is generally not contested but more or less accepted as ‘true’ or at the very least not harshly questioned, and thus play a powerful role in interpreting and giving meaning to the world.” She adds (p. 23): “Textbooks [...] influence the creation of specific types of subjectivities and remain influential in categorizing individuals in particular ways.”

Research on intercultural aspects of textbooks is plentiful. Most studies are from the fields of language education and applied linguistics – though most fields related to other school subjects have also produced research on textbooks as shall be noted *infra*.

In language education, research on textbooks of major foreign languages has been produced in most countries. Two types of studies are to be found: research on representations of self–other and the use of textbooks for developing intercultural competence. Let us have a look at the first category. In English-language teaching, scholars from the so-called periphery have examined how Western textbooks position the other. Shin et al. (2011) have analysed the presentation of local and international culture in internationally distributed textbooks. Their study shows that Western, ‘inner circle,’ cultural content dominated. A similar conclusion is drawn in Tzu-Chia Chao’s (2011) article on comparable textbooks. The article concludes that cultural content allows the publishers to deliver a hidden curriculum of Western-centric ideas, products and characters. Some scholars have concentrated specifically on the representation of certain characters in textbooks produced around the world. Mehrunnisa (2013) studied the representation of Muslim characters living in Canada. He shows that Muslims are placed in inferior and dependent positions compared to ‘white people’ and that reference to their identity always places them in ‘primitive’ positions. Recently, Gray and Block (2014) have taken the important step of moving beyond the identity markers of race and ethnicity by working on the representations of the working class in UK-produced English teaching textbooks. Their diachronic study shows that the idea of class is dealt with superficially in the textbooks and that working class characters have nearly disappeared in today’s textbooks. In relation to how textbooks can contribute to developing intercultural competence, a few studies were identified. For example, Nguyen (2011) examines how textbooks can help to develop intercultural pragmatic competence while Arao and Kimura (2014) dig into the idea of ‘mutual competence’ as developed through textbooks in relation to global education.

Besides language education, many fields have looked into the links between the intercultural and textbooks. For example Morgan et al. (2014) have researched how sexism is depicted and constructed in anatomy textbooks in higher education (France/Wales). The field of history has been quite productive in analysing intercultural aspects. As an example let us mention Ann Doyle’s 2002

article in which she concentrates on the concept of ethnocentrism in English history textbooks in relation to the Irish Famine of 1845–1849. Her diachronic study (1920s–1990s) shows that the textbooks all contain direct and indirect ethnocentrism.

### **Presentation of the textbooks**

Textbooks are not produced in a vacuum as they represent a multi-million dollar industry worldwide. McGarrity (2010, p. 107) suggests that in order to analyse textbooks, one needs to discuss the relational matrix between the author(s), industry and subject matter. Furthermore he states that usually textbook authors generate drafts which are proofread and modified to suit the market. McGarrity (2010, p. 108) therefore explains that “[t]eachers and students thus come to a text that already bears the marks of many hands.” In this chapter we examine two history textbooks produced in Finland for upper secondary education. The two textbooks are published by two of the major textbook publishing companies in Finland, *Sanoma Pro* and *Otava*. Sanoma Pro is the largest Finnish Textbook publishing company that belongs to the Sanoma Group media concern. It also publishes e-textbooks and has a web-based learning environment to accompany the textbooks. The owner, Sanoma, is a media group with operations in more than ten European countries. The group has an annual turnover of 2.7 billion euros and employs over 15,000 people. It publishes magazines, newspapers and educational materials. The company owns TV and radio channels and bookstores and is listed on the Helsinki Stock Exchange. Otava publishing company was founded in 1890 and is the second largest publisher in Finland. Like Sanoma, the Otava concern publishes books, owns shops and newspapers. The textbooks we have chosen for review are *Linkki 6: Kulttuurien kohtaaminen* (i.e. meeting of cultures) published by Sanoma Pro in 2011 (henceforth referred to as *Linkki*) and *Forum VI: Kulttuurien kohtaaminen* (idem) published by Otava in 2013 (henceforth *Forum*).

History teaching in the Finnish upper secondary school consists of four compulsory courses titled “Man, the environment and culture,” “European man,” “International relations” and “Turning-points in Finnish history.” There are also two specialisation courses named “Finland from prehistoric times to autonomy” and “Meeting of cultures” (FNBE, 2003, p. 181–186), the latter being the course whose textbooks are under review in this chapter. According to the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools, this course will “deal with the distinct characteristics and present times of one or more optional cultural spheres and intercultural interaction” (FNBE, 2003, p. 185). The cultural spheres are “chosen from outside Europe” (p. 185) and cover different geopolitical areas (e.g. Africa, the Americas, Australia and Oceania, the Islam world). One cannot but think here of A. Sen’s critique of the “partition[ing of] the people of the world into little boxes of disparate civilizations” (2006, p. 4).

According to the National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools (FNBE, 2003, p. 180), “[h]istory is a subject that creates an individual, national and European identity.” Furthermore, history “[i]nstruction will place emphasis on the relationship between people and their environments along with the extensive scope of human culture, understanding of cultural diversity and the significance of international harmony.” One of the objectives of history education is to “obtain material to create a world view that appreciates human rights and democracy and to act as responsible citizens” (FNBE, 2003, p. 180). One of the specific objectives for students on the course of Meeting of cultures is to “be familiar with the basic concepts of culture and learn to understand the values and lifestyle of a culture different from their own” (p. 185).

*Forum* divides the “foreign cultures” under scrutiny into the following sections and titles: Aboriginals – Australia’s aboriginal culture, Multi-faced Asia, Islam – religion and ideology, Unknown and faraway Africa, and Multicultural America. *Linkki* has structured its contents according to the following divisions: Africa – a continent of many cultures, The world of Islam, Indian culture, Eastern cultures – China and Japan, Multi-faced America, and The world of

aboriginal peoples (in Australia, Oceania and the Arctic regions). The titles themselves give a first glance at the topics and how a particular area is portrayed. For example in *Linkki*, Africa is pictured as distant and mysterious although geographically it is closer to Europe than the Eastern cultures or Asia. The chapters in both textbooks describe historical developments in a chronological order in the different cultural areas. As the title of the course stipulates, both textbooks focus on the meeting of cultures.

The content in the textbooks is particularly chosen to include such cultures that are more different from a mainstream European perspective – as is suggested in the National Curriculum (see above). For example, in the chapters describing Australia or America, the focus is on the aboriginals in Australia or on the indigenous peoples in the Americas and not on the ‘cultures’ shared by the majorities (FNBE, 2003, p. 186). In our review of the textbooks, we will concentrate on the sections on Africa and the world of Islam, as well as the introductory chapters of the textbooks. Africa and the world of Islam are two much discussed themes in Finnish society, as well as in many other countries of the world.

### **Constructing Interculturality in the Textbooks**

In this section we analyse the construction of the idea of interculturality in the introductory chapters of the two textbooks. For *Forum*, we consider pages 6–29 (chapters: introduction, comics and stereotypes, looking at foreign cultures) and for *Linkki* pages 7–25 (chapters: a multicultural world, cultures meet, the other in the European worldview). These chapters serve the purpose of introducing theoretical and methodological tools to the students.

### **Concepts Used in Relation to Interculturality**

In the core curriculum, ‘culture’ is simply “understood as being a comprehensive concept” (FNBE, 2003, p. 185) and its definition is merely left to refer to the “different manifestations of culture in areas such as the arts, religion and social structure.” The introductory chapter to the textbook *Linkki*

also describes culture as being understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses “all the different manifestations, beliefs and customs of the forms of life in a society that have been born in interaction with man and nature as well as that of cultures” (p. 7). *Forum* explains the concept of culture as mainly meaning different forms of art, such as theatre, music and literature but including in its wider definition “customs of living, religion, beliefs, values, norms and people’s worldview” (p. 14). The two textbooks bring up slightly different concepts in relation to culture and that are dealt with in the books. Whereas *Forum* uses the term ‘cultural identity,’ *Linkki* has adopted the term ‘identity.’ *Forum* defines cultural identity as the customs that are common and that unite people belonging to a certain culture. *Linkki*’s term identity is more individualistic and is defined as a person’s conception of self. Whereas *Linkki* emphasises in the introductory chapter that each individual can belong to many cultures simultaneously and one’s identity is not fixed but changes and adapts throughout life in different situations, *Forum* talks about cultural identity and culture being something that belong to societies. *Forum* lists various things that the authors write as being part of culture. These are symbols, rituals, conception of time (linear/cyclical), language, nonverbal communication, relation to physical contact and emphasis on either collectivism or individualism. *Linkki* talks of one’s worldview that is described as “one’s conception of the surrounding world and one’s own place in it” (p. 9). This worldview encompasses man’s relation to nature, conception of time and the relation between individual and society (individualism/collectivism). In *Linkki*, ethnicity is brought up as a core concept and it is described as “the cultural features that unite a group, such as language, customs and religion” (including rituals and symbolism, p. 8).

Table 1 below compares the important keywords that are introduced in the chapters under scrutiny (they are indicated in bold or italics in the textbooks). *Linkki* proposes 26 keywords while *Forum* has 20. Both textbooks include very similar terms though they appear in a different order. The concepts as they appear in the table invoke: 1. Basic concepts, 2. Treatment of the other, 3. Short categorisation of self and other and 4. Political and discourse problems triggered by

Europe/the West (*Forum*) – 1. Basic concepts, 2. Categorisation of self and other, 3. Treatment of the other and 4. Political and discourse problems triggered by Europe/the West (*Linkki*). While *Forum* starts with the concept of stereotype based on an analysis of excerpts from Hergé’s *Tintin*, *Linkki* deals directly with three basic concepts that are to be found in most intercultural communication textbooks: culture, identity and ethnicity. The authors define the terms without suggesting that they are problematic. It is difficult to see why *Forum* starts with the theme of stereotyping. Is this an important message for the rest of the textbook? Within the first pages *Linkki* discusses categorisations of cultures in terms of worldviews, attitudes and behaviours – without being critical towards these ideas. The authors introduce for example animism vs. mysticism, the linear vs. the cyclical and individualism vs. collectivism. Though the authors do not mention references to justify where they found these concepts or definitions, one can sense influences from intercultural communication scholars such as E.T. Hall or G. Hofstede. These figures and their analyses of intercultural have been highly criticized for being ideological, creating a hierarchy of values through for example the idea of collectivism (often applied to Asians) and individualism (“Westerners”), privileging the West (Holliday, 2010). *Forum* also introduces the dichotomy of the linear versus the cyclical towards the end of the chapters under scrutiny but do not relate them to the following concepts of ethnocentrism and eurocentrism, i.e. explaining that the dichotomy can easily lead to these two phenomena. It is also important to note that both textbooks present a series of notions ending in *-ion* such as acculturation (both), assimilation (both), integration (both), segregation (both) and deculturation (*Linkki*). Again both textbooks propose un-problematised definitions which seem to present some ‘truth’ about what they refer to – thus ignoring current theoretical debates on these notions in world research. Finally the concept of racism is present in *Linkki* only.

<i>Linkki</i>	<i>Forum</i>
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Culture	Stereotype
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Culture
<b>Identity</b>	<b>Cultural identity</b>
<b>Worldview</b>	Multicultural
<b>Mysticism</b>	Majority culture
<b>Animism</b>	Minority culture
Linear time	Acculturation
Cyclical time	Assimilation
<b>Individualism</b>	<b>Culture shock</b>
<b>Collectivism</b>	<b>Cultural conflict</b>
Majority culture	Segregation
Minority culture	<b>Rite of passage</b>
<b>Native culture</b>	Linear time
Acculturation	Cyclical time
<b>Deculturation</b>	<b>Non-verbal communication</b>
Assimilation	Ethnocentrism
<b>Integration</b>	<b>Ethnoromanticism</b>
Segregation	Eurocentrism
<b>Otherness</b>	<b>Us and others</b>
Stereotype	<b>Orientalism</b>
<b>Racism</b>	
<b>Social Darwinism</b>	
<b>The White man's burden</b>	
Ethnocentrism	
Eurocentrism	
Multiculturalism	

Table 1 - List of keywords used in both textbooks in the order they appear. The words in bold appear in one textbook only.

## Problems in Using Certain Concepts

Though it is not explicitly mentioned, the first chapters of both textbooks serve as theoretical and methodological frameworks for the rest of the textbooks where different ‘cultural’ areas are reviewed. In what follows, bearing in mind the intercultural paradigm suggested above, we review some of the afore-mentioned concepts and arguments put forward by the authors.

The concept of culture is omnipresent in the chapters and is often used as an agent. The Swedish anthropologist Hannerz has called this way of using culture “culturespeak” (1999). Interestingly, in the introduction to *Forum*, the authors keep referring to cultures – not people. For example, on p. 6, they write:

“The knowledge of cultures and understanding of cultural encounters are emphasised in the curriculum for year 2005. Among the course objectives for “Meeting of cultures,” the curriculum mentions e.g. that student is familiar with the basic concepts of culture and learns to understand the values and way of life of a culture different from his/her own.”

There is a clear reference to the national curriculum here. And one could argue that the authors respect what it says. In the same introduction, the authors mention that the textbook examines “significant cultures from outside Europe.” The choice of the adjective *significant* appears problematic here: who has decided what ‘cultures’ are important outside Europe? Does it mean indirectly that the ‘cultures’ that are not introduced are less important or insignificant? What these discourses seem to be doing implicitly is to hierarchise ‘cultures’ – and people at the same time. Choosing ‘significant cultures’ is a political act that the textbook authors do not even explain. On p. 14, the *Forum* authors have included a map of the world, which they have neatly divided into different cultures (with different colours). These include: Western culture, African culture, Muslim culture, Latin-American culture, Russian culture, Japanese culture, Chinese and Indian culture.

In fact, both textbooks talk about cultures as they have a life of their own without people necessarily being the ones who interact. However, cultures do not have a life of their own, it is people who act and interact (Wikan, 2002). The desagentivisation of individuals is also obvious in the textbook sections dealing with stereotypes. When the authors explain the origins of stereotypes, they have a selective approach to who should be blamed. As such they mention cultural creations such as films and movies and the media, whereas the stereotypes that individuals – all of us – circulate and for example textbooks are not mentioned. Nor are social media which are breeding grounds for stereotypes. The consequence is a discourse of desagentivisation, where ‘we’ are free of guilt and manipulated by macro-discourses.

The authors of *Forum* themselves often fall into the trap of stereotyping or at least bias. At the beginning of the textbook, two pictures appear on different pages that depict ‘intercultural encounters’. On p. 7 in the introduction to the book, a picture depicts a mixed wedding ceremony from the Fiji Islands. The people are both ‘local’ Fijians and ‘white’ people who are about to get married. The caption reads: “fruitful cultural encounters.” On the other hand, on p. 15 a picture of Tibetan monks is followed by a comment on how the Chinese have attempted to crush the culture of Tibet to include it into the majority Chinese culture. Would there be here a bias?

The other problematic concepts and arguments that are used by the textbook authors relate to the ideas of acculturation, assimilation and integration (among others). Clearly the way the authors define and perceive these concepts is biased and unbalanced. When the concept of acculturation is presented, a reference to the past turns the concept into neutral or positive ideas: thoughts, knowledge, skills and religions have spread. On the other hand, in *Linkki*, when deculturation is defined the tone is quite negative and refers only to for example Europeans having brought diseases to South America. Finally it appears clearly that the idea of assimilation is loathed by the authors when they write “Assimilation presumes getting rid of one’s own culture” (*Linkki*, p. 13). There is a clear and interesting case of clear bias and ethnocentrism (a concept the authors

define themselves!) in *Linkki* when the authors give the example of the treatment of Muslims in France – through the example of the burqa (p. 12) and, indirectly, the concept of *laïcité* (i.e. separation of State and Church) – and talk about immigrants in Finland. The idea of *laïcité* is a complex one: The law forbidding anyone from wearing religious signs in schools and public places finds its origins in the political move of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to separate the State from the Catholic Church. Forbidding religious signs was a way to push aside representatives from the Catholic Church. Today most people in France and abroad are not aware of the origin of this law. Its use is different today and has tended to be targeted towards Muslims but also Catholics – with the idea that by not showing one’s religion, one will be treated the same way. The textbook authors seem to be unaware of the history behind the idea of *laïcité* and draw too quickly the conclusion that it is related to the French model of assimilation. Thus what emerges from the description of the French case is moralistic judgments about internal politics that the authors do not entirely grasp. Interestingly, when the authors deal with the way integration is done in Finland, their discourses are overly positive (p. 14):

In Finland the objective of immigration and refugee policy has been to integrate immigrants and refugees into part of the Finnish society.

This is accompanied by the interview of a Finnish Kurd – a successful ‘new Finn’ – who explains that integration is easy in Finland and that she has been treated nicely by Finns – a testimony that many immigrants and researchers could easily question. Finally, it is interesting that for the French case no interview of a ‘real’ person is used to illustrate the point made – the authors use a cartoon drawn by a Finn that shows a crucified woman wearing a burqa. Meanwhile the Finnish model of integration is illustrated with an interview – and an extremely positive voice. The main problem about this example is that it may give an impression to the students that immigrant populations in Finland do not face challenges.

Before moving on to the next analytical section, let us comment on the use of qualifiers such as *Westerners* and *Europeans* in the sections under review. Though there are also a few negative examples from Finland in the pictures (references are made e.g. to a textbook illustration with black children published by the same publisher, *Linkki*, p. 16, in the past; a game referring to black people and Africans in both textbooks), the discourses used by the authors to problematise the negative impact of Europe and the West on the rest of the world refer to Westerners and Europeans – not Finns as such. For example in *Forum* (p. 25) the authors assert that “Europeans have looked down on others. The others have been uncivilised and pagans.” Are Finns included in this assertion, bearing in mind that Finland gained its independence in 1917 and that the country has never been an actor in colonisation? If yes, are they among the Westerners and Europeans (the guilty) or the others (the victims)? It is interesting how the authors often want to give either one of these labels – and forget that it is possible to belong to both. For example in the case of Finland, what about new forms of neo-colonialism represented by cheap Asian labour used by some Finnish companies or deforestation in other parts of the world by the Finnish paper industry?

As scholars specialising in intercultural communication education, it is easy to criticize the textbook authors for ‘making the mistakes’ that have been commented upon above. The authors have obviously tried to explain the terms and concepts related to interculturality with some short, clear definitions and concrete examples. The idea must have been to keep the content of the textbooks manageable and easy for students to read and understand, but unfortunately this approach has required some questionable shortcuts.

### **The Treatment of Different Others in the Textbooks**

#### **The World of Islam**

As we have seen earlier, according to the Finnish national core curriculum, the course of Meeting of cultures should deal with ‘one or more cultural spheres’ and their interaction (FNBE, 2003, p. 185).

Both textbooks, *Forum* and *Linkki* devote much of their chapter on the world of Islam for explaining the birth, growth and changes of and in Islam in terms of historical incidents such as conquering or losing areas. Both textbooks, *Linkki* in more space and detail, also describe the rules and customs associated with Islam. Culture is used as a very loose term that sometimes refers to the fine arts and science or trade but, in *Forum*, it rarely refers to local customs and way of life:

Loan words from different areas of life spread to European languages, which tell about the influence of the Arab culture first to the Spanish culture and through that to other European culture. Even in the Finnish language there are words derived from the Arabic, for example algebra used in mathematics and the food terms coffee, rice and spinach. (*Forum*, p. 90)

The excerpt also reveals that the authors of the textbook assume that there is only one Arab culture, one Spanish culture and one European culture. However, the authors criticize the Western world for seeing all the Islamic countries as similar. Both of the textbooks strive to talk about the world of Islam, and the religion itself, in positive terms. The rules of Islam are clearly detailed but Islam is also described as being adaptable and context-dependent. The Muslims are described as being caring and peaceful people. The Islamic culture (usually meaning arts and science) is praised rich and versatile. The West is mostly depicted as a united front which differs greatly from the Islamic world. The textbook *Forum* seems more critical of the Western view of Islam and it pits the West against the Islam in several ways. In the following quote the West is portrayed negatively as a place where people do not take care of each other while in the Islam world people do:

Many Muslims find the Western individualistic way of life strange because in the Islamic society people take care of each other. (*Forum*, p. 93)

The textbook *Linkki* brings up more clearly the inequality of women and men in the Islamic world although it explains that modernisation has increased women's involvement in work life. The textbook also describes the growing inequalities between the rich and the poor in many Islamic

countries. The West is blamed for some of the changes that have happened along with the globalisation of the world of Islam:

Along with economic growth, the spiritual values of Islam have clashed with the materialism in the Western consumer society, when Western consumer goods have taken over shopping centres and the Western way of life has become familiar through satellite television.

However, religion weighs heavily on Muslims' consumer choices. Muslims like to purchase such products that have been manufactured and produced according to Islam's ethical norms.

*(Linkki, p. 79)*

Although the text previously lists the five main pillars of Islam, the "ethical norms" of Islam (that supposedly differ from the Western or Christian ethical norms) are not specifically explained. The text does not question what the "Western way of life" on satellite television is or if it is, for example, comparable to the way of life the students who read the textbook lead.

The Western media is criticized for creating fictitious stereotypes of the Muslims by spreading images of, for example, violence, subordination of women and the lack of democracy:

Today's mental images of Islam are dominated by militancy, violence, the subordination of women, the lack of democracy and backwardness. The Muslims are expected to behave in a certain way. They can be considered terrorists, women's oppressors and committers of honour killings. The Western media create and uphold these images with simplifying and sensational reporting. [...] The media rarely report on the peaceful life of the Islamic world. *(Forum, p. 95)*

*Forum* seems to downplay the "misunderstandings" of Islam by explaining that many of the customs that the Western world abhors actually belong to old tribal traditions and not the religion itself. The textbook attempts to take a neutral stand but fails to question the rightfulness of some of phenomena that are presented as traditions 'against' women, such as honour killings and female

circumcision (see Wikan, 2002). The textbook also misses the opportunity to link up these elements with the topics of inequality and violence against women in Finnish society in the past and today – and at the same time discuss the concept of ethnocentrism. However the fundamental Muslim extremists are rightfully described as a minority and different from the Muslim majority. Although the text mentions that there are small Muslim minorities “for example in Europe,” there is no mention of Muslims living in the country that the textbook is made for, in Finland. This is despite the fact that today the number of Muslims in Finland is estimated to be close to the number of members in the second national church in Finland, the Orthodox Church (approximately 60,000, close to 1% of population). Again the Muslims are made the other who is different and faraway. The text or the questions in the textbook do not make them part of the Finnish students’ lives. One of the questions at the end of the chapter asks the students to consider what the Islamic culture could give to a Western person (*Forum*, p. 97). Are there no Western Muslims?

Nevertheless, it is according to the core curriculum (FNBE 2004, p. 185) that the “cultural areas” are “chosen from outside Europe.” However, by keeping them distant and failing to bring them close to home increases the (imagined) gap between the different religions and cultures and will not help in intercultural communication. The textbooks do not seem to consider intercultural interaction as something that happens and is done between people but rather something that ricochets between social structures in different countries:

Although the Muslim extremists represent only a small minority of Muslims, intercultural dialogue has been difficult and fruitless since the WTC attacks. (*Forum*, p. 94)

One of the tasks at the end of the Islam chapters in both textbooks calls for the students to consider in which type of situations or how the values of the Islam and the West could be in contradiction. But what are the values of the West? Do all the Westerners have the same values? *Linkki* includes a short section that “gives voice to the representatives of the different cultures” in Finland. Thus this textbook brings the culture, or religion, closer to home to the students. However, the one

representative can obviously give an image that all, in this case Muslims in Finland, are similar in behaviour and ideas as she is. Nevertheless, the voice of the Muslim immigrant is a rare attempt the textbook does in showing an example of positive, modern day intercultural interaction.

### **“Unknown and Faraway Africa”**

This section title opens the textbook chapter to introduce the multifaceted sides of Africa to the reader of *Forum*, however the title maintains the character of the continent being something distant to ‘us’ Finnish people. It is possible to question if Africa really is such an unknown and faraway place for those who have visited the continent, and for those whose family members and friends have immigrated from various African countries to Finland and Europe (According to the Annual Report on Immigration 2012 by the Ministry of the Interior there were 25 895 people living in Finland whose continent of birth was Africa). It is likely that this type of discourse can actually strengthen the boundary between “us” and “them”, and at least maintain an ideology of national boundaries and citizenship, which forms the national Western type of ideology of what is local and what is global, and at the same time familiar or unknown. In *Linkki* the title to the comparable chapter is with less exotic character as it refers to Africa as “a continent with many cultures” (*Afrikka – monien kulttuurien maanosa*, Africa – the continent of many cultures)

*Forum* begins with a good intention while paying critical attention toward the stereotypical image of Africa in Europe. The reader is advised in the introduction (*Forum*, p. 99) to pay attention to this, whilst reading the chapter of Africa. The first section of this chapter focuses on the topic of how Africans have previously been presented and pictured as distant, exotic and primitive through the examples of the *African Star* (a popular board game for children in Finland), a candy called ‘suukko’ (kiss in Finnish) which previously-was called ‘neekerin pusu’ (‘Negro’s kiss’), and the *Tarzan* movie. In the introduction it is mentioned that “Africa is often referred to as one unified area, forgetting that that it has dozens of different cultures and each of them has their own special characteristics” (*Forum*, p. 99). Surprisingly, however, the general way of writing is often by

referring to Africa as one entity. This applies especially to the way the African 'culture' as a way of living is described in *Forum*: "The Africans have been affected by the collectivistic life style and it is also prevalent today" (p. 103) or when referring to fertility in *Linkki*: "Fertility and ensuring the continuation of the family as well as the knowledge about whose family the newborn children belong to are important for the families in the African culture" (p. 32). It can be said that this is also important in most countries since we have a process for recognizing the fatherhood if parents for example are not married when the baby is born.

In both of the books 'collectivism' is used to explain the 'everyday life', as part of African 'culture'. In *Forum* (p. 103) the title for the paragraph dealing with collectivism is called "Collectivistic lifestyle", whereas in *Linkki* collectivism is mentioned as a part of lifestyle and food culture: "Collectivism as part of customs and eating culture". *Linkki* applies the traditional intercultural communication approach (see the beginning chapters) where the knowledge is based on the artefacts such as African hospitality, food culture, the culture for greetings, traditions and nature linked to the eating habits and food culture.

Hospitality is an important part of African culture. Big feasts are organised for family and friends. Food is eaten in a traditional way using the right hand's forefinger, middle finger and the thumb. The left hand is for wiping the mouth. Although oral tradition is significant in Africa, people do not talk while eating. (*Linkki*, p. 33)

This is a good example of the danger of such traditional intercultural approach to education where certain habits and customs are presented as a static lifestyle, for example, for all the Africans. In *Forum* collectivism is described in the meaning of families, tribes, marriages, status of woman. The authors begin by describing how collectivism still has a major role in determining the lifestyle, belonging, as well as becoming. According to the authors, the families, tribes and collectivistic groups in Africa are described as having more meaning than in Europe, since nation states do not have a similar status in Africa as in Europe. This is interesting since with constitutions such as the

EU the borders in Europe have also changed the meanings of belonging and becoming for individuals and families. Also the sense of family, tribes and belonging is something intersubjective, taking place among people rather than part of some culture, country or continent.

In spite of the clearer geographical borders and nationalities in the various African countries today, the ideology of common African cultures instead of African countries still remains throughout the chapters. The chapter on collectivistic lifestyle in *Forum* continues by describing how polygamy has been common in many areas, how it has led to a low status of woman and to promote the status of man:

In many areas in Africa it is still the role of woman to take care of family and to get food, water and wood to burn. These duties take most of women's time. On the other hand women are respected because fertility is appreciated. (*Forum*, p. 103)

Patricia Hill Collins refers to this type of knowledge as strengthening the image of Black woman as a typical African "mammy"; opposing civilized Western culture with a "wilder" primitive image. (Collins, 2009, p. 76). Both textbooks explain also the meaning of 'tribes' in African cultures and how the order of life and sense of belonging are constructed through the tribes and how even the names in a family and inside the tribe tell a whole story of an individual. At times it almost feels like there is some kind of intention for pointing out the exotic lifestyle in a positive light by explaining the "animistic" and "magical" worldviews with shamanism and voodoo (*Linkki*, p. 34). At the same time it is important to question if this type of discourse serves to maintain the boundaries between us 'modern Europeans' and them 'exotic Africans,' and in a way also results in maintaining racial boundaries.

Both textbooks can be given credit for adding the voice of the other to the content. In *Forum* under the title Africa's future there is quote from a Zambian reporter about the relationship between Zambia and the Western world. In *Linkki* they have added an interview of a person from Ghana

who grew up in Finland. In both of the books the voices from the other point out the negative representation of Africa in the Western media. Interestingly both books also present the challenges typical for the media to deal with, such as HIV, building democratic societies, applying human rights into everyday life, access to education and the need from the rest of the world to help Africa to fight these challenges. *Linkki* successfully points out the good work of third sector organisations in bridging Africa to the rest of the world and hopefully examples of these types of projects are part of teaching these courses in the upper secondary school.

There is also an intersubjective side of the proposed knowledge in the textbooks, for example in relation to women's status, belonging and becoming part of a family, and this is missing in the way the textbooks are written. The style of presentation in *Linkki* somehow seems to be more based on historical knowledge without much questioning what is normal and abnormal, and how power is used in the way images are constructed and knowledge is displayed. For example, *Linkki* points out that Islam was better received by the Africans since it accepts the traditions typical for African tribes, such as polygamy and female circumcision (*Linkki*, p. 38). On the contrary the spread of Christianity had challenges because Europeans found the African lifestyle, structure of society and close contact to nature (such as nudity) odd, and therefore they were rejected among the locals (*Linkki*, p. 42). It seems to us that *Forum* could present a little more emphasis on criticality with subtitles such as a quote from an oral African lore "Our ancestors lived nicely until the Europeans arrived" (*Forum*, p. 112). However it is important to recognize the tacit knowledge and how images are constructed. What we do not know is how these textbooks are applied to teaching about today's Africa. Both books are nevertheless successful in bridging the historical continuum and processes for the African nations in becoming independent, as well as describing the effects of colonialism and the effects of Islam and Christianity.

## Conclusion

“The lessons one learns at school are not always the ones the school thinks it’s teaching.”

(Rushdie, 2012, p. 31)

This chapter has examined the way two textbooks published in Finland deal with the topic of intercultural encounters. First the use of concepts was analysed and the chapters on Islam and Africa scrutinized. The results show that, even if there are signs of ‘renewed’ interculturality in both textbooks, the chapters tend to give a contradictory and incoherent images of the other and self at the same time. In this sense, the authors seem to answer the question found in the title of this chapter, “Do I contradict myself?” (Whitman, 1855), with the assertion that “very well then I contradict myself” – without indicating their awareness of it. If one continues quoting Whitman, maybe one can find an explanation as to why the two textbooks seem to offer confused and confusing ideas about intercultural encounters: “(I am large, I contain multitudes)”. Our worlds, the process of accelerated globalisation, digital technologies, etc. are symbolic of the ‘multitudes’ that we all face – which means that they are confusing. Would it then be possible to create a textbook that translates the complexity of these phenomena and at the same time follows official instructions from the authorities? The objectivisation of other cultures in the textbooks, which become crystallised, is problematic. ‘Doing’ history as such is also a challenging issue: History is always a viewpoint, which contains *volens nolens* biased discourses on self–other.

Our main concern here is how the students understand what is being taught in the textbooks and how it impacts their own worldviews. Surprisingly the textbooks contain too few activities leading to the development of critical competences towards discourses on the intercultural. Apart from one or two paragraphs at the beginning of the textbooks – which are not explicitly linked to the rest of the books – the texts seem to present ‘passively’ certain generalities and contestable knowledge about certain parts of the world which may lead to learning unwanted ideas such as *neo-racism* (see Rushdie’s quote at the beginning of this conclusion). A more political approach could

help students nurture independent and critical thinking and develop their own ideas instead of being passively indoctrinated.

Of course, here we have studied only the textbooks, not their teaching in the classroom. Teachers have opportunities for bringing in material outside the textbooks, any of their choosing, based on their own interest and expertise within the framework of the curricula. It would thus be of interest to see how these textbooks are used in practice to ensure that students are in fact taught “critical analysis and interpretation of information” (FNBE, 2003, p. 180). Our last concern is hence related to our interest in multicultural education. In accordance with Nils Andersson (2010), considering the fact that Finnish society is becoming increasingly diverse, the two textbooks are good illustrations of the ignorance of the presence of these diverse voices in secondary education. For Andersson (2010), this absence can easily lead to a risk of exclusion, a feeling of inferiority as the textbooks tend to show an image of ‘their’ cultures as lagging behind.

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