

**UNIVERSIDAD DE  
MURCIA**



**FACULTAD DE  
EDUCACIÓN**

**TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO  
GRADO EN EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA**

**ASPECTOS CULTURALES EN LOS LIBROS DE TEXTO DE  
INGLÉS EN EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA  
(CULTURAL ASPECTS IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION)**

**PATRICIA CÁNOVAS BELCHÍ**  
DNI: 77 710 151-M

**TUTORA: MARIA CRISTINA TOLEDO BÁEZ**  
**LÍNEA: ENSEÑANZA-APRENDIZAJE DEL INGLÉS**  
**EN LA EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA**  
**DEPARTAMENTO DE DIDÁCTICA DE LA LENGUA Y LA LITERATURA (ESPAÑOL**  
**INGLÉS Y FRANCÉS)**

**CURSO ACADÉMICO 2012/2013**  
**CONVOCATORIA DE JUNIO**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	1
1. Introduction and justification.	2
2. Sociocultural aspects in foreign language teaching: theoretical framework.	3
3. Cultural aspects in the English classroom: what the legal framework contains.	5
4. Cultural aspects in the English classroom: what teachers think.	7
5. Cultural aspects in the English classroom: what textbooks provide.	12
6. Conclusions	21
7. References	22
Appendix I	24
Appendix II	25

## **ABSTRACT**

In view of the bad results of Spanish students in some national and international English tests, it was raised whether English as a foreign language textbooks might be responsible for not supplying enough materials, especially as far as cultural elements are concerned. In order to check if English textbooks actually include enough cultural contents, legislation affecting Primary Education has been revised so as to be sure what law utters on this aspect. Due to the lack of accuracy and details, 27 English teachers in Primary Education have given their opinions about which cultural contents are essential for pupils to know. Meanwhile, ten English textbooks for third cycle have been analysed to count and classify the information on cultural elements which they contain. After that, this information has been compared with teachers' answers and finally, we can conclude announcing that, regrettably, English as a foreign language textbooks do not satisfy teachers' expectancies.

**KEYWORDS:** Primary Education, culture, foreign language teaching.

## **RESUMEN**

A la vista de los resultados negativos que los estudiantes españoles obtienen en algunos exámenes nacionales e internacionales, se ha cuestionado si los libros de texto para el inglés como lengua extranjera pueden ser los responsables de no suministrar suficiente material, sobre todo, en lo que se refiere a elementos culturales. En aras de comprobar si los libros de texto de inglés realmente incluyen suficientes elementos culturales, se ha revisado la legislación que afecta la Educación Primaria para asegurarse sobre qué se dice al respecto. Debido a la imprecisión y ausencia de detalles, 27 maestros de inglés en Educación Primaria han dado su opinión sobre qué contenidos culturales les parecen esenciales para sus alumnos. Mientras tanto, se han analizado diez libros de texto de inglés de tercer ciclo para contar y clasificar la información sobre elementos culturales que contienen. Después, esta información se ha comparado con las respuestas de los maestros y por último, se puede concluir diciendo que, lamentablemente, los libros de texto de inglés como lengua extranjera no cumplen las expectativas de los maestros.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación Primaria, cultura, enseñanza de lengua extranjera.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

History of foreign language teaching shows us that the conception of what is a language and how to teach a foreign one has changed for over 3000 years, since Acadians invaded Sumer in 1250 B.C. Since then, methods have evolved from those employed by Acadians which consisted of oral practice and interaction, till current communicative methods which intend to develop communicative competence, a competence composed of four dimensions, and it is especially one of these, the sociocultural competence, which we will focus on.

Foreign language teaching methods are constantly changing, yet, teaching materials do not seem to update often enough, what means that, obviously, pupils cannot make any profit of this situation. Nowadays, one of the biggest problems in teaching a language has to do with the fact that cultural elements have not been sufficiently acknowledged as a priority because the focus of attention has always been the study of linguistic elements. If we concentrate on the former, we can notice that differences among publishers, publishing year and textbooks for Primary Education in general are considerable, and more importantly, these cultural elements significantly vary from what teachers expect to find inside these textbooks. Apparently, legislative efforts to homogenise teaching contents in Spain do not succeed due to their lack of accuracy.

One of these negative consequences is the fact that it is widely known that Spanish students do not excel in their English command, proof of this can be observed in PISA<sup>1</sup> exams, on which Spanish students show an important lack of knowledge. Therefore, the question to be dealt with and the justification of our piece of research here is the following: what do Spanish children have to know about culture in English-speaking countries? And, what do textbooks include on this matter?

Moreover, if we take into account students from the Region de Murcia, we can have a look at annual Diagnosis Evaluation<sup>2</sup> that is undertaken in the 4<sup>th</sup> year in Primary Education and 2<sup>nd</sup> year in Secondary Education so as to obtain some ideas of what educative authorities expect about our children. Last time these exams assessed the basic competence “linguistic communicative competence” was last academic year in May 2012, which proved that our students, regardless of the course, do not achieve the level expected.

Before reading further, we should clarify what we understand under the term “communicative competence”. The Education, Training and Employment Ministry in the Region of Murcia defines this competence as the competence which refers to language use as a tool for oral and written communication, for representation, interpretation and understanding of reality, for building and communicating of the knowledge and the organisation and self-regulation of thinking, feelings and behaviour. It is also stated that in order to express different types of discourse depending on communicative situations in different socio-cultural contexts implies knowledge and effective application of the rules of the linguistic system and of the strategies needed to interact linguistically in a proper way.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Programme for International Student Assessment*. Research launched by the OECD (Organisation for Economic and Co-operation and Development) so that every government reconsiders its educative system.

<sup>2</sup> Diagnosis Evaluation is carried out annually so as to know students' reality and later carry out measurements in order that students achieve basic competences by the end of Compulsory Secondary Education.

With regard to this concept, the Common European Framework for Reference of Languages<sup>3</sup> (CEF), especially on chapter 5, section 1, provides more information about what is the sociocultural competence. At this point, the CEF defines it as the declarative knowledge of the world, particularly of the country in which the language is spoken, which the learner will need to acquire in language learning. The features of culture are related to everyday living; living conditions; interpersonal relations; values, beliefs and attitudes in relation to specific factors; body language; social conventions; and ritual behaviour.

The starting point of this piece of research is the hypothesis “cultural contents are not widely studied in Primary Education textbooks for English language”. The aim of our piece of work is twofold: on the one hand, gathering Primary Education teachers' opinion about the cultural contents their students should know; on the other hand, checking the cultural contents found in Primary Education textbooks for English language by means of an analysis of the cultural elements. In order to do so, the following goals must be achieved:

1. Providing a review of major work in the use of sociocultural aspects when studying a foreign language.
2. Focusing on the specifications of the educative legislation about the importance of sociocultural aspects.
3. Studying the annual Diagnosis Evaluation when cultural aspects have been taken into account.
4. Gathering Primary Education teachers' opinions about the cultural contents their students should know by means of a questionnaire.
5. Analysing ten different textbooks in order to provide information about the cultural elements appearing on them.
6. Comparing both Primary Education teachers' opinions and the results of the analysis of ten textbooks in order to check whether they share points of view.

## **2. SOCIOCULTURAL ASPECTS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Traditionally, knowing a language was understood as being able to read, write, speak and have a conversation with somebody in that particular language. However, could we imagine a person who “knows” English, trying to pay a bus in Liverpool with Euros? Definitely not. Hence, a new idea for the concept “to know a language” was needed. In an attempt to solve this problem, the concept of “communicative competence” was raised. This concept, first presented by Hymes (1972) and later developed by Canale and Swain (1980), is divided into four dimensions: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. In their opinion, a balance among these four competences is needed so as to develop a communicative competence. It is the second dimension, sociolinguistic competence, the one that is concerned on the set of sociocultural rules associated to language use and takes into account interpersonal relationships and the context, and as a result, sociocultural aspects become basic elements in learning.

---

<sup>3</sup> The *Common European Framework for Reference of Languages* provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses across Europe. It also describes what learners must learn to become effective communicators and defines levels of proficiency.

Assuming the need of the cultural aspects in the teaching process of a foreign language so as to attach meaning to the language that has been taught in contrast to teaching based exclusively on linguistic structures which trivialise the language (Kramersch, 1993, Miquel López, 2004, quoted in García, 2006), it brings us to reconsider about the convenience and appropriateness of cultural elements inside textbooks or any other didactic materials. However, research conducted on the cultural dimensions on textbooks and other curricula materials for the teaching of foreign languages on our country is scarce (Puig, 1996, Roca, 1996, Areizaga, 2002, Paricio, 2002, quoted in Paricio, 2005).

Nowadays, cultural elements are growing in importance as it can be concluded from documents such as the definition of the basic competence “linguistic competence” provided in the Diagnostic Evaluation in the Region of Murcia. This competence refers to language use as a tool for communication, orally and by writing, of representation, interpretation and understanding of reality, of building and communicating knowledge and organising and self-regulated thinking, feelings and behaviour.

On this basic competence Royal Decree 1513/2006, 7<sup>th</sup> December also attempts to provide a definition: “Possessing this competence (linguistic competence) implies to be aware of social conventions, of values and cultural aspects and of the versatility of the language depending on the context and communicative intention [...]”.

Defending the importance of cultural elements of a foreign language, Kramersch (1988 quoted in Paricio, 2005) declares that it is assumed that the teaching-learning process of a foreign language inevitably links to the cultural dimension and not much later, this author (1994, quoted in Litz) reminds us that to become fluent in a second language requires communicative competence and, as it has been stated before, this implies cultural understanding. In relation to this, Prodromou (1988, quoted in Litz) and Alptekin (1993, quoted in Litz) suggested that the inclusion of foreign subject matters with no explanation may create misunderstandings since pupils might lack foreign concepts to interpret messages correctly.

However, after looking back at the history of culture teaching, it can be stated that culture has not been considered as a major issue until not long ago. In fact, according to Dimitrios Thanasoulas (2001, quoted in Nancy Serrano, 2002), he identifies two main influences on the teaching of culture. On the one hand, those who believe it consists of transmitting factual, cultural information of the foreign civilisation, such as “literature, arts, customs, habits and folklore of everyday life”. On the other hand, those who consider culture as embed within an interpretive framework.

Furthermore, in Serrano’s opinion (2002), the approach to selecting contents for foreign language teaching has to do with political and economic decisions, though she also mentions supremacy of the geographical proximity criterion. However, she recommends a wider spectrum of the cultural exposure but it seems to raise a number of questions since English language is spoken in a lot of countries.

Trying to find a solution for the differences among European students, the European Council established the Common European Framework for Language Reference, which provides basic guidelines for language learning. Continuous references to cultural dimension

can be found along the Common European Framework for Reference of Languages<sup>4</sup> (CEF), especially on chapter 5, section 1. At this point, the CEF states the declarative knowledge of the world, particularly of the country in which the language is spoken, the learner will need to acquire in language learning. The features and culture mentioned relates to everyday living; living conditions; interpersonal relations; values, beliefs and attitudes in relation to specific factors; body language; social conventions; and ritual behaviour.

Moreover, the current educative system, founded on the Organic Law 2/2006 3<sup>rd</sup> May (LOE) and the Royal Decree 1513/2006 7<sup>th</sup> December for Primary Education, establishes the objectives, contents and evaluation criteria for all pupils attending Spanish schools. This legislation considers the fact of teaching languages as the addition of four content blocks: 1. To understand, speak and chat; 2. To read and write; 3. Knowledge of the language; and 4. Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness. The latter is the one which will be analysed along this paperwork.

On the one hand, we can talk about a block of contents on sociocultural aspects. However, the only evaluation criterion related to this aspect is number 8, that is, “to identify some features, customs and traditions from countries where the foreign language is spoken, in relation and comparison to the own ones so as to develop intercultural awareness”. The problem some teachers may find has to do with generalisation of the contents, which may lead teachers trust contents in textbooks.

Using textbooks for English lessons has supporters and rejecters. Litz summarises different theorists who defend the role of the textbooks reasoning they are an almost universal element of the teaching (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994, quoted in Litz); since they are the “visible heart” of the lesson (Sheldon, 1988, quoted in Litz); because they measure students’ achievement (Haycroft, 1998); they are sensitive to students’ needs (O’Neill, 1982, quoted in Litz) or even be an effective resource for self-directed learning (Cunningsworth, 1995, quoted in Litz). However, Allwright (1982, quoted in Litz) does not agree with these statements, on the contrary, he suggests that textbooks are too inflexible and general, furthermore, they impose external language objectives and incongruent paradigms.

For those who opt to use a textbook in English as Foreign Language lessons should first carry out a meticulous analysis in order to be sure they fulfil their expectations. Among the different criteria proposed for selecting a textbook, Skierso (1991) reminds us to consider the cultural aspect, to grade to which degree they satisfy our expectancies. Nevertheless, her considerations do not solve the problem of the cultural issues in textbooks.

### **3. CULTURAL ASPECTS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM: WHAT THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK CONTAINS**

Even if a similar situation can be observed in any other region of Spain, this section will only revise educative legislation on this issue affecting the Region of Murcia, legislation which must guide teachers to design their didactic plannings.

---

<sup>4</sup> The *Common European Framework for Reference of Languages* provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses across Europe. It also describes what learners must learn to become effective communicators and defines levels of proficiency.

Any Primary Education teacher must carefully read current educative legislation before programming their lessons. In the Region of Murcia, the most concrete legal prescription appears on Decree 286/2007, 7<sup>th</sup> September, which specifies the area objectives for the whole stage, as well as the contents and evaluation criteria for each cycle within this stage (table 1). Nevertheless, Royal Decree 1513/2006, 7<sup>th</sup> December, which also contains stage objective, contents and evaluation criteria, can help teachers to fulfil some aspects which are not presented clear enough.

The Decree 286/2007, 7<sup>th</sup> September, in the Region of Murcia, states *that contents must be selected leaving from the nearest regional context, and joining this to national, European and universal ones, and considering Spain and Europe as cultural foundation*. The stage objectives in Article 4 declare that:

- f) To acquire in, at least, one foreign language basic communicative competence which allows/enables to express and understand simple messages and get along in daily situations.*
- i) To know and value the natural, social and cultural surrounding, placing it in the national, European and universal context.*

The same decree exposes in its Appendix 1 *Areas in Primary Education*, in its content block 4 *Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness*, that these contents foster that pupils know customs, kinds of social relationships, features and particularities of the countries where the foreign language is spoken; to sum up, ways of life different from the own ones. This knowledge will foster the respect and interest in knowing different social and cultural realities differently, depending on the cycle:

CYCLE	CONTENTS	EVALUATION CRITERIA
1 <sup>st</sup>	<i>-Value of the own culture as a consequence of knowing others that are different.</i>	<i>8. To show interest and curiosity in learning the foreign language and recognise linguistic diversity as an enriching element.</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>-Curiosity in knowing general information about people and cultures from other countries. -Realisation of sociocultural activities in relation to the foreign language. -Knowing some characteristic similarities and differences in everyday customs and in the use of some basic forms of social relation, between our country and those where the foreign language is spoken officially. -Open attitude towards other languages and cultures.</i>	<i>8. To identify some aspects of the daily life, customs and celebrations of the countries where the foreign language is spoken, and to compare them with the own ones.</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>-Knowledge of the customs and use of the forms in social relationships where the foreign language is spoken officially.</i>	<i>8. To identify some features, customs and traditions of the countries where the foreign language is spoken, in relation to and comparing them to the own ones so</i>

Table 1. Contents and evaluation criteria for English in Primary Education according to Decree 286/2007, 7<sup>th</sup> September, in the Region of Murcia.

At 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle, Royal Decree 1513/2006, 7<sup>th</sup> December, specifies in its evaluation criteria the following:

*8. To identify some aspects of the daily life where the foreign language is spoken and to compare them with the own ones.*

They add that this criterion assesses the capacity of watching and identifying some differences and similarities about daily life in which the foreign language is spoken concerning timetables, meals, traditions, festivities and ways of relating among people.

Once again, the Royal Decree 1513/2006, 7<sup>th</sup> December clarifies what the text says about the evaluation criteria, this time regarding evaluation criterion at 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle:

*8. To identify some features, customs and traditions of the countries where the foreign language is spoken.*

This criterion intends to assess whether children are able to identify the most famous peculiarities, customs and traditions in the countries where the foreign language is spoken, and to relate these foreign sociocultural elements to the own ones so as to advance in the development of intercultural awareness.

Seen that legal references are too imprecise, this paperwork needs to set which cultural contents will be adequate at this stage through different means so as to compare them with those cultural references which can be found in textbooks.

#### **4. CULTURAL ASPECTS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM: WHAT TEACHERS THINK**

The main problem with cultural contents is their generalisation. This lack of precision allows teachers decide which contents should be included in their didactic programmes, what can be negative due to two reasons: either teachers may not include enough contents so pupils do not achieve an adequate cultural competence or, oppositely, the amount of culture may overwhelm pupils. Consequently, it would be a good idea to create a list with the cultural contents which should be studied along Primary Education. This research includes a selection of cultural contents taking into account opinions by 27 English teachers in Primary Education, besides information extracted from questions in Diagnosis Evaluations<sup>5</sup> in the Region of Murcia, in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Primary Education as well as in 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Compulsory Secondary Education.

---

<sup>5</sup> Organic Law of Education (LOE) establishes that the Evaluation Institute, current National Institute of Educative Evaluation, and corresponding organisms of educative administrations collaborate in the development of general diagnosis evaluation to obtain representative data, from students and educative centres of autonomic communities as well as from the whole nation.

First of all, we will consider which contents were asked in diagnosis evaluations. Therefore, we must look back to the tests carried out in the Region of Murcia in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Primary Education as well as in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Compulsory Secondary Education. These tests can be downloaded from [http://www.educarm.es/portal/admin/webForm.php?aplicacion=EDUCARM\\_EVALUACION&mode=visualizaAplicacionWeb&web=169&ar=1194&zona=PROFESORES&menuSelecci onado](http://www.educarm.es/portal/admin/webForm.php?aplicacion=EDUCARM_EVALUACION&mode=visualizaAplicacionWeb&web=169&ar=1194&zona=PROFESORES&menuSelecci onado).

Diagnosis evaluation tests addressed to 4<sup>th</sup> year Primary Education which assess linguistic competence date back to the academic year 2008-09, although this year, the English section was not included. The following year, in 2009-10, linguistic competence assessed English linguistic competence, but it only considered written comprehension and expression. The first time a section devoted to culture appeared was in 2011-12 in which activities on culture asked about traditional breakfast (eggs, sausages and bacon), double-decker bus (big and red), English currency and timetable for lunch.

Focusing on diagnosis evaluation for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Compulsory Secondary Education in Murcia, the first test on linguistic competence dates back to 2008-09, but this test does not include any English part. The following year, 2009-10, the linguistic competence was assessed again. However, that year, the English section and a part dedicated to culture did appear, dealing with main monuments in London: Big Ben, Trafalgar Square, Westminster Abbey and Buckingham Palace. The third time when the linguistic competence was assessed, cultural contents included the river Thames, the Sterling pound and the typical English take-away meal (fish and chips).

Since the information provided by the tests before mentioned seems to be too brief or scarce so as to elaborate a list detailing which cultural contents must be included in the didactic programmes during the primary stage, one more step is needed: opinions by professionals. Therefore, a questionnaire (appendix I) has been passed out to 27 English teachers in different schools in this region so as to collect their opinions on which cultural contents are essential to study in Primary Education. Despite of the fact this display is not very large, it depicts common opinions among teachers.

The questionnaire has been divided into seven categories: symbols, lifestyle, geography, monuments, famous people, famous dishes/drinks and festivities. Every section offers several items which must be marked if the teacher thinks this concept is essential for students to know or study in their English lessons. Moreover, every section allows teachers to propose more concepts which, in their opinion, are basic to study at this stage. The categories have been elaborated taking into account RD 1513/2006, 7<sup>th</sup> December, and also my personal opinion on this issue. For the proposal of the ideas collected into each category, I have taken into consideration proximity to the British Isles, my personal experience in the foreign country and my supervisor's suggestions on these aspects.

With the intention of drawing conclusions from teachers' opinions, answers will be counted; as a result, a list with answers and suggestions voted by most teachers will be added (table 2). Appendix II summarises the number of answers for each item in the questionnaire.

First category is "symbols". The ideas included here are the Sterling pound, the Union Jack and the Irish flag, red double-decker buses and the typical colours which national sports teams wear in competitions. All the teachers agree pupils should study the Union Jack and the

Irish flag, and almost all of them think the same with the Sterling pound. A vast majority believes that pupils should recognise red double-decker buses as a part of the English culture, but none of the professionals asked would teach their pupils the colours worn by national sports teams. There has been no suggestion in this category.

Second category is “lifestyle”, which refers to routines which are different in the foreign country. The elements for this section are the different timetables that British people follow to have their meals, and the fact that they do not kiss each other the first time they meet a new person but they shake hands instead. Most teachers consider the difference in timetables for meals, and some of them will include shaking hands when meeting people in their didactic programmes. One teacher suggests that good manners must be included.

Third category, “geography”, contains the most relevant geographical aspects from the British Isles, such as their location, the nations which make up the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, some capital cities, as well as main cities, rivers and mountains. Almost one-third would not include the location of the British Isles and their capital cities, however, all of them hold nations in the United Kingdom as something essential to teach. Around half of teachers would study main cities in their lessons, and only one out of nine teachers believes that main rivers are basic for students to know. Main mountains are not considered basic for pupils at this stage. One of the teachers proposes to study the weather and landscape which are typical in these areas.

Category number 4 is “monuments”, which encompasses the greatest and most representative monuments on the islands: the Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament and Buckingham Palace. Teachers’ answers do not coincide totally, but most of them would include these three monuments. A teacher proposes to include the British Museum and other monuments, but without specifying. Another teacher suggests studying monuments from cities in the United Kingdom apart from London.

Next category, “famous people”, comprises the most famous people in this country, for example, the Queen Elizabeth II, the Royal Family and the poet and playwright William Shakespeare. Most opinions coincide in presenting Queen Elizabeth II and William Shakespeare in their lessons, whereas only a few would include the Royal Family. Among suggestions, those that have been repeated several times are famous singers and actors in general, and the Beatles, in particular. Besides, one of the teachers would include the Prime Minister.

“Famous dishes and drinks” is a category which keeps traditional dishes and drinks from this country, for instance, the famous take-away fish and chips, the traditional breakfast consisting of eggs, sausages and beans, and English favourite drink tea. From the answers, it can be said that there is broad agreement in presenting the traditional breakfast. In spite of being chosen by the majority of teachers, not all of them would see fish and chips or tea in their lessons. In addition to this category, a few teachers would add more traditional dishes, particularly, roast beef and carrot cake.

Last category concerns “festivities” which differ from the own ones and which are closely related to history and traditions, particularly, Thanksgiving Day, Halloween and Easter. All the teachers asked agree in selecting Thanksgiving Day for their teaching plans, and almost all of them do with Halloween. Less than fifty percent would include Easter in

their classes. Among the most frequent proposals we find Christmas and Saint Patrick’s Day, and even one teacher proposed Bonfire Night.

<b>CULTURAL CONTENTS IN TEACHERS’ OPINION</b>
<b>SYMBOLS</b>
-Sterling pound
-Union Jack and Irish flag
-Red double-decker buses
<b>LIFESTYLE</b>
-Timetables for meals
-Shaking hands when meeting new people
<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>
-Location of the British Isles
-Nations in the UK
-Capital cities
-Main cities
<b>MONUMENTS</b>
-Big Ben
-Houses of Parliament
-Buckingham Palace
<b>FAMOUS PEOPLE</b>
-Queen Elizabeth II
-William Shakespeare
<b>FAMOUS DISHES /DRINKS</b>
-Fish and chips
-Traditional breakfast
-Tea
<b>FESTIVITIES</b>
-Thanksgiving Day
-Halloween
-Christmas

Table 2. Cultural contents to be included in English lessons along Primary Education in teachers’ opinion.

Bearing in mind the contents which appeared on diagnosis evaluations before mentioned, this list (table 3) can be fulfilled along with the answers from the questionnaires. The following table shows contents which teachers would include in their lessons, marking the symbol “√”, only those which also were asked in diagnosis evaluations. As a result, the definite list will include the following ideas:

CATEGORIES	TEACHERS' OPINIONS	DIAGNOSIS EVALUATION	
		4 <sup>th</sup> year in Primary Education	2 <sup>nd</sup> year in Compulsory Secondary Education
<b>SYMBOLS</b>	-Sterling pound	√	√
	-Union Jack and Irish flag		
<b>LIFESTYLE</b>	-Red double-decker buses	√	
	-Timetables for meals	√	
<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>	-Shaking hands when meeting new people		
	-Location of the British Isles		
	-Nations in the UK		
	-Capital cities		
<b>MONUMENTS</b>	-Main cities		
	-Big Ben		-River Thames √
	-Houses of Parliament		√
<b>FAMOUS PEOPLE</b>	-Buckingham Palace		-Trafalgar Square -Westminster Abbey
	-Queen Elizabeth II		
<b>FAMOUS DISHES AND DRINKS</b>	-William Shakespeare		
	-Fish and chips		√
	-Traditional breakfast	√	
<b>FESTIVITIES</b>	-Tea		
	-Thanksgiving Day		
	-Halloween		
	-Christmas		

Table 3. Cultural contents to be included in English lessons along Primary Education considering teachers answers in questionnaires along with the concepts which appeared on diagnosis evaluations in the Region of Murcia.

If these two lists are compared, we can notice that the teachers who have filled the questionnaire coincide in including all the aspects which appeared on diagnosis evaluations for 4<sup>th</sup> year in Primary Education. As far as the contents from the diagnosis evaluations for 2<sup>nd</sup> year in Compulsory Secondary Education are concerned, it cannot be stated that these must be presented some time in Primary Education since they are supposed to be known by students in year 2 in Compulsory Secondary Education, yet, they are very likely to be included at the very beginning of this stage or at the end of the previous one.

## **5. CULTURAL ASPECTS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM: WHAT TEXTBOOKS PROVIDE**

This section will review which cultural aspects are developed through 10 textbooks for 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle in Primary Education in Spain, considering images as well as oral and written texts. The references will be registered in a table; after that, a graph will illustrate the amount of references depending on the textbook and the category they can be classified into.

The textbooks, including class book and activity book, to be analysed are:

- Bingo 3 (Longman, 1998)
- Bugs 5 (Macmillan Heinemann, 2005)
- Bugs 6 (Macmillan Heinemann, 2005)
- Fantastic Fanfare 5 (Oxford, 1998)
- Finding Out 5 (Heinemann, 1995)
- Find Out 5 (Macmillan, 2007)
- Find Out 6 (Macmillan, 2007)
- Galaxy 5 (Oxford, 2004)
- Summer English 5<sup>o</sup> (Burlington Books, 1999)
- Summer English 6<sup>o</sup> (Burlington Books, 1999)

All cultural references inside these textbooks have been registered in the following table (Table 4) which considers the same categories used in the questionnaire for teachers: symbols, lifestyle, geography, monuments, famous people, famous dishes or drinks, and festivities.



<p><b>Bugs 6</b></p>	<p>-Pounds -Red double-decker bus</p>	<p>-map with the main cities -photo of London -map of the British Isles -Oxford -Glasgow</p>	<p>-pictures of the London Eye -Stonehenge. -Sydney House -Statue of Liberty -Houses of Parliament -National Gallery -Buckingham Palace -Natural History Museum -Harrods</p>	<p>-inventor Graham Bell -Jonathan Swift (Gulliver's Travels) -Mark Twain (The Adventures of Tom Sawyer) -Long John Silver</p>	<p>-Christmas -New Year -Valentine's day. -April fool's day</p>
<p><b>Fantastic Out 5</b></p>	<p>-flag of the UK. -flag of Ireland  -meal times</p>	<p>-map of the UK. -map of the British Isles  -map of the USA</p>	<p>-King Arthur and Merlin</p>		

**Find Out 5**

-flag of the USA	-map of the USA	-G. Washington	-Thanksgiving day
-flag of the UK	-map of the British Isles.	-Amelia Earhart	-Bonfire Night
-double decker-bus	-Edinburgh	-Ella Fitzgerald	-Christmas
-colour of the taxis	-Scotland.	-Neil Armstrong	-Bonfire Night
	-Wales	-Walt Disney	-Advent
	-Cardiff	-Sherlock Holmes	
	-Belfast		
	-Northern Ireland.		
	-London.		
	-England		
	-New York		
	-Stonehenge		
	-Cardiff		
	-Edinburgh		
	-Belfast		
	-London		
	-England		
	-Wales		
	-Northern Ireland		
	-Scotland		
	-Central Park		



If these data are transformed into a graph (Fig. 5), it will be easier for us to observe differences and to extract conclusions. Therefore, every reference has been counted and assigned the same value. The total amount has been represented in different colours depending on the category of cultural contents they belong to. As a result, some statements can be made taking into account differences among categories and textbooks.

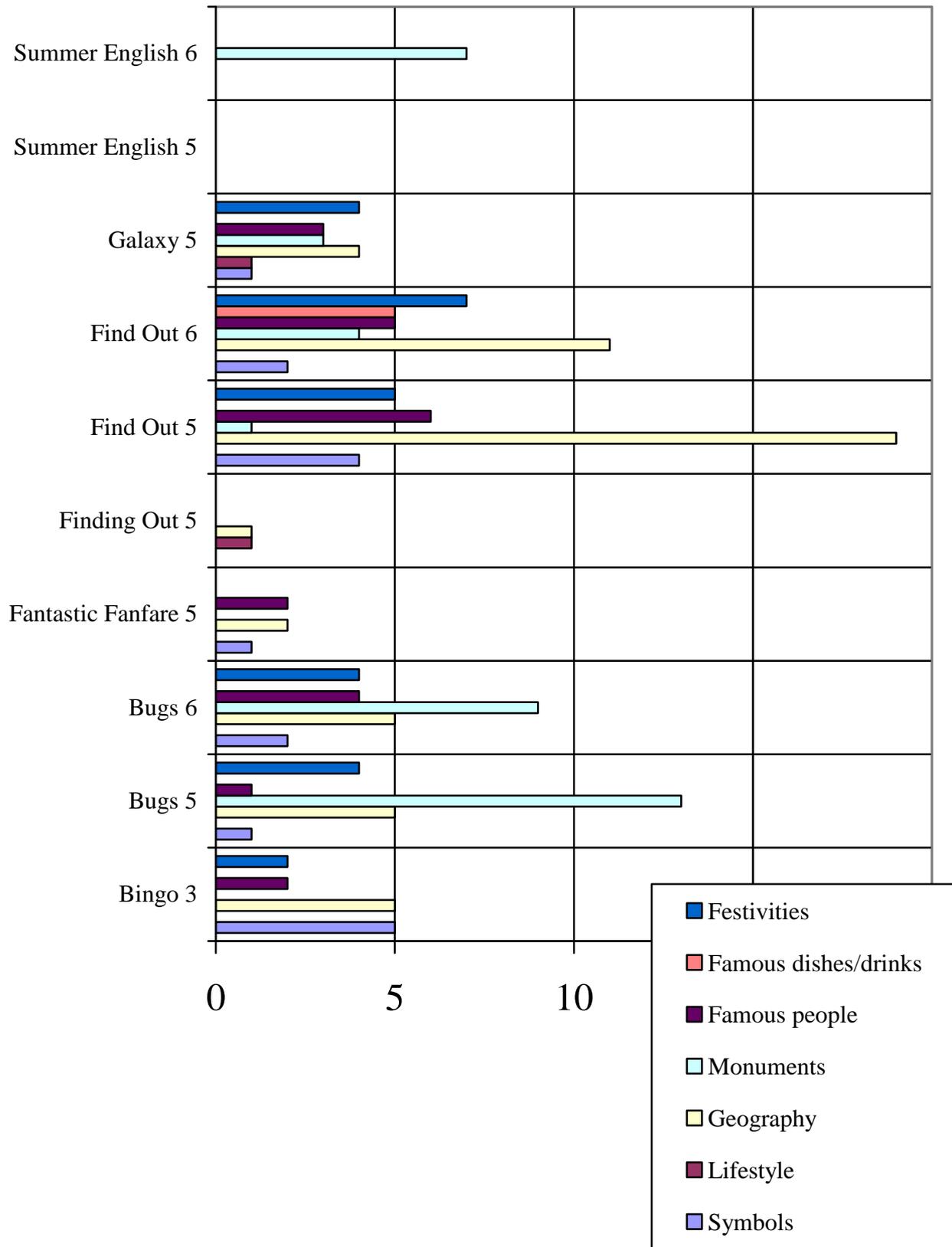


Fig. 5. Cultural references in textbooks analysed.

After observing this graph, it can be stated that most references are geographical or they refer to monuments, followed by “festivities” and “famous people”; in fact, “geography” is the category which includes references in most books, what cannot be said of any other category. On the contrary, it can be stated that the least important category or the category which includes least cultural references are “lifestyle” and “famous dishes or drinks”.

If we consider each category individually, there are elements which are repeated in the different books. The most frequent element within the first category, “symbols”, is flags from the United Kingdom and from the United States of America, followed by double-decker buses. In “lifestyle”, the only reference is the time for meals. Among the numerous elements in “geography”, the maps from the United Kingdom and/or the British Isles can be highlighted, as well as the references to London. As far as “monuments” is concerned, the only element which is repeated along three books is the Big Ben, while Buckingham Palace and the London Eye are presented in not more than two textbooks. Finally, there is only one more category which shares the same cultural references in more than one book, “festivities”, whose most repeated elements are Christmas, Halloween and April Fool’s Day.

On the other hand, taking into account textbooks as a whole, we can conclude saying that the most balanced books are *Find Out 5*, *Find Out 6* and *Galaxy 5*, especially *Find Out 6*. If we consider the amount of cultural references, publisher Macmillan is the one which includes highest number of references, as can be deduced from textbooks *Bugs 5*, *Bugs 6*, *Find Out 5* and *Find out 6*. This is also the same publisher which embraces cultural contents from more countries: the United Kingdom, Ireland, the United States and Australia. The last note which can be noticed is that the later the publishing of the book, the more cultural references appear.

Despite having in mind that cultural contents are distributed along the three cycles in Primary Education and this analysis has only evaluated ten books addressed to third cycle, any type of content is susceptible to be repeated and expanded in upper years. This is the reason why textbooks for the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle are supposed to include more cultural references than any other year.

Comparing opinions by teachers and the factual contents in these textbooks (table 6), table 6 can be used to appreciate to what extent they coincide so as to assess cultural contents in textbooks analysed and, hence, to provide a verdict on the hypothesis.

First data to be compared are symbols. Among symbols, most teachers and best textbooks seem to agree in including the Union Jack, the Irish flag as well as red double-decker buses in their teaching plans. However, surprisingly, there is just one book with this content, in spite of being asked in diagnosis evaluation both in 4<sup>th</sup> year of Primary Education and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Secondary Education.

As it has been said before, lifestyle is one of the least popular categories in textbooks, and there are only two books with references to timetables for meals.

Geography is the most significant category due to the number of references. Agreement is evident in presenting the British Isles, although not so clear in dealing with nations in the United Kingdom. Finally, the River Thames does not appear in any textbook

and very few of the teachers considered it as a basic aspect to teach, though it was a question in a diagnosis evaluation test.

Next category, monuments, is the second most popular. The cultural aspects in which teachers and textbooks coincide are the Big Ben and Buckingham Palace.

In “famous people”, teachers and textbooks totally disagree, since there is only one book with an indirect reference to William Shakespeare, and none of all of them refers to Queen Elizabeth II.

Regarding famous dishes and drinks, only one book encompasses these references, and the unique reference which coincides with teachers’ opinion is the traditional breakfast.

If we consider festivities, we can notice that teachers and textbooks share opinions in dealing with Christmas and Halloween.

<b>COINCIDENCES AND DISCREPANCIES ON CULTURAL CONTENTS</b>		
	<b>COINCIDENCES</b>	<b>DISCREPANCIES</b>
<b>SYMBOLS</b>	-Union Jack and Irish flag	-Sterling pound
<b>LIFESTYLE</b>	-Red double-decker bus	
<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>	-Timetables for meals	-Shaking hands when meeting new people
<b>MONUMENTS</b>	-Location of the British Isles	-Capital cities
	-Nations in the UK	-Main cities
	-Big Ben	-River Thames
	-Buckingham Palace	-Houses of Parliament
<b>FAMOUS PEOPLE</b>		-Trafalgar Square
<b>FAMOUS DISHES/DRINKS</b>	-William Shakespeare	-Westminster Abbey
<b>FESTIVITIES</b>	-Traditional breakfast	-Queen Elizabeth II
		-Fish and chips
		-Tea
	-Halloween	-Thanksgiving day
	-Christmas	

Table 6. Coincidences and discrepancies on cultural elements.

After contrasting opinions and didactic materials, it can be claimed that teachers and textbooks do not share opinions. They disagree on half of cultural contents, approximately. Furthermore, from this contrast it can be inferred that none of the textbooks would satisfy teachers’ expectancies completely, and those which better match them are *Bugs*, *Find Out* or *Galaxy*.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Once that teachers' answers from the questionnaires have been compared with cultural references in textbooks, it can be claimed that textbooks for English as a foreign language for pupils in third cycle in Primary Education do not provide enough cultural references in order to please teachers. At the beginning of this paperwork, it was brought into question whether cultural contents were not widely studied in Primary Education textbooks for English language so as to form pupils' sociocultural competence. Now, this hypothesis has been proven in our piece of research after having achieved the goals set above (see introduction and justification)..

First of all, a review of main works on sociocultural competence has been provided to understand its importance when studying a foreign language. Second, specifications on the Spanish educative legislation have been offered in order to show what legal authorities expect children to know. Owing to problematic overgeneralisation of legal prescriptions, tests from annual Diagnosis Evaluation have been studied to seek specific references to culture. Next, we have gathered opinions by 27 English teachers via a questionnaire so that most voted answers are considered as essential for pupils to know. After that, ten English textbooks have been analysed to provide factual information of cultural elements appearing on them. Lastly, data between what teachers expect and what textbooks actually contain have been compared, so at this stage of the research we are able to claim if textbooks really study enough cultural contents. In fact, it can also be claimed that the most frequent cultural elements in textbooks are geographical, followed by those related to festivities and famous people. There are some specific references which are repeated in different textbooks, namely flags of the United Kingdom and of the United States of America, double-decker buses, maps of the British Isles, the Big Ben, Christmas, Halloween and April Fool's Day. Finally, publisher Macmillan designs textbooks with the highest number of cultural references.

Although English as a foreign language textbooks are increasing the amount of cultural elements, they still do not meet the requirements which teachers demand. Consequently, didactic materials must be improved. In spite of the efforts by national educative authorities to guarantee standard education to pupils in foreign language classrooms, current legislation seems to be too general, at least, with regard to sociocultural contents. As a result, part of teachers' work consists of specifying in their teaching programmes which contents, sociocultural and any other type, they will be dealing with along their didactic units. This task is commonly carried out with the help provided by textbooks which publishers design for each grade. The problem arises when different publishers include different cultural elements and, especially, when teachers consider these books do not satisfy their expectancies. From our point of view and as possible future direction of our research, this issue could be solved if there would exist a reference document which could be consulted by teachers and publishers; otherwise, teachers will elaborate their teaching programmes with uncertainty and disagreement with books as well as with other professionals in this field, and more importantly, they will not be sure whether they accomplish educative standards.

## 7. REFERENCES

- Ambadiang, T. and García Parejo, I. (2006). La cultura lingüística y el componente cultural en la enseñanza de lenguas no maternas: observaciones sobre algunos paradigmas de la competencia cultural. *Didáctica (Lengua y Literatura)*, 18, 61-92. Retrieved on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2012, from <http://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2201296>
- Areizaga, E., Gómez, I. and Ibarra, E. (2005). El Componente Cultural en la Enseñanza de Lenguas como Línea de Investigación. *Revista Psicodidáctica*, 10 (2), 27-46. Retrieved on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2013, from <http://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=1427661>
- Backer, W. (2012). From Cultural Awareness to Intercultural Awareness: Culture in ELT. *ELT Journal*, 66 (1), 62-70. Retrieved on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013, from <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/content/66/1/62.abstract>
- Bryam, M. (1989). *Cultural Studies in Foreign Language Education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Bonachía Caballero, M. J. (2007). Los Contenidos Temáticos y Socioculturales de los Manuales de F.L.E. para Primaria. *Contextos Educativos*, 10, 133-142. Retrieved 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013, from <http://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=1153761>
- Canale, M. and Swain M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics* (1): 1-47.
- Evaluación diagnóstica*. Retrieved on March 25<sup>th</sup> 2013, from [http://www.educarm.es/portal/admin/webForm.php?aplicacion=EDUCARM\\_EVALUACION&mode=visualizaAplicacionWeb&web=169&ar=1194&zona=PROFESORES&menuSeleccionado](http://www.educarm.es/portal/admin/webForm.php?aplicacion=EDUCARM_EVALUACION&mode=visualizaAplicacionWeb&web=169&ar=1194&zona=PROFESORES&menuSeleccionado)
- Hymes, D. H. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride and J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: selected readings* (pp. 269-293). Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Informe Pisa*. Retrieved on March 14<sup>th</sup> 2013, from <http://www.mecd.gob.es/inee/estudios/pisa.html>
- Kramsch, C. (1988). The Cultural Discourse of Foreign Language Textbooks. In *Toward a New Integration of Language and Culture*, A. J. Singerman (Ed.). Middlebury, Northeast Conference on Teaching of Foreign Languages Inc, 63-88.
- Litz, D. R. A. (2001): Textbook evaluation and ELT management: A south Korean case study. *Asian EFL Journal*. 48 (4) Retrieved on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013, from [http://faculty.ksu.edu.sa/umerazim/Documents/Litz\\_thesis.pdf](http://faculty.ksu.edu.sa/umerazim/Documents/Litz_thesis.pdf)
- Marco Común Europeo de Referencia de las Lenguas*. Retrieved on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2013, from [http://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca\\_ele/marco/cvc\\_mer.pdf](http://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/marco/cvc_mer.pdf)
- Miekley, J. (2005). ESL Textbook Evaluation Checklist. *The Reading Matrix*, 5 (2). Retrieved on March 28<sup>th</sup> 2013, from [http://www.readingmatrix.com/reading\\_projects/miekley/project.pdf](http://www.readingmatrix.com/reading_projects/miekley/project.pdf)
- Paricio Tato, M. S. (2005). La dimensión cultural en los libros de texto de lenguas extranjeras: pautas para su análisis. *Glosas didácticas. Revista electrónica internacional*, 15, 133-144. Retrieved on March 27<sup>th</sup> 2013, from <http://www.um.es/glosasdidacticas/GD15/gd15-13.pdf>
- Sánchez Pérez, A. (1997). *Los métodos en la enseñanza de idiomas. Evolución histórica y análisis didáctico*. Madrid: Sociedad General Española de Librería.
- Serrano, N. (2002). Teaching Culture in Foreign Language Programmes at Third Level Education. *CAUCE, Revista de Filología y su Didáctica*, 25, 121-145. Retrieved on April 10<sup>th</sup> 2013, from [http://cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/cauce/pdf/cauce25/cauce25\\_08.pdf](http://cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/cauce/pdf/cauce25/cauce25_08.pdf)
- Skierso, A. (1991) Textbook Selection and Evaluation. In Celce-Murcia, M. (Ed.) *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Williams, D. (1983). Developing criteria for textbook evaluation. *ELT Journal*, 37 (3), 251-255. Retrieved on March 30<sup>th</sup> 2013, from <http://textbookuse.pbworks.com/f/Developing%2Bcriteria%2Bfor%2Btextbook%2Bevaluation.pdf>

**APPENDIX I:** Questionnaire for Primary Education teachers.

**ENGLISH LESSONS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION**

**This questionnaire is intended to seek teachers' opinion on cultural aspects about the British Isles and English-speaking countries for English lessons in Primary Education. Tick only those aspects that YOU, as an English teacher, consider basic for pupils to know at the end of Primary Education.**

**SYMBOLS**

- The Sterling pound
- Red double-decker buses
- Others:.....
- The Union Jack and Irish Flag
- Typical colours worn by national sports teams

**LIFESTYLE**

- Timetable for meals
- Others:.....
- Shaking hands when meeting new people

**GEOGRAPHY**

- Location of British Isles
- Some capital cities
- Main rivers
- Others:.....
- Nations in the UK
- Main cities
- Main mountains

**MONUMENTS**

- Big Ben
- Buckingham Palace
- Others:.....
- Houses of Parliament

**FAMOUS PEOPLE**

- the Queen
- W. Shakespeare
- Others:.....
- the Royal Family

**FAMOUS DISHES/ DRINKS**

- Fish and chips
- Tea
- Others:.....
- Traditional breakfast (eggs, sausages and beans)

**FESTIVITIES**

- Thanksgiving day
- Easter
- Others:.....
- Halloween

**APPENDIX II:** Graph with the total number of answers for each item in the questionnaire.

