

A TRANSATLANTIC TRANSFER OF CULTURAL VALUES:

A Canada-Related Cultural Reader
for the Secondary English Classroom
in Central Europe

1 INTRODUCTION

The creation of the English-language *Canadian Cultural Reader Series* (henceforth *Series* for short) presented in this study was a response to some of the problems raised by Hungarian and German practicing university and secondary school teachers engaged in teaching about Canadian culture.¹ Based on the analysis of these problems, the editors concluded that most cultural readers with Canadian content available in the Central European region have been prepared exclusively for students at a quite advanced stage of language proficiency and/or require solid and canonized (thus not necessarily current and student-centered enough) background knowledge of Canadian culture.² It has also

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1 The editors started collecting practicing teachers' observations on teaching Canadian culture at a Hungarian Oxford University Press event in 2005. The readers were developed in response to more than six years of continuous dialogue with practicing teachers and teacher trainees the editors encountered at Hungarian and international teacher training events organized by Oxford University Press, Macmillan Hungary, Hungarian universities and colleges, the Hungarian Ministry of Education, Pädagogische Hochschule (Vienna, Austria), Gesellschaft für Kanada-Studien (Germany), the Central European Association of Canadian Studies, and Rheinland-Pfalz Provincial Educational Authority. Altogether approximately 500 people engaged in the professional conversation.

2 Among those consulted, Sauvé and Sauvé's *Gateway to Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Donner et al.'s *Cultural Relations* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2001) were the most widely used secondary-level publica-

been inferred that most cultural readers cannot be used at several levels of language proficiency or at non-curricular school events such as thematic school days, as the texts and activities contained in these publications do not lend themselves to such a multi-level approach. The existing readers mostly contain topics so complex that they can be used effectively only if the vocabulary and the information necessary for understanding the context of the cultural themes in question are pre-taught, which makes both the teaching and the learning process arduous and quite inefficient. Furthermore, most readers contain mainly texts conveying cultural information but lack the accompanying activities that could activate and enhance students' knowledge. Last but not least, the existing readers do not necessarily conform to all school curricula either in language or content input.

To combat the above shortcomings, our intention was to create readers that: 1) could be used concurrently at numerous levels of language proficiency, 2) could be used in teaching students exhibiting diverse levels of Canada-related background knowledge, 3) focus on prominent and up-to-date Canada-related cultural topics, 4) present complicated and specialized topics in an easy-to-process manner while preserving the complexity of the topics discussed, 5) could incorporate priority topics published by the Canadian government, 6) suit the most current methodological principles, and 7) contain exercises and activities facilitating the achievement of language and culture-related teaching aims. Focusing on teachers' and students' use of the readers, the study examines to what extent the above aims have been realized with the help of the *Series*.³

tions to cover Canadian culture in the secondary English classroom, whereas some teachers also worked with excerpts from Kenneth G. Pryke and Walter C. Soderlund's *Profiles of Canada* (Toronto: CSPI, 2003). For Canadian Natives, Olive Patricia Dickason's *Canada's First Nations* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Morrison and Wilson's *Native Peoples* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2004) seemed the most popular as well as *The Learning Circle* series published by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. This is no way to say that the aforementioned publications do not make wonderful teaching materials in other educational contexts. The findings anyhow also reflect the high prestige that Oxford University Press publications enjoy in Hungary.

3 The *Series* is currently composed of two student's books entitled *Canadian-*

In order to contextualize the two readers constituting the *Series*, the study first discusses language teaching and culture-related theories incorporated in the design of the readers. Then, it describes the activities leading up to the preparation of the readers and the accompanying teacher's notes. This is followed by the introduction and discussion of the priority topics mentioned above and an analysis of the readers with respect to the above seven aims.

2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Apart from culture and language teaching theories, two fundamental theoretical cornerstones have been observed in the design of the *Series*: one is concerned with the definition of culture and the other with the editors' intention to assist cultural discourse and cross-cultural learning. For the preparation of the *Series*, culture has been defined in line with Brown's approach, which claims that culture is in fact a way of life presentable to students (Brown, 2007: 58). Brown's concept of culture as 'a way of life presentable to students' implies that culture is highly abstract. In our interpretation, such abstract notions can only be made accessible to students pedagogically through concrete objects and examples. This gradual introduction of culture as a concept—pedagogically building on the concrete to approach the abstract—makes use of tangible cultural products and cultural practices.⁴ The applicability of this gradual introduction and presentation-based pedagogical approach is also supported by Hall's concept of culture, which claims that the explicit manifestations of culture to which we can relate only constitute the tip of the iceberg of a culture and that the motives, the underlying concepts and the tacit values associated with such culture, remain underwater and sometimes unseen (Hall, 1966).

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German-Hungarian Cultural Reader and *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada*. Each publication is made complete with a teacher's notes. The readers and accompanying teacher's notes are available for download at: <http://www.kre.hu/btk/index.php/nemzetkoezi-kapcsolatok.html>.

⁴ See Ricoeur's *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* on religious cultural practices (Forth Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976).

The *Series* aims to expose these very ‘underwater features’ by making them presentable for students.

The notion of culture adopted and the pedagogical approach featured in the *Series* also rely on Hofstede’s notion of ‘peeling the onion of culture’ (Hofstede, 2010). Students are exposed to the different levels of culture (symbols, heroes, rituals, and values) gradually through what Hofstede calls cultural practice (in other words, tangible cultural products and practices). Based on this, the *Series* aims to depict numerous aspects of culture from a variety of angles and does so in a way that students are able to comprehend the information contained in the *Series* both culturally and linguistically—moving, within each unit or topic, from less to more abstract levels of culture. Furthermore, on a more general scale, the *Series* has also been designed and is seen as a teaching device facilitating cultural discourse and cross-cultural learning in the context of classroom use, as advocated by Berrell and Gloet (Berrell and Gloet, 1999: 13).

In addition to the theoretical cornerstones, several culture and language teaching theories have been incorporated in the *Series*, the interconnectedness of which is also underscored by Kramsch, who believes that ‘culture and language are inseparable and constitute one single universe’ (Kramsch, 1991: 217). The culture and language teaching theories used for producing the *Series* are surveyed below: first, culture teaching theories are addressed, followed by the description of language teaching theories of relevance in the case of the cultural readers.

In the *Series*, Gochenour and Janeway’s model of culture learning was observed, which advocates the gradual involvement of students in culture-related issues (Gochenour and Janeway, 1993: 7). Therefore, the *Series* is constructed in a way that each unit begins with some observation of culture and moves towards genuine communication about culture. This guarantees students’ step-by-step introduction to the cultural issues discussed. The *Series* also facilitates the formation of what Gay terms cultural responsiveness: the ability to understand, sympathize with and manage other cultures (Gay, 2002: 106). Therefore, as a point of departure, the *Series* builds on students’ own culture and their prior experiences with other cultures.

The *Series* aims to empower learners to more deeply understand their own and others' cultures, the sameness and separateness of linguistic identities (Kramersch, 1998: 82), and to be open to cultures in general. To facilitate this, the *Series* uses Seelye's theory on the development of cross-cultural communication skills, which strives to enable students to realize that behaviors are culturally conditioned, and aids learners in combating generalizations about cultures and in showing empathy towards other cultures (Seelye, 1988: 21). This is supported by the wide variety of cultural input the *Series* offers. Cultural openness is further reinforced through discussions about culture and cultural exchange, for which the communicative approach to language teaching, in accordance with Lange's observations, provides ample space and learning opportunities (Lange, 2003: 281).

Connecting culture and language, Damen believes that language is both the means of communication and the mediator of cultural codes and rules (Damen, 2003: 73). This seems to suggest that language can be effectively exploited both for communicative purposes and for educating about culture, which tenet was also observed when designing the *Series*. Furthermore, in their discussion of the features of modern language teaching, Byram and Morgan as well as Hinkel claim that language education is culture-based in its approach, i.e. language instruction cannot effectively take place without teaching about culture (Byram and Morgan, 1994: 6–8; Hinkel, 2000: 1–2). With reference to this, the teacher's role as a source of cultural knowledge is underscored by Prodromou, who maintains that language teachers should also possess cultural information and should disclose it to their students (Prodromou, 1992: 44). Relying on these premises, the *Series* is meant to function as an instrument of popularizing the use of culture in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) among both teachers and students.

In an attempt to incorporate the most current trends in EFL instruction, the *Series* uses the following methodological and pedagogical approaches. The communicative approach to language teaching is exploited in line with Howatt's and Brumfit's concepts: the *Series* creates communicative contexts where the exchange of relevant information comes as a natural process in the speech

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situations created in the classroom (Howatt, 1984: 331; Brumfit, 1980: 42). In addition, based on Grabbe and Stoller as well as McKay, who encourage content-based language teaching, the *Series* addresses specific knowledge contents, because each unit focuses on and explores one topic in depth (Grabbe and Stoller, 1997: 12; McKay, 2002: 86). Moreover, the *Series* is intercultural, as advocated by Jenkins, since it strongly builds on familiarizing students with different cultures and offers ample opportunities for making cultural comparisons (Jenkins, 2007: 24). Concerning the tasks printed in the readers, the *Series* features individual exercises, cooperative tasks based on Stevens', Webb's, and Slavin's approaches, and peer learning activities following Chapman and Topping through the incorporation of individual, pair and group work activities (Stevens, 2007: 95; Webb, 2007: 205; Slavin, 1990: 16, 1991: 7; Chapman, 1998: 71; Topping, 2000: 14). Neuner's concept of intercultural education, contextualized through explorative learning, is also markedly present in the *Series* primarily with a view to enhancing student motivation, as a vast number of activities require students to design and be responsible for their learning and to survey culture-related phenomena of their own choice (Neuner, 2012: 42).

3 ACTIVITIES PRECEDING THE PREPARATION OF THE *SERIES*: THE READERS' AND TEACHERS' NOTES

The compilation of the readers of the *Series* was perceived as a pioneer project, whose ultimate aim was to produce teaching materials that could potentially satisfy the seven goals mentioned in the introduction above. In the scope of the project, the following activities were carried out with respect to each volume: a) identification of priority topics for the intended audience, b) generating student involvement and participation, c) compilation and selection of raw materials for the readers, and d) editing the materials and preparing the teacher's notes.

In order to ensure that the topics included in the readers feature really up-to-date Canadian themes, the priority topics published by the Canadian government-funded International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS) were taken as a starting point. From among the topics, the editors selected those

that were deemed suitable for educational purposes. Consequently, five unifying themes promoted as priority topics by ICCS's Understanding Canada Program have been included in the *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader*: 1) managing diversity; 2) democracy, law and human rights; 3) economic development and competitiveness; 4) peace and security; and 5) the environment. Apart from their educational value and up-to-dateness, these topics have been selected as they lend themselves to cultural comparison between the three cultures included in the first volume of the *Series*. Furthermore, these topics have been envisaged not only to increase students' civic participation and cultural tolerance but also to engage students' interest in culture to the greatest possible extent. Similarly, *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada* is built around the following five ICCS priority topics: 1) native diversity, 2) challenges of lifestyle, 3) native identity, 4) native knowledge systems, 5) native artistic expression, and 6) native social issues. These topics have been selected as they are peculiar enough to demonstrate the uniqueness and richness of North American Aboriginal culture through EFL and, at the same time, they seem to offer feasible starting points in classroom environments for understanding the life of North American Aboriginal communities.⁵

Based on the assumption that university students (and especially teacher trainees) can contribute to the readers with novel perspectives and that their interests are more likely to reflect those of the intended target audience, and keeping in mind that Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, to which institution the authors of the study are affiliated, strongly emphasizes the involvement of students for pedagogical and academic reasons, the editors assumed that maximizing student contribution to the readers would bring numerous culture and language related benefits such as bringing the pri-

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5 The ICCS priority topics only constitute a framework or focalize possible current issues in Canadian culture and concerning Canadian Natives. As for the discussion of these issues and topics, the readers tried to remain objective by inviting students to explore diverse aspects and the complexity of the topics included. Also, the reader focuses on facts rather than opinions.

ority issues close to the target age group. Student contribution initially manifested in the identification of possible subtopics within the priority topics and concluded in selecting, compiling, and producing raw materials for the readers.⁶

The compilation and selection of student-provided raw material was one of the most challenging jobs. On the one hand, the materials finally included in the readers had to be culturally accessible for non-specialist audiences. This means that complex and culturally challenging topics had to be ‘translated’ into materials that can be understood with a relatively low level of specific cultural background knowledge or ones that are not that distant from the culture of the intended audience were included in the readers. At the same time, the materials appearing in the readers were to be not only informative but also motivating for all future users. This was ensured by choosing materials that provide stimulating insights into cultural issues, on the one hand, and are likely to generate discussions facilitating cultural exchange, on the other hand.⁷

Eventually, the text and activities in the readers were finalized through the editing phase, during which cultural content was checked for factual errors, intercultural appropriateness, and manner of presentation, and was further refined if necessary. Language errors were also eliminated, and the language included in the readers was polished to suit the language level of the envisaged target audience. Eventually, the teacher’s notes to accompany each volume of readers was prepared.⁸

In the teacher’s notes, each section, which corresponds to one unit in the student’s book, contains a detailed description of the activities in the given unit—very much like any traditional

6 During the material collection phase, students were encouraged to consult Aboriginal community websites, Aboriginal learning centres, and Native-related non-governmental organizations.

7 Relatively few sources were presented in their unabridged, original form (e.g. Native land claims) from a pedagogical consideration, as the majority of secondary school students would not understand either the linguistic or the cultural content without the necessary simplification, paraphrasing, or summary of the source text.

8 Teachers can select from the suggested activities and sources according to their pedagogical priorities. The large number of activities and several sources listed serve the purpose of reflecting objectively on the complexity and diverse points of view concerning the given issue.

task description—along with ideas on the extension and possible variations of the activities, a key as well as further teaching ideas. Given the cultural nature of the readers, the inclusion of the key provides teachers with cultural information they may not know and functions as a solid basis of reference for classroom work. On the other hand, the section on further teaching ideas almost always contains references to further readings, which extend teachers' cultural knowledge and thereby aid their preparation for classes. This section may also serve as a starting point for student projects. The description of the activities has been modeled on the descriptions printed in Maley's *Oxford Resource Books* series and contains the same headings (Maley, 2007: 13).

4 PRIORITY TOPICS

This part introduces the priority topics referenced above and discusses their complexity. It will be shown that these priority topics can be broken down into tangible everyday aspects, which are easily accessible for both teachers and students.

The first priority issue for the *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader* called *managing diversity* may encapsulate, as potential topics, famous people from all areas of life, as well as simple to more complex cultural symbols, ranging from flags to the text of the respective national anthems, multicultural events, musical and sports icons, etc. Even more intricately 'translatable', the topic *democracy, law and human rights* can be approached from the angles of minorities, famous historical figures, or via a comparison of simple laws, regulations or taboos in different cultures. *Economic development and competitiveness* may include inventions and their inventors, the success story of a chain of stores or a business, famous brands and well-known products, tourism and various aspects of entertainment. *Peace and security*, a seemingly difficult subject both language- and topic-wise, offers the chance to discuss disaster response or famous military conflicts in the present and in the past. Finally, the last priority topic, *the environment* can include fauna, flora, natural parks, ecotourism, and nature in arts as easy-to-talk-about and popular subject areas.

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As for the second volume entitled *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada*, the priority issues *native diversity* and *challenges of lifestyle* allow for everyday aspects of native life to be examined such as food, housing, health, and inventions, just as culture areas offer a wide variety of tangible subjects to discuss. *Native identity*, however complex it may seem at first sight, may include symbols, historical events, and heroes, whereas the topic *native knowledge systems* provides an opportunity to talk about myths, beliefs, and totem poles. *Native artistic expression* can incorporate legends, poems, short stories and actually anything from textile arts through prints to inukshuks. Finally, *native social issues* can also cover a wide range of subjects including reserves, successful native businesses, and initiatives as well as environmental issues.

As the above examples demonstrate, it is possible to 'translate' these seemingly complex priority topics into more easily digestible sub-segments, which are also available for students at lower levels of English proficiency. It is in fact through this approach that students less advanced in English can potentially be provided with rich and diverse cultural input through being exposed to numerous aspects of Canadian culture. On the other hand, students at a higher level of English will also greatly benefit from their exposure to the above issues and will be able to engage in more in-depth and detailed exploration of culture. All this diverse information will eventually form a cultural image in students' minds and create a colorful mosaic of the cultures discussed.

5 ANALYSIS OF THE READERS

As pointed out in the introduction, the *Series* was designed with the above seven goals in mind as a response to the most common shortcomings of Canada-related cultural readers. Below, with respect to students' and teachers' use of the *Series*, the realization of the above seven goals is analyzed in the case of the *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader* and *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada*, respectively.

As far as our first goal is concerned, that is, to be able to use the readers at numerous levels of English proficiency, most of the units in the *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader* presuppose a pre-intermediate (B1) level of English knowledge on the part of the language learner, but the exercises and activities presented in the *Reader* facilitate and invite linguistic contribution also beyond this level. For example, Unit 2, which features famous people from all walks of life, can be used as a starting point for students to create their own descriptions or oral presentations about celebrated persons, incorporating various levels of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Similarly, the information compiled by students can also be arranged into puzzles and guessing games matching students' own language proficiency. In the majority of the cases, the 'extension' section of the accompanying teacher's notes provides information on how to adapt the activities included in a given unit to different levels of language production.

Also, the collection of images and illustrations printed in the readers make it possible for the teacher to address certain topics at lower levels of English proficiency. For example, in the same unit, the fields of activity represented by the famous people could provide an opportunity to discuss the names of jobs, which is most likely to be addressed at elementary (A2) level.

The units in the volume *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada* range from elementary (A2) to upper-intermediate/ advanced (C1) as for their target level, but here again all lower-level language input texts included in the *Reader* carry the potential for use at higher levels of English proficiency. For example, Unit 1, which centers on the six main culture areas, offers the opportunity to discover these at various depths depending, among other things, on the language skills of the students. Apart from the 'extension' section offering several possible further tasks, the 'further information' section of the teacher's notes provides links to facilitate a guided search-for-information task in the case of students with a pre-intermediate (B1) or inter-

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mediate (B2) level of English, whereas students at advanced and proficiency levels (C1-C2) can be asked to complete their research on their own.

With very few exceptions, the topics and activities in the two readers keep this organizing principle in mind, rendering the two publications suitable for classroom use at various levels of English proficiency. The readers can also be used in extracurricular pedagogical situations (e.g. language camps or school contests) involving mixed ability or mixed language proficiency student groups, where the proposed activities and their extensions can be carried out in line with the abilities, skills, and language proficiency of the given students.

5.2 USING THE READERS WITH STUDENTS EXHIBITING DIVERSE LEVELS OF CANADA-RELATED BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

In today's Information Age, it is most likely that any group of students will possess diverse levels of Canada-related background knowledge. As foreseen during the design of the readers that certain student groups may have some background knowledge on Canada concerning many of the aspects covered in the two readers, most activities build on harnessing and eliciting students' potential Canada-related knowledge. For example, Unit 3 in the *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader* deals with holidays and festivals, where the introductory anagram section (anagrams of festivals) can be tackled without any prior preparation in the case of students who are familiar with these holidays. Students who have less extensive knowledge about the topic but still exhibit some degree of familiarity can do the subsequent matching exercise (matching the description of festivals with their names) on their own, once the names of the different holidays and festivals have been discussed. Finally, those students who have no familiarity with the topic can be provided with some information concerning both the names of, and the main ideas behind these holidays, and then they can do the matching in order to check if they have understood the information correctly. Again, the 'further information' section of the teacher's notes may prove useful in offering suggestions

on how to use the activity with students at different levels of cultural knowledge on Canada.

Similarly, Unit 6 on Aboriginal foods in the volume *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada* (see Appendix 1) can be done as a class competition by individuals or student pairs once the students are familiar with the information presented. For those students who are unfamiliar with the topic, the pictures are perhaps the best starting point, through which they can be familiarized with the target vocabulary included in the unit. Then they can proceed to the text describing some Aboriginal foods. This way all students are able to do the activity at their own specific levels without relying on their prior knowledge of Canada.

With respect to gearing the two publications to the needs of students exhibiting diverse levels of Canada-related background knowledge, it can be stated in general that the idea behind the design of the units is that the activities in the readers can be done without any preparation with students knowledgeable about Canada, building on, or checking students' prior knowledge. Alternatively, for a target group with no knowledge about Canadian topics, the units can be covered after the teacher has carefully introduced the Canada-related information in the given unit. As teachers themselves may not be familiar with some of the information, terms, or concepts included in the readers, the 'key' and the 'further information' sections of the teacher's notes contain the background information vital for teaching the given unit. This also enables both the student and the teacher to maximally benefit from covering the given topic.

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5.3 FOCUS ON PROMINENT AND UP-TO-DATE CANADA-RELATED CULTURAL TOPICS

The focalization of prominent and up-to-date Canada-related cultural topics in the two readers is ensured by the very fact that they were prepared by taking the latest available guidelines and priority issues published by the Canadian government into consideration.⁹ In addition, young Canadians were also con-

⁹ Such guidelines are published by the Canadian government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and ICCS. Following these guidelines was

sulted at the selection of the actual ideas for the sub-segments of the topics included, which helped guarantee that the cultural content incorporated in the readers would engage the interest of the target age group of secondary schoolers. Finally, practicing Canadian teachers, including a Native professor, advised on the context of the current Canadian cultural discourse with a goal of promoting the inclusion of topical issues. All the above factors were taken into account concerning the selection of topics and sub-segments finally included in the readers.

In addition to ensuring topicality, consultation and advice of the above kind also manifest in a few special units. Thus, the volume *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader* quite uniquely tackles practical aspects of multiculturalism (Unit 3), brands and companies (Units 12 and 14), Canadian contribution to 1956 (Unit 18), and environmental art (Unit 28). Focusing on current aspects of Native peoples in Canada, *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada* has chapters devoted to important social issues, such as natural resources, land claims, or Native successes in business (Chapters 31–36), which all count as novel features in a course book on Canadian Natives targeted at Central European secondary school audiences.

It must be stressed that even more traditional cultural topics are approached in novel ways in the two readers. For example, Unit 1 in the *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader* addresses national symbols through inviting students to compare the first stanza of the respective national anthems, which activity is followed by a flag history-related grouping activity, a guided gap-fill on the emblematic Canadian animal, the beaver, and finally, a discussion of images symbolizing various aspects of Canadian culture. The often puzzle-like and thus more challenging manner of presentation shows even these still topical but altogether not entirely new issues in a more attractive light.

Moreover, in *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada*, even ‘classical’ topics such as Aboriginal history accom-

a pedagogical rather than a cultural concern on the part of the editors as the topics addressed by ICCS fit in well with the national curriculum in Hungary and with the provincial curricula in Germany. Also, the vocabulary of these modern, topical issues also addressed by the above curricula is rarely covered in a regular course book.

moderate numerous recent events and incidents. For example, Unit 10, entitled 'Aboriginal Historical Figures', contains Paul Okalik and Elijah Harper, whose names can be associated with events taking place in the 1990s. Similarly, Unit 12, entitled 'Chapters from Canadian Aboriginal History', has a passage on the 1990 Oka crisis.

It can therefore be concluded that the readers offer recent topical themes for discussion and exploration. This approach is likely to generate continued student interest in all Canadian topics.

5.4 PRESENTING COMPLICATED AND SPECIALIZED TOPICS IN AN EASY-TO-PROCESS MANNER WHILE PRESERVING THE COMPLEXITY OF THE TOPICS DISCUSSED

The easy-to-process presentation of complicated and specialized topics, while retaining their complexity, is realized in the following way. First, university students taking part in the project were requested to identify and suggest possible subtopics within the priority topics which they would deem suitable for elaboration for the target age group. At the same time, it was checked whether these subtopics were in line with the Hungarian national and the German state curricula. These two principles were meticulously applied to each and every priority topic. For example, the priority topic *economic development and competitiveness* was translated into inventions, brands, actual products, famous companies, tourist attractions, wellness spas, and television for unit themes in the *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader*. The topic *native social issues* contained in *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada* was transformed into units on relocation, reserves, success stories, land claims, resource management, and environmental issues.

In these units, the complexity of the topic is preserved through a multidimensional manner of presentation: each unit introduces the selected cultural aspect using concrete examples and invites students to do their own topic-related research. Thus, students' understanding of the given topic is enhanced through concretization and personalization, both being efficient methods of bringing abstract and complex issues closer to the target audience by offering less complicated insights. To provide an even

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more concrete example of this, Unit 34 of the *native social issues* priority topic discussed in *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada* (see Appendix 2) features land claims and is built in the following way: first, some simple background information is given introducing the target vocabulary items necessary for students to understand the topic. Next, students are invited to play a board game, which simulates the situations those natives potentially faced who wanted to regain their land. Once students have finished playing the game, they are invited to share their feelings about the experience they have gained during the activity, which serves as a perfect starting point for discussions about the intricacy of this issue. Then, in activity 2, students conduct their own research concerning successful examples of settled land claims. As this example demonstrates, the unit presents the issue of land claims in a multidimensional manner just as it makes use of concretization and personalization, thereby bringing the discussed topic closer to students.

Consequently, it can be claimed that complex issues are addressed from numerous angles in a way that the presentation and discussion of these topics do not result in simplification but rather facilitate the exploration of the complexity of the issues discussed.

5.5 INCORPORATING PRIORITY TOPICS

PUBLISHED BY THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT

As far as the incorporation of the above-mentioned priority topics published by the Canadian government is concerned, Figures 1 and 2 below show how the two readers focalize and accommodate a selection of Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development and ICCS topics. In both figures, the priority topics are printed in bold, while the reader units belonging to the individual topics appear under the bold headings and also feature the unit number. Figure 1 below displays the units of the *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader* arranged under the priority topics.

Managing Diversity

1. National Symbols
2. Famous People
3. Holidays and Festivals
15. Tourist Attractions
16. Wellness Spas
17. Television

Peace and Security

4. Education
5. Music
6. Sports
18. The '56ers
19. Engagement in Afghanistan
20. Terrorism

Democracy, Law and Human Rights

7. Human Rights
21. Disaster Response: Aid for Haiti

The Environment

8. Minorities
9. Religion
10. Famous Historical Figures
22. Famous Natural Parks
23. Wildlife Conservation
24. Endangered Species

Economic Development and Competitiveness

11. Inventions
12. Brands
13. A Sweet Tooth
14. World Famous Companies
25. Global Warming
26. Ecotourism
27. Landscape Painting
28. Environmental Art

Figure 1: The units of the *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader* arranged under priority topics

As for the selection of the priority topics of this *Reader*, the choice fell on those issues that lend themselves for cultural comparison among the three cultures and have been envisaged not only to engage students' interest but also to increase their civic participation and cultural tolerance. Figure 2 below shows the priority topics and units of *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada*.

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Native Diversity

1. Culture Areas
2. Algonquian Quiz
3. People of the Arctic: The Inuit
4. Safe Travel to Nunavut
5. Iqaluit

Challenges of Lifestyle

6. Aboriginal Foods
7. Aboriginal Homes
8. Indigenous Healing Practices
9. Aboriginal People and Their Diverse Talents

Native Identity

10. Aboriginal Historical Figures
11. Aboriginal Heroes
12. Chapters from Canadian Aboriginal History
13. Fur Trade
14. Aboriginal Inventions
15. Aboriginal Identity

Native Knowledge Systems

16. Inuit Beliefs
17. Aboriginal Religious Culture
18. Totem Animals and Their Symbolism
19. Totem Poles
20. Totem Poles: Colours and Significance
21. Why and How to Make a Totem Pole?
22. Inuit Hunting Magic
23. Christianity Meets Native Religions
24. Inuit Mythical Figures

Native Artistic Expression

25. Legends
26. The Raven and the First Men
27. Shanadithit—A Poem
28. The Red Couch
29. Inuit Stone Carvings
30. Inuit Art

Native Social Issues

31. From Grise Fiord to Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
32. Aboriginal Reserves
33. Success Stories
34. Native Land Claims
35. Natives and Natural Resources
36. Indigenous People and the Environment: The Inuit

Figure 2: The units of *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada* arranged under priority topics

As for *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada*, the featured priority topics have been chosen because they boast of aspects peculiar enough to demonstrate the peculiarities and versatility of North American Aboriginal cultures through EFL for the sake of developing cultural responsiveness. On the other hand, these priority topics also seem to be feasible starting points in classroom environments for understanding the life of North American Aboriginal communities.

As Figures 1 and 2 also reveal, the priority topics chosen for elaboration could not always be explored in the same depths. This resulted in a somewhat disproportionate distribution of the aspects presented in the two volumes, especially in the case of *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada*. Nevertheless, both volumes are arranged around priority topics propagated by the Canadian government.

5.6 BUILDING ON THE MOST CURRENT METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

Both readers have been written using the latest methodological and pedagogical methods. The presented units are communicative, content-based, and intercultural in their approach and are predominantly characterized by the presence of tasks facilitating individual, cooperative, and peer learning.

Both readers are communicative since they create situations where the exchange of information is presented in a natural way in the framework of content-oriented units. Typically, information gap activities appear in numerous units of the two readers. For example, Unit 5 of the *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader* contains three gapped texts on a Canadian, German, and Hungarian musician, respectively. Once students have filled in the gaps in their own texts working in pairs, they are encouraged to share the content of the passage they have worked on with peers, who have read the other two texts. Or, take the board game presented in Unit 34 of *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada* (see Appendix 2) as another example that also needs a constant exchange of information on instructions ('roll the dice', 'it is your turn', etc.) and a joint interpretation of the texts in the squares of the land claims

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game board. This can only be effected through successful communication, for which a natural situation is created.

Both teacher's notes contain further ideas as to how an activity in the given unit can be extended into a task further facilitating information exchange (e.g. questionnaires to go with reading comprehension tasks, etc.). As an example, one can mention the question sheets presented in the teacher's notes to go with 'Holidays and Festivals' (*Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader*, Unit 3) or the 'Aboriginal Inventions' comprehension question set (*A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada*, Unit 14; see Appendix 3), where the successful completion of the tasks presupposes genuine communication.

The task types included in the readers (gap-filling; true or false statements; matching and pairing activities; multiple choice; ranking; skimming; scanning; information sharing; finding similarities and differences between ideas, cultures, etc.; searching for specific information in written texts; project work; oral discussion tasks requesting students' own intellectual contribution; activities requiring creative language use; reading and discussing literary pieces) can easily be used in communicative classroom settings. Discussions during activities, the checking of correct answers, the explanations to go with the activities, and the presentation of related background information can all be performed in a communicative manner.

The readers are considered intercultural since they introduce students to and familiarize them with various aspects of Canadian culture and provide opportunities for making cultural comparisons. In fact, most units in the *Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader* draw parallels between selected aspects of the three cultures, such as music, sports, or television. The volume on Canadian Natives, on the other hand, provokes comparison through presenting a culture very different in almost every aspect from that of the target audience: a clear example of this is Aboriginal diet (Unit 6 in *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada*; see Appendix 1).

Concerning tasks, the readers feature individual, cooperative, and peer learning activities through the incorporation of individual, pair, and group work tasks and open-ended activities. In fact,

both readers present units which can be covered in a number of ways: the same tasks can be covered using any of the above work forms building on and facilitating individual or group achievements, respectively. Moreover, these options with reference to tasks suitable for such approaches are also pointed out in the 'variation' section of the teacher's notes. To furnish concrete examples, creating the description on Bell Canada or designing a commercial for a company product can also happen in any of the work forms listed above, disregarding the actual instructions of Activities 3 and 4 (*Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader*, Unit 14). Equally, the matching activity in Unit 17 on 'Aboriginal Religious Culture' in *A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada* can be done individually, in pairs, and also in small groups as a contest.

It can be concluded that the activities in the readers are constructed in the framework of the communicative, content-based, and intercultural approaches and take the shape of individual, cooperative, and peer learning tasks. This allows for numerous uses of the same activities: depending on the actual group in which the readers are used and the teacher's preferred approach in the given group, the activities can take different forms and can be tailored to the actual students' needs.

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5.7 INCORPORATING EXERCISES AND ACTIVITIES FACILITATING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE RELATED TEACHING AIMS

Finally, as for exercises and activities facilitating the achievement of language and culture related aims, it can be stated that, as a result of conscious and systematic planning, every activity in the readers serves the multiple purpose of teaching both language and culture. The designed materials combine actual knowledge contents on various aspects of Canadian culture and some general language use related focus (lexis, grammar, etc.), with the latter feature mirroring any regular EFL course book. In addition, the included tasks ensure integrated skills language practice, where several skills are used and practiced concurrently. Moreover, many of the activities in the readers build on the modern language learner's active use of the Inter-

net, thereby offering students the opportunity to enhance their knowledge both language and culture-wise.

Let us now demonstrate these characteristics on two respective units entitled 'A Sweet Tooth' (*Canadian-German-Hungarian Cultural Reader*, Unit 13) and 'People of the Arctic: The Inuit' (*A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada*, Unit 3). The first activity of 'A Sweet Tooth' compares typical sweet treats and their producers in Canada, Germany, and Hungary while teaching some basic enterprise and product-history related vocabulary. Activity 2 elaborates on vocabulary connected to sweets through same-brand products. Activity 3 explores the language and style of commercials through working with Canadian icon Tim Horton's as cultural input, and, also using the same icon, Activity 4 is a good opportunity to practice the vocabulary of nutritional facts. As for the task types, all four activities can foster individual, pair, or group work and can accommodate internet-based research tasks (e.g. collecting the names of sweets, looking up different Tim Horton's products for the commercial, etc). In this unit, the cultural input serves as a theme and framework for the language input, and the activities can successfully be completed only if both the language and the cultural inputs are used effectively.

Similarly, apart from the cultural information included in the unit entitled 'People of the Arctic: The Inuit', the activities in this unit can be used to achieve numerous teaching aims including exam practice (describing pictures), practicing the language used for creating definitions and providing definitions of words (Activity 1), working on text cohesion (Activity 2), and using English focusing on both grammar and collocations (Activity 3). Again, all activities can be carried out if students are able to actively use both the language and the culture input for the successful completion of learning tasks in various forms of student-to-student interaction.

As the above description shows, activities in the readers feature both language and culture related teaching aims, which meaningfully complement each other and mutually reinforce each other's effectiveness. All in all, based on the analysis of the activi-

ties presented above, it can thus be concluded that the readers successfully realize the seven goals prompting their creation.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The study first outlined the most common shortcomings associated with currently existing cultural readers focusing on Canadian culture and available in the Central European region from the point of view of the practicing teacher. After identifying these shortcomings, the study put forward seven professional aims, through which the *Series* wished to combat these problems. The study then continued with an insight into language and culture teaching theories used in the design of the *Series*. Subsequently, the activities leading up to the preparation of the readers and the accompanying teacher's notes were detailed. The study concluded with an analysis of the readers, which explored to what extent the above seven aims have been achieved.

The analysis showed that the *Series* can be used at numerous levels of language proficiency and that it is suitable for use with students possessing diverse levels of Canada-related background knowledge. Furthermore, it is concluded that the *Series* focuses on prominent and up-to-date Canada-related cultural topics and presents complicated and specialized topics in an easy-to-process manner concurrently preserving the complexity of the topics discussed. It is also claimed that the *Series* incorporates priority topics published by the Canadian government for ensuring topical content and that it uses the most current methodological approaches for the presentation of activities that promote the achievement of language and culture related aims.

With the help of the analysis, it has thus been demonstrated that the *Series* successfully combats the shortcomings associated with former Canadian culture related publications available in the Central European region. Additionally, the *Series* may create added value in the sense that the readers themselves, their description, the depiction of the project itself, and the methods of goal-setting as well as the analysis of these goals may serve as both a starting point and an example for those experts who

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wish to develop and create similar cultural readers. On a final note, as the arguments presented above seem to confirm, the *Series* constitutes teaching materials that promote the transatlantic transfer of cultural values and cultural studies in general.

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Appendix 1

A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada

6. ABORIGINAL FOODS

Activity 1

Fill in the sentences about Aboriginal diet with a suitable word from the box.

• blueberries • maple tree • spruce tree • fiddlehead • man-o-mi •
• buffalo • salmon • muktuk • maple sugar •

1. This delicious plant has been harvested and prepared as a vegetable by First Nations. It is a rich source of Omega 3, iron and fiber. This plant is the _____ (1).
2. Aboriginal peoples in Ontario and Quebec have picked _____ (2) in August for generations.
3. Aboriginal peoples from the Prairies used _____ (3) for many different purposes: from meat, clothing and tepees to containers and cord.
4. A traditional food that remains popular among the Inuit is _____ (4). It provides vitamin C, and it is made from the skin and outer blubber of a whale.
5. North American Aboriginals created a sticky chewing gum by cutting the bark of _____ (5).
6. _____ (6), a fish with pink flesh abounds in British Columbia.
7. Wild rice is known as _____ (7) to the Ojibwa. This is a grain which Aboriginals used to harvest from a canoe.
8. The _____ (8) is one of the symbols of Canada. In early spring, _____ (9) is made from its sap.

Can you guess which of the above foods can be seen in the pictures?



A.



B.



D.



E.



C.



F.

*Wor(l)ds Apart –
Navigating Differences*

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Appendix 2

A Cultural Reader on Aboriginal Perspectives in Canada

34. NATIVE LAND



Activity 1

In the late 19th century, the Canadian government wanted to integrate Natives, encouraging them to settle, work the land and live as farmers. As the Natives did not have individual property, they were offered the scrip system to provide them with land. The procedure consisted of three steps: first, one had to get a scrip to claim land as an Aboriginal; next, the individual had to go to the Dominion Land Office in person to convert the scrip into land and to register the land; and, as a last step, the person would get his/her piece of land.

This in reality was more difficult than it seems at first glance. To give you an idea, here is a game for you to play.

Rules

Each of you should have a figurine or a counter and should place it on the START square. You must set an order of turns each of you is going to follow. Each player should roll the dice and step on the appropriate square and act according to the text in the square. The winner is the one who gets to the FINISH square first.

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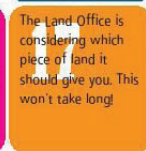
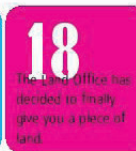
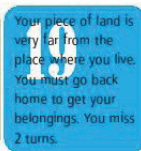
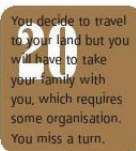
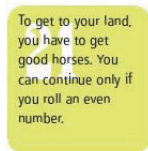
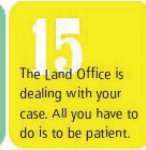
CLAIMS



You finally get to the Land Office and learn there that somebody else has already signed the documents in your name which give you land for the scrip. Go to square 13.



The police has acted on the case and imprisoned the person claiming to be you.



Activity 2

The Canadian government has successfully settled many individual and comprehensive land claims recently. Choose one such project from the list, and answer the questions on the project sheet.

1. The Skeetchestn, British Columbia
2. The Keeseekoowenin, Manitoba
3. Crespicul Reserve, Quebec
4. The English River Land Claim Agreement, Saskatchewan

Appendix 3

14. Aboriginal Inventions

Description

Time: 45 minutes.

Level: intermediate (B1).

Skills: reading, speaking, writing.

Activity: The aim of the activity is to familiarize students with Canadian Aboriginal inventions, and through this, to demonstrate their resourcefulness and the fact that white settlers could also learn from Aboriginals so their encounter facilitated a real cultural exchange rather than a one-way Western World knowledge transfer.

Preparation: Photocopy the worksheet and the question cards.

Procedure: For Activity 1/A, divide students into two large groups (A and B) and give them Text A or B and the corresponding question sheet. Give them 5 minutes to read their text, and put/project the unknown words on the board along with a short English definition for each item. Then pair students up from the two large groups and tell them to help their partner find the answer to their questions. As a follow-up, students should write a full-sentence answer to go with their questions in their exercise books.

For Activity 1/B, ask students to browse the web for other Aboriginal inventions in the computer lab. Set a time limit (15 minutes) and ask each group to report on their findings.

Extension/variation: Activity 1/B can be homework, too. If students do not have enough practice in using the web, you can give them the pdf file detailed in the “further information” section, and ask them to match the invention and the image. After checking, everyone should choose a single invention to look up. The findings could be summarized in a short paragraph or presented orally.

Questions to go with Text A

1. What did Native North Americans use to make chewing gum?
2. How did the European settlers learn about it?
3. How long was spruce gum in use?
4. What replaced it?
5. How popular are chewing gums now?

Questions to go with text B

1. What kind of sport is lacrosse?
2. Is it a special sport in Canada?
3. Who played the game first and with what purpose?
4. Is it a safe game?
5. What makes a good lacrosse player?

