

doi.org/10.61425/wplp.2025.20.68.90

CULTURE-RELATED COURSES IN SECONDARY SCHOOL EFL TEACHER EDUCATION IN HUNGARY: A CURRICULUM ANALYSIS

Dávid Kálóczy

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
kaloczidavid12@gmail.com

Abstract: It is impossible to become a foreign language teacher without also becoming a teacher of culture at the same time, as including cultural elements in foreign language teaching is indispensable. As a consequence, teacher education must prepare future foreign language teachers to teach not just language, but culture as well. Teachers heavily rely on what they have learned during their training, so the cultural content of EFL teacher education is a highly relevant factor. This study aims to analyse the study unit lists and course descriptions of culture-related courses in the secondary school EFL teacher training programmes at three Hungarian universities using thematic content analysis. The results show that there is an average of five compulsory culture-related courses at each university, however, while these courses mainly transmit cultural knowledge or develop participants' intercultural competence, they rarely address how to integrate culture into language teaching. The courses that directly prepare teacher trainees for the integrated teaching of language and culture are offered as electives at most universities, even though completing these courses would be beneficial for all future EFL teachers.

Keywords: *culture, intercultural competence, teacher education, curriculum, document analysis*

1 Introduction

Language and culture are inextricably interrelated, so the teaching of a foreign language undoubtedly includes the transmission and development of certain cultural knowledge and skills, as these are essential for the comprehensive acquisition of language competence. This is reflected in Hungarian teacher education, as English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers who graduate in Hungary receive a degree called *teacher of English language and culture*. The relationship between language and culture in language teaching has been discussed by several scholars in the international (Byram, 1997; Byram & Morgan, 1994; Damen, 1987; Kramsch, 1993; Risager, 2006; Risager, 2007; Seelye, 1993) and in the Hungarian (Holló, 2019; Lázár, 2022) context as well.

As a consequence, culture teaching and the development of intercultural competence are included in the Hungarian National Core Curriculum as objectives of foreign language teaching, however, they appear in a broad and

vague way (Divéki & Lázár, 2024). As for the cultural content of English lessons, the Hungarian National Core Curriculum mentions that by the end of their studies, foreign language learners are expected to know the geographical locations and main characteristics of the countries that belong to the given target language cultures and they should also be familiar with the basic expressions, phrases, and customs related to the main holidays of these cultures (Government of Hungary, 2020).

This broad description mainly focuses on civilisational aspects, and the cultural and intercultural aims and contents of language teaching are not explicitly specified. As there are no specific suggestions about what to include in English lessons under culture and interculturality, it is a noteworthy challenge for teacher training programmes to prepare future teachers for the integrated teaching of language and culture. Overall, it can be hypothesised that due to the inseparable nature of language and culture (Fantini, 1997; Risager, 2006) and based on the recommendations of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) and the Hungarian National Core Curriculum (Government of Hungary, 2020) the majority of foreign language teacher training programmes include some cultural content, but this varies greatly across universities and programmes.

Our world is becoming increasingly global and interconnected, so it has never been more important for learners to acquire real-life language skills that can be used in communication with people from different cultural backgrounds. Most misunderstandings in the context of intercultural communication are caused by cultural differences and the lack of appropriate skills and knowledge (Holló, 2014), so it is crucial to take the cultural aspects of language into consideration in foreign language teaching. However, in order for teachers to prepare their students to communicate effectively in intercultural situations, teacher education must prepare future teachers to integrate culture into their teaching in order to become teachers of language and culture at the same time.

Several studies (Holló, 2016; Holló, 2021; Lázár, 2013) and doctoral dissertations (Lázár, 2006; Talbi, 2023) investigated the cultural content of EFL teacher training programmes in Hungary. Most of these research projects focused on earlier systems of teacher training, and Talbi's (2023) case study investigated different English major programmes at one Hungarian university. There is no research available that focuses on the cultural content of the new five-year teacher training programme that was introduced in 2022 and aims to train teachers of English language and culture, as its name suggests. This study seeks to address this gap by analysing and comparing the culture-related courses of three major Hungarian universities within the current secondary school EFL teacher training programmes.

2 Theoretical and Empirical Background

2.1 Culture and Intercultural Competence

Culture has always been part of English Language Teaching (ELT), however, its role has constantly changed. Since culture is a very broad term, it has been defined by various researchers in several ways, there is no universally accepted definition. The definition of Spencer-Oatey (2008) highlights the complexity and dynamic nature of culture, as she defines culture as

a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour. (p. 3)

The complexity of culture is comprehensively illustrated by the culture model of Holló (2019), as she identifies three main categories of culture, as can be seen in Table 1. The three main categories (civilisation, speech & behaviour patterns, and text/discourse structures & skills) contain several elements of culture, and learning about these aspects of culture can contribute to successful intercultural communication and the better acceptance of people from other cultures (Holló, 2019).

In today's world concerning the role of culture in foreign language teaching, a primary goal of language teachers is the development of learners' intercultural competence (IC). The concept is mainly associated with Byram (1997), who defines IC as learners' "ability to interact in their own language with people from another country and culture, drawing upon their knowledge about intercultural communication, their attitudes of interest in otherness and their skills in interpreting, relating and discovering" (p. 70). Furthermore, Byram (1997) differentiates between intercultural competence (IC) and intercultural communicative competence (ICC), and states that ICC refers to language users' ability to

interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language. They are able to negotiate a mode of communication and interaction which is satisfactory to themselves and the other and they are able to act as mediator between people of different cultural origins. Their knowledge of another culture is linked to their language competence through their ability to use language appropriately (sociolinguistic and discourse competence) and their awareness of the specific meanings, values and connotations of the language. They also have a basis for acquiring new languages and cultural understandings as a consequence of the skills they have acquired in the first. (p. 71)

The two terms are often used interchangeably, however, intercultural competence is more common today as a general term. Moreover, Byram (1997) adds that intercultural competence consists of five elements: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness.

Civilisation	Speech & behaviour patterns	Text/Discourse structures & skills
Civilisation topics	Behaviour, etiquette	Discourse features
History	Language functions	The aim and audience of a text
Geography	Greeting, leave taking	Text structure
Icons (people, products)	Starting a conversation	Genre characteristics
Sights	Chatting	Topic structure
Traditions	Socializing	Coherence, logic, cohesion
Customs	Inviting opinions	Arguments and evidence
Institutions	Expressing opinions	Figures of speech
Economy	Agreeing, disagreeing	Public speeches
Arts	Moderating a conversation	Translation
Sciences	Interrupting	Mediation
Popular culture	Requesting, refusing	Interpretation
Values	Advice, suggestions	Summarising
Culinary traditions	Complaining, criticising	Discourse processes and skills
Administrative and other practicalities	Complimenting	Researching a topic
Taboo topics	Praising, encouraging	Focusing on issues
Humour	Apologising	Outlining
Cultural connotations of vocabulary	Visiting, telephoning	Developing and structuring ideas
etc.	Pragmatic features	Drafting, re-writing, editing
	Socio-linguistic features	Relating to audience
	Body language	Using dictionaries
	Cultural dimensions	Avoiding plagiarism
	etc.	etc.

Table 1. Elements of culture (Holló, 2019)

2.2 Teaching Language and Culture

Kramsch (1993) emphasizes that teaching culture requires an interdisciplinary approach, as culture is related to several disciplines apart from language pedagogy, such as for example literature, social sciences, psychology, and sociology. Byram and Morgan (1994) support this claim, as they argue that EFL teachers might have the impression that they have to become historians, sociologists, economists, or political scientists in order to teach culture. Although, due to its interdisciplinary nature, culture teaching is not exclusively, but mainly an integral part of language education (Barrett et al., 2014).

It is important to integrate culture into foreign language teaching and learning because focusing only on the linguistic systems of language does not make it possible to communicate in intercultural situations effectively (Byram & Morgan, 1994), as without any cultural knowledge foreign language users will be “fluent fools” (Bennett, 1997, p. 16). Furthermore, it is not possible to understand a language without understanding its cultural context (Kramsch, 2013), as language and culture are closely interrelated. Byram and Morgan (1994) state that it is impossible to become a teacher of a language without becoming a teacher of culture, as in their framework they refer to the integrated teaching of language and culture by hyphenating the term as “teaching language-and-culture” (Byram & Morgan, 1994, p. 1) to highlight that language and culture are inseparable. This relationship between language teaching and culture teaching is supported by Fantini (1997), who merges these two constructs and refers to language and culture together as “linguaculture” (p. 10). Similarly, Risager (2006) also emphasises that language and culture are inseparable, and she refers to the two constructs together as “languaculture” (p. 110).

One of the main benefits of including culture in foreign language teaching is that culture learning challenges and develops learners’ identity and the way they see the world (Byram, 1997; Damen, 1987). Due to the complexity of culture, it is not at all easy to decide what aspects of culture to integrate into language education because it is not possible to design a syllabus that covers everything (Ur, 2024). Culture is dynamic and it is constantly changing, so cultural knowledge tends to become outdated rather quickly (Enyedi, 2000). Instead of teaching cultural facts of a given time, it is more beneficial to teach learners how to get to know a culture and how to adapt to cultural changes (Damen, 1987).

Byram and Morgan (1994) argue that in the process of the integrated teaching of language and culture, teachers have to take the role of a mediator. The role of a mediator is defined in the companion volume of CEFR (2020) as

creating a neutral, trusted, shared “space” in order to enhance communication between others. They aim to expand and deepen intercultural understanding between participants in order to avoid and/or overcome any potential communication difficulties arising from

contrasting cultural viewpoints. Naturally, the mediator themselves needs a continually developing awareness of sociocultural and sociolinguistic differences affecting cross-cultural communication. (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 114)

Damen (1987) highlights that teachers as mediators should encourage their students to be empathetic and develop a third culture by themselves to learn how to recognise and respect cultural differences. Kramsch (1993) refers to this as third place and defines it as an emerging concept “that grows in the interstices between the cultures the learner grew up with and the new cultures he or she is being introduced to” (p. 236). She also adds that it is the task of language learners to define what this means to themselves (Kramsch, 1993).

2.3 Training Teachers of Language and Culture

Teachers cannot teach language and culture effectively, without learning about culture (Byram & Morgan, 1994), so teachers should receive special training for teaching language and culture (Damen, 1987). Therefore, teacher education should put great emphasis on the relationship between language and culture (Hobbs, 2013), because beyond language knowledge, teachers need cultural knowledge and skills as well (Yuan & Hu, 2018). Willems (2002) emphasises that interculturality should not be an additional element of language teacher education, but an essential part, as the task of a language teacher is more than teaching grammar and vocabulary, so they need to be prepared for the integrated teaching of language and culture as well. It is hardly realized by policy makers that including cultural and intercultural content in language teacher education is not a shift from language focus, as language and culture are so substantially interrelated that language cannot be taught without culture (Liddicoat, 2009).

Furthermore, it is a big challenge to decide what kind of cultural content to teach for future teachers in the age of English as a lingua franca. Language teachers have to be able to communicate effectively in a wide range of cultural situations, so they have to become culturally responsive practitioners who have some knowledge of several cultures and are aware of cultural differences in a way that they are able to transmit cultural knowledge and intercultural skills (Badger & MacDonald, 2007). Kimmel (2020) argues that the culture of the English-speaking countries, like for example the UK or the USA is still highly relevant in English language teaching and EFL teacher education, as the English language is rooted in these cultures. Furthermore, according to Holló (2019), in English language teaching, the target culture does not just include the culture of English-speaking countries, but every cultural context where foreign language learners will use the language, so learners of English should not be limited to learning only about English-speaking national cultures.

2.4 Empirical Research on Teacher Education from the Perspective of Culture

Looking at international contexts, in Finland, Larzén-Östermark (2009) concluded that culture is strongly neglected in language teacher education, and even if cultural contents appear, the focus is on literature and civilisation, it is rarely discussed how to integrate culture into foreign language teaching. A more recent study conducted in China revealed that EFL university teachers mainly include civilisational facts in their teaching when it comes to culture and the main reason for this is the lack of pedagogical knowledge concerning the integrated teaching of language and culture in higher education (Qian, 2023). The IC of Mexican pre-service teachers was assessed with the help of a self-report questionnaire by Hernández-López et al. (2024). They found that teacher candidates are open and empathetic, but they lack the theoretical and professional knowledge to deal with cultural and intercultural topics.

According to Lázár (2020), the role of culture and intercultural competence development in language education are underrepresented areas of empirical research in Hungary. Two doctoral dissertations (Lázár, 2006; Talbi, 2023) were carried out in Hungary that explored this topic. Lázár (2006) investigated the cultural and intercultural content of several courses in the teacher training programme of seven Hungarian universities, while Talbi (2023) examined the culture-related courses at one university in Hungary in English major programmes at every level (BA, MA, teacher training, PhD). Lázár (2006) concluded that a one-semester course about the methodology of developing intercultural competence can raise teacher trainees' awareness, and as a result, they are more likely to include cultural elements in their teaching. Talbi (2023) found that culture and intercultural competence development appear at every level in the English major programmes of the investigated university, however, this case study mainly concentrated on how these courses teach culture and develop participants' intercultural competence, its focus was not on how these courses prepare future teachers to teach language and culture.

In 2013, a new system of secondary school teacher training leading to a Master's degree in Education (MEd) was introduced in Hungary. This six-year programme was replaced in 2022 by a shorter, five-year programme that brought some changes in the content of teacher education. This programme has a different structure concerning the type and amount of teaching practice, and this resulted in some changes in the curriculum, too. Previous studies (Lázár, 2006; Talbi, 2023) analysed the curricula of earlier systems of teacher training, so it may be worth examining what cultural and intercultural content this programme contains and how it responds to the changes that have happened in the fields of culture teaching, intercultural communication, and global citizenship in the past decades.

3 Research Design and Methods

3.1 Research Questions

To investigate EFL teacher education curricula from the point of view of culture-related courses, this study attempts to find answer to the following research question:

1. What cultural content is included in the secondary school EFL teacher training programmes in Hungary?

Two sub-questions helped operationalize the main research question:

- 1.1. What types of compulsory culture-related courses do students have to take in the secondary school EFL teacher training programmes in Hungary?
- 1.2. What types of elective culture-related courses are available to students in the secondary school EFL teacher training programmes in Hungary?

3.2 Research Design and Context

In order to answer the research questions, qualitative document analysis was carried out to investigate the curricula of the EFL teacher training programmes of three Hungarian universities. The research involved the analysis of study unit lists and course descriptions that are publicly available on the websites of the institutions. Teacher training in Hungary takes five years to complete. It is not the combination of a BA and an MA programme, but is delivered as a so-called undivided five-year programme leading to a Master's Degree in Education (MEd), and the qualification obtained can be used to teach in both primary and secondary schools. Teacher trainees have two majors, which they study in equal proportion and at the same level. The subject-specific training is supplemented by courses in pedagogy and psychology, the content of which is the same for all students regardless of their two majors.

Currently, ten universities in Hungary offer the regular five-year teacher training programme, where one of the majors is teacher of English language and culture. Three of the ten universities were selected by purposive sampling, since these three universities have the largest number of students, and almost 60% of the teacher trainees studied at one of these universities at the moment the study was conducted. As a consequence, the majority of pre-service teachers receive the training provided by one of these three universities concerning culture teaching, so investigating the curricula of these three universities can help answer the research questions the most effective way.

In addition to the regular five-year teacher training programme, it is also possible to attend a short-cycle programme. This option is available for those who already have a teacher degree and would like to complete the EFL teacher training

as their third or further subject, or have an English MA degree and would like to obtain a teaching qualification in addition to that. Furthermore, four universities in Hungary offer a one-year English language instructor MA programme, which allows participants to teach English in institutions such as language schools, but not in public education. This study does not include these types of training, it only focuses on the regular five-year teacher training programme, since the majority of future secondary school teachers study in this form of teacher education.

3.3 Methods of Data Collection

As the first step of data collection, the study unit lists of the selected universities were thoroughly reviewed and those subjects were selected that, based on their titles, prepare teacher trainees to teach cultural and intercultural topics. It is important to make a distinction between a subject and a course. In this study, a subject refers to a study unit, which has a title, code, and credit value, while a course is a specific implementation of a subject, offered in a given semester and tied to an instructor, time slot, and classroom. Moreover, there is a difference between a subject description and a course description, too. A subject description provides a general description of the subject, its main topics, and the expected learning outcomes. It is usually compiled by the head of responsible department or a subject coordinator, and it is only updated when there is a major change in the study unit list or subject code. On the other hand, a course description is prepared by every instructor who teaches that specific subject at the beginning of each semester, it contains a weekly schedule, specific course materials such as readings, and the course requirements.

Furthermore, lectures and seminars are two different course formats. A lecture is a large course with 150-200 or even more students in a big lecture hall, where the instructor is teaching in a frontal way, while a seminar consists of a small group of learners, usually around 15, who have discussions and interactive activities with the instructor and each other. After analysing the subject descriptions, the descriptions of the particular courses were also analysed. In these cases some course descriptions were not publicly available, so some instructors provided the description of their courses for the analysis, and by providing their course descriptions, they all gave their written consent that their documents can be analysed for this study, thus complying with the rules of research ethics.

3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

The descriptions and the syllabi of the chosen subjects and courses were analysed with the help of thematic content analysis. Fraenkel et al. (2012) emphasise that document analysis is an appropriate research method in cases when it is not possible to directly observe a human activity as a firsthand experience, and this is true for this study. The courses were categorized into three categories based on the culture model of Holló (2019), depending on which elements the particular courses focused on: civilisation, speech & behaviour patterns, or text/discourse structures

& skills. This model of culture was chosen for the study as it is particularly suitable for document analysis because it provides concrete, tangible categories with several elements of culture belonging to the three main categories which can be searched for in course descriptions thus enabling a rigorous and systematic data analysis. Furthermore, this model highlights that culture is more complex than civilisational facts and it includes categories like speech & behaviour patterns, and text/discourse structures & skills.

It is important to emphasize that this study focuses on culture-related courses where the primary aim of the course is culture-related and the whole course is devoted to a specific aspect of culture. However, it might be possible that some cultural and intercultural topics appear in language development, academic writing, literature, linguistics, or methodology courses, even though their primary aim is not to prepare future teachers for teaching culture through language. In several cases, a course concentrates on more than one aspect of culture, these courses are listed in all of the relevant categories and are italicized, while compulsory courses are marked in bold. To ensure anonymity, the universities will not be named, but will be identified by the letters of the alphabet: University A, University B, and University C.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 University A

University A offers six culture-related courses altogether, four of which are compulsory, and two of them are elective courses. There are two lectures, the other four subjects are practical seminars, and in the case of one compulsory study unit, students have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of available cultural courses with different sub-topics. An overview of the culture-related courses at *University A* can be seen in Table 2.

Civilisation	Speech & behaviour patterns	Text/Discourse structures & skills
Cultural Studies	<i>American Culture</i>	Reading Culture: Interdisciplinary Approaches
<i>American Culture</i>	<i>English-Speaking Cultures</i>	
History of Great Britain	Elective Course in Language Pedagogy	
<i>English-Speaking Cultures</i>		

Compulsory courses are marked in bold.

Courses that belong to more than one category are italicized.

Table 2. Overview of the culture-related courses at University A

4.1.1 Civilisation

University A offers a compulsory lecture series called *Cultural Studies*, where the focus is on the civilisation of the English-speaking countries. The aim of this course is to familiarise teacher trainees with the most important topics and issues of English-speaking cultures, and it includes the following main topics: from England to the Commonwealth of Nations, British geography, British identity, American culture and regionalism, American core values, tension points in American culture, Australian nature and people, Australian social issues, profiles of Canada, multicultural Canada, and intercultural communication. In this course, the English-speaking countries, (the UK, the USA, Australia, and Canada) are equally represented.

After completing the *Cultural Studies* lecture, students have a seminar called *American Culture*. This course touches topics that belong to civilisation, for example American values and beliefs, American politics, and the heritage of the frontier or the abundance, however, some topics focus on speech and especially on behaviour patterns. As for British culture, no similar compulsory seminar is available at this university, but teacher trainees have to take a lecture with the title *History of Great Britain*. This lecture provides a chronological overview of British history from the Celts to Brexit, including topics like for example medieval British history, the Tudors, the Stuarts, the restoration, Britain in the first and second world war, or the premiership of Margaret Thatcher. It is highlighted in the course description that the cultural aspects of history are key constituents of this course. At this university, teacher trainees do not learn about the history of other English-speaking countries in a compulsory way.

Towards the end of their studies at this university, teacher trainees have the *English-Speaking Cultures* seminar. This is a practical course, where every instructor has a different topic, and focuses on different aspects of an English-speaking country. To complete this subject, students have to select one course from the following titles: *Focus on Australia*, *Aspects of British Culture Explored on the BBC*, *Exploring UK Identities*, *Controversial Issues Focusing on Britain*, *Impressions of Canada*, *First Nations of Canada*, or *Topics in US Culture*. Most courses mainly deal with civilisation-related topics, for example geography or history, and they also contain topics that can be closely identified with the culture of that particular country, for example Australian Aboriginals and the stolen generation in the case of Australia, or folklore and mythology in the case of Canada.

4.1.2 Speech & Behaviour Patterns

As it has already been mentioned, the *American Culture* seminar at this university in addition to civilizational topics also deals with issues that belong to speech

and behaviour patterns, such as education in the United States, how Americans spend their leisure time, or the American family. These topics help understand American behaviour patterns, as it is one of the main goals of this course to understand why Americans live and behave in the way they do. Furthermore, most of the courses offered under the subject *English-Speaking Cultures* also include behaviour and culture-related contents, for example the *Focus on Australia* course pays special attention to the social issues of contemporary Australia, such as crime, racism, unemployment, women in politics, and illegal immigration, and the students also have the opportunity to discuss Australian eating habits or the celebration of different holidays. Similarly, the *Impressions of Canada* course investigates different holidays and festivals that are celebrated in Canada, and it also discusses the language of Canadian people and the role of bilingualism and French language in Canada, and these are key aspects of speech patterns based on Holló's (2019) model.

At this university, teacher trainees have a subject called *Elective Course in Language Pedagogy*. Similarly to the *English-Speaking Cultures* seminar, there are several different courses offered under this title as well, such as *Group Facilitation*, *Group Dynamics in the EFL Classroom*, *Teaching Young Learners*, *How to Write a Thesis?*, *Teaching the Four Skills*, *Teaching Pronunciation*, *Gamification*, *Difficult Dialogues in the EFL Class*, or *EFL for Intercultural Competence*. Most of these courses are not connected to the cultural and intercultural dimension of language, except for the *EFL for Intercultural Competence* seminar, which belongs to the category of speech and behaviour patterns. This is a highly practical course where future teachers learn about the theoretical background of developing intercultural competence, they analyse teaching materials from an intercultural perspective, and they also have the opportunity to design and try out activities that develop intercultural competence in the form of peer teaching. When it is possible, a telecollaboration project is also part of this course, and participants have to do different tasks in collaboration with teacher trainees from other cultures.

4.1.3 Text/Discourse Structures & Skills

The development of text/discourse structure and skills is often overlooked, but this is also an important element of culture (Holló, 2019). This university has a subject that falls into this category called *Reading Culture: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. This seminar is similar to the *English-Speaking Cultures* or the *Elective Course in Language Pedagogy* classes, where the students have to take one course from several titles. However, it is important to highlight that this is not a compulsory subject, students have to take one course advertised either under the title *Reading Literary Texts* or under the title *Reading Culture: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Under the code and name of *Reading Literary Texts*, the courses focus on different literary periods or the works of particular authors.

Those students who choose the category *Reading Culture: Interdisciplinary Approaches* can select a course from the following list: *Magic and Witchcraft in the Renaissance*, *Male and Female Roles and Discourses in Early Modern England*, *Medieval and Early Modern Villains and Their Legacy in Contemporary Popular Culture*, *Cultural Theories of Addiction*, *Reading Food and Drink History: Sources and Resources*, *Cultural Memory and Early Modern England*, or *Introduction to Irish Language and Culture*. Apart from civilisation, it is highlighted in the general subject description that these courses all deal with the reading and analysis of cultural texts that can contribute to the development text/discourse structure and skills of teacher trainees.

4.1.4 Summary

Teacher trainees at *University A* have three culture-related courses that are compulsory for everyone (*Cultural Studies*, *American Culture*, *History of Great Britain*) and they must choose one course from the seminars advertised under the subject of *English-Speaking Cultures*, which means that they can graduate having attended four courses altogether, where they have learned about different aspects of culture. Additionally, they have the opportunity to take the *EFL for Intercultural Competence* seminar within *Elective Course in Language Pedagogy*, and one culture-related course from the unit of *Reading Culture: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, which means, that they can have the maximum number of six courses with cultural or intercultural content if they wish. Of course, this depends on a lot of external factors, including timetable issues and the availability of the offered courses.

4.2 University B

As Table 3 shows, teacher education at *University B* includes five compulsory courses with cultural and intercultural content, and one further elective course is available for those who are more interested in the integrated teaching of language and culture. Three compulsory subjects are held in a lecture format, while the other two courses are seminars as is the elective culture-related course.

4.2.1 Civilisation

The first culture-related course that teacher trainees have to take at *University B* is a lecture in the third semester called *Introduction to British and American Studies: History and Culture for Teachers*. This course aims to introduce participants to the civilisation of the UK and the USA through the major events of British and American history as well as cultural topics such as religion, urbanization,

immigration, or regionalism. This course prepares teacher trainees for their further studies in the field of cultural studies, however, it only concentrates on British and American studies, any other English-speaking cultures like for example Australia or Canada are not represented.

Civilisation	Speech & behaviour patterns	Text/Discourse structures & skills
Introduction to British and American Studies: History and Culture for Teachers	<i>Culture Survey Course</i>	<i>Culture Survey Course</i>
History Survey Course	<i>Current Approaches to North American Culture</i>	
<i>Culture Survey Course</i>	<i>Aspects of Contemporary British Literature and Culture</i>	
<i>Current Approaches to North American Culture</i>	Focus on the Classroom and the Individual	
<i>Aspects of Contemporary British Literature and Culture</i>		

Compulsory courses are marked in bold.

Courses that belong to more than one category are italicized.

Table 2. Overview of the culture-related courses at University B

After this introductory course, there are two further subjects with a focus on British and American civilisation called *History Survey Course* and *Culture Survey Course*. These are both held in a way that several lecture courses with different titles are offered under both subjects, and students have to take one from each category to complete these study units. Under the code and name of *History Survey Course* six courses are advertised that focus on different periods of British or American History, one of the following courses is compulsory: *Early Modern Britain*, *British History 1688-1914*, *Great Britain in the 20th Century*, *A History of the Old South*, *19th Century US History*, or *American History Survey: 20th Century*. Similarly, several civilisation-related courses are offered under the subject *Culture Survey Course*, teacher trainees have to take one of these lectures: *Cultural Theories and American Studies*, *18th century British Cultural History*, *Theories of Culture*, *Contemporary American Society and Culture*, *Contemporary British Society and Culture*, or *Introduction to Popular Culture and the Media*.

As for seminars, teacher trainees at this university have to take two compulsory culture-related seminars, one about American and Canadian culture, called *Current Approaches to North American Culture*, and one about British culture with the title *Aspects of Contemporary British Literature and Culture*. The *Current Approaches to North American Culture* seminar focuses on American and Canadian civilisation with a special focus on the following areas: immigration, globalization, multiculturalism, and mass culture. The *Aspects of Contemporary British Literature and Culture* course deals with British Culture, including Welsh, Scottish, and Northern Irish culture and examines civilisational topics, like for example identity, religion, education, music, fashion, high culture, and sports in Britain.

4.2.2 Speech & Behaviour Patterns

The *Theories of Culture* lecture within the *Culture Survey Course* offers an overview of the theoretical aspects of culture, and speech and behaviour patterns are also part of this lecture series. Furthermore, the two seminars discussed in the previous section (*Current Approaches to North American Culture* and *Aspects of Contemporary British Literature and Culture*) also deal with cultural topics that belong to this category. One of the main objectives of the seminar *Current Approaches to North American Culture* is to familiarise the participants with the linguistic and stylistic aspects of cultural products and works, and how future teachers can use these topics in teaching. The other culture-related seminar, *Aspects of Contemporary British Literature and Culture* also focuses on speech patterns, like for example the languages of Britain, and different aspects of everyday behaviour as well, such as food, clothing, and different holidays.

Similarly to *University A*, *University B* also has a subject where the students have to choose one from several courses that investigate a different area of the teaching and learning process. This is called *Focus on the Classroom and the Individual*, and the following courses are offered to choose from: *Individual Learning Strategies in TEFL*, *Focus on the L2 Learner*, *Individual differences in Foreign Language Learning*, *Research in the Language Classroom*, *CLIL - Content and Language Integrated Learning*, or *Intercultural Communication and Language Learning*. From the point of view of this analysis, one course is relevant, the seminar called *Intercultural Communication and Language Learning*. This course combines theoretical and practical elements, and aims to familiarize teacher trainees with the role of culture and intercultural competence in language teaching through very up-to-date reading materials and practical activities. It focuses on the following main topics: the concept of culture and intercultural competence, theories of culture and intercultural communication, cultural awareness and self-reflection, verbal and non-verbal communication, stereotypes and prejudices, conflicts in intercultural communication, and developing intercultural competence in the language classroom.

4.2.3 Text/Discourse Structures & Skills

This university does not offer any compulsory course where the special focus is on text/discourse structures and skills from a cultural perspective. However, one lecture can be taken as part of the study unit *Culture Survey Course* called *Theories of Culture* that addresses different theories and aspects of culture including meaning production and idea formulation that belong to text/discourse structures and skills. Additionally, these skills of future teachers are developed at courses that are connected to literature rather than culture, but these courses are not part of this analysis, as their focus is on literature and not on culture.

4.2.4 Summary

Every teacher trainee at *University B* has to complete three compulsory culture-related courses (*Introduction to British and American Studies: History and Culture for Teachers*, *Current Approaches to North American Culture*, *Aspects of Contemporary British Literature and Culture*) and it is also obligatory to choose one course from the lectures offered both within the category of *History Survey Course* and *Culture Survey Course* respectively, so they have to complete five culture-related courses altogether. Furthermore, those students who take the *Intercultural Communication and Language Learning* seminar from the *Focus on the Classroom and the Individual* subject have an additional sixth course that prepares them for the integrated teaching of language and culture, but this course is not compulsory for everyone.

4.3 University C

University C has the most compulsory culture-related courses, namely six. Five out of six subjects are practical seminars, while one is a lecture course. As it can be seen in Table 4, at *University C* there are no elective courses with cultural and intercultural content, and it is not possible to choose a sub-topic within any of the courses in contrast to the other two universities.

4.3.1 Civilisation

At *University C*, second-year teacher trainees attend a compulsory seminar called *British Civilisation*. The main topics discussed in this seminar are the following: national symbols, identity, society, politics, institutions, education, religion, and the British Royal Family. To complement this, in the second semester of the same year, the university offers a similar seminar called *Introduction to*

American Culture, which mainly focuses on American civilisation. The main civilisation-related areas of the *Introduction to American Culture* course are geography, regionalism, politics, government, and identity. The knowledge and skills acquired during these two seminars are further developed towards the end of the programme in a course called *Contemporary Society and Culture* that provides the opportunity for an in-depth analysis of these cultural topics.

Civilisation	Speech & behaviour patterns	Text/Discourse structures & skills
<i>British Civilisation</i>	<i>British Civilisation</i>	<i>Contemporary Society and Culture</i>
<i>Introduction to American Culture</i>	<i>Introduction to American Culture</i>	<i>Teaching Literature and Culture</i>
<i>History of the British Isles</i>		
<i>History of the USA</i>		
<i>Contemporary Society and Culture</i>		

Compulsory courses are marked in bold.

Courses that belong to more than one category are italicized.

Table 4. Overview of the culture-related courses at University C

History is an important component of the teacher training programme at this university, as in contrast to *University A* and *University B*, *University C* has two compulsory history-related courses, and they both belong to the category of civilisation based on the framework of Holló (2019). The lecture *History of the British Isles* provides an overview of British history from the beginnings to World War I. The American counterpart of this course is a seminar called *History of the USA* which deals with the most important historical events of the USA including the relationship between England and the colonies, the War of Independence, the Civil War, the two world wars, and the cold war. It is important to learn about these historical aspects of culture, as they help understand the culture of a different age (Byram & Morgan, 1994).

4.3.2 Speech & Behaviour Patterns

The two practical seminars *British Civilisation* and *Introduction to American Culture* illustrate well the principle of teaching culture through language, as they have double goals, aiming to familiarise the participants with the most important topics and issues of contemporary British or American civilisation, but at the

same time, they pay special attention to the development of students' language skills as well. Even though as the title suggests, *British Civilisation* focuses mainly on civilisation, it is highlighted in the course description that language development is a key constituent of this course, so it also belongs to speech and behaviour patterns to some extent. Similarly, the *Introduction to American Culture* seminar develops language skills too, but it discusses behaviour patterns such as everyday life and different holidays.

4.3.3 Text/Discourse Structures & Skills

As it has already been mentioned, towards the end of their studies teacher trainees at this university have a seminar called *Contemporary Society and Culture* that aims to emphasise the unique features of the target cultures. This happens through the analysis of authentic materials such as films, songs, videos, and newspaper articles. The in-depth analysis of these authentic texts provides an opportunity for the development of text/discourse structure and skills. It is highlighted in the course description that this course pays special attention to discussing how future teachers can integrate the acquired knowledge into their teaching.

Just before their individual teaching practice, teacher trainees at this university have a compulsory seminar with the title *Teaching Literature and Culture*. This course aims to familiarise students with literary texts that appeal to secondary school students, and it encourages future teachers to include poetry, fiction, drama, and film adaptations in their teaching, so this course mainly belongs to the text/discourse structures and skills category of the framework used for this analysis. The use of literature in foreign language teaching has many advantages (Kramsch, 1993), however, based on the course description, this course only focuses on teaching literature, as the teaching of culture is discussed in the *Contemporary Society and Culture* seminar. However, the theoretical models and the possibilities of developing intercultural competence in the classroom are not integral parts of these courses based on the available documents.

4.3.4 Summary

The teacher training programme of *University C* has the highest number of compulsory culture-related courses. Apart from some language development opportunities, and speech and behaviour patterns analysis, four courses (*British Civilisation*, *Introduction to American Culture*, *History of the British Isles*, *History of the USA*) focus strongly on civilisation, while two seminars (*Contemporary Society and Culture*, *Teaching Literature and Culture*) deal with text/discourse structures and skills, and how to integrate civilisation and literature into foreign

language teaching. There is a strong focus on the UK and the USA, but other English-speaking cultures, such as for example Australia and Canada are not represented in the teacher training programme of *University C*.

4.4 Interpretation of Findings

When the findings of the collected data from the three universities are compared, it is clearly visible that the most dominant category is civilisation based on Holló's (2019) culture model. According to Byram and Morgan (1994) and Fantini (1997), if culture-related courses are part of EFL teacher education, their main focus is on the civilisational aspects of culture, and the results of this study show that this has not changed a lot over the past about 30 years. Civilisation provides important background knowledge for future teachers, so it is a key constituent of their training, however it is not enough for successful intercultural communication (Barrett et al., 2014; Holló, 2014).

Furthermore, there is a strong dominance of the culture of the United Kingdom and the United States. It seems as if English-speaking cultures are mainly limited to these two countries, and except for *University A*, Canada, Australia or other English-speaking areas are barely mentioned, especially in the case of *University C*, where they are completely absent based on the available course documents. In today's world, English is a global language, a lingua franca (Kimmel, 2020). If teacher education mainly focuses on the culture of only two countries, future teachers may not get a comprehensive picture of the cultural and intercultural contexts where English is used as a means of global communication. However, according to Holló (2019), nowadays target culture should refer to all cultural contexts where language users will use the language.

Additionally, apart from transmitting cultural knowledge and developing future teachers' intercultural competence, the methodological preparation of pre-service teachers is also an important task of teacher education (Liddicoat, 2009). The findings show that at the investigated universities there is no compulsory course that explicitly prepares future teachers for the integrated teaching of language and culture and the development of intercultural competence through language education. These courses exist at all universities, however, they are offered in an elective format or as a sub-area of a compulsory course, but as Lázár (2006) found, a one-semester course like that would be beneficial for every future teacher.

5 Conclusion

This research intended to investigate the role of culture-related courses in secondary school EFL teacher training programmes at three major Hungarian

universities with the help of qualitative document analysis and attempted to answer the following main research question: What cultural content is included in the secondary school EFL teacher training programmes in Hungary? Findings showed that at most universities the average number of compulsory culture-related courses is around five with a great variation among the topics across universities. At the examined universities the culture-related courses mainly focus on the civilisational aspects of culture, with the predominance of the culture and history of the United Kingdom and the United States, while other English-speaking cultures and the methodology of teaching culture and developing intercultural competence are less emphasized.

The following sub-questions were also formulated to operationalize the main research question: What types of compulsory culture-related courses do students have to take in the secondary school EFL teacher training programmes in Hungary? What types of elective culture-related courses are available to students in the secondary school EFL teacher training programmes in Hungary? The findings indicate that future teachers primarily have to complete culture-related lectures and seminars that mainly aim to transmit cultural background knowledge and that develop their intercultural competence. Elective courses typically focus on specific sub-topics, and methodological subjects also appear here, such as teaching culture and the development of intercultural competence in language education.

A limitation of this study is that it only focuses on courses that have an explicit culture-related topic, however, it might be possible that cultural and intercultural contents appear in language development or methodology courses, but this study only concentrated on courses where the whole course is devoted to culture. Furthermore, document analysis is an appropriate research method for analysing study unit lists and course descriptions, but not the way courses are actually held. In reality, a lot depends on the way courses are held, as some course descriptions might promise more than they actually deliver. On the other hand, it is possible that in a particular course a discussion is generated on a topic that is not included in the official description.

However, this methodological limitation does not diminish the value of the findings, since this research provides a picture of what universities officially promise, and the documents provide an official framework that determines the direction of the training. If something is not included in the documents, then in practice its implementation cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, as an area of future research, it would be worth supplementing this picture with interviews with pre-service teachers to see what actually happens between the walls of the classroom.

References

- Badger, R., & MacDonald, M. N. (2007). Culture, language, pedagogy: the place of culture in language teacher education. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 15(2), 215–227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681360701403722>
- Barrett, M., Byram, M., Lázár, I., Mompoin-Gaillard, P., & Philippou, S. (2014). *Developing intercultural competence through education*. Council of Europe.
- Bennett, M. J. (1997). How not to be a fluent fool: Understanding the cultural dimension of language. In A. E. Fantini (Ed.), *New ways in teaching culture* (pp. 16–21). TESOL Publications.
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M., & Morgan, C. (1994) *Teaching-and-learning language-and-culture*. Multilingual Matters.
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Council of Europe.
- Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment: Companion volume*. Council of Europe.
- Damen, L. (1987). *Culture learning: The fifth dimension in the language classroom*. Addison-Wesley.
- Divéki, R., & Lázár, I. (2024). A 21. századi elvárások megjelenése a középiskolai angoltanárok gyakorlatában [The presence of 21st century expectations in the practice of secondary school EFL teachers]. In Cs. Csapodi & Zs. Gonda (Eds.), *Tanulmányok a mester és tanítvány országos tanárképzési konferenciáról [Studies from the master and apprentice national teacher training conference]* (pp. 133–141). Eötvös Loránd University.
- Enyedi, Á. (2000). Culture shock in the classroom. *novELTy*, 7(1), 4–16.
- Fantini, A. E. (1997). Language: Its cultural and intercultural dimensions. In A. E. Fantini (Ed.), *New ways in teaching culture* (pp. 3–15). TESOL Publications.
- Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N.E., & Hyun, H. H. (2012). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. McGraw Hill.
- Government of Hungary. (2020). *National core curriculum*. <https://magyarkozlony.hu/dokumentumok/3288b6548a740b9c8daf918a399a0bed1985db0f/letoltes>

- Hernández-López, E. M., Núñez-Mercado, P., & Bórquez-Morales, L. S. (2024). Assessing intercultural competence: The case of EFL pre-service teachers in the Mexican context. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 24(4), 84–96. <https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v24i4.974>
- Hobbs, V. (2013). ‘A basic starter pack’: The TESOL certificate as a course in survival. *ELT Journal*, 67(2), 163–174. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccs078>
- Holló, D. (2014). Cultural dimensions and foreign language teaching. In J. Horváth & P. Medgyes (Eds.), *Studies in honour of Marianne Nikolov* (pp. 133–148). Lingua Franca Csoport.
- Holló, D. (2016). Az interkulturalitás helye az angolszakos tanárképzésben – az interdiszciplinaritás kihívásai [The place of interculturality in English teacher education – the challenges of interdisciplinarity]. In K. Károly & Z. Homonnay (Eds.), *Kutatások és jó gyakorlatok a tanárképzés tudós műhelyeiből [Research and best practices from scholarly workshops in teacher education]* (pp. 178–192). ELTE Eötvös Kiadó.
- Holló, D. (2019). *Értsünk szót! Kultúra, nyelvtanítás, nyelvhasználat [Let’s understand each other! Culture, language teaching, language use]*. Akadémiai Kiadó.
- Holló, D. (2021). The role of intercultural education in English major programmes at the School of English and American Studies: The experience of practitioners and graduates. In J. Kenyeres & É. Illés (Eds.), *Changing perspectives: Studies in English at Eötvös Loránd University* (pp. 177–196). Eötvös Loránd University.
- Kimmel, M. (2020). Culture teaching in the age of global English. In K. Károly, I. Lázár, & C. Gall (Eds.), *Culture and intercultural communication: Research and education* (pp. 11–29). Eötvös Loránd University.
- Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Kramsch, C. (2013). Culture in foreign language teaching. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 1(1), 57–78.
- Larzén-Östermark, E. (2009). Language teacher education in Finland and the cultural dimension of foreign language teaching – a student teacher perspective. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 32(4), 401–421. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760903012688>
- Lázár, I. (2006). *The role and status of intercultural communication training in English language teacher education in Hungary* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Eötvös Loránd University.

- Lázár, I. (2013). Az interkulturális kompetencia szerepe az ELTE angol szak módszertani kurzusain 1986 és 2011 között [The role of intercultural competence in the methodology courses of the English programme at ELTE between 1986 and 2011]. In T. Frank & K. Károly (Eds.), *Az angol tudománya: 125 éves az egyetemi angol szak, 1886-2011 [The science of English: 125 years of university-level English studies, 1886–2011]* (pp. 314–322). ELTE Eötvös Kiadó.
- Lázár, I. (2020). Cooperative learning for intercultural competence: A pilot study on teachers' views and classroom practice. In K. Károly, I. Lázár, & C. Gall (Eds.), *Culture and intercultural communication: Research and education* (pp. 71–89). Eötvös Loránd University.
- Lázár, I. (2022). *Mirrors and windows in language teacher education: Intercultural competence and reform pedagogy*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Liddicoat, A. J. (2008). Pedagogical practice for integrating the intercultural in language teaching and learning. *Japanese Studies*, 28(3), 277–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10371390802446844>
- Qian, L. (2023). Chinese EFL university teachers' perceptions of culture teaching and their pedagogical practices. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 24(6), 679–692. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2023.2283702>
- Risager, K. (2006). *Language and culture: Global flows and local complexity*. Multilingual Matters.
- Risager, K. (2007). *Language and culture pedagogy: From a national to a transnational paradigm*. Multilingual Matters.
- Seelye, H. N. (1993). *Teaching culture: Strategies for intercultural communication*. National Textbook Company.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008). Introduction. In H. Spencer-Oatey (Ed.), *Culturally speaking: Culture, communication and politeness theory* (pp. 1–8). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Talbi, M. (2023). *The development of intercultural competence in the English major programmes at a Hungarian university: A case study* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Eötvös Loránd University.
- Ur, P. (2024). *A course in English language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Willems, G. M. (2002). *Language teacher education policy promoting linguistic diversity and intercultural communication: Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe from linguistic diversity to plurilingual education*. Council of Europe.
- Yuan, R., & Hu, Y. (2018). Teachers' views on the qualities of effective EFL teacher educators. *ELT Journal*, 72(2), 141–150. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccx032>