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A Critical Analysis of the Representation of Japanese Culture in Japanese Language Textbooks[1]

ABSTRACT

Obtaining both linguistic and cultural competence in order to develop communicative proficiency is considered important in modern foreign language education, and various textbooks are used for that purpose in the field of Japanese language education in Croatia. Therefore, it is also important to examine the cultural content that these textbooks present to learners. To accomplish this goal, three intermediate-level Japanese language textbooks were critically analysed, with a focus on the portrayal of "Japanese culture". The framework for the analysis was created by combining the findings of several previous studies, and was used to examine categories of topics presented under the designation of "culture", or more specifically, "Japanese culture", the prevailing types of culture presented, and to whom the culture is presented as belonging. The issue of whether or not certain ideologies relating to Japanese culture are reflected in the content of the textbooks was also investigated.

Keywords: Japanese language education, critical analysis, textbook analysis, culture, ideology

1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign language textbooks have a considerable impact on learners who, for various reasons, are not in a position to maintain direct and constant contact with their target language, culture and society (Kumagai 2014: Chapter 9). Textbooks are also perceived as authoritative sources of information, regarded as "right", "objective, neutral and necessary" (Hilliard 2014: 240; Kumagai 2014: Chapter 9). However, as Apple and Christian-Smith argue,

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1   This article is a based on part of the author's research carried out for the purposes of an MA thesis, and includes excerpts from the thesis. The thesis was submitted in September 2017 at the University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

textbooks represent "someone's selection, someone's vision of legitimate knowledge and culture" and contribute to the definition of "whose culture is taught" (1991: 1, 4). In addition, the creation process of a textbook consists of numerous decisions about the language, linguistic behaviour and the information that needs to be included, and these decisions are influenced by the values of the author(s) (Paige et. al. 2000: 39; Kumagai 2014: Chapter 9), as well as of publishers who "avoid certain topics based on customers' cultural sensitivities" (Hilliard 2014: 242). Ultimately, it is this selected knowledge that is "regarded as the 'standard' and 'normal'" (Kumagai 2014: Chapter 9).

The main goal of learning in modern language education is the acquisition of communicative proficiency, for which both linguistic and cultural competence are needed (Thanasoulas 2001: 1-2; Gray 2010: 29-30; Liddicoat 2011: 837; Elmes 2013: 15). The cultural aspect of learning has gained prominence with the development of the Communicative Language Teaching method, with educators increasingly accepting the idea that students need to be aware of and knowledgeable in the culture of the target language in order to become fluent (Gray 2010: 29-30). While the true nature of culture is dynamic and subject to change, however, cultural knowledge is included into the foreign language learning process in a passive way, via notes on culture, with culture itself mostly treated as a static, homogeneous thing, easily described and learned through facts that can be memorized (Thanasoulas 2001: 2, 10; Hall 2008: 49-50).

As language textbooks are used in the classroom in the context of Japanese language education in Croatia (Japanology 2018), it is important to examine the type of cultural content they present to the learners. Therefore, the first aim of this paper is to critically analyse how culture is presented in Japanese language textbooks, which culture is considered representative, and whose culture it is presented as. The second aim is to investigate whether the content of the textbooks, especially what is there and/or what is not there, relates to certain discourses on Japanese culture and society, and whether it reflects certain ideologies about what and whose culture it is.

Three intermediate level textbooks were chosen as the focus of this analysis:

[T] *Tobira: Gateway to Advanced Japanese Learning Through Content and Multimedia* (Oka et al. 2009, from now on *Tobira*),

[IA] *An Integrated Approach to Intermediate Japanese* (Miura and Hanaoka McGloin 2008, from now on *Integrated Approach*), and

[JH] *Nihon no ima - Japan heute: Ein Japanischlehrwerk für Fortgeschrittene [Japan today: A Japanese language textbook for advanced students]* (Sakai 2011, from now on *Japan heute*).

Due to the greater complexity of the content of intermediate level textbooks in comparison with beginner textbooks, the former was considered to be more appropriate for the analysis. The textbook *Tobira* was chosen because it is used in the Japanese Studies stream at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (Japanology 2018), while *Integrated Approach* was selected due to its use in the author's class. Both of these were published in Japan, prompting the inclusion of the third textbook, *Japan heute*, which was published in Europe and fits the timeframe of the publishing of the other two textbooks.

2. THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF JAPANESE CULTURE – A SHIFT IN PERCEPTION

The traditional and dominant portrayal of Japanese culture emphasizes monoculturalism while negating internal diversity and stratification (Sugimoto 2009: 1). Japan is presented as populated by one ethnicity – the Japanese (*nihonjin*), who all share one culture (*nihon bunka*) and speak one language (*nihongo*) (Befu 2001: 68-69; Befu 2009: 34-35; Lie 2001: 1). In actuality, Japan is ethnically and linguistically diverse (Kubota 2015: 5). The major ethnic groups living in Japan include the Ainu, Koreans, Chinese, Okinawans, Burakumin[2] and "Japanese"[3] (Yamato, "Japanese Japanese") (Lie 2001: 3). Additionally, large numbers of foreign workers and exchange students have been coming to Japan from the 1980s onwards (Kubota 2015: 5).

Nowadays, the traditional portrayal of Japanese culture mentioned above is being challenged, and the shift in the characterization of Japanese society, as Sugimoto contends, is the result of changes in public perception due to the inflow of foreign migrants, greater activity on the part of minority groups such as Koreans or the Ainu, and the redefinition of Japanese society as *kakusa-shakai* – a stratified, unequal, and class-based society, as opposed to the egalitarian image that had been prevailing before (Sugimoto 2009: 1-2). Katagiri (2013) reports that the newly emerged consciousness of Japan as a "stratified society" resulted from globalization in the 1990s, which brought on the disintegration of companies when it came to lifelong employment, as well as the family as a unit composed of "a working man and housewife", and a change in the way universities presented employment as a generally male sphere (Yamada 2004, in Katagiri 2013: 151). Furthermore, Slater (2011) argues that this change is due to the "post-bubble" recession (Slater 2011: 103, 111).

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2   According to Lie "the designation of the Burakumin as an ethnic group is controversial…" but can be argued to be considered as such on the basis of shared descent, common culture and discrimination (Lie 2001: 4, 85).

3   For the sake of simplicity, in this study the term "Japanese" will incorporate the ethnic group that is seen as the Yamato Japanese or mainstream, "Japanese Japanese" (Lie 2001: 3).

Building on the assumption that Japan is a "multicultural" society, Sugimoto (2009: 3) presents two co-existing models of Japanese culture – the *monocultural* and the *multicultural* model. In reality, Japan is ethnically and linguistically diverse, and Japanese culture, as any other culture, is diverse and dynamic as well (Tai 2003: 19; Kubota 2015: 5). Nevertheless, as Tai argues, "homogenizing forces" such as the state education system, *nihonjinron* (theories about the uniqueness and homogeneity of Japanese people and culture), and the mass media should not be ignored (Tai 2003: 16).

An important factor related to the belief and propagation of homogeneity is the resulting discrimination against those who do not *fit the bill*, such as various minorities (Tai 2003: 18). But those subjected to discrimination can choose to ignore or challenge the discourse of homogeneity (Tai 2003: 18). The aforementioned influx of migrants and increase in the activity of minority groups like the Ainu and Okinawans foster change in the system, such as the integration of multicultural education, as well as constant change in the way Japanese culture is conceptualized (Tai 2003: 18-19). In conclusion, Japanese culture, just like any other culture, should be thought of as diverse, dynamic and "politically charged" (Tai 2003: 19).

The term *nihonjinron*[4] encompasses theories about Japanese people, culture, society, history and language (Befu 2001: 2), and refers to the "discourse of Japanese uniqueness" (Slater 2011: 106). The main characteristics of *nihonjinron* include a disregard of internal variation and selectivity depending on the contrasting culture and the traits emphasized (Befu 2001: 4-5). It should be noted that the content of *nihonjinron* is not uniform and that some matters can be dealt with differently, but the underlying aim of the writers is to "demonstrate unique qualities" of the subject matter (Befu 2001: 4, 78). Likewise, the "nature of Japanese national identity" has changed through time and in response to different political and economic environments, transforming into a positive or negative self-view depending on external factors, as well as which culture is being compared to Japan (Befu 2001: 123-124)[5].

At the core of *nihonjinron* lies the "belief in the uniqueness of the Japanese people" and their culture which only natives are capable of understanding (Befu 2001: 66-67). Language also plays an important role in legitimizing this uniqueness, thus making the culture expressed through the language unique as well (Befu 2001: 67). The dominant premise in *nihonjinron* is that Japan is culturally and linguistically homogeneous

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4   Also denominated as *"Nihon bunkaron", "Nihon shakairon", "Nihonron"* (Befu 2001: 2).

5   For a more detailed historical view of these changes, see Tai (2003), Befu (2001).

(Befu 2001: 68-69; Gottlieb 2005: 4). Even though this is not an objective truth, but rather a construct serving to promote a certain cultural concept, and while the Japanese themselves are aware of internal variations, this does not seem to have a great impact on the way they prefer to define themselves – as a homogeneous people (Tai 2003: 14).

Befu (2001) argues that, on the surface, *nihonjinron* is a "descriptive model", but in reality it is prescriptive in its expression of how Japanese people should act to avoid being labelled "unusual" or "un-Japanese" (Befu 2001: 78-79). Suzuki claims that "*nihonjinron* itself became one of the social forces that constructs the self-image of the Japanese"[6] (Suzuki 1982, 28 in Nakamura 2005: 33, the author's translation). In addition, *nihonjinron* is promoted by the private sector and the Japanese government (Befu 2001: 80-82). The need to define oneself and one's culture is consistently gaining in strength, especially in the current period of internationalization and globalization (Befu 2001: 82).

Some examples of premises that appear in *nihonjinron* writings include the social structure of groupism (*shūdan shugi*), cooperation, vertical society, a distinct management style, a monoethnic state, *uchi/soto*, a sense of obligation, silence or harmony with nature (Befu 2001: 17-31; Kubota 2014: 3). Furthermore, *nihonjinron* perpetuates the cultural dominance of the elite and intellectuals who "produce and consume" it (*nihonjinron*) because they have more power (Tai 2003: 16).

3. *NIHONGO* – JAPANESE AS A FOREIGN OR SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

The two existing ways to refer to the Japanese language are also associated with different types of learners – *kokugo* is taught to "Japanese students", i.e. native speakers, while *nihongo* denotes teaching Japanese as a foreign or second language to the "non-Japanese" (Gottlieb 2005: 15; Lee 2010: 2).

Nihongo education is not free from the influences of various ideologies. For example, Yasuda (2013: *Teikoku to "nihongo"*) states that the idea of *nihongo* is contemporaneous with the construction of the Japanese Empire, while Tai (2003: 19) argues that it was created to "exclude foreigners and protect *kokugo* for the Japanese nation" through which its people "develop a Japanese mind". Miyo and Chung (2006: 83) also state that a part of the pre-war Japanization ideology continues to exist, and can be detected in statements such as "to learn the Japanese language means to learn the way of thinking of the Japanese".

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6   「日本人論そのものが、ひとつの社会的な力になり、日本人の自画像を形づくっている。」

Nihonjinron also exerts influence on Japanese language education (Liddicoat 2007; Kubota 2014). The dominant premise in *nihonjinron* is the cultural and linguistic homogeneity of Japan, and its theory set is characterized by a disregard of internal variations and selectivity modelled after the contrasting culture and certain emphasized traits (Befu 2001: 4-5, 68-69; Gottlieb 2005: 4). The assumption of the "equivalence of land, race, language and culture" pervades these theories (Befu 2001: 68; Miyo and Chung 2006: 85), meaning that only Japanese people who have lived on the islands from time immemorial speak the language and practice the culture as natives (Befu 2001: 71).

Language education policies reflect the increased preoccupation with the development of "intercultural communication and understanding" and, in the context of foreign language education in Japan, they operate under the "policy of internationalization (*kokusaika*)" (Liddicoat 2007: 32, 35). However, greater focus is paid to expressing "the Japanese perspective" – an element of the *nihonjinron* discourse where a distinct "Japanese self" is constructed through comparison with "others" (Liddicoat 2007: 36-39).

Japanese culture is explicitly presented in the *nihonjijō* (Japanese way of life) part of Japanese language education, introduced to specify knowledge considered important for exchange students, such as the general way of life, history, culture, politics, economy, nature or science and technology (Liddicoat 2007: 40; Kubota 2014: 1). This section is critically examined in this study on the basis that Japan is presented from a stereotypical and ethnocentric point of view, and characterized as a "monoethnic, monocultural and monolingual" society (Liddicoat 2007: 41). The only perspective represented is that of the "Yamato Japanese", although the selected practices and themes may not reflect how they live their lives (Liddicoat 2007: 41).

4. PREVIOUS RESEARCH INTO JAPANESE LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS

Japanese language textbooks have undergone extensive analyses in connection with language ideology, portrayals of the Japanese language, the Japanese people and learners of the language, implicit sociocultural values, sociolinguistic phenomena, gender representation (women's or men's language), and the representation of culture and values attached to it (Ohara, Saft and Crookes 2001; Kawasaki and McDougall 2003; Matsumoto and Okamoto 2003; Siegel and Okamoto 2003; Heinrich 2005; Tanaka 2005; Ideno 2011; Kumagai 2014).

In his article "*Language ideology in JFL textbooks*", Patrick Heinrich (2005) analyses teaching materials in relation to language ideology, clai-

ming that "teaching materials promote beliefs and values of the urban educated middle class" (Heinrich 2005: 227). The author states that the target language, culture and activities of native speakers are represented, while the culture of the learners is rarely mentioned. Activities referred to in textbooks, such as flower arrangement or the tea ceremony, are characteristic of the educated middle class. On the other hand, activities popular among Japanese youth, such as going to karaoke or clubbing, are excluded (Heinrich 2005).

In her critical reading of beginner level Japanese language textbooks *Genki I* and *II*, Kumagai (2014) discusses the sociocultural values, beliefs and ideals that learners implicitly learn through these textbooks. The author states that traditional Japanese culture is in the spotlight, whereas popular culture is ignored. At the same time, elements of the popular culture of the United States are mentioned in the textbooks. Furthermore, Japanese society is presented as polite and conflict-free, a society in which its members are nice and have no problems understanding each other (Kumagai 2014).

Ideno (2011) analysed five Japanese language textbooks published outside of Japan – in Australia, South Korea and China, and reports that traditional Japanese culture is given preference over the culture of the everyday life of present-day Japanese people. The author concludes that only the 'surface dimension' of various cultural elements is presented, that the learning of chronologically continuous culture is difficult, and that there is a tendency to select annual events, the climate or geographical features over topics dealing with everyday life (Ideno 2011: 78).

Building up on previous research mentioned above, this article will focus on the way culture is represented in three Japanese-as-a-foreign-language textbooks used in the classroom or available to students in Croatia. It will deal with the questions of what kind of topics are presented in textbook sections dealing with culture (e.g. the "Culture Notes" sections of the textbooks), what exactly is presented as "Japanese culture", and whose culture it is.

5. METHODOLOGY

The objectives of this research are to critically analyse intermediate level Japanese language textbooks regarding how Japanese culture is represented and whose culture is considered representative, in order to discern the underlying ideologies, assumptions and aspects taken for granted, which are present in these textbooks.

The framework for the analysis (T.1) was created by combining several previous studies of Japanese and English language textbooks that investigate the representation of culture, language, society and language speakers in language textbooks – Risager (1991), Matsumoto and Okamoto (2003), Heinrich (2005), Gray (2010), Hilliard (2014) and Kumagai (2014). As for the category of "Japanese culture", the textbooks were analysed in relation to topics considered to be "cultural" (e.g. "Culture Notes"), what is presented as "Japanese culture", as well as mentions and representations of other cultures.

Table 1. Framework for the Analysis of Japanese Language Textbooks[7]

Category	Inquiries
Japanese Culture	1. What is considered to be "cultural" in the "Culture Notes" sections? 2. What is presented as "Japanese culture"? a. What kind of "culture" prevails (e.g. elite, mass, populist or *seikatsu* ("everyday life") culture)? b. Which values are attached to it? c. What kind of sociocultural beliefs and ideals are presented? 3. Other cultures: a. Are cultures other than Japanese mentioned/presented? b. How are they presented (what kind of values are attached to them, are they viewed in a positive or negative light)?

The analysis relies on Gray's (2010: 41, 48) statement that "cultural content cannot be specified in advance" because it essentializes culture (which goes against the definition of culture as a dynamic process that is subject to change). Therefore, only explicit mentions or explanations concerning culture and topics considered "cultural" in the "Culture Notes" sections were taken into consideration.

To determine what "type" of culture prevails, Sugimoto's typology of Japanese culture into the elite, mass, populists and *seikatsu*[8] was adopted and used for categorizing the items mentioned in the textbooks (see T.2). In addition, textbooks were examined to determine whether they reproduce the "monocultural" or the "multicultural model" of Japanese culture (Sugimoto 2009: 3, 10-11).

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7   For the purposes of this article, only those parts of the framework dealing with "culture" are presented.

8   According to Sugimoto (2009: 7), this concept developed in the Japanese context and depicts every domain of everyday life and the activities of "ordinary, nameless and common men and women".

Table 2. Examples of the four types of culture as presented by Sugimoto (2009: 10-11)

Culture	Examples
Elite	Japanese tea ceremony, flower arrangement, *noh* play, *koto*, symphonies, operas, museum exhibitions, calligraphy
Mass	movies, animation, manga, most literature, TV shows, popular songs, fashion and advertisements
Populist	popularity contests, reader letters, TV ratings, street protests / demonstrations, fan mail, online activism
Seikatsu	origami, bonsai, private gardening, *Obon* festival dancing, graffiti, New Year's card writing, kite painting, local folk songs, community festivals, tomb arrangements, ways of bowing, gesturing in conversation, chanting choruses in street demonstrations, blogging in cyberspace, preparing meals, taking a bath

The analysed sections of the textbooks encompass reading sections, dialogues with named characters, and the "Culture Notes" sections.

5.1. Materials - A brief description of the textbooks

The textbook *Tobira* was written by Mayumi Oka, Michio Tsutsui, Junko Kondo, Shoko Emori, Yoshiro Hanai and Satoru Ishikawa – authors employed at various universities in the United States. The textbook is intended for students who have completed a beginner level Japanese textbook, and aims to strengthen the foundations of the beginner level, as well as further develop the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) and the socio-cultural knowledge deemed necessary for communication (Oka et al. 2009, vii). *Integrated Approach* was written by Akira Miura and Naomi Hanaoka McGloin, both of whom currently are or have previously been professors of Japanese at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The textbook is aimed at students who have completed beginner level studies (Miura and Hanaoka McGloin 2008, vi). The aims of this textbook include the development of the four language skills, teaching realistic content and function, as well as natural Japanese language, and deepening the foreign learner's knowledge about Japan (Miura and Hanaoka McGloin 2008, VII-VIII). *Japan heute* was written by Yasuko

Sakai who has 30 years of experience as a Japanese language teacher in Germany. The textbook targets learners who have completed approximately 300 study hours and are trying to reach the A2/B1 proficiency level as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The aims of this textbook include the promotion of communicative competences based on realistic language usage, and providing a view into today's Japan (Sakai 2011, Vorwort). Both *Tobira* and *Integrated Approach* contain fifteen lessons and a "Culture Notes" sections, while *Japan heute* has ten lessons and does not have a "Culture Notes" segment.

6. JAPANESE CULTURE AS PRESENTED IN THE TEXTBOOKS

Two of the textbooks, *Tobira* and *Integrated Approach,* have "Cultural Notes" sections, which, according to Thanasoulas (2001), is a "passive" way of representing culture. In this way, topics considered "cultural" are presented as facts that can be learned.

6.1. Integrated Approach

The "Culture Notes" sections (see T.3) in *Integrated Approach* are prescriptive – they give advice on how exchange students in Japan should talk or act.

Table 3. Topics in the "Culture Notes" section of the textbook Integrated Approach

• meeting someone in Japan • introducing oneself or others • how to address someone • greetings • addressing your friends • asking favours • going to Japan for a year-long study	• homestays • talking about one's family • writing e-mails and letters • advisors • extra-curricular activities • restaurants • how to decline an invitation • respect for the aged • Akihabara	• student jobs • job interviews • humble expressions • gift-giving • the shinkansen • ryokan • travelling • homestays • making apologies • medical and dental care • food for sick people	• errors and laughter • loanwords • Japanese attitudes toward foreigners speaking Japanese • man's world • 3 高 (sankō) • kawaii / "cute" • group society • shūshokukatsudō (job hunting)

Statements such as "[...] one should be extra polite when asking a favour in Japanese. Japanese speakers often deliberately start out hesitantly by saying ちょっとお願いがあるんですけど [*chotto onegai ga arundesukedo*] [...]" (IA: 44), or "When one gives a gift in Japan, one uses an expression that minimizes its importance: つまらない物ですが [*tsumaranai mono desu ga*]" (IA: 160), exemplify stylistic norms of communication in the Japanese language such as politeness, indirectness and self-effacement, which according to Matsumoto and Okamoto (2003: 28-29) reflect cultural characteristics often emphasized in *nihonjinron,* such as concern for maintaining harmony or consensus. According to an "authentic" account in the reading section in *Integrated Approach*, miso soup, Japanese tea and taking baths are "true Japanese culture" (IA: 202-203). This was written by a host family member who regrets allowing the American exchange student to drink juice with her meals or take only showers (even in winter). In consequence, the student never drank miso or Japanese tea and was prone to getting colds. This is interesting because it implies that not conforming to what is in this case defined as the Japanese way of life does not only get in the way of experiencing the "true Japanese culture", but also has negative consequences on one's health. This was written solely from the perspective of the "native", and the exchange student's point of view was not included. This text is part of Lesson 11, "Problems with the host family", which comprises examples of the typical problems experienced by fictional exchange students. All of these problems centre around the host family mother who worries, scolds and is incapable of understanding the difference in customs of the people of the United States and Japan (IA: 199-201). What is interesting here is the degree of conformity to Japanese customs expected not only from the exchange students themselves, but also from their family members back home. This is illustrated in the second conversation where a textbook character, Susan, is asked to tell her mother to write a thank-you letter to the host family mother because this is a custom in Japan, and the host mother cannot understand why it is not the same in the United States (IA: 200). This echoes Liddicoat's interpretation of language policies contained in *kokusaika* as being more about "Japanese self-expression in the world rather that articulating a mutually informing encounter between cultures" (2007: 38).

6.2. Tobira

The "Culture Notes" sections of *Tobira*, on the other hand, include various topics (see T.4), with only one of them dealing with the language itself through the introduction of dialects (T: 242).

Table 4. Topics in the "Culture Notes" section of the textbook Tobira

1) The story of rice	6) Standard and dialects
2) Various superstitions of Japan	7) Is curry rice Japanese cuisine?
3) Cute Japan	8) Manufacturing Japan
4) Japanese songs	9) *Waka/tanka* and "Manyōshū"
5) Gestures and the Japanese	10) The Japanese Imperial Family

One topic introduces gestures, stating that they express the culture of various countries and that, while learning a foreign language, one needs to know not only the words but also the culture of that country (T: 221). Other topics of interest include "The story of rice" (T: 125), "Is curry rice Japanese cuisine?" (T: 264), "Manufacturing Japan" (T: 288), and "The Japanese Imperial Family" (T: 336). Rice and the Imperial Family are two symbols of Japanese national identity and function as its "unifying principles" (Morris-Suzuki 1995: 771, 773). According to Ishida, the very same "rice-based agriculture" was what engendered a strong sense of group loyalty in Japan (Ishida 1974, in Morris-Suzuki 1995: 771). The importance of rice as the staple food of the Japanese is stressed. In addition, a possible explanation for the custom of the Japanese to first talk about the weather when they meet someone is provided via the link with the importance of the weather for rice production (T: 125). It is interesting to note that Kubota (2014: 10) reports that certain other textbooks explain this linguistic custom as a reflection of "indirectness" and "respect toward nature". The last "Culture Note" introduces the Japanese Imperial Family, citing the Constitution of Japan which declares that "The emperor is the symbol of Japan and the Japanese (T: 336)". This is followed by a mention of the fact that the emperor and his family have no right to express their political opinions and do not possess the right to vote. The current emperor and empress are introduced, as well as their role in the "inheritance and growth of traditional Japanese culture" through rice planting and harvesting, raising silkworms or holding the "*Utakaihajime* (New Year poetry reading)" (T: 336). There is no reference to any controversies connected with the Imperial Family, nor any explanations as to why they are not allowed to express their political opinions. "Culture Note 8" states that the spirit of traditional handicrafts lives on in the Japanese who create excellent things, and that the word "*monozukuri* (manufacturing)" deeply expresses the spirit of the Japanese towards "*mono* (things)", which integrate Japanese traditional power, new technologies and artistic sense (T: 288). Lastly, in the 7th "Culture Note", Japanese curry rice is given as an example of the custom of the Japanese to leave some original characte-

ristics of imported items while adding "Japanese taste", coupled with a definition of the Japanese as an ethnic group (*minzoku*) that really likes to make something new out of traditional things (T: 264).

6.3. Japan heute

The textbook *Japan heute* does not include a "Culture Note" section. Therefore, only statements that explicitly mention culture were analysed. The textbook mentions the modern nation building process in Japan and the creation of a "common culture" at the expense of local cultures (ex. Ainu), cultures of Japan's former colonies (Korea and Taiwan), and occupied Asian countries (JH: 2). The only examples provided, however, are those in reference to aspects of Japanese culture enforced on the aforementioned people, such as visiting "*jinja* (Japanese Shinto shrines)" (JH: 2). This is the only mention, in all three textbooks, of Japan's colonial past and its negative consequences for occupied people, as well as the controversial aspects of modern nation state building.

6.4. Types of Japanese culture presented in the textbooks

In order to find out what "types" of culture prevail in the Japanese language textbooks analysed, the typology of Japanese culture into "elite", "mass", "populist" and "*seikatsu*" proposed by Sugimoto was consulted (Sugimoto 2009, see T.5). It can be concluded that "populist" culture is not present in the textbooks, while "elite" culture – represented by the tea ceremony (T: 245) or traditional arts like *kyogen* (T: 178-185) – is under-represented. This contrasts with discoveries made by Heinrich (2005), Ideno (2011) or Kumagai (2014), where elite or high culture was found to be the only one represented in the textbooks they analysed, while "popular" or "mass" culture was either non-existent or under-represented. This may be related to the increased popularity of Japan's popular culture outside Japan. According to the *Survey report on Japanese Language Education Abroad* (2012) produced by the Japan Foundation, 54% of learners report having an "interest in *manga, anime,* J-pop, etc" (Japan Foundation 2012: 4). Therefore, the inclusion of information on popular culture which might interest and motivate learners is logical. Both *Tobira* (T: 176) and *Integrated Approach* (IA: 122, 278) include descriptions of the so-called "cuteness culture", namely, references to the word "*kawaii* (cute)" which has become a symbol of Japanese popular culture in recent years, as well as "*otaku* culture", the culture of people who express a strong interest in anime and manga. This may be connected to a recognition of "soft power", a "new form of cultural imperialism" (Mouer and Norris 2009: 361). The phrase itself is mentioned in *Integrated Approach*, and explained as not merely selling physical things, but also culture and cultural values (IA: 282-283).

The other type of culture represented in all three textbooks is the "*seikatsu* (everyday life)" culture. Things like eating habits, housing, wedding customs, origami, festivals, gestures or songs that "everyone knows" are woven into the reading sections and dialogues. Although a change in eating habits is mentioned (JH: 66), there are very few examples of specific food and drinks which are consumed, and the implication is that all Japanese consume them, regardless of region or any other circumstances. As Kubota states, eating culture is bundled together, disregarding any geographical, economic variations or variations pertaining to ethnic or other identities (Kubota 2014: 15). *Integrated Approach* also stresses that it is mainly women who prepare these meals – the host family mother cooks delicious food every day (IA: 66) and when "husbands" are good at cooking, it is something to be surprised at (IA: 258). Furthermore, *Integrated Approach* overtly states that "there is nothing better that doing a homestay in Japan to understand what a Japanese family is like, to see how "ordinary Japanese" live, and to improve your speaking skills (IA: 198)". As alluded to elsewhere in the same textbook, homestay families belong to the middle-class (IA: 160), meaning that the phrase "to see how "ordinary Japanese" live" should be interpreted as "to see how middle-class Japanese live". Assuming that the dominant paradigm stating that contemporary Japanese society is classless truly is valid, and that 90% of the Japanese identify themselves as belonging to the "middle stratum (*chū kaisō*)" , this would imply that doing a homestay would indeed show one how the majority of the Japanese live (Lie 2001: 28). But as Lie (2001) and Slater (2011) argue, one of the causes of the self-identification of most Japanese as middle-class could be rapid economic growth which decreased economic inequality. However, a hierarchy based on occupation and education does exist and results in inequality (Lie 2001: 29-32; Slater 2011: 106). The textbook provides clues as to other characteristics of these host families – for example, they are accustomed to receiving gifts and have money (IA: 160, 275). Therefore, the life of "ordinary Japanese" actually stands for the life of "well-off Japanese"; all other ways of living are negated.

Table 5. Yoshio Sugimoto's four types of Japanese culture applied to all three textbooks:

Type of culture	Examples		
	Tobira	*Integrated Approach*	*Japan heute*
Elite	tea ceremony, traditional performing arts (*kyo*gen), traditional instruments (taiko, shamisen, kot*o*)	*kabuk*i theatre	None
Mass	*manga* (Tezuka Osamu), Japanese video games, J-pop, "otaku culture", "*kawaii* culture" (Hello Kitty), *Genji monogatari*, *haiku, waka/tanka*, the *Manyōshū*	*anime*, *manga*, Hello Kitty, Pokémon, games, the "*otaku* culture", fashion	None
Populist	None	None	None
Seikatsu	Origami, festivals (*Hina mat*suri, *Kodomo no hi, Obon*), gestures, songs that "everybody knows" ("*Sakura sakura*", "*Shabon-dama*", "*Haru ga kita*", etc.)	Eating hot rice porridge (*okayu*) with *umebo-shi* when having a cold, wearing slippers inside the house and toilet slippers, gift-giving, weddings, preferring specialty restaurants (ex. *sushi*, *tempura*, eel), eating fast food and drinking Cola, also eating seafood, bread, salad, fish or *sukiyaki*, drinking *miso* soup and Japanese tea	*Obon*, eating habits, home-cooked food (main dish – rice, side dish – vegetables, fish or meat), foreign food in homes, restaurants, *makura-meshi*, gestures, language use

6.5. Other cultures represented in the textbooks

Cultures other than "Japanese" are represented only by the "culture of the United States" and "Thai culture". The latter is only represented in *Integrated Approach* via the inclusion of a text written by a person from Thailand (IA: 284-285). The function of references to the culture of the United States in the textbooks is to point out differences, as those prevail, over similarities, which are few in number – the "eating of fast food by young people", for example. These comparisons predominate in *Tobira* and *Integrated Approach*, which can also be explained by the intended target consumer being an "American" student. As pointed out by Kubota (2008), the comparison tactic "essentializes and objectifies" culture. In this way, internal variations are also negated and not recognized. It is presupposed that there is an "American culture[9]" and a "Japanese culture" which are uniform and shared by their bearers, the "Americans" and the "Japanese". No examples of internal variations of "Japanese culture" are present in any of the three textbooks, not even in *Japan heute*, which does acknowledge the multiethnicity and the coexistence of various "foreign" cultures inside Japan (JH: 114).

6.6. Identifying the carriers of the culture – Whose is the culture presented in the textbooks?

Finally, it is important to identify who the "Japanese culture" presented above belongs to. All three textbooks are marked by rare mentions of nationality or ethnicity, which can, however, be deduced from the names of the fictional characters as either "Japanese (Yamato)" or "American". All "Japanese" characters in all three textbooks have Japanese-style names such as Morita, Suzuki, Kobayashi and Tanaka. These are the characters students will identify as "Japanese" and as "carriers" of "Japanese culture". The only textbook in which the "Japanese" are somewhat identified as a concept is *Japan heute*. They are described as the major ethnic group in Japan, while other ethnicities (*minzoku*) such as Koreans, overseas Chinese and Ainu are defined as minorities (JH: 2). The other two textbooks simply mention *nihonjin* (the Japanese) without explaining who they are or giving any indication of the existence of minorities within Japan. As previously stated, the *nihonjinron* discourse presumes a correlation between land, race, language and culture (Befu 2001: 68; Miyo and Chung 2006: 85) and, considering the results presented above, it would seem that this has influenced the content of the three textbooks analysed as well. Therefore, as has been observed in certain earlier research (Heinrich 2005; Liddicoat 2007), the people who embody the "Japanese culture" in the analysed textbooks are the Yamato Japanese, and, in case of *Integrated Approach* –wealthy middle-class Japanese.

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9   "America" refers only to the United States.

7. CONCLUSION

To conclude, it can be surmised that the three Japanese textbooks analysed provide a "monocultural model" of Japanese culture. Other "foreign" cultures, ethnic groups and minorities are mentioned only in *Japan heute*, but Japanese culture itself is treated as "monocultural" there as well. Therefore, despite acknowledgment of the existence of other cultures inside Japan, the belief in the homogeneity of Japanese culture – the culture of the Yamato Japanese in these textbooks – is sustained by the lack of any mention or allusion to internal variations. It cannot be denied that the Yamato Japanese (as well as their middle class) do possess "Japanese culture", but presenting them as the *only ones* who do so, and treating them as *uniformly* possessing this *one* culture, is problematic.

The textbooks analysed also reflect ideologies of *nihonjinron* and *kokusaika* which can be detected in elements such as stressing sociocultural beliefs, such as indirectness or self-effacement, or the assimilationist approach in which conformity to the Japanese way is advocated, while the students' own perspectives or actions are viewed as incompatible and wrong.

All of the above leads to the following question – how can diverse cultural content be included in the extremely limited space of textbooks? The short answer would be that it cannot. It is impossible, in the same way that one person cannot learn and know the entirety of the culture(s) they belong to, and it is impossible due to the very nature of culture, which is fluid, changeable, subjective and dynamic. This is the first thing that teachers and textbook creators ought to acknowledge and come to terms with. Secondly, cultural content cannot be defined due to the aforementioned nature of culture. Assuming this is so would necessitate the removal of "Culture Notes" or similar sections from language textbooks. Culture, society and language are interconnected, influence each other, and as such their "true essence" cannot be extracted, nor presented as facts which the learner can easily learn. The author proposes that textbook creators include authentic texts and dialogues written by various people, including a diversity of perspectives, topics and situations. Furthermore, the learner's own perspectives, thoughts and discoveries should be given priority in the interpretation of the materials. Teachers should refrain from "correcting" these interpretations while simultaneously providing their own perspective as one of many perspectives, thereby raising awareness of various discourses that exact influence on the way the culture of Japan and its people are portrayed in textbooks, as well as in media in general. In this way, learners can come to recognize that various forces play a role in the way people use language or think about the cultures they are living in or "learning" about. Based on the acquired information, learners can then

actively choose to (re)act in various situations in ways that are beneficial to them and/or do not compromise their own identities.

The most obvious limitation of this study is the inability to generalize due to the small sample of textbooks analysed. Possible future studies would include a larger sample of textbooks, involving students and other teachers in the process of interpretation, a study of the whole process of making the textbooks, or a critical discourse analysis of each text, dialogue and visual material.

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SUMMARY

A Critical Analysis of the Representation of Japanese Culture in Japanese Language Textbooks

Foreign language textbooks are seen as authoritative, and the information they include as objective and indispensable. They may also represent the only point of contact between learners and their target culture and society. In modern foreign language education, obtaining both the linguistic and cultural competence to develop communicative proficiency is considered to be important. Several Japanese language textbooks are widely used in Japanese language education in Croatia. Therefore, it is important to examine the kind of cultural content these textbooks present to the learners. To accomplish this goal, three intermediate level Japanese language textbooks were critically analysed, with a focus on the portrayal of "Japanese culture". The results showed that, while the existence of other cultures inside Japan is acknowledged to some degree, the belief in the homogeneity of "the Japanese culture" is perpetuated through the lack of recognition of internal variations. Furthermore, the textbooks analysed also reflect the ideologies of *nihonjinron* and *kokusaika*, as well as the assimilationist approach to Japanese culture.

Keywords: Japanese language education, critical analysis, textbook analysis, culture, ideology

SAŽETAK

Kritička analiza prikaza japanske kulture u kontekstu udžbenika japanskoga kao stranoga jezika

Udžbenici stranih jezika smatraju se autoritativnim, a informacije koje sadrže objektivnim i neophodnim. Za učenike udžbenici stranoga jezika mogu biti jedini dodir s ciljanom kulturom i društvom. Moderno podučavanje stranih jezika smatra kako je za razvoj komunikativne kompetencije važno stjecanje kako jezične, tako i kulturne sposobnosti. Pošto se u kontekstu podučavanja japanskoga jezika u Hrvatskoj udžbenici naširoko upotrebljavaju, važno je ispitati kakav kulturni sadržaj predstavljaju učenicima. Kako bi se postigao ovaj cilj, kritički su analizirana tri udžbenika srednje razine japanskoga jezika kao stranoga jezika s naglaskom na prikaz „japanske kulture". Rezultati pokazuju određenu mjeru priznanja postojanja drugih kultura unutar Japana, no vjera u homogenost "japanske kulture" održava se neprepoznavanjem unutarnjih varijacija. Udžbenici također odražavaju ideologije *nihonjinrona* i *kokusaike*, kao i asimilacijski pristup.

Ključne riječi: podučavanje japanskoga jezika, kritička analiza, analiza udžbenika, kultura, ideologija