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Research Paper

Critical Cultural Awareness in Iranian ELT Coursebooks: Coursebook Realizations and Ideals

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Abstract

Numerous academics in the domains of language instruction, cultural studies, communication studies, ethnic studies, gender studies, etc. have focused on critical cultural awareness (CCA) as a crucial element of intercultural competency. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate whether the cultural elements in Iranian high school coursebooks (*Vision Series*) have been (un)touched by the ministry of education. To this end, the conversation contents of the *Vision Series* (levels 1-3) were examined by the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) to evaluate possible intercultural competence used in *Vision Series*. It was found that the content was biased toward the source culture in general. Finally, some ideal ways of presenting culture in the coursebooks were put forward in the form of a cultural rubric. The pedagogical implications of this study are discussed.

Keywords: *Critical Cultural Awareness; ELT Coursebooks; Intercultural Communicative Competence; Vision Series*

تحقق ایده آل ها و آگاهی فرهنگی انتقادی در کتاب های درسی ایران

تعداد زیادی از دانشگایان در حوزه های آموزش زبان، مطالعات فرهنگی، مطالعات ارتباطات، مطالعات قومیتی، مطالعات جنسیتی و غیره بر آگاهی فرهنگی انتقادی (CCA) به عنوان عنصری حیاتی در صلاحیت بین فرهنگی تمرکز کرده اند، از این رو، این پژوهش با هدف بررسی عناصر در ایران انجام شد. کتابهای درسی دبیرستان (سری ویژن) توسط وزارت آموزش و پرورش (دسته نخورده) شده است، به همین منظور، محتوای گفتگوی مجموعه چشم انداز (سطوح ۱-۳) با فرآیند تحلیل سلسله مراتبی (AHP) برای ارزیابی بین فرهنگی احتمالی مورد بررسی قرار گرفت. شایستگی مورد استفاده در سری ویژن مشخص شد که محتوا به طور کلی نسبت به فرهنگ مبدأ تعصب دارد و در نهایت راه های ایده آلی برای ارائه فرهنگ در کتاب های درسی در قالب یک روبریک فرهنگی ارائه شد. مفاهیم آموزشی این مطالعه عبارتند از: مورد بحث قرار گرفت.

واژگان کلیدی: آگاهی فرهنگی انتقادی، کتاب های درسی ELT، صلاحیت ارتباطی بین فرهنگی

Introduction

Prior research suggests the significant impact of English language teaching (ELT) materials on the development of English language proficiency, and cultural and cross-cultural skills (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Setyono & Widodo, 2019). Many academics also contend that ELT coursebooks serve as ideological artifacts, and the cultural materials they include form students' identities and affect their perception of other cultures (Awayed-Bishara, 2015; McGee, 2011; Setyono & Widodo, 2019). In addition, because the choice to include or exclude a particular culture from coursebooks might have political implications (Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, 2015), there are problems regarding whose culture should be communicated to learners in what setting and how (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014). Considering the mediating function of ELT coursebooks, many general ELT coursebooks used to improve students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities also incorporate some cultural elements. However, in some coursebooks, cultural elements seem to be ignored due to political issues and power relations (Clifford, 1986).

Several academics have made an effort to identify the cultural representation in these ELT coursebooks in response to the emergence of culturally dense coursebooks. They discover that numerous incorrect representations contain errors, excessive generalizations, and biased representations (Li et al., 2020). To our knowledge, not many studies have been done on what and how cultural elements can be regarded and assessed by syllabus designers via a rubric to indicate the ideals in culture in English coursebooks in general and Iranian ELT coursebooks in specific. The majority of these studies, however, focus on general ELT coursebooks. With content analysis and the previously described context, this study scrutinizes Iranian ELT coursebooks used in high schools (Vision Series) to investigate whether cultural elements are presented and critically analyze them based on the gist of critical cultural awareness (CCA) to present a rubric in CCA for ELT coursebooks. This study will provide a tentative explanation of how cultural representations overlap in Iranian ELT coursebooks, a topic that has received little attention, and it will also give some light on how coursebooks are put together.

Literture Review

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is a paradigm for cross-cultural training that equips students of foreign languages with the attitudes, information, and abilities necessary for successful cross-cultural communication (Byram, 2014). The idea of teaching students to engage accountably with persons from diverse linguistic systems, backgrounds, and worldviews is highly emphasized in the literature on intercultural communicative competence (McGee, 2011). To prepare students for intercultural interactions, instructors are recommended to design foreign language lessons that prompt learners to reflect on their perceptions of the target culture as well as opportunities for students to engage in active inquiry about the products, practices, and points of view of a different culture (Maharaja, 2018).

Learners should engage in activities that foster the intercultural competencies required for involvement in mutual interaction with people from different cultures after attitudes and knowledge have been addressed (Byram, 1997). It is advised that teachers create foreign language lessons that encourage learners to consider how they perceive the target culture as well as chances for them to actively inquire about the goods, practices, and points of view of a different culture in order to prepare students for intercultural interactions (Maharaja, 2018).

However, in teaching and disseminating culture, teachers should be provided with coursebooks that assist teachers to raise learners' awareness of culture and in fact lead them to higher levels of critical cultural awareness. Following is an elaboration on the term CCA

Critical Culture Awareness

Byram (1997) defines critical cultural awareness as follows within the paradigm of intercultural communication competence: “An ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices, and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries” (p. 53).

Educators must consider developmentally appropriate scaffolding methods for learning to teach pupils how to analyze the activities, goods, and attitudes of the target culture (Yulita, 2013).

Therefore, the purpose of CCA-related classroom activities is to aid students in considering the sources of their preconceived conceptions and help them determine whether or not these judgments are valid (Byram, 1997). A commitment to the ideology is marked by CCA and is explained as “a system of ideas which drives behavioral choices” (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman 2010, p. 261). Also, Byram (2008) states unequivocally that one of the objectives of CCA is to expose student beliefs while giving students the chance to “critically evaluate ideological concepts that could possibly lead to intercultural conflict” (Yulita, 2013, p. 205). For this, instructors are needed to equip learners with the vocabulary and expressions necessary to avoid disputes resulting from prejudice and stereotyping in cross-cultural encounters. Furthermore, publishers and syllabus designers should provide cultural elements in coursebooks presented for the students while learning a foreign or second language such as English.

Culture and Coursebook Evaluation

Language coursebooks are an important venue for cultural and linguistic reflection, according to Zhang et al. (2022), who looked at the hidden ideas discursively formed in an English Intercultural Communication (EIC) coursebook geared at Chinese English learners. Data were gathered through conversations, case studies, reading passages, cultural notes, and coursebook assignments. Based on their findings, the authors made the case that Chinese coursebooks disregard cultural components because they are oversimplified, imbalanced, and unequally represented, which may impair English learners' understanding of cultural variety.

Aliakbari (2002) looked into which cultures were highlighted in four Iranian English coursebooks' cultural content and how much this contributed to ICC in Iran.

The results showed that the cultural material was quite minimal and limited in both the reading comprehension and new vocabulary parts. Additionally, the potential of the Iranian national English as a Foreign Language (EFL) coursebook, Vision 1, was examined by Derakhshan (2021) from the perspectives of Iranian L2 learners, teachers, and faculty members. The co-instantiation of the image and text was indexical, leaving cultural understanding and connotations largely untouched. Furthermore, the visual and textual elements driving cross-cultural interpretations and meanings were not in alignment with the activities. Consequently, the interviewees provided some options and more culturally engaging visuals. These themes were developed from content and thematic analyses of the interview documents. Overall, the results supported earlier research that showed this newly localized EFL coursebook for Iran offers little room for its readers to become more culturally sensitive.

Despite the fact that these researchers have provided extensive examples of how cultural aspects and identities are organized in coursebooks and have highlighted the shortcomings of present coursebooks for developing intercultural communication skills (Suo et al., 2015), most of them did not present a solution in the form of rubric for the deficiencies existed in coursebooks in order to help coursebook designers and authors to regard ICC in a balanced manner. Hence, the current study tried to niche the gap that existed in the literature. In short, based on the objective of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: Has critical cultural awareness been appropriately addressed in Iranian high school EFL coursebooks (*Vision Series*)?

RQ2: What are some ideal ways of representing critical cultural awareness in EFL coursebooks?

Method

Materials

The coursebooks used in the present research as the materials were 'Vision Series' designed by Iran's ministry of education. They are one of the series of coursebooks in English for EFL learners and designed to help Iranian learners in the first, second, and third grades of junior high school to become communicatively fluent in English. These coursebooks are designed in accordance with all language skills.

Instruments

The data-gathering tool used in this study was the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) postulated by Saaty (1995) to evaluate whether intercultural competence exists (or does not exist) in Vision Series. The analytical hierarchy process (AHP), developed by Saaty (1995), is a famous decision-making technique in the format of multiple criteria that aids in finding the solution that best fits decision-objective makers and level of problem comprehension. It has been employed in a wide array of industries, including healthcare, business, government, and education, and also in project selection, business planning, instructional methods, English language program design, expertise evaluation, curriculum design, and course design. AHP is also used to evaluate coursebooks. These studies have used AHP to evaluate, produce, or rank the competencies necessary for different occupations (Hafeez & Esmail, 2007). In order to employ AHP, a choice must be broken down into a hierarchy of simpler elements, and decision-makers or experts in the relevant subject must assess each element's relative relevance. Instead of using the exact statistical measures of the comparison rates, the AHP uses fuzzy pair-wise comparison judgments to determine the numerical value or significance of each item in the hierarchy. The assessment of the cultural content of coursebooks using AHP was done for the first time in the literature in this study. It accomplished this by making advantage of these prior studies' methodological approach, which was AHP. Table 1 provides a more thorough explanation of the AHP.

Table 1

Criteria for Evaluating Cultural Content (AHP)

Dimension	Criteria	Descriptions
Gorals/Objective	Cultural knowledge	This relates to whether the cultural information in the coursebook aims to foster cultural awareness.
	Communication	If the cultural information in the material is meant to improve communication skills, this is relevant.
	Intercultural attitude	This is the goal if the intercultural perspectives of knowledge, respect, and openness are to be developed through the cultural information in the coursebook.
Cultural Topics	Relevance	This speaks to whether the subjects are suitable for the student's culture. Regarding if the topic draws in the intended audience of students.
	Interest	This relates to how many various social factors are present in the themes.
	Diversity	This relates to how many various social factors are present in the themes.
Cultural Information	Types of culture	Which cultures—one culture or several cultures—are being presented when we talk about this? Is the kids' own culture

		considered? Exist examples of a culture that can be used to raise awareness and make a link with the culture of the students?
	Cultural sensitivity	This goes back to how sensitive the knowledge is to the beliefs and values of the learners.
	Perspective and Representation	This alludes to where the opinions come from (the author, for instance, or empirical research?). Exist both favorable and unfavorable opinions on the culture? Are there any preconceptions to deal with—racial, gender, sexual, or cultural?
	Authenticity	This indicates whether the information is factual, accurate, or current.
	Presentation	This indicates whether the information is factual, accurate, or current. This relates to whether or if the cultural material is included throughout the curriculum or is introduced at the end.
Cultural Activities	Student participation	This indicates if the data is true, correct, or up to date. his has to do with whether or not the cultural content is incorporated into the curriculum from beginning to conclusion.
	Familiarity	This pertains to whether students and the teacher are familiar with the exercises.
	Logistics	This speaks of the supplies needed, the time limits, and the space restrictions.
Teaching Aids	Illustration and images	This refers to the manner that cultural aspects are illustrated or represented visually. Can they be explained simply?
	Teacher's manual	If the teacher's book is offered as educational support, this relates to that fact.
	Supplementary teaching resources	For instance, this relates to DVDs or other real programs.

Procedure

To conduct this study, a content analysis of coursebooks was done. A part of the final intention of this study was to examine CCA in EFL books taught in Iranian high schools. To this end, the conversation sections of the Iranian English coursebook, *Vision Series*, were chosen for the research. It was meant to seek if there were any cultural elements included in the coursebooks. In fact, the main objectives were whether components of critical awareness were realized in the conversation sections and if they were, how? The content of the English coursebooks in terms of the incorporation of cultural elements and the place of local and national cultures in language learning were analyzed using text analysis techniques. The study adopted a descriptive approach to analyze the conversations which are generally used to reach an accurate description of such phenomena as attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and demographics (Creswell, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The conversations were qualitatively analyzed using the content analysis procedure via the framework under study, which is the process of summarizing and reporting data in a way that “the essential contents are preserved but a short, manageable text is produced” (Mayring, 2000, p. 268). The final phase of the study aimed to capture an ideal level of CCA in coursebooks. This analysis of the phase was completed by integrating the results of the first research questions to design a rubric in CCA for future syllabus designers to regard the concept of CCA in designing ELT coursebooks. A 9-items rubric was designed based on the details of the coursebook evaluation sections.

Results and Discussion

To answer the first research question which investigated whether or not critical cultural awareness has been appropriately addressed in Iranian high school EFL coursebooks (*Vision*

Series), the conversation contents of the *Vision Series* (levels 1-3) were examined. The analytic hierarchy process (AHP) postulated by Saaty (1995) was utilized as the rubric of culture analysis. The purpose of the rubric was to investigate whether the context, events, theme, political and social values, roles and identities of the interactants, structure of the conversation, and the lifestyle presented in the conversations were culturally neutral, or they included instances of the source or target language culture. In Book One, there were four pieces of conversation and in books Two and Three, there were three conversation sections. Several pages away from the end of each lesson, there was another section named Listening and Speaking. The following is a description of the conversation content in each book.

Investigating the First Research Question

Cultural Elements in Vision 1

Because cultural content in coursebooks is important for fostering the development of intercultural communication skills and because there is a must to examine the resources, some scholars have devised standards and criteria to assess the cultural knowledge in publications. This study applied the analytical hierarchy process (AHP) proposed by Saaty to address the previously existing lack of a systematic method that integrates each criterion to arrive at an evaluation outcome and weighs each component in a way that allows the evaluation to be tailored to various teaching circumstances (1995). The cultural information included in *Vision 1* is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Content Analysis of Vision 1

Dimension	Criteria	Descriptions
Goals/Objective	Cultural knowledge	× The purpose of the cultural content in the coursebook is to develop cultural knowledge of the native or L1 culture (ex. promotion of native elites).
	Communication	×The purpose of the cultural content in the coursebook is not to develop communication skills, but just a set of general information about the native culture or neutral topics (cheetah, planets).
	Intercultural attitude	× The purpose of the cultural content in the coursebook is not to develop intercultural attitudes such as awareness, respect for others, or openness.
Cultural Topics	Relevance	× The topics are not culturally appropriate for the learners.
	Interest	×The topic does not attract target learners.
	Diversity	× The topics are not rich with different social aspects.
Cultural Information	Types of culture	More native culture (talk about home scientists), less target culture, use of neutral cultures (visiting Asia), and use of international culture (L4 Spanish)
	Cultural sensitivity	reference to native cultural values: (Iran is a four-season country. It has many historical sites and amazing nature. Also, its people are very kind and hospitable.): the information is sensitive to students' values and beliefs.
	Perspective and Representation	L1 Mayam & Mr. Razavi L2 Alireza & Ms. Tabesh There are no negative attitudes about the other culture, but positive attitudes about native or Iranian culture (L1 (we are going to protect their homes, to make movies about their life, and teach people how to take more care of them.))

	Authenticity	Information is factual, real, or up-to-date, but about native culture, mostly.
	Presentation	✓ cultural information (L1 culture) is integrated into the conversation texts.
Cultural Activities	Student participation	×Based on the results of the questionnaire, the activities in culture do not trigger learners' active engagement or active learning
	Familiarity	×The activities in the native culture (not in the target culture) are familiar to learners and the teacher.
	Logistics	×This refers to time constraints, space limitations, and materials required.
Teaching Aids	Illustration and images	✓
	Teacher's manual	× The teacher's book is not provided to offer instructional support.
	Supplementary teaching resources	✓ (DVDs)

As designated for the analysis of the content of the conversation section in *Vision 1*, the analysis of the rubric indicated that:

All lessons (except for *Vision 1* lesson 4) in the three books have events and activities that are solely taking place in an Iranian setting.

All events resonate events dealing with daily activities such as those happening in school, in the library, or during vacations related to home culture except for *Vision 1* lesson 4. But this ends up with Iran as a favorite tourist attraction destination.

In *Vision 1*, lesson one focuses on the Iranian cheetah, lesson two is culturally neutral as it revolves around the stories of planets, and lesson three zooms in on Iranian scientists. However, the focus of lesson four is another culture as it is about traveling around the world.

The people involved in the conversations range from students, teachers, and ordinary people.

All the conversation events except one in *Vision 1* lesson 4 (which is a Spanish setting) are taking place in Iranian contexts.

The gender of the interactants in the *Vision Series* plays no specific role except perhaps one in *Vision 1* lesson 1, as a male person who is working in the museum. There is no preference for a specific gender in the lessons and both genders seem to be equally used.

In *vision 1*, there is a talk about the protection of wildlife in the home country, and in Lesson 3 there is much talk about the promotion and importance of Iranian elites.

In *Vision 1* lesson 1 as well as lesson 4, there is a description of and admiration for the four seasons available in Iran. There are explanations about various historical sites and amazing nature in Iran. The description also extends to the kindness and hospitality of the Iranians.

Vision 1 made no implicit or explicit reference to any of these items: Reference to Negative representation of values, Reference to Ideological Values, Reference to Political Values, Reference to Sociocultural Functions of Language, Reference to the Spread of Language, and Conversation Structures.

In *Vision 1* lesson 3, there are pictures of Iranian scientists and observatories. In *Vision 1*, lesson 2, there is a picture of Darband closing the conversation with an emphasis on home culture. Based on the detailed analysis of the rubric under study, the weight that the authors in *Vision 1* gave to the categories related to the goals/objectives and cultural topics was mostly in native culture or Iranian culture. For instance, in terms of goals/objectives and under the sub-category of cultural knowledge, the purpose of the cultural context in *Vision 1* is to develop

cultural knowledge of the native or L1 culture (ex. promotion of native elites). In terms of the communication sub-category, the purpose of the cultural context in Vision 1 is not to develop communication skills, but just a set of general information about the native culture or neutral topics (cheetah, planets). Intercultural attitude under the category of goals/objectives did not try to develop intercultural attitudes such as awareness, respect for others or openness, because as Iranian students, the learners learning English via Vision 1 are familiar with their own home culture, hence the cultural content in this coursebook is weak in increasing awareness respect for others or openness.

Based on the coursebook evaluation, in terms of cultural information, Vision 1 uses more native culture (talk about home scientists), less target culture, high use of neutral cultures (visiting Asia), and use of international culture (L4 Spanish), however, as the results showed cultural information (L1 culture) is integrated into the conversation texts, hence presentation under the category of cultural information is observed in *Vision 1*. In terms of cultural sensitivity (under the category of cultural information), reference to native culture values: (Iran has four distinct seasons. Its incredible natural beauty and abundance of historical sites. The locals there are also incredibly friendly and welcoming.): the information is sensitive to students' values and beliefs. As regards perspective and representation, again related to cultural information, there are no negative attitudes about the other culture, but positive attitudes about native or Iranian culture (L1 (We're aiming to safeguard their houses, document their lives in motion pictures, and instruct people in better ways to care for them.). Finally, in terms of authenticity related to cultural information, the texts were a real representation of culture, not target culture, but native culture.

Cultural activities including student participation, familiarity, and logistics were not observed in Vision 1, however, in the last category that is teaching aids, culture in Vision 1 is represented via illustrations and images and supplementary teaching resources that as DVDs, however, the teacher's book is not provided to offer instructional support (teacher's manual).

Cultural Elements in Vision 2

The cultural information included in *Vision 2* is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Content Analysis of Vision 2

Dimension	Criteria	Descriptions
Goals/Objective	Cultural knowledge	× The purpose of the cultural content in the coursebook is to develop cultural knowledge of the native or L1 culture.
	Communication	×The purpose of the cultural content in the coursebook is not to develop communication skills, but just a set of general information about the native culture or neutral topics (Iranian handicrafts).
	Intercultural attitude	× The purpose of the cultural content in the coursebook is not to develop intercultural attitudes such as awareness, respect for others, or openness.
Cultural Topics	Relevance	× The topics are not culturally appropriate for the learners.
	Interest	✓ The topic attracts target learners as Nowruz can be attractive to foreigners.
	Diversity	× The topics are not rich with different social aspects.
Cultural Information	Types of culture	More native culture (talk about Iranian handicrafts, Tomans, Termeh, Mrivain,...), and less target culture.
	Cultural	reference to native culture values: (My favorite language is

	sensitivity	absolutely my mother tongue.): the information is sensitive to students' values and beliefs.
	Perspective and Representation	There are no negative attitudes about the other culture, but positive attitudes about native or Iranian culture (all my family members work here to help our family business).
	Authenticity	Information is factual, real, or up-to-date, but about native culture, mostly.
	Presentation	cultural information (L1 culture) is integrated into the conversation texts.
Cultural Activities	Student participation	×Based on the results of the questionnaire, the activities in culture do not trigger learners' active engagement or active learning
	Familiarity	×The activities in the native culture (not in the target culture) are familiar to learners and the teacher (Amir Kabir).
	Logistics	×This refers to time constraints, space limitations, and materials required.
Teaching Aids	Illustration and images	✓
	Teacher's manual	× The teacher's book is not provided to offer instructional support.
	Supplementary teaching resources	✓ (DVDs)

Based on the results of the rubric, in *Vision 2*, Lesson 3, the topic is Iranian handicrafts. In *Vision2* Lesson 1, there is emphasis stating that the speaker's favorite language is his mother tongue. The gender of the interactants in *Vision 2* plays no specific role except perhaps one in lesson 3, the family business is valued as in the sentence "All my family members work here to help our family business." There is no preference for a specific gender in the lessons and both genders seem to be equally used. In *Vision 2*, there is a trace of the non-verbal semiotic system (Photos, colors, clothing, design, etc.). Based on the information gathered from the analysis of the rubric under study, the weight that the authors in *Vision 2* gave to the categories related to the goals/objectives and cultural topics was mostly in Iranian culture. It is worth noting that under the category of cultural topics, the sub-category of interest, the topic seems to attract target learners as topics such as Nowruz can be attractive for foreigners, but since this book is not used in the other countries, hence this element is meaningless.

In terms of cultural information, *Vision 2* uses more native culture (talk about Amir Kabir, Tomans) and less target culture, however, as the results showed cultural information (L1 culture) is integrated in the conversation texts, hence presentation under the category of cultural information is observed in *Vision 2*. In terms of cultural sensitivity (under the category of cultural information), reference to native culture values: (My mother tongue is without a doubt my preferred language.), the information is sensitive to students' values and beliefs. As regards perspective and representation, again related to cultural information, there are no negative attitudes about the other culture, but positive attitudes about native or Iranian culture (all my family members work here to help our family business). Finally, in terms of authenticity related to cultural information, the texts were a real representation of culture, not target culture, but native culture.

Cultural activities including student participation, familiarity, and logistics were not observed in *Vision 2*, however, in the last category that is teaching aids, culture in *Vision 2* is represented via illustration and images (the photo of Darband) and supplementary teaching resources that are

DVDs, however, the teacher's book is not provided to offer instructional support (teacher's manual).

Cultural Elements in Vision 3

The cultural information included in *Vision 3* is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Content Analysis of Vision 3

Dimension	Criteria	Descriptions
Goals/Objective	Cultural knowledge	× The purpose of the cultural content in the coursebook is to develop cultural knowledge of the native or L1 culture (places such as Damavand Mount as culturally sensitive places).
	Communication	×The purpose of the cultural content in the coursebook is not to develop communication skills, but just a set of general information about the native culture (Dr. Garib) or neutral topics (wind turbines).
	Intercultural attitude	× The purpose of the cultural content in the coursebook is not to develop intercultural attitudes such as awareness, respect for others, or openness.
Cultural Topics	Relevance	× The topics are not culturally appropriate for the learners.
	Interest	×The topic does not attract target learners.
	Diversity	× The topics are not rich with different social aspects.
Cultural Information	Types of culture	More native culture (talk about home scientists) and less target culture (a reference to the couch potato. This is one of the few instances of reference to other cultures and this is probably criticizing the target culture of laziness).
	Cultural sensitivity	reference to native cultural values: (Clean energy produced in Iran and Iranian scientist): the information is sensitive to students' values and beliefs.
	Perspective and Representation	There are no negative attitudes about the other culture, but positive attitudes about native or Iranian culture (Clean energy produced in Iran and Iranian scientists)
	Authenticity	Information is factual, real, or up-to-date, but about native culture, mostly.
	Presentation	✓ cultural information (L1 culture) is integrated in the conversation texts.
	Cultural Activities	Student participation
Familiarity		×The activities in the native culture (not in the target culture) are familiar to learners and the teacher.
Logistics		×This refers to time constraints, space limitations, and materials required.
Teaching Aids	Illustration and images	✓ Beginning and ending images of Iranian figures and hospital Beginning image of an Iranian Images of turbines in Guilan and Yazd
	Teacher's manual	× The teacher's book is not provided to offer instructional support.
	Supplementary	✓ (DVDs)

Based on the results, all lessons in *Vision 3* have events and activities that are solely taking place in an Iranian setting. The gender of the interactants in the *Vision 3* series plays a role (female nurse, L2 male student & translator) in comparison to the other two coursebooks. In *Vision 3* lesson 1 where a female person is a nurse, a cliché role for women in Iran. And in lesson 2 of *Vision 3*, there is a translator who is male, perhaps another stereotypic role for translators in Iranian settings. In *Vision 3*, lesson 2, there is the phrase couch potato. This is one of the few instances of reference to other cultures and this is probably criticizing the target culture of laziness. *Vision 3*, Lesson 3 talks about energy produced in Iran. It is probably praising Iranian culture for the conservation of the environment. In *Vision 3*, Lessons 1-3 all start and end with pictures referring to Iranian people, which is a reflection of the importance of Iranian culture. Based on the information gathered from the analysis of the rubric under study, the weight that the authors in *Vision 3* gave to the categories related to the goals/objectives and cultural topics was mostly in Iranian culture.

In terms of cultural information, *Vision 3* uses more native culture (talk about Dr. Gharib) and less target culture, however, as the results showed cultural information (L1 culture) is integrated into the conversation texts, hence presentation under the category of cultural information is observed in *Vision 3*. In terms of cultural sensitivity (under the category of cultural information), reference to native cultural values: (Clean energy produced in Iran), the information is sensitive to students' values and beliefs. As regards perspective and representation, again related to cultural information, there are negative attitudes about the target culture (couch potato), but positive attitudes about native or Iranian culture (Iranian scientist). Finally, in terms of authenticity related to cultural information, the texts were a real representation of culture, not target culture, but native culture.

Cultural activities including student participation, familiarity, and logistics were not observed in *Vision 3*, however, in the last category that is teaching aids, culture in *Vision 3* is represented via illustration and images (Beginning and ending images of Iranian, figure, and hospital, Beginning image of an Iranian, Images of turbines in Guilan and Yazd) and supplementary teaching resources that is DVDs, however, the teacher's book is not provided to offer instructional support (teacher's manual).

In total, there are 10 pieces of conversation with follow-up listening and speaking sections in the *Vision Series*. All of these texts except for one case have made use of Iranian-speaking partners. In addition, the location of all instances is Iran except, inevitably, for one that is referring to the topic of traveling around the world. Names and events related to Iran, hence Iranian culture, range from Iranian cities (e.g. Tehran, Manjil, Hamedan, Yazd, Marivan), places and monuments (e.g. Golestan forest, Boostan Park, Maragheh Observatory, and Ray hospital), animals (e.g. cheetahs), famous figures (e.g. Razi, and Nasreddin Toosi, and Mohammad Gharib), currency, toman, works of art (e.g. Amir Kabir series, and Hafez poetry), events, Nowruz, handicrafts (e.g. Isfahani Termeh and Qashqai Gabbeh) to the solar calendar. There are also some pictures of figures and places that support the use of local culture.

The results of the study showed that ELT coursebooks taught to Iranian high school students did not include cultural content and proved to not be helpful in developing intercultural competence and cultural understanding. The evidence obtained from the results of this study and other studies (Aliakbari, 2004; Sharif & Yarmohammadi, 2013) indicates that the cultural contents, deliberately or not, are ignored and, in the case of inclusion, are extremely limited and basic. Due to social or political considerations, mostly, all of the ELT coursebooks designed by the Iranian education ministry are one-dimensional and they mostly gave value to the native

culture rather than the target one as it was understood from the coursebook evaluation, sometimes, ELT coursebooks criticized target culture.

The results support Mozaffarzadeh and Ajideh's (2019) analysis of the manner in which culture is addressed in Iranian EFL coursebooks for students in high school before and after the Islamic Revolution. The study's conclusions indicate that ELT coursebooks both prior to and after the Islamic Revolution omit cultural information. Consequently, Iranian ELT texts are insufficient for teaching communicative language and in general teaching culture-universal abilities such as intercultural competence and comprehension since they purposefully or accidentally ignore learners' cultural communicative requirements. Furthermore, the results of the current study are in line with those of Ayu (2020), who sought to use qualitative content analysis research to better fully explain cultural content from Indonesia as the source culture, western culture as the target culture, and other cultural content as an international target culture in the novel curriculum coursebook.

Investigating the Second Research Question

In order to answer the second research question which concerned with some ideal ways of representing critical cultural awareness in the EFL coursebook, the results of the first research question were reviewed in detail to design a rubric for designing a coursebook in terms of culture. An ideal way to represent culture in coursebooks would be to make a balance between source and target culture. These ideals helped learners to use cultural elements in a way that was representative of all cultures. Culture should not be addressed only in the target language or in the native language. Factors such as the sociology of language, ethnography, linguistic relativity theories and beliefs, all and all show the necessity of teaching culture and paying attention to the culture of each language while designing a coursebook. Moreover, not neglecting the source culture assists learners to strengthen the values of their own culture and not forget the norms of their own culture. Surprisingly, the weight of source culture in *Vision Series* was higher than the standard level which is a balanced level.

It is ideal to attend to the target culture instead of the source culture. With reference to the source cultural content, *Vision Series* received the most attention. An Iranian student surely is aware of his/her own country's culture (source culture), but he/she is not familiar with the target culture. It is the responsibility of coursebook designers to increase awareness in terms of the target culture, however, as the detailed analysis of the coursebooks in this study showed the coursebook designers focused on Islamic religious themes and national identity themes. Also, regardless of coursebook designers, ELT teachers can design activities in culture to increase students' knowledge of culture. The research also revealed that literature, travel, and art were the main subjects of the *Vision Series*. In fact, nationalities associated with the target culture, including Canadians and Australians, were mentioned in the coursebooks, but neither the United States nor the United Kingdom, two respected nations, were mentioned. The dollar as a unit of currency was the only thing mentioned. However, there was no mention of music or film, and references to the media were limited to only identifying two people. Additionally, there was no mention of the tourist destinations and locations connected to the target culture, even though familiarizing EFL students with these topics can help them improve their CCA levels.

The next ideal can be the pragmatic sense. In addition to the pragmatic sense, the sociolinguistic sense can be the other ideal that in *Vision Series*, it was an ignored sense. In terms of the sociolinguistic meaning, it was anticipated to refer to interpersonal interactions like appropriateness and etiquette topics (such as how to address people) in the target culture, which are essential for cross-cultural knowledge. Apart from two instances where IRIB (the primary broadcasting agency in Iran) and the name of a TV series from the source culture were

mentioned, no details were given of media, film, or song as the most important parts or manifestations of culture.

In the coursebooks studied, even a passing mention of the names of celebrities (filmmakers, singers, and artists) or their creations, such as well-known films, albums, etc., is completely avoided as a source of culture.

With the advent of feminism, this term was considered as the main factor in all topics from media to journals and coursebooks. Any action, whether verbal or nonverbal, that promotes the rights of all women to independence, liberty, and justice and works to eradicate gender-based oppression is referred to as feminism (Sharifi, 2016). Gender differences were neglected issues in ELT coursebooks used for Iranian high school students that resulted in the ignorance of the other ideal in culture. Finally, attention to the pragmatic nature of culture can be considered another ideal that ignorance of it in coursebooks can decrease the learners' levels of CCA and may harm the L2 intercultural competence that students need to acquire. In sum, the following ideals to increase learners' CCA levels can be concentrated in designing ELT coursebooks that were represented in the following rubric. It is worth noting that in order to make a balance between two cultures (both source and target cultures), the coursebook designers need to give equal weight to each culture in all of the nine mentioned items (Table 5).

Table 5

Rubric in CCA

1. Making a balance between source and target culture	5% source culture	5% target culture
2. Designing activities or tasks by coursebook designers to highlight CCA	5% source culture	5% target culture
3. Touching on the positive aspects of CCA and attention to the target culture's values	5% source culture	5% target culture
4. Attention to cultural differences without judgment	5% source culture	5% target culture
5. Reference to the pragmatic sense	5% source culture	5% target culture
6. Reference to the interpersonal relationships	5% source culture	5% target culture
7. Sociological sense which covers the themes such as social values, leisure, and healthy lifestyle	5% source culture	5% target culture
8. Reference to media (music types)	5% source culture	5% target culture
9. Reference to gender equality	5% source culture	5% target culture

The existing report's findings demonstrate that the context of locally published English coursebooks is irregular; source, worldwide, and unbiased cultural content is more frequently recognized than target cultural content, and ELT material designers make an effort to include L1 cultural content more frequently in order to provide pupils to the local culture and prevent the alien culture that could be harmful to them and alienate them from values and customs. For these reasons, the ideal sections of the coursebooks in terms of culture are ignored facts. However, the researcher believes that if the language is presented through culture in contexts familiar to the students who are enriched and empowered in their own cultures and religious beliefs, they have more motivation to learn the language and surely the hidden agenda of ELT materials, that is the fact that they try to advertise western culture and impose their cultural norms and values to the learners along with ELT materials (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014), will not be obtained and disseminated. The purpose of addressing culture should be to increase language learners' awareness of their own culture and other cultures. Learners should be familiarized with varieties

of cultures and should also learn to respect cultural differences. One of the effective ways to achieve this goal is through coursebooks.

Conclusion

To answer the first research question which investigated the cultural aspects of Iranian high school EFL coursebooks (Vision Series), the conversation contents of the Vision Series (levels 1-3) were examined. The analytic hierarchy process (AHP) postulated by Saaty (1995) was utilized as the rubric of culture analysis. The purpose of the rubric was to investigate whether the context, events, theme, political and social values, roles and identities of the interactants, structure of the conversation, and the lifestyle presented in the conversations were culturally neutral, or they included instances of the source or target language culture. The results of the study showed that ELT coursebooks (Vision Series) designed and used for Iranian high school students did not include cultural content and proved to not be helpful in developing intercultural competence and cultural understanding.

To answer the second research question which sought some ideal ways of representing critical cultural awareness in the EFL coursebook, a researcher-made rubric was designed based on the results of the interview (research question three) and the coursebook evaluation details (research question four). It was concluded that an ideal way to represent culture in coursebooks was the one that used cultural elements either neutrally or in a way that was representative of all cultures. Culture should not be addressed only in the target language or the native language. The purpose of addressing culture should be to increase language learners' awareness of their own culture and other cultures. Learners should be familiarized with varieties of cultures with the main focus on media, gender equality, pragmatics, and interpersonal relationships. They should also learn to respect cultural differences. One of the effective ways to achieve this goal is through coursebooks.

In general, regardless of the coursebooks in the Iranian context, which ignored the concept of culture, the findings demonstrated that the teachers tried to pay less attention to culture since the situation and statutes of the society oblige them to act in such a way. As a result, teacher educators and decision-makers must develop internal policies that push new teachers from all backgrounds to master new techniques for cultural interaction in order to emerge as experts with high CCA. We believe that Iranian academic institutions shouldn't fall behind in light of the results. There is a dearth of literature on CCA development in FL instruction in Iran. To be concluded, it is worth noting that in terms of intercultural competence teaching, the roles of the teachers are highlighted and they are required to direct pupils' development via their activities and to give culturally diverse language experiences and this surely can emerge and improve in the case of support from the government.

The findings of the current study have implications for L2 learners. Culture plays a critical part in the qualitative and quantitative achievement of EFL learners, hence, performing CCA level and optimizing the learners to respect cross-cultural differences (that is the duty and responsibility of syllabus designers and teachers as a competent individuals) may play a very important role in assisting students to adopt themselves against culture differences. Hence, language students should be seeking out possibilities to increase their CCA level.

Syllabus designers should take into consideration the learners' and teachers' interculturality in their courses to improve their CCA levels. Curriculum developers and material producers are better to work cooperatively with teachers and learners so that they can create a more effective program, suitable resources, and tasks to advance ICC. Taking the different teaching and learning contexts into account, it is suggested for further studies investigate the other settings in which English is taught as a foreign language such as schools and private institutes in comparison. However, further research is required for the examination of Teacher's books, Students'



workbooks, or audio and video materials with regard to the extent they can develop learners' intercultural competence and ability. In order to diagnose the CCA of EFL teachers, syllabus designers, and learners, additional research will require concluding the current study analysis of the questionnaire, the interviews, and the legal forms, syllabi, and materials.

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