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**A Comparison Between Two Different  
Secondary English Course Books**  
How Differences Might Influence A Foreign Language Learning

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## *Abstract*

In foreign language learning – specifically, English language learning in the case of this dissertation - a textbook can be an importance reference for both students and teachers. While learners could find in it a supporting tool, teachers can instead exploit it to plan their activities following a given outline. Nowadays, English has become an international language and people all around the world have to learn it, for pleasure or because they need to. Analysing English Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks, it is important to consider not only that amongst all the publishing houses that are set all around the world, the most important ones are English or American, but also that the publisher's nationality can impact on the way the textbook contents are structured and delivered to students.

Therefore, the main aim of this work was to investigate whether there is a difference between textbooks published by international houses for an international target and textbooks published at a national level for a specific national target, as well as to draw some implications in terms of foreign language learning and teaching. From the comparison of two textbooks, one published by Cambridge and the other by DeAgostini, it was found that English was presented as an international language in the latter, including many different accents and the cultures related to them, while the former was much more centered on British English from both a linguistic and a cultural perspective. Further relevant differences in structure and in the variety of the ancillary materials were also found from the comparison and led to a reflection on the characteristics “a good book” needs to have. These features were analysed following the model exposed by Pemberton (2018), namely one of the main references in this dissertation.

The discussion of data, collected using a qualitative method, will try to answer the following research questions, as well as to suggest some hints to help EFL teachers in textbooks selection. Is a British-centered textbook more helpful because of its easier structure? Or, is a more international-centered vision potentially more appropriate to help students learn a language which is spoken all over the world by so many different people?

## *Introduction*

Despite the technological tools we live with, it is fundamental to evaluate the different roles that educational books have both for students and teachers. Textbooks may be considered as *teachers, maps, resources, trainers, authorities or ideologies* (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Students may use them to study without the teachers' mediation and teachers may use them to plan their lessons.

The concept of English as a language and culture evolved since the time of colonialism, when English became an international language worldwide (Jenkins, 2000). In fact, in the model developed by Kachru (1986) identifying "three circles" – i.e. Inner Circle, Outer Circle and Expanding Circle -, many different varieties of English are included. Even if all these varieties differ in many aspects, he believed that they are substantially equal from a linguistic point of view. This evolution of language and culture melting together through a linguistic common ground, leads to the so-called concept of *lingua franca* (Kachru, 1986).

The implications of such a linguistic progression can be seen in both cultural and financial terms, to such an extent that even the books market in general, and specifically the textbook market, shows a clear hegemonic role of British publishing houses amongst others, that may have more difficulties in integrating into the school market. In fact, the British hegemony played an important role in all the British colonies, and it expanded all over the European countries as well. This proceedings impacted even on English teachers, who had to choose between different textbooks, and to decide whether to follow a specific one or to offer students some ancillary materials, especially in the globalized and technological world we live in today.

The focal point of this study will be the comparison of two pre-intermediate EFL textbooks, namely *Open Up* (edited by the English publisher *Cambridge*) and *Twenty-One* (edited by the Italian publisher *DeAgostini*), highlighting the differences and the similarities between their structure and the learning activities they propose. These textbooks are deliberately selected from two publishing houses belonging to different countries - the first (edited by *Cambridge*) is British, while the second (edited by *De Agostini*) is Italian. These tools have been chosen because they are both written for Italian learners and adopted in Italian middle schools - grade 6.

Firstly this thesis aims to clarify whether the differences between the two publishers' nationalities impact on teaching and learning, and if the textbooks' units follow Balboni's model and the three

main phases of globality, analysis and synthesis. Secondly, the activities will be examined from a linguistic point of view, in order to see whether the textbooks present a different variety of the English language. Notably, the aim of this research is to answer two main questions:

1. Is there any difference in structure and contents between the English textbook published by Cambridge and the Italian one published by De Agostini? Are the units based on the model suggested by Balboni? Do they follow the three fundamental stages of globality, analysis and synthesis?
2. Is there a difference in the variety of the language presented?

The research is composed of two core parts: the theoretical context is presented in Part 1, while Part 2 illustrates the process and the results of the research itself. Moreover, Part 2 is divided into two chapters. While Chapter 2 aims to describe the two research questions and the materials analysed, Chapter 3 deals with an analysis and a discussion of the results.

The first unit of the textbooks will be analysed and compared in its entirety, to highlight differences and similarities between the two publications from different publishers. Firstly, the comparison deals with the general structure of the two textbooks, following the evaluation rules set by Pemberton (2018). Then, a detailed reflection on the model of the unit structure devised by Balboni (2015), based on the Gestalt psychology, is made. Moreover, Scrivener's work (2011) and its objectives considered for the different sections that form the unit, will serve as a guide for some sections of the textbooks (*Vocabulary, Grammar and Functions*). For the *Culture* section, instead, the indications provided by Balboni (2015) are more recent and appear to be more appropriate.

Furthermore, the method adopted to analyse data and properly answer the two research questions, is qualitative. In fact, one of the purposes of this dissertation is to describe the two different textbooks chosen and to observe their differences both in terms of structure and from the linguistic point of view.

To conclude, in the final chapter it will be argued that both textbooks are developed following the three stages of globality, analysis and synthesis described by Balboni, but each publishing house has a proper view. On the one hand, the English publisher focuses more on the organization of the unit's materials, distinguishing each section with different colours, thus facilitating the readers and

guiding them. The Italian publisher, on the other hand, appears to be less organized but offers a wider view of English as an international language.

## *PART ONE: Theoretical content of reference*

### Chapter 1

#### *The importance of textbooks in foreign language learning and teaching*

Despite all the technological tools we live with, textbooks are still present and fundamental in schools, representing a reference point for both students and teachers. Indeed, while students may rely on them to study contents without the teacher's mediation, teachers find in textbooks useful tools to plan their lessons. Over the last decades many teachers were surveyed by researchers (Dove, 1998; Schug. Et al, 1997; Zahoric, 1991; Apple, 1991; Moulton, 1994), who reported that, where instructions and classrooms activities are textbook driven, the main reasons for using textbooks are their usefulness in planning courses and lessons, as well as the value of their so-called ancillary materials (e.g. handouts and display materials).

In the first section of this chapter, we will describe how English language teaching has developed since the time of colonialism, after the spreading of the English culture worldwide. Language itself has evolved over the centuries, becoming an *international language*, with many different varieties spoken all around the world (Jenkins, 2000).

The following section - Culture in ELT Textbooks - will focus on the evolution of the English language in terms of different countries and cultures melting through a linguistic common ground, to become a *lingua franca* (Kachru, 1986). In section 1.1.3 how this linguistic evolution profoundly impacted also on the English publication industry, particularly as far as textbooks used to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are concerned, will be examined. The implications of such a progression were seen in both cultural and economic terms, as the influence of publishing houses on textbooks' contents and teaching modalities gradually grew over time. This transformation, in turn, impacted on the role of the English teacher, who is called to make a choice among different textbooks and to choose how to implement their content, deciding whether to follow the very textbook or to provide students with ancillary materials, such as written texts or audio-visual resources taken from other sources, to complement the activities offered by the textbook. This happened in a context of a more globalized and technological world, where several more interactive and appealing teaching devices and aids could facilitate foreign language teaching, thus questioning the mere existence of



textbooks (Garret, 2009). Despite such remarkable technological advancements and educational deregulation in many countries, several experts claim that textbooks still represent a landmark in English teaching (Reichenberg, 2016). For this reason, it seems important not to underestimate its role as a key teaching tool. In her study, Reichenberg highlights how important textbooks are even in countries with a deregulated system, which implies a resulting greater autonomy on the teachers' part. Particularly, it has pointed out how different textbooks of different publishing houses directly influence the way English is being taught and learnt inside the classroom. Consequently, it seems clear that the choice among different educational volumes implies for teachers to specifically select the kind of content to deliver to their students, as well as to prefer certain teaching modalities over others, which are less in line with the structure and the activities of the chosen textbook (Durwin & Sherman, 2008). Therefore, identifying the differences and the similarities between textbooks from different publishing houses and assessing their influence on the students' learning process appear to be of uttermost importance for teachers and schools.

In paragraph 1.1.3, the role that textbooks play for both students and teachers considered by Cortazzi & Jin (1999) will be examined. In their view, textbooks, in fact, may be considered as *teachers, maps, resources, trainers, authorities or ideologies*. Alongside, a reflection on their use in schools is provided, investigating the relationship between publishers and teachers, and the role that publishing houses have in schools. Moreover, in section 1.2 a reflection regarding deregulation in education is made, considering a study carried out by Reichenberg (2016).

Furthermore, in section 1.3 existing comparison models will be considered. First of all, the relevant points proposed by Pemberton (2018) to evaluate a textbook will be presented (1.3.1). Then, the teaching unit model by Balboni (2015), which follows the Gestalt psychology, will be illustrated. After an overview of the complete unit, the several sections of each unit of the textbooks will be analysed in detail, following the line proposed by Scrivener (2011). The section related to culture, instead, will be analysed with reference to the reflection proposed by Balboni (2014) will be taken into account. Later, in paragraph 1.3.3, different English Language Teaching (ELT) methods and techniques will be discussed and considered in the following chapters to compare the two textbooks under analysis. To conclude, a detailed presentation of the chosen method applied in chapters 2 and 3 will be made in chapter 1.4.

## 1.1.Linguistic Imperialism and Globalization

The English Language has become a necessity in today's globalized world (Neji Meidani & Pishghadam, 2012: 82). In fact, it is very often considered the prevailing foreign language in the curricula of most educational institutions, as well as in foreign language learning (Chang, 2006). Teaching English to non-native speakers started in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Jenkins, 2000). Since then, English has been taught all around the world with the aim of making the learners autonomous in their communication with native speakers in English-speaking countries (Harmer, 2015). However, due to globalization, goals and views around English have changed over the centuries (Neji Meidani & Pishghadam, 2012: 84). Once the British Empire was dismantled in ESL countries, linguistic changes started to spread and the English language transformed (itself) from a *foreign* language into an *international* one (Jenkins, 2000). Despite globalization, according to Phillipson (2009) British people wanted to "ensure that the learning of English is to their benefit economically, culturally and politically"; an attitude which he labels as "linguistic imperialism". Neji Meidani and Pishghadam (2012), instead, associated this claim with "cultural imperialism", because through language, a number of other elements may be directly transmitted, including culture. According to them, in language teaching, cultural imperialism means transmitting ideas about the culture of English-speaking countries via textbooks, which implies the presentation of certain cultural stereotypes and values as superior and universal. In this regard, in 2015 Balboni highlighted the so-called intercultural dimension, considering the foreign language teachers could not "teach" a different culture due to its continuous variability, but they could give the students tools and instruments to observe it. Observing a different culture, in fact, means (a) to be aware of potential communication problems because of the different "software of the mind"; (b) to offer different simple tools to observe the communication; (c) the fact that reality changes daily, so different cultures modify, mingle and differentiate themselves, so "studying" them and observing them with the right attitude is important; (d) to teach to observe videos or films where actors seem "natural", therefore they reproduce consciously gestures, distances, daily moves, making them easily observable precisely because they are art-made. Furthermore, even Richards & Schmidt (2002) pointed out that in language teaching, cultural imperialism includes the transmission of ideas about the culture of English-speaking countries via textbooks, the choice of contents related to daily life, or, with reference to culture, to festivals or traditions. Moreover, it entails the presentation of certain cultural stereotypes and values as universal and superior, while others are presented as inferior. Language and culture are closely related, as globalization acts as a force in the cultural hegemony

that English has acquired with the aid of a huge range of messages, icons and brands (Sweeny, 2006). Chang (2006) also supports the previous claims, adding that cultural globalization was closely linked with the development of English as a *global* language. In 2019, Rose and Galloway, investigated global contexts where English L2 speakers communicate to each other: this study reveals that business textbooks are more likely to include a range of English varieties and depict interactions between L2 English users when a native speaker is not present, which is in stark contrast with what some English textbooks present, namely only one variety at a time. Their dissertation comes to the conclusion that despite individual elements, the target and the model for successful English use remains the domain of the native speaker (Bayyurt, 2021).

### 1.1.1 Culture in ELT Textbooks

Culture is a complex concept, especially when teaching of a second language is its object. In 1988, Chastain divided the concept of culture into two groups, namely “small c culture” and “large C culture”. The first concerns the way people live, while the second is related to the social, economic and political history of great politicians, heroes, writers and artists of a country. Modiano (2001, cited in Neji Meidani & Pishghadam, 2012: 86, suggests that the cultural imposition of English language learning might be controlled by employing ELT practices which define English as an *international* language. Moreover, he suggests a variety of teaching practices in English classes in order to promote cultural equality. Similarly, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) found three different ways of seeing culture presented in language textbooks: the so-called source culture, where extra inputs are drawn from the learners’ own culture; target culture, which includes the culture of the Inner Circle countries, namely English-speaking countries (based on the concept developed by Krachu1986); and international target culture, which draws on a variety of English from around the world.

According to a more recent study carried out by Cook (2008), although many course books present multilingual English people and sometimes mention multiculturalism, L2 users, for example, are seen as tourists or visitors, and have a secondary role compared to native speakers. This way of presenting native speakers might have a negative impact on textbooks. Indeed, in 1990, even Crawford (cited by Neji Meidani & Pishghadam, 2012) highlighted that textbooks (a) may distort the content they provide because they often present an idealized, white and middle class view of the

world and avoid controversial issues; (b) are mostly written for the global market and may not reflect the specific needs of the learners in a particular setting; (c) can deskill teachers.

In their study, Neji Meidani & Pishghadam (2012) examined four different English textbooks and analyzed them in relation to the concept of English as an International Language (henceforth EIL). The four textbooks, *New American Streamline*, *Cambridge English for Schools*, *Interchange Series Third Edition* and *Top Notch*- written respectively in 1994, 1996, 2005 and 2006- , covered a time span of 12 years. All these books belonged to the intermediate level and were used to teach English in different countries around the world. The criteria taken into account by the authors were the following: references to Inner Circle countries, to Outer and Expanding Circle countries, non-native accents, dialogues in non-English speaking countries, as well as the place of home culture and famous people. Furthermore, they categorized countries according to the division made by Kachru (1986), who classified countries in three groups: the *Inner Circle* (countries where English is the native or major language), the *Outer Circle*, where ESL, and the *Expanding Circle*, where English is studied as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL). The number of dialogues presented by the different textbooks in non-English speaking countries depicts English as a *lingua franca*. Scholars focused also on the fact that non-native accents convey one of the main principles of EIL, which leads to the acceptance of different varieties of both language and culture. Finally, Neji Meidani & Pishghadam (2012) demonstrate how the adherence to the principles of EIL is stricter in more recent textbooks than in older ones. They also found that the presentation of cultural themes of *Outer* and *Expanding Countries* has grown and has become more diverse over the years. Nonetheless, speaking of different accents, all the textbooks considered do not contain any non-native-speakers accents, and if English is considered as an international language, it is important to examine different accents the origins of the and different speakers.

According to Labtici & Teo (2020: 1) the purpose of learning English has shifted from “focusing on grammar and discourse” to “gaining a wider range of cultural knowledge to share ideas and express one’s culture for understanding and building relationships”. Moreover, they agree with Byram’s (1997) assumption that language learners are also culture learners. Claiming that learning a language implies also learning its culture, they examined different sources of culture presented in textbooks, which are described by Cortazzi and Jin (1999), Crystal (2003) and McKay (2002) as *source* culture, *target* culture and *international* culture. Source culture helps English language learners to

reflect on their own culture and values, so that they can appreciate the cultural diversity of the world surrounding them (Breen 2001; Baker 2008). Target culture refers, instead, to the cultural information from countries, such as the USA, Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand, where English is spoken as a native language. These cultures are usually represented in all the textbooks with Western culture bias and stereotyping (Labtíc and Teo, 2020). International culture, instead, refers to cultural information from countries where English is spoken as a second or a foreign language, such as India or Philippines. To understand how language and culture are deeply related, Labtíc and Teo focus on receptive and productive skills (Brown, 2001), otherwise referred to as reading/listening comprehension skills and oral/written production skills respectively (Crystal, 2003). Moreover, Labtíc and Teo (2020) reflect on how learners receive the language and extract its meaning when they listen to, and read about, something:

Since language and culture are closely related and language normally transmits culture, it can be said that when learners are listening to and reading about something, they are receiving and decoding cultural knowledge, which may develop their skills of comprehension or build their cultural schemata.

Following the idea that English language learning should focus more on improving comprehension skills (Crystal, 2010; Krashen, 1982), Labtíc and Teo develop the receptive skills more than the productive ones. They suggest, in fact, that textbooks in general should present a wider reference to cultural information beyond native English countries, to widen the students' worldview<sup>1</sup> and increase their knowledge of the cultural diversity in the world. In other countries, for instance the English colonies, English is spoken as a first or second language. It seems that including references to those countries in textbooks would provide users with a broader vision of the English language - and consequently of its cultural heritage too -, also as far as intonation and accents are concerned.

### 1.1.2 Research on textbooks

The global status of English has had an important influence on the textbook publication industry: "textbooks play a pivotal role in the realm of language teaching and learning, and they are looked

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<sup>1</sup> Reference here is made specifically to Thai students, as this study is based on Thai schools.

upon as an indispensable vehicle for foreign language learning” (Naji Meidani & Pishghadam, 2003: 84).

In 1999 Cortazzi & Jin (1999: 199) analyzed how textbooks may play different roles for students and teachers: they may be *a teacher*, as they contain materials used to instruct students about English-speaking countries; or *a map*, providing an overview of several linguistic and cultural elements; or even *a resource*, offering a set of materials and activities from which appropriate items can be chosen. They can also represent *a trainer*, as inexperienced teachers might find it useful to follow instructions provided in a teacher's guidebook; or *an authority*, as textbooks are reliable, since they are written by experts. Finally, the textbook might be seen as *an ideology*, reflecting a worldview or a cultural system, a social construction that may be imposed on both teachers and students.

Furthermore, Cortazzi & Jin (1999: 200) reflected on the importance of considering interests and purposes which guided text drafting in whose interests and for what purpose a text is written. They claim that the country of origin, commercial interests, and the views of interests of decision makers who choose a book, can be important factors leading to changes in cultural content. Boynton shows that this was an important goal already in 1988, highlighting that it is helpful for teachers to work *with* a textbook, using it as a guide to plan their lessons, rather than *against* one, drawing instead from materials taken from different sources. On this issue, Richards (1993:99) has, instead, a more resource-based view, considering textbooks as *source* books rather than *course* books. He claims that they have an important role in facilitating teaching, rather than hindering it: “in order to be able to serve as sources for creative teaching, teachers need to develop skills in evaluating and adapting published materials”.

Textbooks have an important role in teaching, in learning a foreign language, in fact a successful ELT course book can sell over a hundred thousand copies a year, according to Littlejohn (1992). It can be stated, therefore, that textbooks are a big business and, as Christenbury and Kelly (1994: 77) pointed out, they are so widely used for five main reasons: time, money, authority, convenience and control over teachers. In their opinion, in fact:

to expect today's teachers, already overburdened and overwhelmed, to create original curricula not driven by textbooks requires an institutional investment of time and money which few school systems will commit. It's just simpler to put together a textbook selection committee and let them, essentially, choose a pre-packaged curriculum.

Textbooks are cheaper than printing many photocopies; while students have to spend a certain amount of money just once when they buy a textbook, providing many copies entails a lot of money for a single institution, which could invest it in other cutting-edge projects. As mentioned before, textbooks might be considered as a guide for both teachers and students, because they help learners when teachers are not present, for example when they are required to complete some tasks at home. Christenbury and Kelly (1994: 77) pointed out that educational volumes have considerable control over teachers:

For some, textbooks represent a positive control over class content; loss of that control certainly was a fear in the elective curriculum as individual teachers, essentially textbook-free, could determine class content. If, as some believe, a teacher is given a textbook to “cover”, students will learn what is in that textbook, and there will be a quality-control of sorts.

Publishing houses have an active role in schools and have control over textbooks, in fact they manage the assessment of demand of quality and the way in which a book can meet the needs of the market (Bradley, 1982). Later, they develop the text with the author/s to devise it in the form they believe will best meet the readers’ needs. This market research is essential especially for educational texts (Bradley, 1982: 380).

In his work, Bradley (1982) points out how important exporting books and textbooks is. In fact, reflecting on the books’ world market, it can be noticed that the hegemonic role of American publishers has merged with British publishers’ interests over the years. As far as textbooks are concerned, instead, British publishing houses have risen in importance, especially among English-speaking Commonwealth countries and in Europe. Nevertheless, what are the demands of the market? Since 1988 scholars have stated that teachers and publishers had to find a balance between the right textbook and the market’s offer. As Boynton highlights (1988: 206), “schools have to use what the publisher publishes, but at the same time the publishers say that they publish what the schools say they want”. To this end, Boynton (1988: 208) claims that:

The teacher's goal wouldn't be to denigrate the textbook; it would be to get students willing and able to judge and evaluate what is published and this assume some responsibility for their own learning. And after this type of critical analysis, they won't forget what they've learned and how they learned it.

In a more recent work, West (2012) noticed that USA publishing houses have made different choices compared to UK publishers, investing in advertising much more than them since the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Fitzgerald (2018) also reflected on this matter, highlighting how the global educational landscape has seen a dramatic change with the huge growth of international schools in Ireland, the country chosen as the focus of her study. Although she focused on the market of educational volumes in international schools, her observations might be widened to textbooks too. Her focal point was to see the influence of American and British education in other English-speaking countries, concentrating especially on Ireland, to which she refers as a minor English-speaking country, which had to count, in fact, on its own market. In many European countries, instead, education in international schools is offered through the medium of English (Fitzgerald, 2018), using an English or an American curriculum such as the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) developed by the University of Cambridge, and specifically designed for international schools. notably, she noticed how the traditional predominance of American and British education is evaluated as the best in the English market, while other English-speaking countries, such as Ireland for instance, should stay focused on the home market. Research does not help in finding whether the same pattern is developing also among other countries or not, yet the hegemony of American or English publishing houses can be clearly noticed, even in Italian schools, especially in relation to educational textbooks. As pointed out before, being guided is essential for students, and having an instructor who teaches them how to take advantage of a book could foster both their motivation and their learning skills. The texts taken into account by Boynton (1988) are common reading books such as novels or romances, not textbooks or other kind of written publications, but in the view of the author of this paper, the same things could be said for educational books used to teach a second language. He claims indeed "textbook editors could encourage critical thinking by not only that substantive content fills a textbook but also that editorial comments and questions demand reactive involvement with that content" (Boynton, 1988: 211).



To conclude, in the following chapters we will analyze how culture and language are presented in two different EFL textbooks, namely *Open Up*, edited by the English publisher *Cambridge*, and *Twenty-One*, edited by the Italian publisher *DeAgostini*.

## 1.2 Teachers and textbooks

Not only textbooks, but also teachers play a fundamental role in the classroom context, especially when learning a foreign language. In this chapter the role of the teacher within the classroom will be discussed, taking into consideration the following questions. Do teachers have an active role in teaching with a textbook? Do they need to follow an educational path, or do they choose to use a certain textbook or material?

Christenbury & Kelly (1994: 77) pointed out that teachers have an important role in making curricular plans. Since schools often require original curricula (Christenbury & Kelly, 1994), teachers are required to spend some of their work time to decide which are the best or the most suitable textbooks for their students, how to use them in class, whether to use all their sections or not, and, in case, how to supplement them with additional materials. This decision requires an institutional investment of time and money which few schools can afford, which is the reason why it is easier to choose a pre-packaged curriculum (Christenbury & Kelly, 1994).

In the last few years, in northern Europe some schools faced deregulation in education, which implies basically an absence or a reduction in rules, guidelines and policies in an educational context. Therefore, teachers were free to create original curricula and to use different materials to make their lessons more interesting (Reichenberg, 2016) instead of adopting a textbook to teach EFL. Indeed, in the field of language learning, deregulation allows teachers to be freer to use technological tools in their lessons, integrating them into their curricula, in so doing addressing different cognitive styles and learning strategies. Digital learning tools might, in turn, be more appealing also to students and increase their engagement in the classroom (Sharma, 2019). Eventually, Reichenberg (2016) points out that despite deregulation in education, textbooks still play a dominant role in many countries, even in the most deregulated ones, such as Finland, Norway, UK, and Netherlands.

In her study, Reichenberg (2016) focused on deregulation as the increase of a teacher's autonomy and, at the same time, on the fact that students could struggle with a text which might be difficult to use on their own. Reichenberg aimed at examining teachers' strategic use of textbooks in Sweden, a country where the textbooks' adoption is not compulsory. Anyhow, Findings showed that teachers used to refer to textbooks to support their students and plan their lessons. In this study, 313 Swedish teachers from year 4 to year 12 were involved: the youngest was 25 and the oldest was 65 years old, 68 percent were females and 32 percent male; 90 percent had a degree, while 10 percent were unqualified. Through a questionnaire, Reichenberg covered issues ranging from reading instruction and special education, to teaching and learning materials, as well as their usage. In the end, she found out that among teachers, experience was the main factor influencing the choice to whether use a textbook or not: the more experienced teachers were, the more likely they used or read textbooks with students. This questionnaire, however, showed that although teachers' approach to reading strategies was influenced by the teacher's experience, it did not affect the teachers' textbook satisfaction or their textbook strategic use. She demonstrated that, despite deregulation and the increasing trend toward computer-based education, teachers developed dissatisfaction with textbooks because most textbooks did not meet their expectations regarding accuracy, quality and understandability. They became more selective, but textbooks remained central in most classrooms.

Another scholar, Jiang (2008), noticed how textbooks in schools often appear to have been written by authors who assume that all students have the same background knowledge. Nowadays, instead, many more cultural differences than in the past are present in each class, and educational books should let students share their experience (e.g. belonging to different cultures, coming from different backgrounds); classes themselves are 'small worlds' where people from several cultures and backgrounds are together for a consistent amount of time. Everyone should feel free to contribute to the school community with their own personal background, as everyone has a different *software of the mind*, as clarified by Balboni (2015) and explained in section 1.1. Thus, students will not discover just the English language and culture, but they will also learn new topics and explore new tools from a much wider perspective. The author also offers some other suggestions, such as inputs related to different backgrounds (e.g. to write different menus and prices in the unit regarding food or shopping). Specifically, Jiang claims how important the use students' life experiences is, as codes in teaching make learning authentic and interesting too.

### 1.3 Existing models of comparison

Since it seems there is not just one model to analyze all the sections presented in a textbook, different models will be considered in this dissertation. In order to build a model, it is important to consider the existing ones related to the field of interest. The present dissertation includes two main sections which have two different focuses: the first one is concerned with the observation of the textbook's structure, the second one reflects instead on the activities presented in two different units. The answers to the research questions – RQ1 and RQ2 – will be supported by the analysis considered accordingly.

#### 1.3.1 How to evaluate a good textbook

When teachers choose a textbook for their students, they need to be sure it is a tool they can rely on. Part of the job of being a teacher is evaluating all the elements that help a certain textbook to perform better. What kinds of tools should be considered? Different scholars focused on textbooks' strengths and weaknesses. Firstly, as Ansary and Babaii suggest (2002), teachers should choose a textbook as a guide, and they should try to find supplementary materials to complement its contents. In order to support this statement, they linger on the advantages of using a textbook and all their supporting statements are listed hereafter.

As an important framework, a textbook might regulate times and programs for both students and teachers. From the students' point of view, one of the main risks of not having a textbook is the lack of purposes, even because they might think the subject might not be taken seriously. In addition to being a support, a textbook might also be a syllabus as well as a consistently cheap manner of providing material to students. Last but not least, a textbook means security, guidance and support for non-experienced teachers. In considering the whole perspective of textbooks adoption, it is important to remember that every student has different needs, and no textbook might suit all the differing needs. In addition, because of its pre-defined structure, a textbook sets a prearranged sequence and structure that might not be realistic and students (teens in the present study) might not understand or experience the same real-life situations as the ones presented in the textbooks. Moreover, Ansary and Babaii (2002) stated that textbooks have their own rationale, that is why these tools might not be suited for all the learning styles and, consequently, all the learning

strategies that could exist in a multifaceted class. Then, teachers might not be free mediators, and they might as well not be independent in considering what is good and what is bad for their students (Ur, 1996). After this introduction on textbooks' strengths and weaknesses, a list of the items to consider when evaluating a good textbook, based on the model proposed by Ur (1996), is provided by these scholars. Specifically, teachers should look at a good pronunciation practice, a good grammar presentation, cultural and pedagogical concerns in presentation, vocabulary practice and topics that might interest different learners. These reflections lead to the conclusion that the perfect textbook does not exist. Furthermore, teachers should be free to assign ancillary materials based on the students' own specific needs depending on their own specific teaching situation. In so doing, teachers will play an essential role not just in guiding and motivating their students, but also in supporting all the different learning styles, creating, at the same time, a pleasant atmosphere that will facilitate their pleasure in learning.

According to Pemberton (2018), instead, the main component to consider in textbook evaluation in general is the way the content is structured. In this respect, she presents five basic rules of structure:

- *Rule of Framework*: the framework acts as a *mental roadmap* which allows students to proceed with or without the teacher's guide.
- *Rule of Meaningful Names*: using the right titles and terminologies leads to the ability of recalling and might facilitate the understanding and, in our case, foreign language acquisition.
- *Rule of Manageable Numbers*: writing this rule, Pemberton considers the fact that the amount of new information introduced at one time should be controlled, since most learners might find it difficult to absorb new material. As they become familiar with part of a subject domain, the number of students expands. Pemberton considered this element important for textbooks in general, but this statement could also be considered in the teaching field. In this respect, the very Krashen (1981), in his theory related to second language acquisition, claimed the importance of the  $i+1$  rule, where  $i$  is the stage of the students and  $i+1$  stands for the comprehensible input they should be exposed to.
- *Rule of Hierarchy*: before being introduced to a new concept, students should understand functional knowledge.

- *Rule of repetition*: the expert claims the importance of repeating important concepts. While elements of lesser utility may not be repeated at all, important ones and frameworks should be repeated many times, at least three or four.

Furthermore, Pemberton reflects on the chance of having supplementary material available because she considers extra resources as important components within the framework of textbook adoption. Hers is an interesting reflection since some textbooks do have some additional materials associated with them, while many do not, which is an interesting element to consider also in the comparison made in the following sections of this work.

### 1.3.2 The teaching unit

As argued in paragraph 1.3.1, the textbook should provide a guide for both teachers and students, therefore it should follow a certain sequence. Since the 1960s, language teaching has been organized in didactic units, namely self-consistent blocks of materials. As Balboni suggests in the model he designed in 2015, each teaching unit can be formed by a series of acquisition units<sup>2</sup> - a minimum block of contents to be covered in a certain time span – as defined on the basis of the Gestalt psychology. His theory was developed to teach Italian as a Second Language, but can be applied to foreign language teaching overall, as the different stages described by him regard language acquisition in general. Moreover, also Scrivener (2011), in his work *Learning Teaching*, shared similar reflections referring specifically to EFL teaching, precisely with reference to the main stages in the process of foreign language acquisition. As described by the Gestalt psychology, this process implies three consequent phases: a global phase, an analytical one, and a conclusive one of synthesis. The first one, Globality, is based on some strategies such as the redundancy of contextual and co-textual information, regarding the place and the participants, as well as more specific details in the information provided, that allow students to infer the grammar rules without providing the simple rule for its own sake. Some strategies of this kind are simple questions which solicit students reflecting on their everyday life, helping them getting closer to the topics covered, even if they should seem difficult. Other strategies concern the formation of socio-pragmatic

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<sup>2</sup> Theory elaborated by Krashen - SLAT (Second Language Acquisition Theory) - who considered the opposition between *acquisition*, i.e. the unconscious process whereby the acquired material becomes part of the long-term memory, and *learning*, i.e. a rational process where the competence is provisional and not definitive.

hypotheses on what may happen in context, based on the knowledge of the users' world; the formation of linguistic hypotheses on the basis of the readers' grammar knowledge; the elaboration of voluntary or involuntary metaphors that allow students to view certain meanings; global and approximate evaluation of the hypotheses, i.e. skimming - or assessment of the single elements, i.e. scanning; the search for analogies with known events.

To apply this first phase, it is necessary that some specific activities are present in the text in order to guide the students from the overall understanding (of a text or a video) to a more detailed one. Then, the teachers proceed to the phases of analysis, synthesis and (spontaneous or guided) reflection relating to the communicative acts that they want the students to acquire: they must be identified in the text, dramatized, consolidated and reused. In addition to communicative acts, students are made to reflect on linguistic aspects, using different techniques (paragraph 1.3.1); also important are the cultural themes implicitly or explicitly developed by the textbook, together with non-verbal languages, if the source text is a video. Any activity proposed by the textbook should be presented to students according to these three phases, so as to make learning evolve into acquisition; new information is thus deposited in the mind together with the pre-existing heritage. This process, as pointed out by Balboni (2015) and mentioned before, can be applied not only to foreign language acquisition, but represents the natural process of general acquisition.

If each activity follows the three phases previously suggested, the teaching unit should follow the scheme illustrated by Balboni (2015), which includes four main blocks, namely *motivation*, *acquisition*, *assessment and evaluation*, and *additional activities*. In the *motivation* phase, the teacher's role is limited, as he/she acts as a guide to the activities proposed by the textbook, for instance some of them are aimed at bringing out what the students already know and what they can imagine about the unit's topic. In addition to this, a fundamental role is played by videos, songs, photos, authentic materials and websites, in order to stimulate the students' interest. The *acquisition unit*, i.e. the sequence, represents another part of the unit: the development follows a certain pattern established by the authors of the book and the publishing house, who guide the students. Yet, if the teacher believes that some elements or topics are too complex to deal with at a given moment, they can choose to postpone them or integrate them with other material or other acquisition units, in order to facilitate their understanding. The *assessment* block, on the other hand, concerns the final phase, namely the linguistic, pragmatic and cultural objectives of the unit just concluded, and it evaluates those elements that should have been acquired in previous units as well. As for the *additional activities*, it may be useful to include some conclusive inputs – e.g. non-didactic

texts, songs, film clips or advertisements - that deal with the same themes of the unit; this would represent an essential step on the overall motivation.

In order to answer the first and the second research questions, the activities of the different sections which compose the first unit - *Grammar, Lexis, Functions and Culture*<sup>3</sup> - will be listed, observed and compared.

### *Lexis – Vocabulary*

These two words are not synonyms, but might both help in defining what is important when teachers plan a lesson or, as in this case, might define and evaluate a good textbook. As Scrivener correctly pointed out in *Learning Teaching* (2011), *lexis* and *vocabulary* are not just different definitions of the same concept. In fact, if *vocabulary* reflects on, and refers mainly to, single words or short combinations, *lexis* refers instead to a bigger concept which involves the existing database of words or combinations of words we use in our everyday life without overthinking, such as single words or collocations (Scrivener, 2011: 227). Within the context of a textbook, if the *vocabulary* section might end on itself, or just be a separate section of the unit, the *lexis* section could be a connection between the *vocabulary* section and the *grammar* one. In fact, if *vocabulary* represents just single words existing in our mind, *lexis* corresponds to some expressions that link single words to much more complex phrases taken from our life experience.

According to Scrivener, six important stages may be followed in order to let students acquire *lexis* in a proper way:

1. Pre-teach lexis: through board pictures, a teacher should show the students the whole setting, and should elicit different words, which is a way to practice pronunciation too.
2. Written practice of lexis: through matching exercises, students should develop what they learned in the first point.
3. Oral practice of lexis: students could work in pairs and try to practice the lexis starting from the instruction given by the teacher.

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<sup>3</sup> Hereafter these sections are written in capital letters and in italics because they are referring to the sections of each textbooks' unit.

4. Reading to find specific information (i.e. scanning): teachers should find examples from real life, such as leaflets, short stories or advertisements, and students should recognize all the words already encountered before.
5. Further lexis work: teachers should ask students questions about the topic of the activity, in order to define all the words already given and add new words that students might ask as well.
6. Communicative activity: role play in small groups to practice and learn all the vocabulary and lexis.

### *Grammar*

First of all, it is important to distinguish between *grammar* as a descriptive set of rules and explanations, and *teaching grammar*, where existing information and new knowledge let students transform “dry records of facts and rules” into “living resources that allow to communicate and being understood” (Scrivener, 2011: 253). All the most important points related to grammar according to Scrivener are summarized in Table n.1, which in the author’s view might work as an important reference for the comparison between the two textbooks under analysis that is following.



To learn a language item students need to:	In class teachers probably need to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Be exposed</b> to a lot of language reading/listening</li> </ul>	Include lots of reading and listening activities: realistic texts a little bit above the realistic language level.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Notice</b> specific items in text when they are being used (in stories, conversations...)</li> </ul>	Provide texts, exercises and techniques that help learners notice specific items; texts specifically written for learners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Understand</b> the form, the use and the meaning of an item. (Form: how the pieces fit together, endings etc.; use: typical situations, contexts and conversations in which they are used).</li> </ul>	Be informed about form and use of language. Focus learners' attention on form, meaning and use by means of exercises, explanations, games etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Try things out</b> in a safe environment with limited other linguistic demands.</li> <li>● <b>Have opportunities to practice</b> the new language.</li> </ul>	Give many opportunities to practice things in activities that call only for restricted language when they speak and write, with encouragement and feedback.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Use the new language</b> when speaking and writing to communicate in different contexts.</li> </ul>	Offer speaking and writing tasks that allow learners to make use of all the language they know.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Remember</b> items</li> </ul>	Pay attention on how learners record items Return to items again with revision tasks.

Table n. 1: Students' and teachers' points according to Scrivener (2011)

Scrivener describes different passages a teacher should focus on from a theoretical perspective. In chapter 3, all the activities presented in Unit 1 of the two textbooks will be examined with reference to these points because they seem to reflect all the stages that are important in order to learn a foreign language.

### *Functions*

It seems difficult to find a description related to *functions* in language teaching. Considering that in textbooks' authors focus on the unit's topic expanding both the *lexis* and the *grammar* sections, the following analysis will consider *functions* as a support of some activities related to the two sections above. Speaking exercises and role plays will be considered as a basis and a support.

### *Phonology*

It might be a tricky section, especially if teachers are non-native speakers, but it is an important one to consider, especially when English is taught as a *lingua franca*. Indeed, paying attention to all the different accents and laying the ground to let students communicate with native and non-native speakers is essential. Scrivener's (2011) suggestions are useful because one of the main goals is to expose students to real language and to real life situations as much as possible. The most interesting ideas about phonology considered for the comparison are:

- Modeling intonation: students, in fact, should hear typical examples of real language, real-life sentences, said as much naturally as they may be, paying attention to emotions and feelings too. After hearing them, students should be able to practice them, to acquire them 'by doing' and imitating the possible situations as much as possible.
- Use dialogues: learners should read dialogues out loud; their aim should be to speak naturally, even if their grammar accuracy is not perfect.
- Chants: they involve strong rhythm and a lot of repetitions. In this way students even the most difficult pronunciation might be found approachable by students.

### *Culture*

As already mentioned in paragraph 1.2, in the 1980s a new perspective emerged. It was based on a metaphor expressed by Hofstede, whereby every person has a *software of the mind*, which includes several files that "work" automatically when we are inside our culture, but which can be defective when "clashing" with other cultures. Some examples of this software can be, for instance, the concept of *time*, different from culture to culture, or *non-verbal codes*, such as head nodding or the physical distance between two people talking to each other; as for the *language*, the voice tone, the expression and the intonation of sentences also vary from culture to culture.

According to Balboni (2015), while it is possible to teach a language, it is not possible to teach an intercultural competence. Yet, observing it is a competence that can be taught. A useful model is the one designed by Robert Lado (1955) – with reference to the structuralist approach - whereby every cultural model can be analyzed according to three main variables, namely form, distribution,

meaning. An example of the analysis of a typical Italian *colazione* (i.e. breakfast), compared to the English breakfast, is provided in Table n. 2<sup>4</sup>.

	<i>Form</i>	<i>Distribution</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
Italian <i>colazione</i>	Based on dessert: coffee or cappuccino, brioche, jam, bread; excluding vegetables or cheese	Light meal. Continued work and medical education are changing Italian culture towards a more varied breakfast.	It has biological significance, it is just breaking the fast before going to work or school.
Anglo-American breakfast	Based on salty food, although sweet food can be served too; often vegetables and different kinds of cheese.	Hearty meal, as then the lunch will be very light and therefore breakfast must provide nourishment until dinner time.	It is not only a biological need, but also a moment of family socialization.

Table n. 2: Italian vs American breakfast

### 1.3.3 English Language Teaching methods and techniques

Since the '60s and the '70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the field of language teaching, and especially in ELT, numerous scholars have reflected on different theories and related approaches, which led to the development of different techniques. A list which summarizes all the changes in language teaching was provided, for instance, by Sanjay in 2019 (cfr. Table 3), who gave a real overview on several theories, such as Krashen's *Input Approach* (1992), the *Critical Period Hypothesis*, the *Creative Construction Hypothesis*, the *Universal Grammar Hypothesis*, just to name a few, and on different teaching methods, starting from the 1850s, with the *Grammar Translation Method*, or the *Montessori Method*, up to all the resulting techniques. Activities in the following sections of this paper will be described with reference to this list.

## DIFFERENT TEACHING TECHNIQUES

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<sup>4</sup>Tabletranscribed from *Teorie dell'Educazione Linguistica*, pg 165.

1. Action sequence	21. Everyday speech by using rotating charts	41. Peer-editing	61. Sentence patterns
2. Activation	22. Fill-in-the-blank exercise	42. Peripheral learning	62. Sharing learning experience
3. Authentic discourse	23. Films	43. Peripheral learning through Video tapes, posters, tape recorders, radio, TV, computerized language lab, and language software	63. Simulation: activity involving complex interaction between groups and individuals based on simulation of real-life actions and experiences
4. Chain drill	24. Finger-plays	44. Phonics	64. Slides
5. Choosing a new identity	25. Fluency	45. Picture strip story	65. Small group tasks to know one another
6. Circle the sage	26. Grammar games	46. Practicing daily happenings	66. Songs
7. Cognitive coding	27. Handwriting	47. Pronunciation drills	67. Spelling
8. Colour rods	28. Information gap	48. Question-answer display	68. Stories
9. Commands for action	29. Interaction based on social and conflict-resolution	49. Question-answer exercise	69. Structured feedback
10. Completing a task in groups (e.g. putting items in order of importance, comparing two versions of the same story, a class survey, or writing a poem)	30. Interview	50. Reading aloud	70. Substitution drill
11. Composition	31. Jigsaw	51. Reading comprehension	71. Teacher's silence
12. Concert	32. Language games	52. Reading or listening passage presented for passive reception	72. Teachers' repeating correct form as many times as the learners need
13. Conversation practice	33. Life experience	53. Reading with speed	73. Teaching pronunciation with fidel charts

14. Deductive application of grammar rules with examples	34. Memorizing and completing dialogue	54. Reflective listening (recording and listening own voices)	74. Teaching vocabulary using visual aids
15. Dialogue creation	35. Memory cards	55. Repetition drill	75. Think-pair-share
16. Dictation	36. Minimal pair drill of pronunciation	56. Rhymes	76. Translating L2 into L1
17. Direct or indirect positive suggestion	37. Numbered heads together	57. Role play	77. Using missing or new words to make a sentence
18. Discussion	38. Opposites	58. Role reversal	78. Visualization
19. Drawing (for listening comprehension)	39. Pair work	59. Scrambled sentences to teach cohesion and coherence	79. Vocabulary drills (finding synonyms, antonyms, and cognates)
20. Everyday speech	40. Paragraph writing	60. Self correction	80. Warm-up: mimes, dance, songs, jokes, play

Table n. 3: Sanjay's teaching techniques list

#### 1.4 The chosen model

The models previously exposed consider several important factors to compare textbooks. The points listed by Pemberton (2018) regarding how to assess whether a textbook is indeed a “good textbook” or not, will be considered primarily to answer the first research question. As regards, instead, the organization and the structure of both the teaching unit and the activities, Balboni's model (2015) will be followed. Therefore, the focus will first be on the phases of the structure of the unit in general, then on its different sections, and, finally, on the individual activities. On the other hand, Scrivener's work (2011) and its objectives considered for the different sections that form the unit, will serve as a guide for the *Vocabulary*, *Grammar* and *Functions* sections. As for the *Culture* section, instead, the indications provided by Balboni (2015) are more recent and appear to be more appropriate, also because his is proved to be the most comprehensive study on such a topic.

## *PART TWO: The research*

### Chapter 2

#### *The study: a comparison between two EFL textbooks (Introduction to the research)*

In this chapter, a study carried out on two textbooks will be presented. In the first paragraph the aim of the study will be outlined and the research questions will be presented (paragraph 2.1.). Then, the context and the materials of the study will be briefly described (paragraph 2.2), leading to a short description of what is considered, in the author's view, to answer the research questions (paragraph.2.3).

#### 2.1 Aim of the study

The present study focuses on two different textbooks used to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Italian middle schools. The volumes concerned are "Open Up" edited by Cambridge, and "Twenty-One" edited by DeAgostini, an Italian publishing house. One of the aims is to understand whether the differences between the two publishers' nationalities impact on teaching and learning. In the following paragraph a detailed methodology on how this comparison was made will be provided.

The study aimed at answering the following research questions:

*RQ1: Is there any difference in structure and contents between the Italian and the English textbook? Are the units based on Balboni's model? Do they follow the three fundamental stages of globality, analysis and synthesis?*

The first aim is to clarify whether the textbooks follow the same structure in terms of grammar, culture and vocabulary, and if they offer the same audio-visual materials as well as the same activities, following the list provided by Ur and Pemberton reported in Chapter 1. In addition, it will be considered whether the publisher's nationality may have influenced the contents of the main body, as well as of the sections of the textbook's unit. Moreover, the unit's structure will be

observed in depth in order to analyze whether it follows the Balboni's model, developed by the Gestalt psychology, namely that of the three main stages of globality, analysis and synthesis.

*RQ2: Is there a difference in the variety of language presented?*

All the activities, exercises and audio-visual materials offered by the textbooks will be considered and examined from the linguistic point of view, in order to notice whether the textbooks present a different variety of the English language. As argued in the first chapter, the English language could be considered and described as a means of communication with native speakers, as an international language, or as a *lingua franca*.

## 2.2 The textbooks

More specifically, the two textbooks taken into examination are:

-*Open Up*, volume 1, *Student's book & Workbook* is edited by Cambridge University Press; its authors are C. Kennedy, D. Urban, S. Cupit and E. Alden, and its first edition was published in March 2021.

-*Twenty-One*, volume one, *21<sup>st</sup> century competences*, edited by DeAgostini; its authors are S. Cochrane, A. Greenwood, E. Scorti, V. Heward; its first edition was published in 2018.

Both textbooks are published to be used in Italian middle schools; in fact, they are designed following the directions given by the Italian *Ministero dell'Istruzione*, i.e. the Ministry for Education. Foreign language learning, i.e. English language learning in this case, should start from the lowest level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, i.e. A1, whose descriptors are explained as follows:

**Level A1 (Breakthrough)** – is considered the lowest level of generative language use – the point at which the learner can *interact in a simple way, ask and answer simple questions about themselves, where they live, people they know, and things they have, initiate and respond to simple statements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics*, rather than relying purely on a very finite rehearsed, lexically organized repertoire of situation- specific phrases. (CEFR 2001 Section 3.6)

Level A1 (*Breakthrough*) is probably the lowest “level” of generative language proficiency which can be identified. Before this stage is reached, however, there may be a range of specific tasks which learners can perform effectively using a very restricted range of language and which are relevant to the needs of the learners concerned. The 1994-5 Swiss National Science Research Council Survey, which developed and scaled the illustrative descriptors, identified a band of language use, limited to the performance of isolated tasks, which can be presupposed in the definition of Level A1. In certain contexts, for example with young learners, it may be appropriate to elaborate such a “milestone”.<sup>5</sup>

The following descriptors relate to simple, general tasks, which were scaled below Level A1, but can constitute useful objectives for beginners:

- can make simple purchases where pointing or other gesture can support the verbal reference.
- can ask and tell day, time of day and date.
- can use some basic greetings.
- can say yes, no, excuse me, please, thank you, sorry.
- can fill in uncomplicated forms with personal details, name, address, nationality, marital status.
- can write a short, simple postcard. (CEFR 2001 Section 3.5)

Since both textbooks start from the same level, they have been selected as a starting point for the present analysis, whose procedure will be described in the following paragraph.

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<sup>5</sup><https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>



## 2.3 The analysis

This section is based on qualitative research undertaken collecting and observing all the textbooks' materials (Minchiello et al, 1990:5). Each section explains how tools examine RQ1 and RQ2.

To answer RQ1 the following procedures have been carried out. Firstly, the tables of contents were analysed to compare the two books concerned by this study, which are both composed of eight units. Since the starting level of the two textbooks is the same, the analysis will focus on the first unit, because it represents a good sample of the structure of the whole textbook. It will, therefore, be useful to answer the research questions underlying the topics provided and to describe the way the publisher developed the internal sections of the unit.

Secondly, it was decided to consider whether the topics<sup>6</sup> developed are the same for all the sections - namely vocabulary, grammar, use of English, listening and culture - or not. It would have been much more interesting to analyse the last unit of the third volumes from the same textbooks series, in order to compare the final levels of the English language considered and the general goals for each language skill. Yet, in that case, the grammar structures and the culture section would have been too different; in fact, these textbooks are developed in a different way and offer different sources, so the comparison would have been more difficult to make.

Thirdly, a reflection on the structure of the two different textbooks will be provided to discuss differences and similarities between the choices of the Italian publisher and the English one.

As for RQ2, the following procedures have been carried out in order to answer it. Firstly, the two textbooks' units were analysed considering the different types of exercises and tools regarding *Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading comprehension* and *Writing exercises*, in order to observe whether any connections with different English varieties are provided.

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<sup>6</sup>Each unit is built around a specific topic (for further explanations see attachment 1, page ...), and every section of the textbooks is composed of different parts, namely *Vocabulary, Grammar, Functions, Culture*.

Secondly, audio materials were considered and the focus shifted to the varieties of the English language. Through the different activities, in fact, it was possible to see whether different varieties exist and how they are organised.

Thirdly, a reflection on how the two different publishers deal with different varieties will be made, together with an analysis of the elements that differ in the two textbooks.

## Chapter 3

### *Analysis, results and discussion*

In this chapter, after describing the research questions investigated and the research method adopted, data will be presented and discussed. This chapter is divided into two main sections (3.1 and 3.2), each dealing with a research question. Firstly the results from the analysis of the materials are illustrated (3.1.1 and 3.2.1), then they are analysed (3.1.2 and 3.2.2).

#### 3.1 First research question: Structure and Contents

The first section aims to illustrate the analysis and the results connected to the first research question related to the unit's structure of the textbooks taken into consideration. All the activities are labeled following the descriptors mentioned in Chapter 1 (Sanjay, 2019; Balboni, 2015; Balboni, 2014).

##### 3.1.1 Results

Once the readers open the two textbooks, they can immediately notice the first difference in the unit's structure: *Open Up* presents the whole unit as a series of sections in a row, one after the other, while *Twenty-One* does not incorporate the *Workbook* section within each unit. Starting from the first section (pages 24-37), which is much more descriptive and contains the main topics and activities (*Vocabulary, Dialogue, Grammar, Grammar Vlog, Functions, Skills and Culture, Vocabulary Strategies* and *Grammar Map*), the readers are led directly towards the *Workbook* (pages 38-43). At the end of the textbook, instead, as if it was an attachment, a part named *Culture* offers some additional information related to the English world, providing an activity for each unit. On the other hand, *Twenty-One* proceeds differently: the first part of the book is divided in different sections, deals with several topics and provides some exercises, while the *Workbook* section is all one at the end of the textbook. In the last pages, it also offers a *Culture* section, which develops from a cultural perspective all the themes previously dealt with.

Given this general introduction, a detailed description of the units will be provided in the following paragraphs, in order to observe how the textbooks are organized and to reflect on the research questions presented.

- *Open Up*

The first unit, which is developed from page 24 to page 43, is titled *We're Italian!* and opens with an overview on the *Vocabulary* connected to countries and nationalities. Through some *warm up*, *filling-the-blank* and *vocabulary drill* exercises, the textbook presents different nationalities from all over the world. This first section ends with a *practicing daily pairwork exercise*, inviting students to introduce themselves to a classmate, to memorize the words they have just learned.

Leafing through the pages, the reader will notice that the first visual material is provided: it consists of a video and its transcription, where the textbook's characters present themselves and introduce each other, much in the same way as British teenagers are expected to do when they enter a new school. Students are supposed to first watch the video, then to listen to and repeat the audio; their understanding goes with some highlights in the transcript and some *memorizing exercises*, followed by a *pairwork and groupwork* activity.

In the following pages, the *Grammar* section is in turn divided into four sections, namely:

- A. *Pronomi personali soggetto*
- B. *Present simple of to be - forma affermativa*
- C. *Aggettivi Possessivi*
- D. *Articoli*<sup>7</sup>

Each part is introduced by a table and a short explanation of the grammar rules in Italian and is followed by two or three *circle-the-sage* or *filling-the-blank* exercises. This section ends with a *Grammar vlog*, a video where a British teenager introduces himself and invites the reader to do the same; it is followed by a *multiple-choice* exercise. Students, in turn, are invited to practice and to produce a similar example with their classmates, working in groups. Then, a *Pronunciation* section

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<sup>7</sup>A. *Personal subject pronouns*

B. *Present simple of to be - affirmative form*

C. *Possessive adjectives*

D. *Articles*

In Italian in the textbook.

provides the focus on the pronunciation of the article *the* and highlights the /ðə/ and /ði:/ sounds, providing examples that students are expected to listen to and repeat.

Later on, in the *Functions* section, students are required to practice short dialogues, introducing themselves and using the everyday language presented in the previous sections. A few listening exercises are then provided, before giving all the instructions to the learners, who, at this point, are expected to create their own dialogue.

The last section before the *Workbook*, summarizes all the previous parts and focuses on the geography of the United Kingdom as well. It is entitled “The UK - A multicultural nation”, and presents four different kids from some capital cities of the UK and originating from different countries of the world, specifically from India, the Caribbean, China and Poland. Even in this part, the transcription is accompanied by a listening track and a glossary where some words are explained, and is followed by a *circle-the-sage* exercise.

As a conclusion, three *listening*, *speaking* and *writing* exercises close this first part of the unit. While in the *listening* students are required to match every country to the right speaker, in the *speaking* drill they are invited to introduce themselves to their classmates using all the words and expressions learned in the whole unit. Finally, they are required to write a short paragraph giving as much personal information as possible.

The *Workbook* part is preceded by some learning strategies, presented to students as tips to memorize the vocabulary and to schematize the grammar of the unit. Through a given structure, they can revise the grammar rules by completing some schemes, while checking whether all the topics and structures encountered are clear to them. These supports lead directly to two pages dedicated to the *Grammar* focus, where previously described grammar rules are explained in Italian. Lastly, the *Workbook* section includes six pages of exercises, each page corresponds to the previously mentioned parts. Seven exercises are related to the *Vocabulary* part, specifically *circle-the-sage*, *fill-in-the-blank* and *opposites*; three *fill-in-the-blank*, instead, are given as a task completion of the previous dialogue. The main section, then, offers thirteen grammar exercises, three for each *Grammar* section and a summative one: while the first twelve are all *fill-in-the-blank*, *circle-the-sage*, *scrambled sentences*, *using missing or new words to make a sentence* exercises, the last one asks students to re-write some sentences provided, using personal information. The three exercises related to the *Functions* section are all *substitution drills*, which lead to the *Reading* section of the *Workbook*, the last one. After a pre-reading activity, in which students are asked to observe some pictures and guess some information, a text titled *School Life* is presented. It is followed by a

*true-false* comprehension exercise and a reflective drill, asking students to tick the right phrase and to reflect on the similarities and the differences between their school and the one described by the authors.

In this textbook, the title of each section is displayed with a different colour: light blue for the *Vocabulary*, red for the *Dialogue*, green for the *Grammar*, orange for the *Functions*, blue for the *Skill and Culture* section. It is a visual strategy to help the reader get oriented easily.

As mentioned before, at the end of the textbook, a *Culture* section offers some texts connected to the different units, as well as a text titled “*London*”. Some pictures of the main attractions accompany a text presenting the capital city of the UK, which is followed by a reading comprehension and an activity aimed to improve the students’ oral production, in which they are expected to present an Italian city following the given model.

#### - *Twenty-One*

In the following paragraphs the first unit’s structure of the second textbook is presented, providing an analysis that will help to answer the first research question. Every textbook’s unit is divided in three sections: the topics’ presentation -countries, nationalities and a self-introduction -, the theoretical section, and the *Workbook*. An additional *Culture* part is presented as an appendix at the end of the book.

The first unit, titled *Hi. I’m Maisie*, starts with some visual material: a *pre-watching* exercise helps the students understand the context (i.e. the school) where the video, starring four British students who already know each other, is set. Before watching the video, students are also asked three questions in Italian, inviting them to reflect on a picture of the four characters. Specifically, the questions are the following: 1. *Chi vedi nella foto?* 2. *Dove sono?* 3. *Cosa stanno facendo?*<sup>8</sup>. Learners are supposed to watch this video, to read and repeat out loud the dialogue transcription, which is followed by a comprehension exercise, including a few *fill-in-the-gap* sentences which easily summarize what happened the story. The section, then, proceeds with a map named *Dialogue Focus*, which introduces all the unit’s sections and topics. Here the main sentences of the dialogue are highlighted. The map is divided into two main sections, *Vocabulary* and *Grammar*, and each corresponds to a task (e.g.: Grammar - “Trova altri 4 pronomi personali soggetto: you... . Vocabulary

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<sup>8</sup> 1. Look at the picture: who do you see? 2. Where are they? 3. What are they doing?

–Trova una nazione e una nazionalità.”<sup>9</sup>). After this preview on the unit, the focus is again on the dialogue, with a *linking-translating L2 into L1* exercise: students should correctly match some everyday English expressions, which appeared in the dialogue, with their Italian correspondents. Eventually, the last exercise is an *information gap* one, where students are given a short introduction dialogue, and are supposed to rearrange its related expressions in the correct order, to create a new dialogue and act it out in pairs.

In the second section, the *Vocabulary* part, an overview on the lexicon related to countries and nationalities is offered through some *warm up*, *fill-the-blank* and *vocabulary drill* exercises. Then, a *listening* exercise asks learners to understand a dialogue about different boys and girls who introduce themselves saying what their nationalities are; this part ends with a *memorization speaking* task.

Later on, three pages are dedicated to the *Grammar*: each topic corresponds to one of the five sections, namely A, B, C, D, E. Section A presents the *Subject Pronouns*, with a L1-L2 table accompanied by an note in Italian clarifying that the courtesy form does not exist in English. Section B contains a table presenting the affirmative form of the *Verb to be*. In part C, a table with *Possessive Adjectives* is provided; the pronouns are presented and followed by a comparison with Italian, i.e. “*in inglese gli aggettivi possessivi non sono mai preceduti dall’articolo e concordano con il genere del possessore, non con la cosa posseduta*”.<sup>10</sup> Section D focuses, instead, on *What?, Who? and Where?*, while section E explains the *Articles: the and a/an*, through a table of comparison between English and Italian. All these parts are followed by some *circle-the-sage*, *filling-the-blank* activities - three or four per section - and some *writing* exercises, where students need to replace or modify sentences to apply the grammar rules at issue. Then, the *Summing Up* section presents two wrap-up activities: a *fill-the-blank* exercise with short dialogues and a *Translating L1 into L2* exercise, where ten sentences to be translated from Italian into English are listed.

Later on, the *Oral Competences - Functions* section offers another video, the “sequel” of the one which opens the unit, and the second part of the dialogue is used as the first activity. Students should watch the video and complete the transcription with some already given everyday English expressions. After repeating the dialogue out loud, learners are supposed to use the previous

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<sup>9</sup>In Italian in the textbook. Grammar: find other 4 subject pronouns: you... . Vocabulary: find a country and a nationality.

<sup>10</sup>In Italian in the textbook: *in English articles never precede possessive adjectives and agree with the possessor, not with the thing possessed.*

expressions to *fill-in-the-blank* some simple situations. A *pair-speaking* activity concludes this section, focusing on oral and every-day situations: as a *role-play* exercise, it asks students to employ all the expressions and the words learned in the unit.

This first part of the textbook ends with the *Competences and Culture* section, which presents first a reading comprehension: four teenagers, each coming from a different British city, introduce themselves. This is followed by a *true or false* exercise to check the comprehension. The remaining activities focus on different skills, such as listening, speaking and writing, and are all related to countries and nationalities. The homework *pair-role-play* is a speaking activity: following a draft, students first introduce themselves to a classmate, then should collect information about their friend and are supposed to be able to present him/her. Lastly, the *paragraph writing* task is introduced by a short *circle-the-sage* presentation followed by a final task, where students are invited to write a paragraph on their classmates following the previous prompt.

The first part of the unit is now concluded, and the reader enters the second part of the book, namely the *Workbook* section, which is composed of eight pages of exercises. Six exercises are related to the *Vocabulary* section, and are all *circle-the-sage*, *filling-the-blank* or *vocabulary games exercises*, while the last two activities ask students what they remember about the lexicon. In the first they should simply write all the countries and nationalities they remember, while the last one asks the students to think about some non-Italian people and try to write some sentences introducing them. Leafing through, four pages of grammar exercises are offered. There are between two to five activities for each of the parts already presented, and they are preceded by a section of in-depth grammar rules. Most of the exercises are *fill-in-the-blank*, *circle-the-cage*, *scrambled sentences to teach cohesion and coherence* or *information gap*. They lead to the last two activities of the *Summing up* section, which are a *fill-in-the-blank* dialogue with some words and expressions, and a *dialogue creation*. The grammar part gives way to the *Oral competences - Functions* part, which is introduced by a *multiple-choice* exercise and ends with a *fill-in-the-blank* one. Lastly, the *Competence and Culture* section includes in one page a series of reading, listening and writing activities. Firstly, a short text presenting a teenager from London - who lives in a multicultural street and has himself Indian origins - is provided and is followed by a *multiple-choice* reading comprehension. Then, some listening and writing exercises are connected to each other: students are first required to listen to an Indian boy (i.e. Raj) and to complete a given chart with some personal information about the boy, then to write a similar presentation introducing their best friend.



As mentioned before, at the end of the textbook, a *Culture* section offers additional material for each unit. In this section the readers find some brief paragraphs on *The UK capitals*, accompanied by two *reading comprehension* activities. As a conclusion, a *completing a task in pairs* exercise asks students to search for information and prepare a short oral presentation on the Italian capital city.

### 3.1.2 Discussion

This section aims to further comment the data observed in the previous section and to draw useful implications which may provide an answer to the first research questions, i.e. “is there any difference in structure and in terms of contents between the Italian textbook and the English one? Does the unit’s structure follow Balboni’s model?”.

This first question aims to determine if one of the two textbooks investigated in the present study follows the structure recommended by Pemberton, mentioned in chapter 1, and if the textbook can be considered as a guide - as Ansary and Babaii (2002) suggest (cfr. chapter 1) - for students, who might need to consult it without the teacher’s help. Once observed if the course book might be a “good book”, the attention will focus on the unit’s structure, in order to say whether it follows the structure suggested by Balboni (cfr. chapter 1.3.2).

From the observations collected so far, at a first glance it can be noticed that the two textbooks under analysis are structured differently as far as the general structure of the unit is concerned. If *Open Up* presents the entire structure of the first unit, the same cannot be said for *Twenty-One*, which splits the unit into several parts, displayed in different positions of the book. Indeed, also the order of the unit sections is different. In *Open Up* the parts are arranged as follows: *Vocabulary*, *Dialogue*, *Grammar*, *Grammar Vlog*, *Functions*, *Skills and Culture*, *Vocabulary Strategies*, *GrammarMap*, *Grammar Notes*, *Workbook*, while the *Culture* section is at the end of the book. In *Twenty-One*, instead, the first part develops the *Dialogue*, *Vocabulary*, *Grammar*, *Oral Competences*, *Functions* and *Competences and Culture* sections, while the *Workbook* and the appendix dedicated to *Culture* can be found in the second part. All the sections are summarized in the maps below in the same order the reader sees them while leafing through the textbook, and the most similar parts are highlighted in light blue.

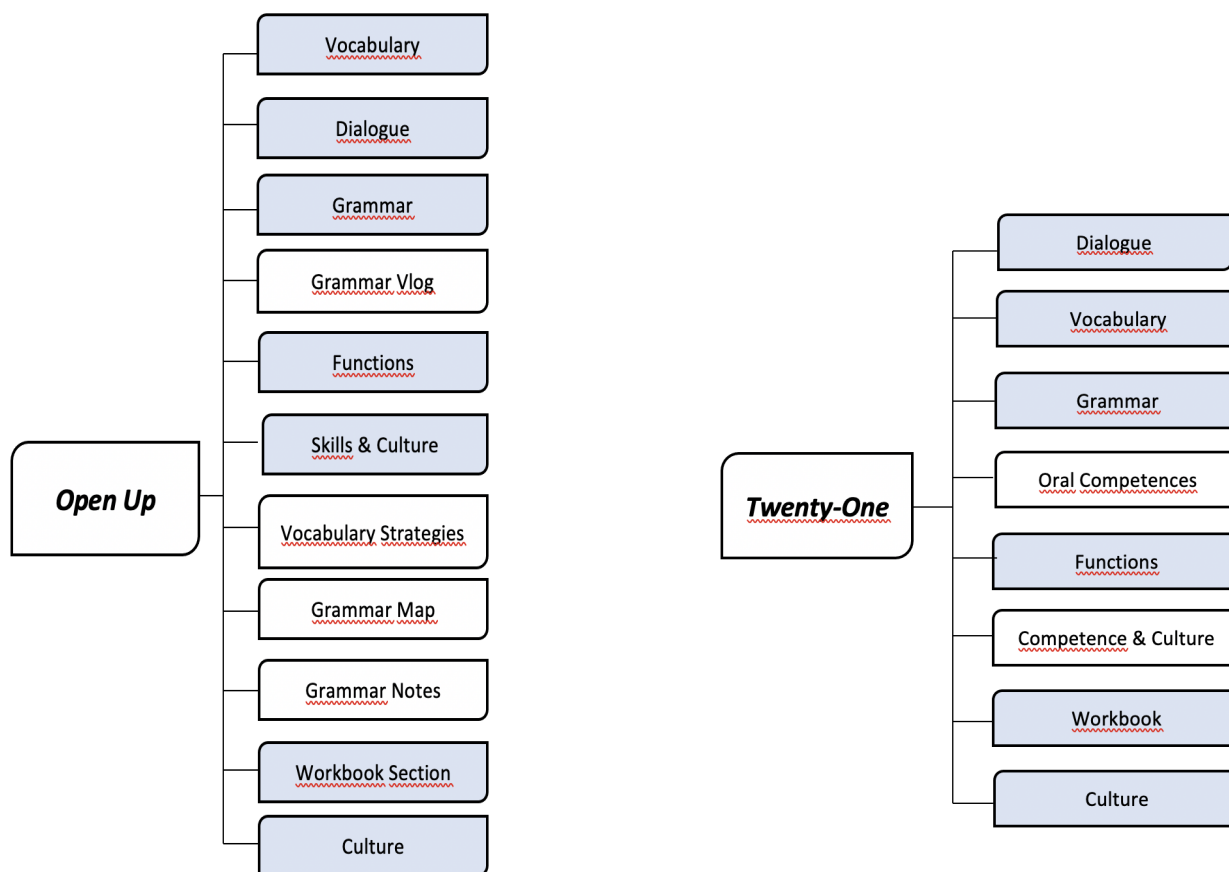


Table n. 4: Textbooks' sections

Following Pemberton's model (2018), the evidence of a mental roadmap is fundamental in the *Rule of Framework*, because it helps the students follow the guiding thread of the textbook structure. The Cambridge publisher is more organized and schematic, facilitating the understanding even without the teacher's guidance. There are several learning strategies which explain to students how to study or memorize some elements covered in the units, such as some lexis or some grammar rules (e.g. *Vocabulary Strategies* and *GrammarMap*). Moreover, the grammar rules are explained in more detail. Yet, at the beginning of *Twenty-One*, as mentioned in paragraph 3.1.2, the inductive method seems to be preferred, as a map - called *Map it!* - briefly anticipates the main topics that will be addressed throughout the unit, in order to give an overview to the reader.

Proceeding with the structure of Pemberton's "good book", it is evident that both publishers respect the *Rule of Meaningful Names*, as the titles of the sections and related subsections immediately allow the students to settle in, to understand at what point of the unit they are and the focus of

that particular section. The English publishing house, even in this case, seems to pay more attention to fragmentation and, therefore, to step-by-step guided understanding.

Regarding the *Rule of Manageable Numbers*, connected to Krashen's theory of  $i + 1$ , it seems that the Italian publishing house insists more on ensuring that students have very well understood a topic before introducing new inputs. This can also be noted in the *Rule of Hierarchy*. DeAgostini, in fact, through role-play activities and small - often oral and pair-work - reality tasks, tends to insist on already learned concepts before introducing new ones. On the contrary, the activities are less reflective, less practical and rather short in *Open Up*. Moreover, the transcription exercise, which could facilitate the students with their learning and studying, is often missing.

Proceeding with the last point considered by the scholar, the *Rule of Repetition* holds an important place. According to Pemberton, in fact, it is important to repeat the main concepts at least three or four times before moving on to new items. As far as this element is concerned, *Twenty-One* seems to be faithful to this consideration, especially with regard to activities that consider multiple skills together, such as reading, listening, and speaking or writing. Providing activities that focus on and develop all these different skills, in fact, the same concept is repeated to ensure students' acquisition. *Open Up* also offers some activities structured in this way, especially those related to the Oral Competences part, but the concepts are repeated fewer times and through tasks or exercises that are much shorter. Since students learn more and better when they are actively engaged in learning, by doing things themselves rather than being passively told about them, it should be essential for the textbook to provide them with as many detailed activities as possible (Scrivener, 2001).

Concerning the second part of the first research question, the two units are observed firstly in their entirety, then all the activities are considered in the light of Balboni's model based on Gestalt philosophy. Both the units' textbooks follow the different steps of globality, analysis and synthesis through the sections which compose the unit itself. The themes and topics presented in the dialogues or in the *Vocabulary*, in fact, are combined with the topics and exercises displayed later in the *Grammar* or in the *Functions* sections.

Looking at the activities in detail, the textbooks structure the presentation of the exercises differently. The tools offered in *Open Up* (see 3.2.1) especially in the unit's dialogue, in the *Functions* or in some reading comprehensions, do not provide the tip given by Balboni - some pre-watching activities - in order to guide students to the following stages of analysis and synthesis. In *Twenty-One* these tools are presented before the unit's dialogues and also before a reading comprehension in the *Competence and Culture* section.

In conclusion, to answer to RQ1, given the previous considerations, it can be stated that although the first units of the two textbooks seem almost similar both in their structure and in their content, actually it is precisely in the latter point that the main differences between the Italian and the English publishing houses lie. While DeAgostini textbook seems apparently more disorganized from a structural point of view than the English one, in several sections the Italian publishing house provides richer and more organized activities that follow the principles suggested by Pemberton, and proceeds towards the unit structure recommended by Balboni.

### 3.2 Second research question: the variety of language

This second section focuses on the analysis and discussion of data obtained through the second research question investigation method, whose purpose was determining whether there is a difference in the variety of the English language presented by the two textbooks analyzed.

#### 3.2.1 Results

Section 2.1 reports the procedure followed to provide an answer to RQ2. Firstly, all the audio-visual materials are considered, in order to assess whether different varieties of English and different accents of English are presented by the textbooks. Secondly, all the other exercises are evaluated in such a way as to analyze whether any connections with different English varieties are provided. In the following paragraph the two textbooks are examined separately, but at the end of this section a table summarizes the activities. Further considerations are then made in section 3.2.2.

- *Open Up*

As said before, all the audio-visual materials are firstly analyzed. In the *Vocabulary* section, the first audio exercises presented are related to countries and nationalities: different teenagers from different parts of the world introduce themselves; more specifically, they are from Australia, Russia, India, Brazil, the USA and South Korea. In each sentence they simply say “Hello, I’m Irina, I’m from Russia, I’m Russian”, apart from the Australian and the American kids, whose answers are different from the other ones (i.e. “Hi, I’m Brett, I’m from the USA!” “Oh, so you’re American.” “Yes, that’s right!”). Then students are led to the most important visual material of the unit, namely a dialogue where four British teens -two boys and two girls - introduce themselves. Lily and Lewis are brother and sister, Josh is Lily’s friend from primary school and Evie is the new girl: she is a coloured girl, her parents are Scottish but she is from London. Their accent is British and their speech speed is very slow.

The only visual material provided in the *Grammar* section is the *Grammar Vlog*, where Simon, a coloured boy from the UK, presents the UK flag and talks about his friends, Isabella and Martine, at the international school, and their dreams. Isabella is from the USA, while Martine is from Brazil. Proceeding through the *Functions* section, a dialogue and its related audio are provided: two people, Tina and Robert, introduce themselves using typical key expressions, i.e. “Hello/Hi, Nice to meet you, What’s your name, I’m...”. In the *Skills and culture* section, two different readers read the short texts about the four capital cities of the UK: while the first reads the information related to the cities, the other reads an introduction of the kids, who introduce themselves. Krisha is Welsh but her family is from India, while Jaden is from London, but his family is from the Caribbean. Jin is Chinese but lives in Northern Ireland, and Zofia is from Edinburgh but her family is Polish.

The *Workbook* does not provide any audio-visual material, but the *Culture* part at the end of the book offers a reading comprehension which goes with a video that serves as additional material, because it contains new information which is not present in the text. In this video, each country of the United Kingdom is mentioned and some curiosities about its capital city are presented, while a supplementary worksheet on the city of London is provided.

All the other activities offered by the textbook are related to the main topic of the unit. Especially in the *Grammar* section, many sentences include the names of several countries. Apart from one sentence connected to China, the others are focused on Australia, South Africa, Canada, India,

Wales and Scotland. In the *Workbook* part, the countries mentioned are the following: Italy, Brazil, Spain, France, Ireland, Scotland, Canada and India again.

- *Twenty-One*

Proceeding in the same way as for the textbook edited by Cambridge, all the audio-visual materials are considered. Differently from *Open Up*, a visual material opens the unit. The four characters - Maisie, Eddie, Ryan and Aila - are introduced in a video. They all live in London, and start attending the same school, but Aila's mum is from Scotland and Eddie and his sister are from Oxford. They speak quickly and act as if they were waiting for Tech Camp's registration for real. Then, in the *Vocabulary* part, the first listening exercise on countries and nationality is presented: two friends are talking about the nationalities of another teenager's family. They speak slowly and are both of English origin. The *Grammar* section does not present any listening activities, and the next exercise in the *Oral Competences-Functions* section is a visual one. Specifically, it is a video where two other characters, who will appear again in the following units, are introduced: their names are Dillon, Maisie's brother, and Sophie, Eddie's sister. They introduce each other speaking fluently and not very slowly. The following listening exercise is introduced in the *Competence and Culture* section, where an audio track is provided as a complement of the four different texts. Every teenager from a different city (i.e. Belfast in Ireland, Harlech in Wales, Glasgow in Scotland and York in England) presents him/herself. They talk slowly but they present different English accents, typical from each country. Then, another listening activity is presented: a girl and a boy talk about their families and their origin: Ella is from Scotland, she speaks slowly but with a Scottish accent. Andrew, instead, is from London, his mum is French, while his dad is a Londoner too. The boy speaks clearly and with a standard British accent.

In the *Workbook* section, the listening exercises are provided with reference just to the *Competence and Culture* part: a teenager, Raj, introduces himself and his family, who is Indian, although he was born in England. He speaks clearly and with a British accent. In the *Classic culture* section at the end of the textbook no listening exercises are provided.

Observing the other activities proposed by this textbook, it appears that all the sentences considered in the exercises have to do with the main topic of the unit, namely countries and nationalities. Moreover, in the *Grammar* section, where the listening and speaking activities make way for additional exercises, different countries and nationalities are presented. In particular, Scotland, England, Italy, Germany, Egypt, Wales, Morocco, Spain, France, Sri Lanka, the USA are

mentioned in the first section; while Canada, Poland, Tunisian, India, Scotland, Brazil, Russia, Mexico, Romania, China, Portugal, Australia and Germany are cited in the *Workbook* section.

In the table below, the previous paragraphs, which will be further discussed in section 3.2.2, are summarized.

	<i>Open Up</i>	<i>Twenty-One</i>
Linguistic differences in audio-visual materials	British accents Characters speak slowly	Different UK accents Characters speak as in everyday life
Countries mentioned in other exercises	Australia, South Africa, Canada, India, Wales and Scotland, Italy, Brazil, Spain, France, Ireland	Scotland, England, Italy, Germany, Egypt, Wales, Morocco, Spain, France, Sri Lanka, the USA, Canada, Poland, Tunisian, India, Scotland, Brazil, Russia, Mexico, Romania, China, Portugal, Australia and Germany

Table n. 5 : Linguistic comparative chart

Even though, as the chart shows, different English-speaking countries from around the world are cited in the different exercises, the only English language variety presented by both publishers is British English. The world-wider view is probably related to the topic developed in the units examined, that is countries and nationalities, as mentioned before.

### 3.2.2 Discussion

The aim of this last section is to further discuss the results obtained in the previous section, as well as to draw possible implications which enable the author of this dissertation to answer the second research question, i.e. “is there a difference in the variety of English presented?”.

The purpose is to determine whether the concept of English as an international language and as a *lingua franca* introduced in chapter 1, and the concept of culture introduced in section 1.1.2, have something to do with the nationality of the textbook’s publisher.

Both textbooks start talking about London and the United Kingdom and introduce some characters as close as possible to the readers to whom the textbook is addressed, namely children attending middle school (sixth grade). Since the characters live in London, it can already be inferred that

linguistic imperialism, especially in Europe, is dictated by Great Britain, and by London in particular, as already discussed in section 1.1. Nonetheless, it is interesting to notice that in *Twenty-One*, the textbook edited by the Italian publishing house, already in the listening activities of the first unit several inputs contain different accents of the United Kingdom states. Although linguistic "supremacy" is recognized, students are nevertheless exposed to several varieties. The same does not happen, however, in *Open Up*, where the only language variety to which students are exposed is standard English, especially in audiovisual materials, as already mentioned in paragraph 3.2.1. In addition, slowness changes in the two textbooks: in the Cambridge edition, the characters speak very slowly in the listening exercises and in the videos, and they respect pauses to facilitate the understanding. In the Italian textbook, on the other hand, the characters speak slowly and articulate words in the listening exercises, while the videos tend to be more authentic, and, therefore, conform more to the language spoken by native English-speaking children.

As noticed in paragraph 3.2.1, different countries are mentioned precisely because nationalities and countries are the theme of the unit. It is thus immediately evident that the states mentioned in *Open Up* are somehow correlated with the United Kingdom, while in *Twenty-One* a greater number of states, belonging not only to the United Kingdom, but also to Europe and overseas countries, is considered.

Although the English language variety presented, namely British English, would seem to be the same in the two textbooks, the Italian book seems to give a greater number of inputs and an overall vision that is more internationally projected. Moreover, it emphasizes the cultural aspect by mentioning countries outside the British influence. The British publishing house, on the other hand, seems to be more conservative, providing examples strictly related to the United Kingdom.



## Conclusions

The present study aimed at comparing two different ELT textbooks (A1 level - CEFR), which belong respectively to an English publishing house and an Italian one, and are adopted in Italian middle schools (sixth grade). The aim was to observe if any differences are present in the textbooks' structure, if both volumes follow the didactic structure of Balboni's model and, finally, if they present the same variety of English.

Data showed some interesting findings, which are now listed.

Regarding the general structure of the units observed, both the textbooks analyzed follow Balboni's model, based on the three stages of globality, analysis and synthesis. Yet, *Open Up*, shows more organized topics, so it might be easy for readers to get oriented in the whole unit. *Twenty-One*, instead, results being less organized in terms of unit's presentation, because the first part of the unit and the *Workbook* are in separate sections.

As for the activities presented, the Italian publishing house seems to respect Balboni's model, especially with respect to the audio-visual activities, where the three phases clearly emerge. The English publisher, instead, seems not to pay attention to them, showing exercises which are not linked.

Finally, the variety of English presented by both textbooks is the same, namely British English. However, while the English publisher offers listening activities, which highlight just the British accent, the Italian publishing house gives a wider view of English as an international language. The latter, in fact, develops some listening activities highlighting different accents of the English countries, such as the Scottish, the Irish or the American accents.

This research is limited to the analysis of a restricted number of materials, and it is important to consider that textbooks in general give partial information about the way EFL teaching is conducted. In fact, they represent just one of the tools used in EFL classrooms. Yet, it should be highlighted that neither the Italian publisher nor the English one seems to give attention to the inputs providing the ancillary materials suggested by Balboni, which could make language acquisition easier. Despite everything, however, the Italian publication offers some inputs which differ from purely didactic tools; every two units, for instance, students might find a non-didactic text belonging to English

literature, which might be considered a more interesting input from the students' point of view, as suggested by Balboni (2014).

Although the present study is a small-scale research in terms of textbooks, it may hopefully inspire further investigations on EFL textbooks and contribute to increasing attention to and awareness of the importance of the materials available and employed in EFL teaching.

## Attachment: Table of contents

### Units 1 & 2

	Open Up: Cambridge		Twenty-One: DeAgostini
<b>Unit 1</b>	<b>We're Italian!</b>	<b>Unit 1</b>	<b>Hi, I'm Maisie</b>
<b>VOCABULARY</b>	Countries and Nationalities Adjectives describing places	<b>VOCABULARY and SCHOOL SKILLS</b>	Countries and nationalities
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	A: Personal subject pronouns B: Present simple <i>to be</i> : affirmative form C: Possessive Adjectives D: Articles Grammar Map: present simple verb to be	<b>GRAMMAR</b>	Subject pronouns Verb <i>to be</i> : affirmative Possessive adjectives What, Where e Who Articles: the and a/an
<b>GRAMMAR VLOG</b>	Welcome to my Vlog	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Meeting people
<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Making new friends	<b>COMPETENCE and CULTURE</b>	I'm from a great place! Reading: capire la descrizione di quattro città in UK Listening: ascoltare e completare informazioni personali Speaking: sapersi presentare Writing: scrivere la descrizione di una persona Focus on reading: Preparing to read Classic culture: UK Capitals
<b>SKILLS and CULTURE</b>	The UK – A multicultural nation Reading: Understanding a text about UK capital cities and nationalities Listening: Understanding a British girl speaking about her friends and their nationalities Speaking: Introducing yourself to a classmate Writing: Writing a brief text about you and your city/country. Skill strategy: Capital letters	<b>VLOG</b>	
<b>Unit 2</b>	<b>Are they cousins?</b>	<b>Unit 2</b>	<b>Is he nice?</b>
<b>VOCABULARY</b>	Family Occupations	<b>VOCABULARY and SCHOOL SKILLS</b>	Adjectives
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	A: Present simple verb <i>to be</i> – negative form B: Present simple verb <i>to be</i> – interrogative form C: Genitivo sassone D: Parole interrogative	<b>GRAMMAR</b>	Verb <i>be</i> : negative Verb <i>be</i> : interrogative and short answers Plural nouns (1)

<b>GRAMMAR VLOG</b>	Me and my family	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Describing people and things
<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Asking for and giving personal information	<b>COMPETENCE and CULTURE</b>	From England to Hollywood... Reading: capire un testo su due attori famosi Listening: abbinare dei luoghi alle loro descrizioni Speaking: saper presentare un personaggio famoso Writing: completare un testo descrittivo; descrivere un personaggio famoso <sup>11</sup> Focus on listening: Preparing to listen Classic culture: London people
<b>SKILLS and CULTURE</b>	Blended Families Reading: Understanding interviews about families Listening: Understanding a conversation about a famous family Speaking: Talking about your family Writing: Writing a short text about your family members.	<b>VLOG</b>	<b>MAGAZINE 1-2:</b> Reading: Peter Pan by J.M. Barrie Life Skills: Relationships  Listening: Two islands  Pat's Vlog: Hello Italy!

### Units 3&4

	<b>Open Up: Cambridge</b>		<b>Twenty-One: DeAgostini</b>
<b>Unit 3</b>	<b>Have you got a pet?</b>	<b>Unit 3</b>	<b>Have you got a pet?</b>
<b>VOCABULARY</b>	<b>Pets</b> Animals Personal Possessions	<b>VOCABULARY and SCHOOL SKILLS</b>	Family and <b>pets</b>
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	A Present Simple have got – affirmative form B Present simple have got – negative form C Present simple have got – interrogative form and short answers D Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns – this, that, these, those Grammar map: have got	<b>GRAMMAR</b>	Verb have got: affirmative Verb have got: negative Verb have got: interrogative and short answers Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns Plural nouns (2) Possessive 's
<b>GRAMMAR VLOG</b>	What do you look like?	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Talking about your family

<sup>11</sup>This section has been transcribed in Italian from the textbook and translated by the author. *Reading: understanding a text on two famous actors. Listening: match different places to their different descriptions. Speaking: describe a star. Writing: fill a descriptive text; describe a star.*

<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Describing people	<b>COMPETENCE and CULTURE</b>	My unusual pet Reading: capire alcuni brani sugli animali domestici Listening: capire descrizioni di animali domestici Speaking: fare domande e risposte su un'associazione per gli animali Writing: scrivere una mail per descrivere un animale domestico <sup>12</sup> Focus on speaking: Asking for and giving information Classic culture: Lupo – a royal pet
<b>SKILLS and CULTURE</b>	Animals at work Reading: Understanding a presentation about working animals Listening: Understanding teens talking about their favourite possessions Speaking: Class survey about your favourite animals Writing: writing descriptions of your favourite things Skill Strategy: Making notes	<b>VLOG</b>	
<b>Unit 4</b>	<b>There's a small study</b>	<b>Unit 4</b>	<b>There's a lot of stuff!</b>
<b>VOCABULARY</b>	Rooms in a house Parts of a house Furniture and appliances	<b>VOCABULARY and SCHOOL SKILLS</b>	House and furniture
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	A there is / there are – affirmative form B there is / there are – negative form C there is / there are interrogative form and short answers D some / any E Prepositions of place Grammar map: there is (singular) – there are (plural)	<b>GRAMMAR</b>	There is/There are: affirmative and negative There is/There are: interrogative and short answers some, any - Prepositions of place
<b>GRAMMAR VLOG</b>	My house	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Describing your home
<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Describing a room in our house	<b>COMPETENCE and CULTURE</b>	Strange houses Reading: capire alcuni brani su tipi di abitazioni particolari Listening: capire descrizioni di camere da letto Speaking: esprimere preferenze su diversi tipi di abitazione Writing: completare

<sup>12</sup> Reading: understand some texts on pets. Listening: understand descriptions of pets. Speaking: ask questions and give answers about a pets' organisation. Writing: write an email to describe a pet.

			correttamente un messaggio; <b>descrivere la propria casa</b> Focus on writing: Linking words: and, but, so Classic culture: Houses in the UK
<b>SKILLS and CULTURE</b>	A different time and place Reading: Understanding an email about a living museum Listening: Understanding teens describing their favourite room Speaking: Talking about a house Writing: Writing an email to describe your bedroom  Skill strategy: preparing questions	<b>VLOG</b>	<b>MAGAZINE 3-4:</b>  Reading: The Selfish Giant by O. Wilde's Life Skills: Know yourself  Listening: Haunted houses  Pat's Vlog: My house

## Units 5 & 6

	<b>Open Up: Cambridge</b>		<b>Twenty-One: DeAgostini</b>
<b>Unit 5</b>	<b>I always have lunch at home</b>	<b>Unit 5</b>	<b>Camp starts at nine</b>
<b>VOCABULARY</b>	Daily routines School subjects	<b>VOCABULARY and SCHOOL SKILLS</b>	Daily routine and time
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	A Present simple – affirmative form B Present simple – Orthographic rules C Prepositions of time D Adverbs of frequency	<b>GRAMMAR</b>	Present simple: affirmative Present simple: spelling Adverbs of frequency Expressions of frequency Prepositions of time: at, in, on
<b>GRAMMAR VLOG</b>	My not so easy morning	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Talking about time
<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Talking about school	<b>COMPETENCE and CULTURE</b>	A day in the life of... Dan Kennedy Reading: capire un testo sulla routine di uno studente Listening: capire la descrizione della routine quotidiana Speaking: fare domande e risposte sulla propria routine quotidiana Writing: scrivere un breve testo sulla routine Focus on reading: Skimming Classic culture: 212 UK teen life

<b>SKILLS and CULTURE</b>	This is my school! Reading: Understanding teens' describing their school Listening: Understanding teens talking about their favourite day Speaking: Talking about your favourite day Writing: Writing about your friend's favourite day	<b>VLOG</b>	
<b>Unit 6</b>	<b>What do you do at the weekend?</b>	<b>Unit 6</b>	<b>I don't believe it</b>
<b>VOCABULARY</b>	Free-time activities Places in town	<b>VOCABULARY and SCHOOL SKILLS</b>	Free-time and school subjects
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	A Present simple – Negative Form B Present simple – Interrogative form and short answers C Interrogative Words with present Simple D Object Pronouns  Grammar map: Present simple	<b>GRAMMAR</b>	Present simple: negative Present simple: interrogative and short answers Question words Object pronoun
<b>GRAMMAR VLOG</b>	What does Sophie do?	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Talking about likes and dislikes
<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Talking about frequency	<b>COMPETENCE and CULTURE</b>	love the weekend! Reading: capire un testo su una ragazza che fa parte degli air cadet Listening: capire la descrizione delle attività del fine settimana Speaking: fare domande e risposte sul fine settimana Writing: descrivere le attività del fine settimana <sup>13</sup> Focus on listening: Adverbs of sequence Classic culture: Schools in the UK
<b>SKILLS and CULTURE</b>	A great day out Reading: Understanding a text about UK cities and tourist attractions Listening: Understanding teens talking about their city Speaking: Describing your summer routine	<b>VLOG</b>	<b>MAGAZINE 5-6:</b> Reading: Anne of Green Gables by L.M. Montgomery's Life Skills: Emotions  Listening: #gotobednow  Pat's Vlog:

<sup>13</sup> Reading: understand a text about an air cadet girl. Listening: understand a description about weekend activities. Speaking: ask questions and answers about weekends. Writing: describe weekend activities.

	Writing: Answering questions about your favourite place Skills strategy: Giving a reason		My week
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## Units 7&8

	Open Up: Cambridge		Twenty-One: DeAgostini
<b>Unit 7</b>	<b>He can cook very well!</b>	<b>Unit 7</b>	<b>Can you dance?</b>
<b>VOCABULARY</b>	Abilities and sports	<b>VOCABULARY and SCHOOL SKILLS</b>	Sports and abilities
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	A Can – Affirmative and negative Form B Ability C Can – Interrogative Form and short answers D Imperative  Grammar map: Can	<b>GRAMMAR</b>	Verb can: affirmative Verb can: negative Verb can: interrogative and short answers Imperative
<b>GRAMMAR VLOG</b>	Ask me anything	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Talking about ability
<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Asking for and giving / refusing permission	<b>COMPETENCE and CULTURE</b>	Yes, we can! Reading: capire un testo sulle paralimpiadi Listening: capire ragazzi che parlano dei loro sport preferiti Speaking: fare domande e risposte sugli sport Writing: scrivere un messaggio sui propri sport preferiti <sup>14</sup> Focus on speaking: Giving extra information Classic culture p. 214 UK schoolsports
<b>SKILLS and CULTURE</b>	After school clubs & Types of clubs Reading: Understanding a text about after-school clubs in the UK Listening: Understanding information about a tennis competition Speaking: Talking about your after-school activities Writing: Replying to a friend's message  Skills strategy: Linkers: and, but, so	<b>VLOG</b>	

<sup>14</sup>Reading: understand a text on Paralympics. Listening: understand boys and girls talking about their favourite sports. Speaking: ask questions and answer about sports. Writing: write a message about your favourite sports.



Unit 8	He's buying new trainers	Unit 8	We're shopping!
<b>VOCABULARY</b>	Clothes and accessories	<b>VOCABULARY and SCHOOL SKILLS</b>	Clothes and accessories
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	<p>A Present continuous – Affirmative Form</p> <p>B Present continuous – Orthographic Rules</p> <p>C Present continuous – Negative Form</p> <p>D Present continuous – Interrogative Form and short answers</p> <p>E Possessive Pronouns</p> <p>F Whose</p> <p>Grammar map: Present Continuous</p>	<b>GRAMMAR</b>	<p>Present continuous: affirmative</p> <p>Present continuous: spelling</p> <p>Present continuous: negative</p> <p>Present continuous: interrogative and short answers</p> <p>Present continuous vs Present simple</p>
<b>GRAMMAR VLOG</b>	What's your style?	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Shopping for clothes
<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	Shopping for clothes and shoes	<b>COMPETENCE and CULTURE</b>	<p>Timeless tartan</p> <p>Reading: capire un testo sulla tradizione del tartan edei kilt</p> <p>Listening: capire la descrizione di una fotografia</p> <p>Speaking: fare domande e risposte sull'abbigliamento</p> <p>Writing: scrivere la descrizione di una foto</p> <p>Focus on writing: Preparing to write</p> <p>Classic culture: Shopping in London</p>
<b>SKILLS and CULTURE</b>	<p>Fancy dress</p> <p>Reading: Understanding a text about fancy dress in the UK</p> <p>Listening: Teens talking about their school uniform</p> <p>Speaking: Describing clothes and guessing who is wearing them</p> <p>Writing: Describing a classmate's clothes and what they are doing</p> <p>Skills strategy: Listening for gist</p>	<b>VLOG</b>	<p><b>MAGAZINE 7-8:</b></p> <p>Reading: The Emperor's New Clothes by H.C. Andersen</p> <p>Life Skills: Critical thinking</p> <p>Listening: Superhuman vision</p> <p>Pat's Vlog: Shorts in the rain!</p>

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