# CULTURAL CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE ELT TEXTBOOKS IN LIBYA

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*Abstract:* Language and culture are two crucial factors in building any civilization; they undoubtedly work alongside and have influenced each other for generations. This study aims to measure to what extents do the ELT textbooks applied in Libya reflect the cultural references; native culture, target culture, international culture, and culture free. It also observes the cultural categories that have had the most emphasis and subdivided into subcategories highlighted afterwards. In order to achieve this, this research makes a comparison between the ELT textbooks conducted in Libya and selected two different textbooks belong to different series to collect the necessary data, the first one is the Second Preparatory English textbook out of the ELT series English for Libya which are applied for the 8th grades in the Libyan public schools. Whereas the second textbook is the first level of the Face2Face Starter series which is Face2Face Starter and it is published by the Cambridge University Press and applied by the language teaching institutions in Libya. In order to analyse the cultural content in the textbooks, the study used the model prepared by Ramirez and Hall (1999:53). The research ends up with many interesting findings that are clarified the dominance of the native culture, a humble presence of the international and free culture, in addition to a poor existence for the target culture. Out of the percentages of the cultural categories and subcategories, the study shows the Libyan textbooks' high interest in the Social, Personal, and Environmental categories at the expense of Political and Religion categories. Whereas the international version of ELT textbook Face2Face tend to focus on all these categories evenly and in a balanced way except the Religion category which show less attendance in general.

*Keywords:* native culture; target culture; international culture; cultural categories; cultural references.

## 1.   INTRODUCTION

### 1.1.  Background of the Study

Language represents an extremely important part of our existential entity, in one way or another it constitutes the pristine identity of human beings and reflects their lifestyle through the culture they are living into. However, the culture; in turn, plays a prominent role in determining and orienting the language the way that serves the community, as well as its legacy, and keeps it connected to its past, present, and its future. And this emerges in both communities' behaviors and traditions. (Al-sofi, 2018)

As it has been the very essential key tool for learning languages in general and English in particular, the textbook was the fundamental material in this work and analysing it in terms of the cultural content was the main aim of the research. This paper has tried to focus on one of the Middle Eastern countries and choose Libya and the Libyan textbooks to be our study field. And in order to obtain clarification of how often the Libyan ELT textbooks represent the cultural elements related to the native, target, and international culture, this study picked the Second Preparatory ELT textbooks in Libya addressed the following; the culture categories, the areas of the cultural categories (culture references), and the subcategories that have been illustrated in the analysis.

The research on the other hand analysed, the textbook belongs to *Face2Face starter* syllabus in order to make a detailed comparison between; *English for Libya* and *Face2Face* textbooks as both are used in this country as part of the educational curriculum. The analysis will be considering the culture categories, the culture references, and the culture subcategories of each textbook respectively.

### 1.2. Statement of the Problem

Teaching and learning English language in the Middle East is still a critical issue and suffers from different aspects, we can figure that out obviously through observing the English level of the students of these countries, they generally struggle with expressing their feeling and needs. For the sake of attempting to understand the reasons of the Middle Eastern struggles with learning English, we decided to pick one of the Middle Eastern countries –and that was Libya-, and study one of its ELT textbooks in terms of the distribution of the cultural content to create an adequate contextualization about the Libyan ELT textbooks used in the Libyan public school, and thus, we can assign the mainlines about the reasons of the gap between the cultures and how might the sufficient textbook cause huge difference in the learning process.

As it is exceedingly recognized that textbook is considered one of the most common foreign language teaching materials (Allen, 2008). It creates the very first connection between the teacher and students, besides it allows learners to gradually gain knowledge for being prepared to facilitate the learning process for learners and help them digest it in an organized way (Mithans, 2020).

### 1.3. Significance and Implications

English, as it has been the most important language in the world in terms of many reasons such as; its being one of the official languages of the UN, the most used language on the internet, the press language for many centuries, and of course almost all the advanced technological achievements and the political predomination belong to English speaking countries (Crystal, 1997).

According to Ulum (2014), the textbooks should fulfill students' needs by developing students through interacting with different cultures. He claims that exposing students to different cultures would improve their linguistic, cultural, and social skills. One of the issues threatening the concept of cultural interdependence is being sufficient with learning the indigenous culture and neglecting other cultures. For the sake of achieving reliable study, this paper will analyze the $8^{th}$ grade of the Libyan ELT textbooks -the Second Preparatory *English for Libya*- that is applied in the Libyan public schools and *Face2Face Starter* which is applied in the educational institutions in Libya. Content analysis will be conducted as a research method for analyzing the cultural content in the selected textbook.

This study ends up with interesting findings in which we can comprehend some of the reasons behind Libyan students' difficulties in learning English as well as their limited perceptions about other cultures besides the target culture. It clarifies an overall dominance of the native culture, a weak presence of the world culture with a poor presence of the target culture. In one word, most of the curriculums applied in Libyan schools are particularly focused on the native culture. The target and world culture are in the second plan, taking into consideration that the world culture is distinctly attached to great importance in the Libyan textbooks compared with the target one.

### 1.4. Research Questions:

1.4.1. Which culture categories are presented in the ELT textbooks English for Libya and Face2Face in Libya?

1.4.2. What are the subcategories of each cultural category, and which one is mentioned the most?

1.4.3. What cultural references in the ELT textbooks in Libya have received the most emphasis?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Language and Culture

It has become known in linguistic studies that language is not just a tool of communication, nor it is a group of sounds with which all people express their intentions and needs through; It far exceeded that and became a bridge for communication and unification of concepts between individuals, groups, and generations (Niswa, 2022; Daulay, 2022), thus it is the means that enables the individual to join a group or even exclude him. Hence, Halliday and Hasan (1989) pointed out that the situation in which linguistic interaction takes place gives the participants a great deal of information about the meanings that are being exchanged, and the meanings that are likely to be exchanged.

According to his definition, Kramsch (1996:2) defines culture as "the attitudes and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving and remembering shared by members of the community". A large number of studies addressed the impact and the association between the language and the culture in foreign language education and stressed the significance of cultural integration within school curriculums as it has a great role in promoting cultural rapprochement (McKeown & Diboll, 2011), related to the various cultural orientations such as; aesthetics, philosophy, history, and science (Çelik, 2013; Erbay, 2013). Thus, McDaniel and Samovar (2014) stated that culture "is an extremely popular and increasingly overused term in contemporary society" (p. 9).

In this flow of studies, Brown (2001) emphasizes that language and culture are interconnected in a complex way so that they cannot be separated without losing the significance of either language or culture. Byram (1991) in addition, confirms that language should 'unlock the door' to the culture. Whereas Kramsch (2013, p.71) indicates to the culture as "outdoor gardens with no meaning in themselves unless they are related to and contrasted with indoor apartments and dwellings". By the same token Allen (1985) stated that there was a distinct relationship between language and culture, and the phenomena and efforts of learning the language was not in vain but to read the literary masterpieces of the civilization in 1900s.

### Big C" culture, and "Little c" culture

The "Big C" culture is the concept that refers to the most evident elements of culture with which people learn about and realise the outlines that determine any culture. Therefore, in order to learn about a new culture, the initial features and elements that become the most distinguished and easy to be noticed about that culture are the "Big C" cultural elements those are; literature, architecture, music, dance, and history creating the solid side of a culture (Hu, 2002). On the other hand, there are the elements which belong -in one way or another- to the culture itself. However, it creates the intangible type of it, and that is the "little c". The "little c" concept reflects those elements of culture which do not exactly form the culture itself but it adds values and principles on, to learn a new culture it might requires a bit longer time to comprehend and observe the "little c" elements. Furthermore, it refers to the culturally influenced beliefs and perceptions explained by the language that belongs to it. The "little c" framework includes communication etiquette, common gestures, language symbols, community's customs and norms, proper behaviors and manners, etc. (Halverson, 1985).

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The main aim of this study is to obtain thorough data about the cultural content of the English textbooks used in Libya. Out of the qualitative research method, this study adopted the content analysis in textbooks as a research tool to calculate the results, reach percentages, and make a comprehensive analysis based on the collected data.

**3.1 Materials Used in This Study:**

● The Second Preparatory textbook, *English for Libya,* Garnet Education

● Face2Face Starter, Cambridge University Press

The first selected textbook *English for Libya* was prepared to serve the 8th graders attending the Libyan public schools. The book is written and published in 2020 by a group of Libyan educational publishers in the Curricula and Educational Research Centre in the State of Libya. *English for Libya* is a series of textbooks prepared and organized to be appropriate for Libyan students and culture, the series is divided into three stages; primary (1-6), preparatory (1-3), and secondary (1-3). It is worthy to mention that the Libyan school system consists of; six years of primary school, three years of middle school, and three years of high school, and the curricula are distributed accordingly, where each grade has its copy of *English for Libya* with its student's book and workbook.

The *Face2Face Starter* student's book consists of ten units, each unit covers certain topic which is divided into four parts, for instance, Unit 1 consists of (1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D), and at the end of each unit there exists a Review page, which is prepared to be a revision and a repetition for the whole unit. Each unit covers the various language skills respectively, Vocabulary, Grammar and Real World, Reading, Listening, Help with Listening and Help with Sounds, Speaking, and Writing. And the units of the book- as they are shown in Table (1-3)- are one by one: New Friends, All About You, People and Places, My World, Day-to-Day Life, Towns and Cities, Love It, Like It, Hate It!, Days to Remember, Going Away, and My Future.

**Table (1) the units and topics of *Face2Face* Starters textbook**

| Units | Topics | Pages |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | New Friends | 6-13 |
| 2 | All About You | 14-21 |
| 3 | People and Places | 22-29 |
| 4 | My World | 30-37 |
| 5 | Day-to-Day Life | 38-45 |
| 6 | Towns and Cities | 46-53 |
| 7 | Love It, Like It, Hate It! | 54-61 |
| 8 | Days to Remember | 62-69 |
| 9 | Going Away | 70-77 |
| 10 | My Future | 78-85 |

**Table (2) the separate section in the *Face2Face Starter* textbook.**

| Sections | Topics | Pages |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Pair and Group Work: Student Group A | 86- 91 |
| 2 | Pair and Group Work: Student Group B | 92- 97 |
| 3 | Pair and Group Work: Other activities | 98- 99 |
| 4 | Language Summary 1 | 100- 101 |
| 5 | Language Summary 2 | 102- 103 |
| 6 | Language Summary 3 | 104- 105 |
| 7 | Language Summary 4 | 106- 107 |
| 8 | Language Summary 5 | 108- 109 |
| 9 | Language Summary 6 | 110- 111 |
| 10 | Language Summary 7 | 112- 113 |
| 11 | Language Summary 8 | 114- 115 |
| 12 | Language Summary 9 | 116- 117 |
| 13 | Language Summary 10 | 118- 119 |
| 14 | Recording Scripts | 120- 125 |
| 15 | Phonemic Symbols | 126 |
| 16 | Classroom Instructions | 127 |
| 17 | CD-R0M/Audio CD Instructions | 128-129 |

**3.2 Data Collection**

In the phase of the Cultural Content Analysis in Textbooks, the model prepared by Ramirez and Hall (1999:53) is considered to analyze the content of *English for Libya* and *Face2Face* textbooks. The model contains two main sections, the categories of culture which are; Social, Personal, Religion, arts, humanities, Political systems, institutions, Environmental, which subdivided into subcategories that are mentioned in Table (2-1), and belonged to those categories indicated before. On the other hand, there is the reflection of those cultural categories which is presented through the cultural references; and denoted by: the Source Culture, Target Culture, International world Culture, and Culture Free (refers to the category that does not have any source of culture). And these references will be presented in separated tables mentioning the various percentages that the textbooks in Libya have in terms of the cultural references. Table (2-3) provides a sample of the cultural references.

**Table (3) categories of culture and their subclasses (modified model).**

| | Categories of Culture | Subclasses |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Social | Leisure |
| | | Population/nationality |
| | | Work |
| | | Social classes and Attitudes |
| 2 | Personal | Eating/shopping |
| | | Family relationships |
| | | Housing/ accommodation |
| | | Health problems & Parts of the body |
| | | Technology& Machine |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Transportation |
| | | Money & Business |
| 3 | Religion, arts, humanities | Literature/music/arts |
| | | Folklore/history |
| | | Linguistic variation/ nonverbal behavior |
| | | Religion |
| 4 | Political systems, institutions | Government/non-government institutions |
| | | Education |
| | | Law, order, and justice |
| | | Publications |
| | | Products and tools |
| 5 | Environmental | Natural resources |
| | | Geography |
| | | Weather |
| | | Economic development |
| | | Urban vs. rural |
| | | Animals& pets and Plants |

Table (4) which provides a sample of the cultural references that are Culture free, Source Culture, Target Culture, and International Target Culture.

**Table (4) the percentages of the cultural references mentioned in the textbook.**

| | Culture reference | The total number mentioned | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Culture Free | | |
| 2 | Source Culture | | |
| 3 | Target Culture | | |
| 4 | International Culture | | |
| | Total | | |

### 3.3 *Face2Face Starter* Textbook Analysis Results

Table (5) illustrates the pecentages of the cultural themes mentioned in the textbook.

**Table (5) the percentages of the cultural themes mentioned in the textbook.**

| Theme | The total number mentioned | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Social | 329 | 39.54% |
| Personal | 149 | 17.9 % |
| Political | 165 | 19.83 % |
| Environmental | 115 | 13.82 % |
| Religion, arts, humanities | 74 | 8.89 % |
| Total | 832 | 100 % |

A comprehensive analysis of the *Face2Face starter* ELT textbook is seen in the table (16) above, there is a quite large concentration on the social theme where its percentage presence is the highest with 39.54% percent, with a convergent percentages of the political systems and institutions theme as well as the personal theme which are 19.83 % and 17.9 % respectively , followed by the Environmental theme presence that is 13.82 % percent. And the lowest presence theme belongs to the Religion, arts, and humanities theme with 8.86 % percent.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to reach a clear finding of how ELT Textbooks in Libya deal with the cultural content, in the respect of the native culture, target culture, and world culture. The materials used in this study were the Second Preparatory *English for Libya* textbook which have being taught in the Libyan public schools as well as the ELT textbook of *Face2Face Starter* which is an international edition applied in the educational institutions and English language private centres. The study concluded with results underline the remarkable dominance of the native culture in the 8th graders curriculum with a percentage of 42.18%, it follows with the target culture with 21.87% and then the world culture comes last with 35.93%.

That eventually reflects the Libyan interest in having a well-equipped generation concerning its native culture, in the extremely important period of its growth. The presence of the target culture seems to be poor which is interestingly controversial and indicates to the Libyan more interest in the world culture content unlike the target culture. It is noticeable for the country of Libya to establish the native culture in its very young generations so they can acquire it naturally and later on learn about other cultures consciously.

The second focus turns to the world culture and finally the target culture. It is worth mentioning that there should be reconsideration as well as a quick reviewing on the formation and constitution of the Libyan ELT textbook in the respect of the target culture content, and the findings of this study may assist in one way or another the authors, curriculum designers, developers or educators to take right steps towards cover such cultural gaps in the future.

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