

A Descriptive Analysis of Cultural Content of “English for Iraq” Textbooks Used in the Intermediate Schools in Iraq

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ABSTRACT

Despite the abundance of the literature addressing culture incorporation in English language teaching and learning, the study of the implicit, as well as the explicit, cultural representations in EFL textbooks' linguistic content formulates an essential part with a consensus on its significant importance. Since 2012, a new EFL textbooks series written by foreign authors has been adopted in Iraq; this series does not seem to have gained a lot of quality research about the hidden curriculum, particularly related to its cultural content. This study investigates culture integration in the content of “English for Iraq” textbook series currently used in the intermediate schools in Iraq, aiming at detecting both any potential acculturation, and the kind of culture, (surface or deep) emphasized in the written texts and the visuals of the textbooks' content. A qualitative research method is employed based on a descriptive content analysis. Findings show that the textbooks encompass sharp difference in the frequency occurrences of the cultural representations, resulting to the dominance of both the source (Iraqi local cultural) culture, and the two cultural dimensions, products and persons. This imbalanced representation drives the textbooks to be source-culture-based textbooks with least probability of acculturation, and be prevailed with surface culture materials focusing on items like Folks, Fairs, Festivals, and Food, which turn the textbooks to look like tourist's guide books. The textbooks then follow a traditional approach for integrating culture in their content. A pedagogical implication of the study can be the necessity of re-considering culture corporation in these textbooks and ultimately improving textbook writing and/or selection in the ELT context of Iraq.

Key words: Cultural Content, Hidden Curriculum, English Textbooks, Content Analysis, Cultural Bias

INTRODUCTION

Every language carries culture; both culture and language are actually interwoven and closely bonded. Agar (1994: 28) used the term “linguaculture” in a reference to this unification between a language and its culture. Kramsch (1998: 63) mentions that no one is able to use or learn any language without being acquainted with the culture of its speakers. Based on this inseparability of culture and language, learning or teaching a language is by necessity learning or teaching culture (Brown, 2007, 189-190). Learning a new language is “a kind of enculturation, where one acquires new cultural frames of reference and a new world view” (Alptekin, 2002: 58).

Textbooks still construct an essential component of English language teaching/learning process; in Hutchinson and Torres' (1994) words “No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook. “ (p: 315). Foreign language textbooks can then be transformers of culture(s) hidden in their language content, whether textual or visual content. Since all “teaching materials (e.g. textbooks) directly or indirectly transmit cultural values to a certain degree” (Xiao, 2010: 4) and particularly textbooks do communicate explicitly or implicitly “sets of social and cultural values which are inherent in their make-up” (Cunningsworth, 1995: 90) part

of what is termed "hidden curriculum", it is the educators' concern through consistent researching to find out the ideology and cultural values in a curriculum behind the materials presented to the students (Asgari, 2011: 890).

The EFL context in Iraq, the Asian Islamic middle-east country, encompasses "English for Iraq" textbook series which has been in-use since 2012 and are authored by foreign writers. These textbooks are the sole source of knowledge of learning English in all the Iraqi primary, intermediate and preparatory (pre-university) schools. The intermediate schools are three-grade schools where students' age is 13 to 16 years. Teaching English in Iraq is a textbook-based process as no materials other than textbooks can be taught in all governmental as well as private schools.

The Iraqi country-wide experience of writing EFL textbooks by foreign writers and adopting them in all schools of Iraq also requires consistent researching to uncover the hidden curriculum in the textbooks' content. By investigating the occurrences of the cultural representations in textbooks, both discovering any attempt of acculturation, indoctrination and alienation through a dominance in cultural types, and emphasizing a kind of culture, whether surface or deep, through a domination in cultural dimensions, are two main issues that help give a full description of the cultural load in the textbook, and accordingly of culture integration in their linguistic content.

RATIONALE OF STUDY

When textbooks are authored by foreign writers, it assumed that acculturation, indoctrination, and alienation is more expected to take place, intentionally or unintentionally, usually due to the unfamiliarity of the foreign writers with the local culture of the country. But, to the best knowledge of the researcher, there are very few studies conducted about "English for Iraq" series in this concern; the majority of these studies such as Hejal (2012), Akef (2015), Fayadh, (2017) tend to generally be evaluative and mostly tackling the effectiveness of these textbooks in the Iraqi context; however, there exist a few studies such as Obaidi (2015), and Al-Akraa (2007) examining the textbooks' cultural content. Therefore, there generally remains a need to quality studies particularly related to detecting the hidden curriculum within the linguistic content of these textbooks.

Accordingly, the rationale of this research paper is motivated by a literature gap based on an argument concerning both the serious need for a consistent research to explore the hidden curriculum behind textbooks' content, particularly that is related to cultural representations, and on the few studies so far conducted about the cultural content of "English for Iraq" series of textbooks which is rather recently adopted in the intermediate schools of Iraq.

This paper is after two main objectives in the domain of integrating culture in EFL textbooks, namely, to discover both any potential acculturation, if any, and the kind of culture, surface or deep, probably dominating the intermediate school textbooks' materials. The approach that the authors adopted to integrate culture in these textbooks can then be detected. Objectives are fulfilled through analyzing the cultural representations in the textbooks' written texts and visuals in terms of the cultural types and dimensions. Therefore, the following two research questions are to be answered in this study:

1. How are the cultural types (source, target, international, and neutral) represented in the written texts and in visuals of the "English for Iraq" textbook series used in intermediate schools in Iraq?
2. How are the cultural dimensions (products, practices, perspectives, and persons) represented in the written texts and in visuals of the "English for Iraq" textbook series used in intermediate schools in Iraq?

As such, this study is only limited to investigating the cultural content of the textbooks, that is, the intercultural or multicultural content is beyond the limits of the study. Then, the three textbooks used in intermediate schools are the only materials investigated as a primary source of data for this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Textbooks are considered paramount due to their being the most common teaching tool used in schools; textbooks cultural content then "becomes a clearly determining element, since it marks the type and extent of the cultural knowledge students are likely to gain in the classroom" (García, 2005: 59). Scholars often chase the cultural content of the textbooks through analyzing it with the use of various typologies, such as Cartozzi & Jin (1999) three categories (types) of culture, Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990) four senses (or meanings), and Kachru (1992) three (geographical) circles, and scholars' ready checklists of analysis such as Kili-chaya (2004), Olajide (2010), and Byram (1993), inter alia. Also, the cultural content of EFL textbooks can be scrutinized on the basis ACTFL standards for learning languages encompassing the (3-Ps) framework of products, practices, and perspectives. This study employs two schemes of analysis, one is for the cultural types and the other is for the cultural dimensions.

Cultural Types

One of the schemes that has greatly contributed in analyzing EFL textbooks content in TESOL literature is Cortazzi and Jin's, (1999) model (Dehbozorgi, Amalsaleh, & Kafipour, 2017: 95) which has three types source, target, and international culture. It is usually the case that the source culture is the learners own local culture, e.g. the Iraqi local

culture in the context of Iraq. The target culture has not become confined only to the American and British cultures but include cultures in all the countries using English as a native language like Canada, Australia, Ireland and the others (Alpetkin, 1993, 2002). The international culture pertains all cultures other than the source and the target culture. Through the use of this scheme in a large number of TESOL studies for categorizing cultural representations in textbooks, there often appears a need for extending this model with at least one more type covering the linguistic items which can be described as culturally unidentified or neutral due to either their general (in the sense of belonging to all cultures) nature of themes like science, health, technology and the topics alike, or to the difficulty or impossibility for the researcher to attach them to a particular culture.

This cultural type for extending Cortazzi & Jin (1999) model had been addressed with various terms by different researchers such as Tzu-chia Chao (2011), Lui and Laohawiryanon (2012), Xiao's (2010), and Rashidi and Meihami (2016) who follow Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2015). But Aliakbari (2004) proposed the term (neutral) for "texts with little interest with culture" (P: 5) drawing upon Brumfit's (1996) conceptualization of this term as being a model of variety offering a wide access to English all over the world which is full of different cultures as opposite to any locality-based (but not American or British) model which is first unpopular to the students and then too restrictive (P: 296). In this case, Aliakbari's terminology can be specified as literature-based of a wider and more comprehensive proposition, and thus, be more appropriate extension to Cortazzi & jin's (1999) scheme selected for the purpose of analysing the cultural content of the textbooks in this paper.

Aliakbari (2004) investigated culture integration in the Iranian ELT high school context through a content analysis of the cultural aspects in some textbooks to find out whether these textbooks help the learners be familiarized with their local culture. For him, textbooks can presumably reflect the authors' cultural views and their own understanding. The materials of the textbooks were analyzed with an adapted content analysis model based on both Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Ramirez and Hall (1990). Conclusions reveal that these textbooks are inadequate for teaching culture in the Iranian EFL context as they treat culture in a superficial and shallow way.

The frequency occurrences of the cultural representations in textbooks' contents is the main concern of these studies to uncover the dominant type of culture and its expect consequent affects. Ja'far (2006), examined the foreign and Arabic cultural aspects in EFL Action Pack textbook series in Jordan. The foreign culture constructs the majority of the materials; learners then can be less

motivated and may feel a cultural shock. Aldera (2017) in Saudi Arabia studied the cultural types in two textbooks, Access and Interaction1, discovering a bias in favour of the foreign cultures presented dominantly in the content of the textbooks; this supports Alsaif's (2016) study to the textbooks utilized in Saudi universities, in which Alsaif detected the prevalence of the target culture, whereas Almujaivel (2018) investigated the EFL textbooks used in Saudi Arabia from 2016 onwards to discover that in these textbooks the "local Arabic cultural words are more frequent than target English cultural words, and the latter is more frequent than the intercultural words" (P: 31). Mahmood et al. (2012) in Pakistan examined the cultural content of "Step Ahead 1" textbook; the results show that the non-native culture is more focused on and the source culture is least considered, consequently, it "is likely to alienate the learners from their own culture" (P: 35).

Cultural Dimensions

A different view can be followed to scrutinize the cultural textbooks' content. Culture can be presented with basically three dimensions, namely products, practices and perspectives. These three dimensions are part of the standards adopted by the "American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages" for foreign language learning. There are five areas (five Cs) set as to cover the goals pertained in the content of these standards, which are "Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities" (see also Phillips, 2003, Lear & Abbott 2008: 77-8). In the area of "Culture", students are supposed to demonstrate a relation among a triangle of three corners as culture is seen to include "the philosophical perspectives, the behavioral practices, and the products – both tangible and intangible – of a society" (cited in Dema & Moeller, 2012: 78). The ultimate objective is developing the learner's cultural competence.

In relation to textbooks' content analysis, more dimensions can also be added to these basic three dimensions. Moran (2001) introduces a model that can be used to explore the cultural contents in EFL textbooks, which consists of five dimensions, products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons (P: 36). But Yuen (2011) believes that "Language can be considered an 'artefact' or a system of code (products) used, to signify thoughts (perspectives), for communication (practices), by different people (persons)" (P: 459). Her 4-Ps model focuses only on four dimensions excluding "communities" from Moran's five-dimension model. She analyzed the cultural content of two series of textbooks (Longman Elect and Treasure Plus) adopted in Hong Kong secondary schools. The first dimension "products" includes tangible products, such as books or paintings, and intangible products, such as oral tales or traditional dances and all the cultural ele-

ments related to food, entertainment, merchandise, print, tools, dwellings, clothing, laws, education, religions, and travel. The second "practices" refers to the behavioral patterns of a particular society; these include its customs and information about daily life, forms of address, and rituals. The third "perspectives" covers the underlying beliefs and values, inspirations, myths, superstitions, and world views of a particular society. The fourth dimension, "persons" embraces famous individuals and fictitious or unknown people from a particular society.

Among several studies following Yuen (2011) framework for investigating the cultural content of textbooks in the EFL literature is Celik & Erbay's (2013) study of the cultural perspectives in a number of Turkish ELT textbooks, one of which is Spot on 8. Another study employing Yuen's framework but with the addition of "places" as a new dimension is Singhanat Nomnian's (2013) study exploring the cultural aspects in six English language textbooks in Thai secondary schools. In places dimension more concentration is on tourism locations in Thailand.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative method of research is followed for the purpose of this study. The qualitative method generally strives to touch upon the different perspectives of the phenomenon's stakeholders with a firsthand and direct experience to obtain meanings behind texts. It ensures both a true portrait to the dynamic and changing nature of the reality and a comprehensive view of the phenomenon through certain techniques of study such as interview, document analysis, observation, and learning histories (Laws & McLeod, 2004: 2). One main qualitative research technique, descriptive content analysis, is utilized to collect data for examining the cultural content of the textbooks under study to ultimately extract the intended concepts (cultural types and dimensions) from the cultural representations in the written texts and the visuals of the textbooks. More specifically, the deductive approach of content analysis is followed since the analysis schemes are operationalized depending on the previous knowledge.

Content Analysis

Content analysis was basically employed as a quantitative technique of research being the "systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics" (Neundorf, 2002: 1) but in recent decades it has been greatly used as qualitative (Hashemnezhad, 2015: 59), and then elaborated to include "a family of techniques all of which emphasize frequency counts of concepts within and/or across texts" (Carley, 1994: 293). It examines both the manifest features which are the apparent, countable and visible constitutions of a message and the latent features which are the meanings hidden behind the manifest features of a text

(Rose, Spinks, & Canhoto, 2015: 1). The main purpose for employing it in qualitative studies is to "reduce the data into manageable forms for analysis making the data descriptive in both qualitative and quantitative forms" (Lillejord & Ellis, 2014: 59). According to Neundorf (2000: 53-6), the descriptive content analysis is one of the four approaches of content analysis classified according to the roles they play in research, namely descriptive, inferential, psychometric, and predictive (see also Macnamara, 2005: 3-4). Also, content analysis can be described as having inductive and deductive approaches. Either of the two approaches is selected by the researcher based on the objective(s) of the study. When there is no sufficient previous knowledge about the concepts in the content under analysis, inductive approach is followed to observe and elicit new concepts from the data and amalgamate them in theory; whereas when following the deductive approach, the researcher relies on models from the theory available in previous in-the-field literature to form a structure operationalized for the process of analysis, in which case the researcher moves from the general field of theory to the specific range of the intended concepts (Elo and Kynga's, 2008). This approach of content analysis is used in this paper following the eight steps recommended by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009: 308 - 19) which are preparing data, specifying analysis unit, determining the categories and the scheme of coding, testing the codes (validating in a pilot study), text coding, testing the text coding consistency (checking through revising and repeating coding), drawing conclusions, and reporting the findings (P: 107 - 115).

Many features of the descriptive content analysis technique make it appropriate to the objectives of this study, such as its unobtrusiveness (smooth uninterrupted data collection process), the approximately permanent nature of data, and the explicitness of the analysis scheme. It also lends itself to reliability procedures as inter-raters (other researchers) can use the data with the same scheme of analysis to necessarily obtain the same results, or to verification through replications and more revisions made by the researcher to bridge any gaps and correct potential mistakes.

The written texts and the visuals in the three intermediate textbooks, Students' Books and their opposing three Activity Books of "English for Iraq" textbook series used in the intermediate schools of Iraq, are the primary source of data for this study. All other materials including the teachers' guides, video and audio materials are excluded because they mostly duplicate the same written materials; therefore, the cultural load of the textbooks lurk mainly in the teaching materials of the students' books and the tasks in the activity books. The textbooks shown in table below, are the first-hand source of data for analysis. It is noticeable that the textbooks are all authored by foreigners (non-Iraqis).

Table 1. Authors and publishers of the “English for Iraq” textbooks adopted in intermediate schools in Iraq

Textbook	Authors	Publisher
First Intermediate	Terry O’Neill Peter Snow	Garnet Educational (2017)
Second Intermediate	Terry O’Neill Peter Snow	Garnet Educational (2017)
Third Intermediate	Terry O’Neill Peter Snow	Garnet Educational (2017)

Each textbook consists of eight units. Almost all of the units contain ten lessons each. The total investigated units in this study is 24 units. Analysis of the written texts and the visuals in the three students’ books and the opposing three activity books is conducted with frequency occurrences. The analysis unit is any theme depicting the intended concepts within the framework that encompass both the cultural types and dimensions, whether this them is illustrated in a word, a phrase, a sentence, a passage or any unit of written texts or visuals. The framework is a checklist according to which the descriptive content analysis is performed; it consists of two models (coding schemes), Aliakbari’s (2004) model of cultural types (source, target, international, and neutral). And Yuen’s 4-Ps model for the cultural dimensions (products, practices, perspectives, and persons). The frequency occurrence (e.g. how often) of the cultural aspects (types and dimensions) are counted, as Yuen (2011) believes that frequencies reflect the breadth of the cultural representations in textbooks (P: 460). The checklist is validated by a panel of four experts (university profs), and reliability is obtained through checking consistency through a pilot study with a peer-researcher on three random units of the textbooks.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings and discussion of this paper are articulated in a sequence showing the answers of the two research questions respectively, reflecting in turn the objectives of this study. The first research question is about showing the representation of the cultural types in textbooks’ materials, to discover any dominance that may result to acculturation. The second research question is about showing the representation of the cultural dimensions in the textbooks’ materials, to discover any dominance that may result to emphasizing the kind of culture, whether surface or deep. Accordingly, the approach of integrating culture in these textbooks can be disclosed.

Representations of Cultural Types

This section is related to answering the first research question about any potential sharp difference or imbalance in proportions of representing the cultural types in the mate-

rials of the textbooks under study. In view of the findings shown in (Figure 1) below, the source culture in “English for Iraq” textbook series is the dominant cultural type followed by the neutral type, followed also by the international type, and finally comes the target culture as the least represented type in the content.

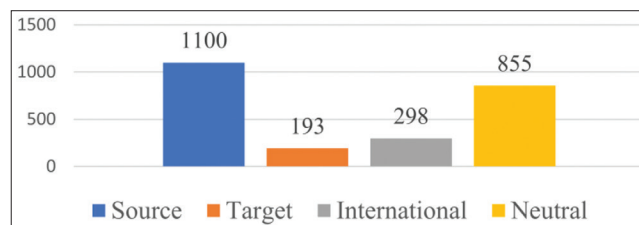


Figure 1. Cultural types proportions in the “English for Iraq” textbooks used in intermediate schools in Iraq



Figure 2. Source culture representations in “English for Iraq” textbooks for intermediate schools in Iraq

Both cultural types, source and neutral, constitute the majority of more than two thirds of the total cultural content of the textbooks. There is a sharp difference in occurrences of these two types from those of the target and international types. The sharp difference indicates an imbalanced representation with the dominance of the Iraqi culture.

The prevailing Iraqi local culture takes different presentations in the texts and visuals in the textbooks, such as reporting names or persons like Hala, Adel, Rashid, and Samar, or descriptions of Iraqi places like Emadiya, Duhok, and Mosul, or presenting the Iraqi civilization historical place like Ur, or showing birds and animals in the Iraqi environment and geography or referring to the Iraqi food and so on. For instance, in the first intermediate textbook lesson in Unit one, entitled “Richard in Iraq” there are six pictures from Iraq, in the second intermediate textbook there is “Jalal’s story” containing another Iraqi name, Ibrahim, and two visual demonstrations of the persons.

The over-emphasis of the source culture goes in line with the conclusion of Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990) study in which they studied the EFL teaching materials in secondary schools in Morocco. They realized that local culture dominance encourages the learners to identify themselves and not to alienate. Consequently, in new Moroccan programs it is determined to “keep foreign cultural content to the minimum” (P: 9). Similarly, the Iraqi textbooks, according to such a conclusion, encourage learners to well identify themselves away from alienation.

The neutral culture comes next to the dominating source culture (see figure 1 above) according to the frequency occurrences of the cultural representations in the textbooks. Neutral culture can be manifested in general-information or scientific topics such as The Media, Sports, Healthy lifestyle, Danger – Environment, Safety, and Health and so on.

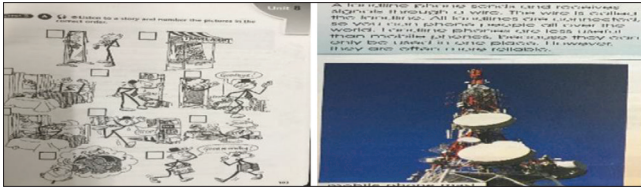


Figure 3. Neutral culture representations in the “English for Iraq” textbooks for intermediate schools in Iraq

Another sort of the neutral culture manifestations is the representations that can't be attributed to any culture like Cartoon visuals. For example, in the third intermediate textbook there is a lesson “A perfect Holiday” having an invitation to come to a tourist (anonymous) city to camp, swim, horse-ride, fish and sail, with seven visual demonstrations in the same page.

The third in sequence of proportions is the international culture type which can obviously be regarded as under-represented in comparison with source and neutral types. According to Alptekin (2002, 57), it is the international culture together with the local culture that should constitute the setting of language use which involves interactional situations between natives and non-natives. In view of this under-representation, this blend in interactional situations is also expected to be less-offered in the materials of the Iraqi textbooks. Still, there are few examples of dialogues between an Iraqi and a native-speaker character in this series of textbooks fostering this blend, like the one in four consecutive lessons (4,5,6,7) in Unit four of first intermediate textbook; these lessons are referring to the Japanese culture, and are under titles “Which one is Yuki?”, “Fuad meets Yuki”, “Fuad first meal in Japan” and “A postcard from Fuad”, they demonstrate Fuad’s visit to Japan.



Figure 4. International culture representations in the “English for Iraq” textbooks for intermediate schools in Iraq

Finally, target culture is represented with the least proportion. This finding is compatible with one of the conclusions of Mahmood, Asghar & Husein (2012) study, who explored the cultural types in “Step Ahead 1” text-

book for the sixth standard in schools of Pakistan to find out that the book does not provide learners with sufficient exposure to the target culture.

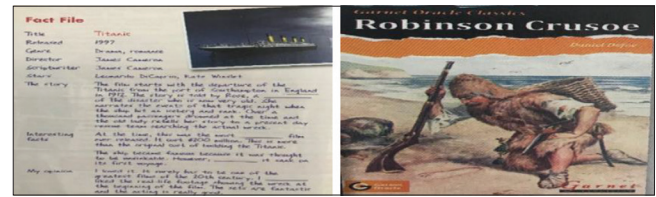


Figure 5. Target culture representations in the “English for Iraq” textbooks for intermediate schools in Iraq

It is true that the source culture is to be represented in textbooks as its negligence, or low-proportion representation, may lead to learners’ misconceptions about their local culture and, consequently, to a possible alienation (Mahmood, Asghar & Husein, 2012: 40), but it is equally true that learners’ exposure to the target culture is essential in that it can satisfy some learners’ eagerness to “precisely” learn it to quip themselves with an access to other parts of the world and to a life style they may aspire to (Kramsch, 2013: 59). Still, target cultural should not also be over-represented. Authors like Xiao (2011) in China, Matsuda (2002) in Japan, Alsaif (2016) in Saudi Arabia, and Yuen (2011) in Hong Kong affirm the focus on the target culture in the textbooks they investigated. One option to deal with this dichotomy of source/target cultures seems to be that textbook writers should avoid the sharp difference made available in the cultural representations particularly of these two cultural types in textbooks, and of the other types as well. In other words, amid of these two extremes (source and target cultures) a comprise can be brought about as, according to Dewi et.al (2016) in their study of ELT textbooks in Indonesia, an ideal presentation of teaching materials in textbooks could amalgamate source culture and other global cultures including the target culture in a “proportional blend” (P: 2). As a perspective, this amalgamation of the target culture with the source culture to “localize” the content can also be supported by “Glocalization” approach where TESL practitioners are invited to think globally but act locally (Tiplady, 2003: p. 4). Considering the dominant occurrences and the proportions of the cultural types in the textbooks under study, such a blend is introduced to the minimum, and thus it can't be said that such a presentation is knowingly adopted by textbooks writers as an option of compromise.

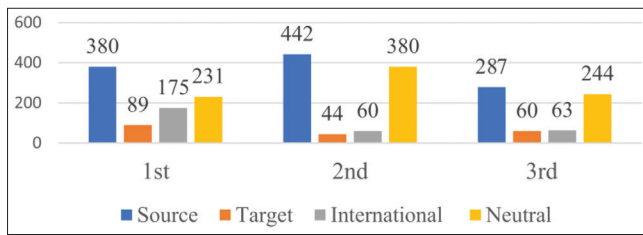


Figure 6. Cultural types distribution in each of the three intermediate “English for Iraq” textbooks

In a comparison among the three textbooks, (Figure 6) indicates that the second intermediate grade textbook shows the sharpest imbalance as it has the highest proportions of source and neutral representations as opposed to the lowest representations of the international and target representations.

Representations of the Cultural Dimensions

This section is concerned with answering the second research question about any potential difference in proportions of representing the cultural dimensions in the materials of the textbooks under study. In view of the findings revealed in (Figure 7) below, the “product” dimension of culture covers the highest occurrences in the textbooks, followed by “persons” dimension, with a recognizable difference with “practices”, leaving the “perspective” of distinguishably-least representations. The two dominant dimensions in the textbook series’ content are, then, “products” and “persons”. But it should also be noted that “Practices” can’t be considered neglected or not well-paid attention to, rather they have a proportion of approximately a bit less than one fifth of the total representations. Perspectives constitute a serious problem for not keeping a balance, and bring about sharp difference in the dimensions’ distribution.

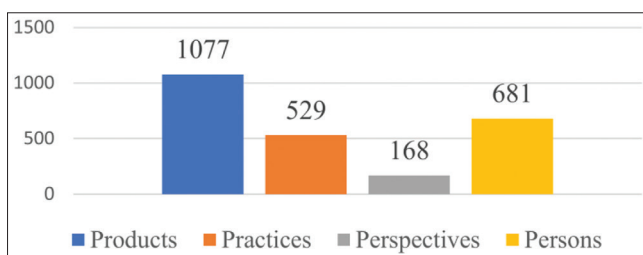


Figure 7. Cultural dimensions’ proportions in “English for Iraq” textbooks used in intermediate schools in Iraq

The domination of the products and persons dimensions over the practices and perspectives indicates that the majority of the textbooks’ texts and visuals represent culturally superficial materials, i.e. the surface culture is more emphasized in the textbooks’ content and not the deep culture.

Products can be observed in many representations, such as the ruins especially those of the Iraqi civilization like Ur and Hatra ancient cities, and landmarks like Eiffel Tower of France found in the first intermediate textbook, or food like the Iraqi dishes of Masquof (Iraqi fish dish) and the tea prepared on wood fire in Project (1) entitled (Summer Camp: Iraq – outdoor experience), in addition to Madgooga (traditional Iraqi recipe), milkshake drink, and Walnut cake (Iraqi snack) in the Project (2) entitled (amazing dates: a gift from Iraq to the world); the two projects are in the second intermediate textbook, or arts as it is the case with the Fact File of the Titanic movie in the third intermediate textbook.

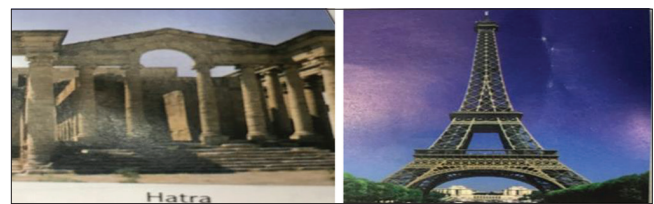


Figure 8. Products dimension representations in “English for Iraq” textbooks for intermediate schools

Persons comes next in the dimensions’ representations. There is a distinctive load names like Khalid, Rashid, Abbas, Sami, Noor, Tariq, Wijdan, Mona, Dalia, John, Bob, Lucy, Len, Yuki...etc. Some famous characters are included like the old physicist Abu Ali al-Hasan Ibn al-Haitham (al-Hazan, al-basri), the English comedian Mr. Bean in the third intermediate textbook. Other studies share the predominance of local names and characters in textbooks with (English for Iraq) series, such as Abdullah, N. and Chandran, S.K (2009) study in which the cultural content of a Malaysian textbook (KBSM English Form 4) is examined, and is then reported that “the characters portrayed in this textbook are mostly local characters” (P: 16).

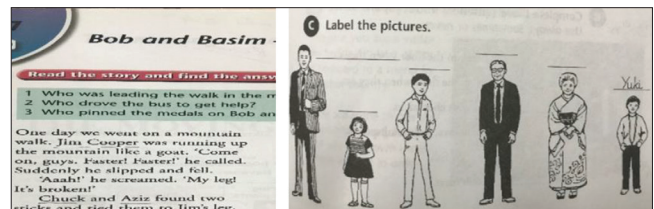


Figure 9. Persons dimension representations in “English for Iraq” textbooks for intermediate schools

Practices come third in the sequence of the dimensions’ portions. It can then be claimed that there is still a need to present practices to the Iraqi learners with more authentic subjects and more every-day-life situations from English-speaking language countries. Practices take various manifestations in the textbooks. For instance, the

holidays, hobbies, social and individual celebrations, or sport practices. There are “Eid al-Fitr” “New Year’s Day in London” lessons in the first intermediate textbook, “Keep fit” and “The sports center” lessons in the second intermediate textbook, “A perfect holiday” and “What is your hobby” lessons in the third intermediate textbook.

Practices cater for the deep culture manifestations. Borrowing Hall’s (1976) analogy of culture as an “ice-berg” encompassing visible aspects of culture in the ice-berg- tip and the invisible aspects of culture embedded within the submerged part, Jerrold Frank (2013) asserts that the cultural products are surface culture (the visible part) while practices and perspectives are deep culture (the invisible part) which “underline the behavior of a specific culture [and] are difficult to observe” (P: 3).

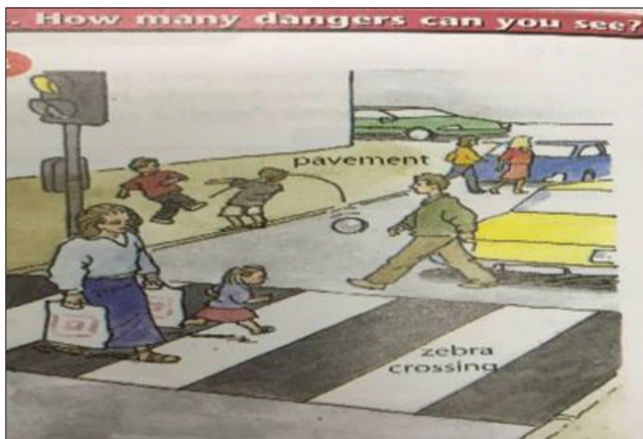


Figure 10. Practices dimension representations in “English for Iraq” textbooks for intermediate schools

Perspectives are the most under-represented dimension in this study. This indicates that the Iraqi learners in intermediate schools miss opportunities to discuss and then be familiar with the deep culture of values, beliefs, ideals, meanings and ideas about aspects of their and other’s cultures. Perspectives can be a basic part of materials that Wandel (2002) recommends for textbooks writers to provide materials which provoke discussions and opinions, because “Students should be given communicative and pragmatic tools to ‘negotiate meaning’, to develop interactive and meta-linguistic skills, to be able to tolerate and endure ambiguity” (P: 73).

These findings are contrary to Nomnian (2013) who scrutinized the cultural dimensions in six English textbooks in secondary schools in Thailand. The author also adopted Yuen’s (2011) 4-P model adding a fifth dimension, “places”. The most frequently-occurring dimension in these textbooks is “perspectives” demonstrated in texts and illustrations that reflect the way people of Thailand voice their opinions and thoughts particularly to foreigners. In comparison, and since the perspectives dimension gets the least representations and products is the highest represented in the current study, it can then be said that

“English for Iraq” textbooks for intermediate schools do not give the learners the same learning opportunities for voicing up their opinions as Thailand ELT textbooks do.

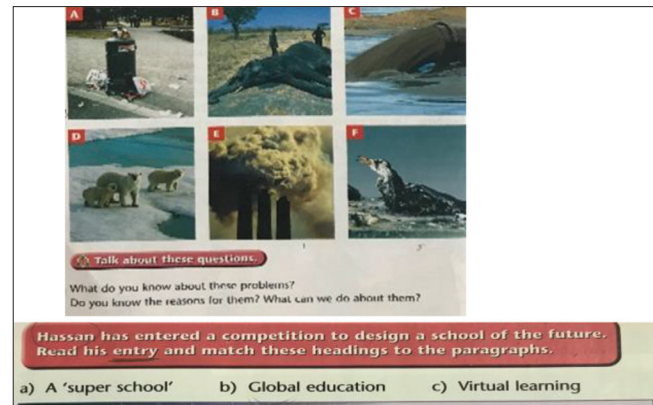


Figure 11. Perspectives dimension in “English for Iraq” textbooks for intermediate schools)

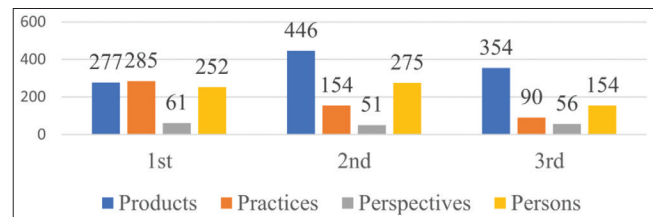


Figure 12. Cultural dimensions’ distribution in each of the three intermediate “English for Iraq” textbooks

There are many examples for the materials which are identified within “perspectives” dimension in the textbooks under investigation, such as a task in the activity book/first intermediate in which the student is asked to answer the following questions:

1. Who is the luckiest boy/girl in your class?
2. Who is the friendliest boy/girl in your class?
3. Who is the happiest boy/girl in your class?
4. Who is the noisiest boy/girl in your class?

Through the answers the learner is expected to negotiate the meaning of luck, friendship, happiness and noisiness as his/her interpretation might be different from the others and is necessary to justify the answer.

In a comparison among the three textbooks, (Figure 12) indicates that the second intermediate grade textbook shows the sharpest imbalance as it has the highest proportions of products and persons as opposed to the lowest representations of the perspectives dimension.

Finally, though different only in the domination of the cultural types, the findings of the current study are similar to the Gómez Rodríguez (2015) study in concern of the representation of the cultural dimensions. In Rodrigues’s work, the cultural content of three EFL textbooks used by undergraduate students at the university level in Colombia are explored; surface culture elements predominate over the deep culture elements as “the textbooks contain only static and congratulatory topics of surface culture

and omit complex and transformative forms of culture” (P: 176). Perspectives proportion of representations in a textbook can encompass such complex cultural items that can encourage discussion, argument, comparison and expression of opinions on the part of the learners, on the contrary of the use of the static nature of fact-stating materials. But, based on the lowest proportion of the perspectives in the textbooks under investigation, it can be said that intermediate English for Iraq series share this conclusion of lacking such deep-culture materials.

More significantly, the findings are similar to the results obtained in a study about the same ELT context of Iraq by Sarab AL-Akraa (2013) in Florida, University of Central Florida. Sarab explored culture integration in the primary fifth-grade textbook “English for Iraq”. In her findings, she criticizes the limited role of culture which is not taken into consideration except in superficial representations like some names in dialogues and some visual appearances in the textbook (P: 60).

But the findings of this study go, to a great extent, in line with Shin et al. (2011) conclusions. Culture integration is investigated in seven internationally-dispersed ELT textbook series (Side by Side, World Link, New Headway English Course, Fifty-Fifty, True colors, Interchange, World View). They pointed out that most of the cultural content in these textbooks remains largely at the traditional approach of representation which does not provide the learners with opportunities to engage in deeper level of reflection on profound cultural matters; it is “mainly related to tourism and surface level culture” (P: 264). As mentioned by Omaggio (1986: 362), Galloway, in the eighties, recognized four (traditional) approaches to deal with the issue of culture, the “Frankenstein” approach of few number of facts represented randomly about cultures, the “4-F” approach of cultural representations in food, fairs, festivals, and folks, the “tour-guide” approach of representations about cities, monuments and historical or geographical materials, and finally the “By the way” approach of isolated sporadic bits of cultural (see also Campos, 2009: 386).

CONCLUSION

As indicated above, the cultural content of “English for Iraq” textbook series for intermediate schools in Iraq shows sharp difference in representing the four cultural types (source, target, international, and neutral culture) with the domination of the source (Iraqi local). The second cultural type that follows in proportion of frequency occurrences is the neutral culture. Source and neutral cultures constitute the majority of the cultural load of the textbooks leaving narrow space for the international culture and the target culture which is the least-represented type.

This imbalance of cultural types has two main indications. First, due to the low representation of the foreign cultures (target and international), acculturation is not, to a very high degree, expected to take place. But, this does not mean that the target culture is to be neglected or under-represented, as target culture representations could encourage the students to “understand the cultural references and views that the native speakers of the particular target culture possess” (Rajabi & Kitabi, 2012: 706). Introducing target culture in textbooks does not necessarily mean threatening or jeopardizing the students’ local culture; rather, target culture can allow the learners to better realize their culture and identity (Nikou and Soleimani 2012: 647). Second, based on the distinctive dominance of the source culture, the textbooks can then be described as mono-cultural.

The textbooks’ cultural content also reflects a prevalence of the “products” cultural dimension over the other four dimensions “persons”, “practices” and ‘perspectives” respectively. Perspectives is the lowest-represented dimension. Due to the dominant majority of products and persons, the textbooks form a view of structure focusing more on the surface culture than on the deep culture which is principally loaded in practices and perspectives. The Iraqi learners in intermediate classes would then miss opportunities to be familiar with the deep culture of values, beliefs, meanings and ideals in their and other’s cultures. Materials with the “perspectives” dimension are basic for encouraging learners to voice out their opinions and thoughts in order to culturally adapt their beings.

As such, the textbooks share many of the characteristics of the traditional approaches of integrating culture in textbooks, like the 4-Fs approach when the students are more exposed to folk dances, fairs, festivals, and food, or the tourist-guide approach when students are more exposed to rivers, cities, monuments...etc. or by-the-way approach when the students are more exposed to sporadic bits of behaviors for making contrasts.

To sum up, in the light of the description, analysis and interpretation of the cultural content of “English for Iraq” textbooks for intermediate schools in Iraq, acculturation is not expected to take place with the use of these textbooks, and the materials are mostly introduced with culturally superficial themes. This series of textbooks can then be described as following a traditional approach in integrating culture in the materials with sporadic 4-Fs representations predominated with source culture leading them to look like tourist’s guide books, with little space for learners to touch the foreign cultures particularly the target culture.

The implications of this study are mainly directed to Ministry of Education in Iraq as the most concerned institution in Iraq with EFL process, to reconsider “English for Iraq” textbook series in regard of culture in-

corporation in the textbooks' content. Avoiding sharp differences in cultural representations may save the textbooks of being culturally imbalanced and of the consequences accordingly. Writing or selecting textbooks in the EFL context of Iraq would be, as a result, expected to improve for a better status.

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