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Exploring Culture-Related Content in English Textbooks: A Closer Look at Advanced Series of Iran Language Institute

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Abstract

The aim of this article was to examine three advanced textbooks in Iran Language Institute (ILI) in an attempt to establish if they differed in the extent to which they represented dimension of big "C" culture and little "c" culture, their stance in distribution of references of cultural category, and also what themes predominated. The analysis identified just the cultural elements, and culture–free linguistic items were not counted. The statistical analysis suggested that the dominant culture category was the target culture with the least attention given to source culture. It was also found out that although the occurrences of themes of little "c" culture dimension in advanced textbooks 2 & 3 were slightly higher than those of big "C", there was a wide gap between two dimensions in advanced textbook 1 which tended highly towards big "C" culture. There was lack of consistency in the occurrences of themes throughout the textbooks. The main absent themes were common little "c" themes (i.e. "Living Condition," "Social Convention," and "Body Language"). Such considerable lack of source information and imbalanced representation of cultural themes might not be sufficient to flourish Iranian learners' intercultural communication competence (ICC) and thus might make intercultural communication difficult for them.

Keywords: Intercultural Competence, Source Culture, Target Culture, International Culture, Big "C" culture, Little "c" Culture

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Introduction

Hinkel (1999) viewed culture as a complex and broad phenomenon that referred to areas of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviors, and activities. Thompson (1990) defines culture as "the pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances and meaningful objects of various kinds, by which individuals communicate with one another and share their experiences, conceptions and beliefs" (p. 132). Samovar, Porter and Stefani (2000) offered a comprehensive definition of culture including verbal and non-verbal descriptions manifesting "the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, actions, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and artifacts acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving" (p. 36). Although the above-mentioned definitions put emphasis on different aspects, there is a unanimous agreement that our ways of life, attitudes, and social norms are deeply integrated with culture.

It seems inevitable that reconsideration regarding the role of culture in English as an international language is required. The shift of focus from communicative competence to intercultural communication competence (ICC) has been aimed to enhance cultural awareness. Scollon and Scollon (2001) argued that awareness of intercultural abilities is needed to overcome those cultural challenges and differences that cause the feelings of frustration in communication. Since the successful communication requires students to possess ICC, it seems of considerable importance to determine which type of culture and what kind of culture should be taught in the language classroom. A thoughtful incorporation of culture in textbooks, according to Cunningsworth (1995) and Bao (2006), assist learners to be cross-culturally competent and tolerant to beliefs and values of other cultures. Peterson and Coltrane (2003) maintained that a language learner cannot fully master a language without mastering the cultural contexts in which the language occurs. ELT Textbooks play main role in EFL context where experiencing interaction and living among native speakers is almost inaccessible. Therefore, they should incorporate enough information regarding the cultural dimensions and background and aid learners in identifying different cultural perspectives and consequently transforming them into intercultural learners.

Although cultural-content analysis of EFL textbooks is a burgeoning field of research, there has been scant regard for EFL textbooks that are widely in use in Iran especially for ones in ILI at advanced level. There have been a few studies that have investigated cultural content of EFL textbooks (Aliakbari, 2004; Khajavi & Abbasian, 2011; Sharif & Yarmohammadi, 2013) or probed cultural manifestation in various textbook series employed at language institutes in Iran (e.g. Rashidi & Najafi, 2010; Ziaei, 2012). The aim of the current study is to examine which dimensions and themes of culture and what kinds of references of cultural information are introduced in the textbooks of IRI. The aim is to provide valuable insight into current ELT textbooks from the standpoint of what cultural content should be imparted via the resource of textbooks with the aim of promoting learners'

ICC. This study also attempts to offer some advice for cultural teaching and learning in the EFL classroom.

Culture, Teaching and Textbooks

According to Risager (1991), before 1950s the major part of language teaching texts includes language element; nevertheless, after 1970s the importance of the social context was emphasized particularly with regard to related foreign countries (Servet & Sakire, 2013). With the advent of the functional and communicative proficiency approaches during 1970s-1980s, cultural elements got the essential role in the textbooks (Kramsch & McConnell-Ginet, 1992). Culture radically influences the meaning, discourse, and pragmatics so that it would affect language material selection for its cultural content and cultural foundation of teaching method. This concern about the selection of cultural content has been more highlighted as the stance of English as an International Language (EIL) is being established. Nault (2006) called for researchers, language educators, and practitioners to reflect on current status of cultures and their representation for the development of EIL. He advised that English educators must be aware of other culture categories than only British and American culture.

There are a number of studies undertaken by Iranian researchers. In his study about cultural references in high school textbooks, Aliakbari (2002) found that ELT textbooks currently in use in Iranian high schools are inadequate in their manifestation of the target culture or other cultures. Sadeghi (2007) believed that culture was one of the key factors in reading comprehension especially when a text contains cultural elements with which readers are not familiar enough. Ketabi and Talebinezhad (2009) refer to the shortage of various socio-cultural patterns in high-school textbooks of Iran. Maybe the lack of cultural variety is due to the fact that they are written by Iranian authors. Rashidi and Najafi (2010) examined ILI advance reading texts and found out that nineteen percent of the texts do not touch any specific culture and only seven per cent of the texts are related to Islamic culture. However, their study revealed a good variety of cultures in the reading texts.

Sources of Culture

The inseparable relationship between language and culture indicates that the integration of cultural components in language teaching material can raise learners' level of motivation (McKay, 2002). When language learner obtains the competency to interpret values, behaviors and beliefs of their own and of speakers of the other culture with different language and cultural background he or she is called "intercultural speaker" (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; Risager, 1998). Baker (2012) maintains that cultural awareness is not only restricted to target language culture awareness but also to awareness of one's own culture. Additionally, ELT specialists should regard the inclusion of international source materials in teaching curricular. Yuen (2011) also maintained that for learners' efficient intercultural communication, language teaching materials should be equipped with information from a variety of cultures of English-speaking countries for learners' intercultural communication. Kuhi (2013) believed that the English used in academic context should include

various cultural experiences in different contexts because English as an international language does not belong to particular culture or group.

McKay (2000) asserts that the introduction of source cultural content in ELT textbooks allow learners to enhance their intra-cultural knowledge. This is also associated with the opportunity to learn vocabulary and linguistic items, which are related to their native culture in English so that they can easily interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. In their study of teaching materials in Moroccan secondary schools, Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990) found it beneficial or motivating if the language is related to learners' living background.

McKay (2002) considered the target cultural knowledge as an indispensable component in ELT textbook. The understanding of target source of culture enables learners to form positive attitude toward target culture and get motivated enough to continue the learning of language. Additionally, textbook including target source taught in the classroom with learners from different societies provide the same cultural background for all learners. The rationale for the abundance of target culture according to Alptekin (1993) is that it is difficult for native English speaking ELT textbook writers to include source cultural data other than from their own culture. Méndez García (2005) asserts that familiarizing language learners with target language culture not only increase their respect and tolerance attitude but also it fosters the concept of their own culture.

One of the oft-cited cultural categories is Cortazzi and Jin's (1999). They categorize the sources of cultural information into source culture (learner's own culture), target culture (any English-speaking countries where English is spoken as a first language), and international target culture (English speaking or non-speaking English counties around the world where English is not used as a first language).

Rashidi and Najafi (2010) adopted Ramirez and Halls' (1990) study of content analysis and edited a coding scheme with eight categories: reference to English-speaking countries (H), reference to non-English speaking western countries (I), reference to eastern countries (E), Cross-national comparison (M), reference to Iran (N), reference to Islam or Islamic traditions (O), and general texts such as those related to science (J). Ziaei (2012) in her study established 5 categories: 1) Asian countries, 2) European countries, 3) African countries, 4) American countries, and 5) Australian countries.

Chao (2011) elaborated on the concept of ICC trying to provide the comprehensive picture of culture. He devised the five categories in his classification, namely Source/Local Culture (SC) that refers to one's own culture, Target Culture (TC) that includes English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, UK and USA), International Culture (IC) that includes cultures of all countries in the world (European countries, countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia), Intercultural Interaction (ICI) that includes the comparison, reflection or awareness of the differences and similarities between the local/source and the target/international culture and Universality across culture (UC) that includes general knowledge/content that is not specific to any particular culture or country. This study adopts Chao's classification of culture which is more comprehensive but

in this study the last category is modified to refer to those cultural issues that are common among countries in the world for example the text about environmental pollution without refereeing to special area or region is categorized under this category, since the aim of this study is to identify the items which are culturally charged.

Multidimensional View of Culture

Culture is a complex and multi-dimensional concept and the narrow definition in terms of the facts and fixed cultural achievements may not allow the learners to obtain the broad perspective of culture including behaviors performed in the social contexts. Therefore, in order to get the wider cultural view, a dichotomous concept was suggested by different researchers, such as "big C" and "little c" (Basttista, 1984), and objective culture and subjective culture (Bennett, 1993). Lee (2009) refers to big "C" culture as "the culture which represents a set of facts and statistics relating to the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals, and customs of a target speech society." (p. 78). Peterson (2004) asserts that big "C" culture in terms of grand themes includes the following ones such as geography, architecture, classical music, literature, political issues, society's norms, legal foundation, core values, history, and cognitive processes. Little "c" culture generally contains the routine aspects of life and involves everything as a total way of everyday life. Lee (2009) considers this type of culture as delicate and invisible aspects including attitudes or beliefs and assumptions. Peterson (2004) defines little "c" culture in terms of common or minor themes which includes themes such as opinions, viewpoints, preferences or tastes, gestures, body posture, use of space, clothing styles, food, hobbies, and popular music.

Wintergerst and Mcveigh (2010) maintained that students with cultural awareness of both big "C" and little "c" elements were able to deal with issues in intercultural settings in an efficient way. Although the domain of big "C" culture is accessible for the highly educated, little "c" cultural knowledge affects the way people are interacting with other people. The appropriate behavior as an essential component of communicative competence is achieved through getting awareness of the socio-cultural values, norms, beliefs, and assumptions entailed in small "c" culture. The failure in this kind of understanding leads to what Lee (2009) termed "pragmatic failure." Therefore, learners through small "c" culture will better comprehend how those in that culture communicate with each other. According to Xiao (2010) since the little "c" culture acquaint language learners with lifestyles, daily lives and routine aspects of a society and consequently it paves the way into beliefs, ideas, and values of another society, more attention should be devoted to it.

Since the criteria adopted for cultural content in this study were categorized in terms of big "C" and little "c", the checklist obtained from the lists drawing from Chastain (1988), Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) for big "C" and Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2001) for little "c" culture. The list of sociocultural knowledge CEFR (2001) represents a detailed description of small "c" cultural topics. Then the researchers themselves added one more to the dimensions categorized under the dimensions of big "C" and little "c"

culture, that is, "people" is added to the subcomponents of big "C" and "correspondence "is intended for one of the themes of little "c" culture. It is worth noting that minor modifications have been made within the domain of some themes. Geography, for example, is intended to include environment, too.

1. Big "C" culture (8 themes): art, economy, education, geography, history, institution, literature, and people. (Appendix 1)

2. Little "c" culture (8 themes): everyday living, living condition, interpersonal relation, values, beliefs, attitudes, body language, social conventions, ritual behavior customs, and correspondence. (Appendix 2)

Statement of Problem

There is no comprehensive study that has ever investigated the cultural dimensions, themes, and categories in the materials developed for ILI especially at advanced level. Therefore, the current research attempts to find out how the textbooks taught in this institute distribute cultural dimensions and what cultural references are more highlighted. The study sheds more light on the way the textbooks offer sufficient content for students' cultural understanding and make them ready for intercultural communication

Research Questions

The present study was designed to seek answers to the following questions:

1. Is there any significant difference in the distribution of cultural **categories** in three advanced textbooks of IRI?

2. Is there any significant difference in the distribution of **dimensions** of big "C" culture and little "c" culture in three advanced textbooks of IRI?

3. What cultural **themes** predominate within both dimensions of big "C" culture and little "c" culture three advanced textbooks of IRI?

Methodology

Materials

The adult section of ILI series involves Basic 1, Basic 2, Elementary 1 (ELl), EL2, EL3, Pre-intermediate l (Prel), Pre2, Pre3, Intermediate l (Interl), Inter2, Inter3, High-intermediate (high) 1, High 2, High 3, Advanced l (Ad 1), Ad 2, Ad 3. There are three books in the ILI English series at advanced level, revised and published by the Research and Planning department. They contain a total of 18 units and are structured in the same way as each unit begins with listening section which includes the introduction of new word. This section is then followed by the reading part in which most of the new words appeared. The third and last sections include speaking and writing activities, respectively.

For the present study, three students' textbooks in advanced level were selected. Every part of the books including pictures and activities were also

analyzed. The advanced level was chosen due to the fact that main focus of textbooks in early levels is on developing students' basic language skills and the role allocated to culture and cultural aspect learning is very slight. However, it is in intermediate level that English language teachers start to familiarize learners with different aspects of target culture and this is getting more dimensions in cultural aspects in advanced level.

Procedure

The present research is both qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative analysis follows the model presented by Chao' (2011) classification of cultural categories. As was mentioned earlier since the analysis focused on culturally charged materials, the researchers revised the content of the last category of Chao's classification termed Universality across Culture (UC), which was a neutral and purely linguistic material and founded it on the meaning of common cultural issues among countries. For cultural dimensions of big "C" culture and little "c" culture, the selection is based on Chastain (1988), Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) and Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001). The researchers, though, added one more dimension under each series of the big "C" and little "c" culture, namely, the dimension of "people" is categorized under the big "C" culture and "correspondence" is placed under the little "c" culture. This addition helps to get more comprehensive picture of cultural dimensions. Furthermore, using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the frequency of every counted item is presented in percentages to determine the prominence and absence of some particular cultural aspects.

The main content of each unit in the textbook was considered at this level to understand the preliminary distribution of cultural dimensions. In order to code the cultural categories and cultural dimensions and themes of the textbook, the total occurrences of categories, dimensions, and themes of each textbook were obtained. Again, using SPSS, the statistical analysis was conducted to determine if there was a difference between cultural categories among three textbooks and also between the representation of big "C" and small "c" culture in the EFL materials of ILI. Then the frequency and percentages of themes of related dimensions were calculated to determine what topics predominated.

Results

Table 1 shows comparison of cultural categories among the three textbooks of ILI using chi-square test. The data reveals that with chi-square rate of 13.85 and significance of 0.086, there is no statistically significant difference among the three textbooks in terms of their cultural categories.

TC (Target Culture) is highlighted over the other four categories of culture throughout the ELT textbook of ILI in the study since it has gained the highest frequency (40.4%). UC (Universality across Culture) which refers to mainstream cultural elements throughout the world and IC (International culture) which refers to countries other than source and target culture are distributed similarly. SC (Source

Culture) becomes a minority in all aspects of the cultural categories except for Advanced 3 in which it is higher than ICI (Intercultural interaction). ICI as a useful pedagogical tool in the transmission of cultural information formed 8.2%, 12.4 % and 2.3 % in Advanced 1, 2, and 3 respectively.

Table 1. Cultural Categories in Three Textbooks of ILI

Textbooks	SC	TC	IC	ICI	U C	Total
Advanced 1	6	67	35	13	37	158
	3.8%	42.4%	22.2%	8.2%	23.4%	100.0%
Advanced 2	3	48	31	16	31	129
	2.3%	37.2%	24.0%	12.4%	24.0%	100.0%
Advanced 3	10	54	32	3	32	131
	7.6%	41.2%	24.4%	2.3%	24.4%	100.0%
Total	19	169	98	32	100	418
Percentage	4.5%	40.4%	23.4%	7.7%	23.9%	100%
Pearson Chi-Square: 13.54 Df: 8 Sig:0.086						

One of the examples illustrating the SC is related to advertisement pictures in the form of group work that ask student to discuss the ethical aspects of advertisement in their country. The pictures include advertisements about Mahan Air, Zamzam, and Barf (Advanced 1, P. 51).

There are several indicators of TC in the forms of pictures mainly taken from English or American contexts, English names of people, and passages about English geographic names or locations. For example, one of the paragraphs allocated to writing activity is about a weekend trip to St. Louis (Advanced 1, P. 64)

International culture or IC is presented in the form of listening task involving advertising problems in different countries (China, the Middle East, Mexico, and Japan) (Advanced 1, p. 48)

ICI functioning as a helpful tool in transmission of cultural facts is present in the first unit of Advanced 2 titled "Crossing Cultures." This unit encourages students to reflect on cultural differences between their country and other countries. For example, there is a table indicating different customs in different countries including Canada and the U.S., Indonesia, Korea, Samoa, and Thailand. (Advanced 2, p. 11)

UC or universality across culture is not specifically related to one culture and it is evident in the reading passage about family relationship (Advanced 3, P. 111).

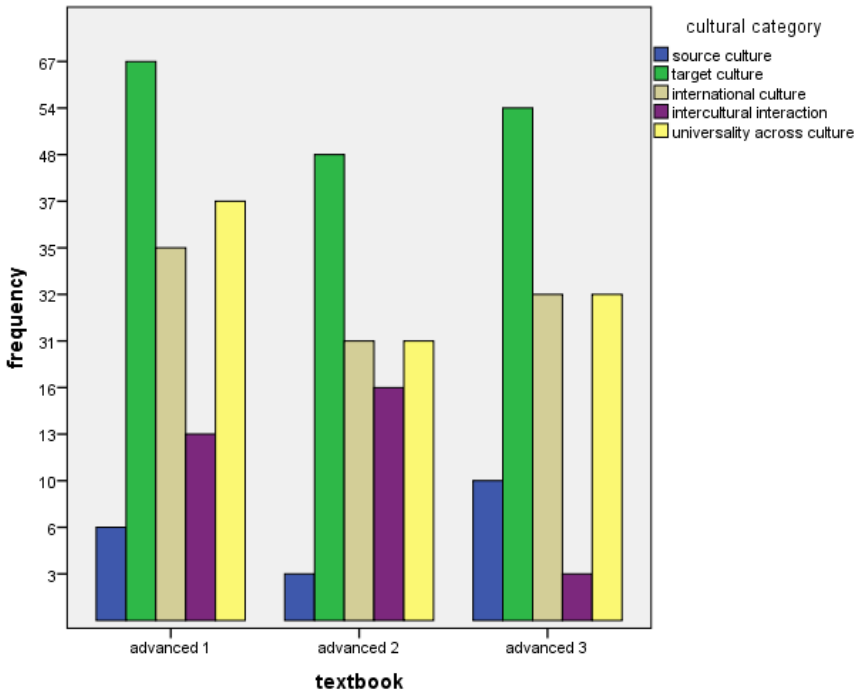


Fig. 3. Cultural Category

The results for research question two, which asked if the EFL materials used in ILI differ in the extent to which they represent big "C" culture and small "c" culture are as follows:

The graph in figure 2 shows that as we move from Advanced 1 to Advanced 3 there are more occurrences of small "c" cultural topics than big "C" topics in the researched EFL materials. To be precise, while there are 140 occurrences of big "C" which is by 123 more than little "c" culture in Advanced 1, there is a reverse trend (not sharp one) in the other two textbooks, that is the occurrences of little "c" are higher than those of big "C". The percentage of big "C" and little "c" cultures are 89.2 % versus 10.8 % in Advanced 1, 49.6% versus 50.4% in Advanced 2, and 42.7% versus 57.3% in Advanced 3. Data demonstrated in Table 2 reveals the significance of 0.000 with 95% certainty that there is a statistically significant difference among three textbooks in terms of big "C" and little "c" themes. The percentage of little "c" in Advanced 3 is found to be the highest, so it can better acquaint language learners with beliefs, values and ideas of the target society. However, the percentage of little "c" is dramatically low in Advanced 1.

Table 2. Cultural Dimensions in Three Textbooks Of ILI

Textbook	Culture Dimension		Total
	Big C	Little c	
Advanced 1	140	17	157
	89.2%	10.8%	100.0%
Advanced 2	57	58	115
	49.6%	50.4%	100.0%
Advanced 3	47	63	110
	42.7%	57.3%	100.0%
Total	244	138	382
	63.9%	36.1%	100.0%
Pearson Chi-Square: 75.06 df: 2 sig:.000			

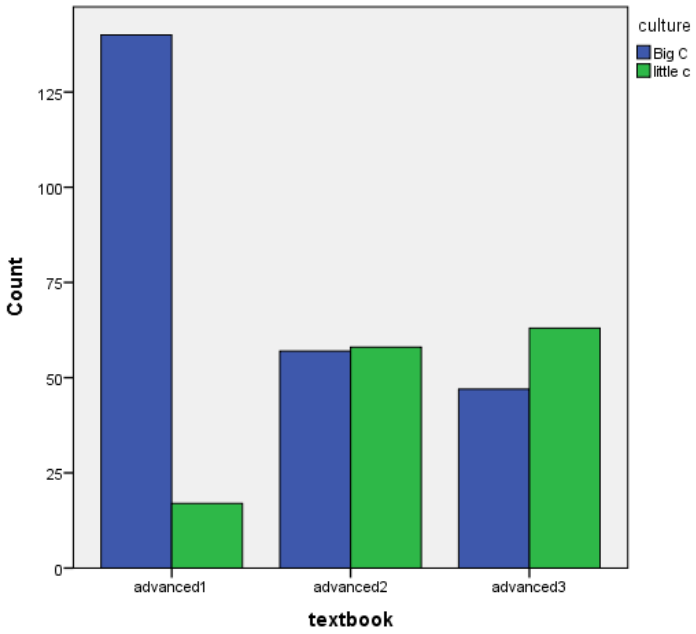


Fig. 4. Cultural Dimension

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of specific topics, referring to big "C" culture in the EFL materials. The most prominent topics in Advanced 2 and 3 were institution (56.1%,40.4%) and people (15.8%, 31.9%). The percentage of history both in Advanced 1 & 2 is the least (0.7% ,0.0%). In Advanced 3, the least percentages are given to Art and Education (2.1%, 2.1%). In Advanced 1 the themes of arts (17.1%) and people, economy, and geography (18.6%) are predominate.

Table 3. Frequency and Percentages of the Big "C" Themes

	Big "C" Themes								
Textbook	Art	Economy	Geography	History	Institution	Literature	Education	People	Total
Advanced 1	24	26	26	1	12	7	18	26	140
	17.1%	18.6%	18.6%	0.7%	8.6%	5.0%	12.9%	18.6%	100.0%
Advanced 2	1	2	4	0	32	7	2	9	57
	1.8%	3.5%	7.0%	0.0%	56.1%	12.3%	3.5%	15.8%	100.0%
Advanced 3	1	2	3	4	19	2	1	15	47
	2.1%	4.3%	6.4%	8.5%	40.4%	4.3%	2.1%	31.9%	100.0%
Total	26	30	33	5	63	16	21	50	244
	10.7%	12.3%	13.5%	2.0%	25.8%	6.6%	8.6%	20.5%	100.0%

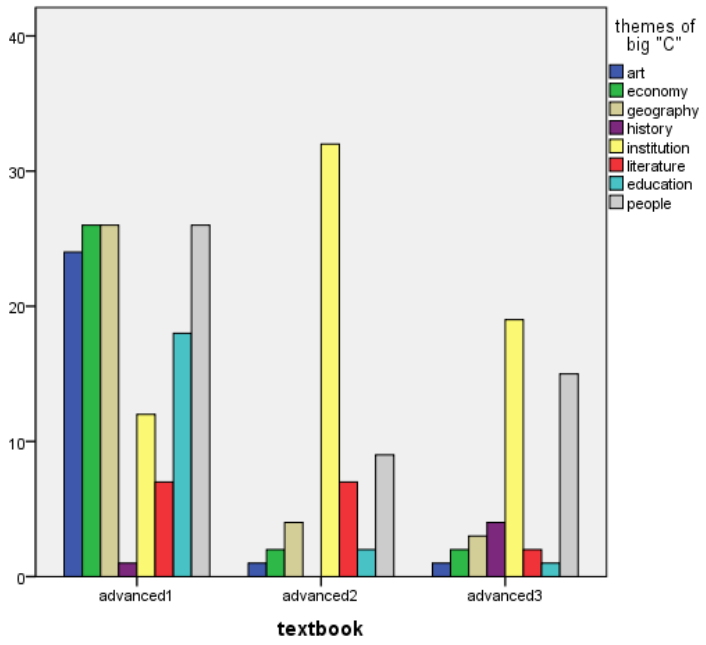


Fig. 3. Themes of Big "C"

The famous paintings in Advanced 1 illustrate the theme of Art, for examples, *The Stroll*, *Evening* by Vincent Van Gogh, *Susan On A Balcony Holding A Dog* by Mary Cassat and *Shimmering Substance* by Jackson Pollock. (Advanced 1, p. 96)

The theme of Economy is more illuminated in the second unit of Advanced 2. The unit introduces the concepts of workweek, work habits, blue-collar job, white-collar job, and working overtime. (Advanced 2, p. 28)

The theme of Geography that encompasses the environmental issues is present in the two passages, one is about the noise pollution, and another is about the rising of temperature and its impact on the agricultural patterns. (Advanced 2, p. 86)

The theme of History is evident in the activity of paragraph comparison that discusses the similarities between two U.S. Presidents, Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy and there is also one activity that mentions the similar histories of the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal (Advanced 1, p. 110 and p. 63)

The Institution theme is usually mentioned in the reading passages. The examples include the University of Virginia, Cornell University, Swedish Academy of Sciences and the Caroline Medical Institute. (Advanced 2, p. 44)

Regarding the theme of Literature, there are some famous quotations about art by Oscar Wilde and Edgar Allen Poe (Advanced 1, p. 107)

With regard to Education theme, Advanced 1 describes some scientific breakthroughs and discoveries in the form of pair work activity to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of producing animal clones, DNA testing and discovering enzyme preventing cells aging. (Advanced 1, p. 128)

The theme of People is present in Advanced 3 introducing three famous people such as Harriet Tubman, Stephen Hawking and Pele and their achievements. (Advanced 3, p. 78)

Table 4 shows the distribution of small "c" cultural topics in the researched EFL materials. Some cultural themes are missing from Advanced 1 (living conditions, body language, social convention, and ritual behavior). The percentage of Everyday Living is the highest, which is followed by Interpersonal Relations. In Advanced 2 the percentages of Social Conventions and

Table 4. Frequency and Percentages of the Little C Themes

Textbook	Little C Themes								Total
	Everyday Living	Living Condition	Interpersonal Relation	Values, Belief, Attitude	Body Language	Social Convention	Ritual Behavior	Correspondence	
Advanced 1	9	0	4	1	0	0	0	3	17
	52.9%	0.0%	23.5%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	17.6%	100.0%
Advanced 2	18	2	5	8	0	19	5	1	58
	31.0%	3.4%	8.6%	13.8%	0.0%	32.8%	8.6%	1.7%	100.0%
Advanced 3	11	0	6	20	5	4	5	12	63
	17.5%	0.0%	9.5%	31.7%	7.9%	6.3%	7.9%	19.0%	100.0%
Total	38	2	15	29	5	23	10	16	138
	27.5%	1.4%	10.9%	21.0%	3.6%	16.7%	7.2%	11.6%	100.0%

Everyday Living are high (32.8 %, 31.0%). In Advanced 3, Values, Beliefs, Attitude, and Correspondence outperform the others.

One of the examples related to Everyday Living is about working hours and leisure activities (hobbies, sports, reading habits, and media). Advanced 2 includes a table representing the average hours in workweek and the average number of paid vacation in three countries of France , Belgium, and the United States. (Advanced 2, p. 29)

A welfare arrangement is one of the categories of Living Conditions. It is related to nutrition, medical treatment, fitness, and health discussed completely in unit 5 of Advanced 3 (Advanced 3, p. 92)

The theme of Interpersonal Relations includes family structures and relations between generations. One of the activities of speaking sections clearly presents the comments made by people of different generations (kids, parents, and grandparents). (Advanced 2, p. 60)

One of the subcategories of the theme of Values, beliefs, and attitudes is about religion. Advanced 3 presents the text about Islam. It describes the Muslim's beliefs and values. (Advanced 3, p. 11)

Social Conventions that include dress, refreshments, drinks, meals behavioral, conversational conventions and taboos is illustrated in the activity that test the knowledge of international customs and etiquette. (Advanced 2, p. 20).

Ritual Behavior that encompasses birth, marriage, and death is present in the reading passage that describes the Islamic marriage made through a contract that is conformed when the bride receives a marriage portion, called *Mahr*. (Advanced 3, p. 13)

Correspondence as one of the themes of small "c" cultures is in the forms of letters, e-mails, and telegraphs. There are examples of letter writings and e-mail composing at the end of every unit in Advanced 3.

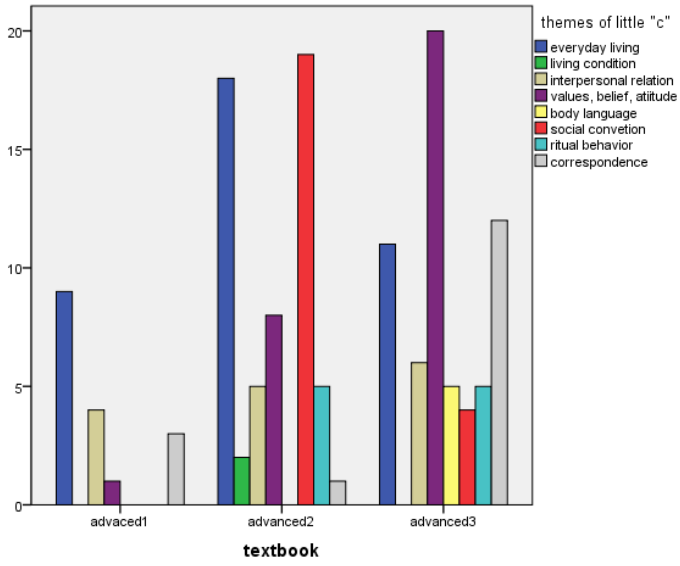


Fig. 4. Themes of Little "c"

Discussion

Results indicate that all three of the ELT textbooks of ILI are found to contain more TC in the study. In other words, the teachings of TC and its relevant attitudes or beliefs have been largely integrated into the ELT textbook through main four parts of reading, listening, speaking and writing, as well as pictures. Cultural references of UC including global ones (without referring to specific country) fitted into the textbooks may be due to the fact that they are the most familiar concept for most learners of different cultural backgrounds.

As for the introduction of world culture, coded under International Culture, there were occurrences of Asian, European, and African countries, though the number was not as high as the one in TC. The inclusion of diverse countries and nationalities enhances the notion of English as an international language, and makes learners develop friendly attitudes towards different cultures and trust more the content of the textbooks.

The scant attention to Source Culture (Iranian culture) is observable throughout the three textbooks. In most cases there was no apparent reference to Iran and the term "your country" is used instead. It seems that it follows the model of ELT textbook that are intended for international publication. There were some instances of Intercultural Interaction which tends to provide students opportunities for deep intercultural understanding, comparison and awareness.

The findings of this research are not in line with the results of some studies (Aliakbari, 2004; Majdizadeh, 2002) which found out that locally produced Iranian ELT textbooks incorporate mainly Islamic, Iranian traditions and culture or that they are mostly knowledge-oriented.

The manifestation of big "C" and little "c" are not consistent in three textbooks. In Advanced 1, while big "C" dimension outperforms little "c" one, the reverse is true in Advanced 2 & 3. Therefore, Advanced 2 & 3 contain more of little "c" and are in line with the argument by Kramsch (1993) who believes that awareness of appropriate behavior and patterns that guides lots of speech acts is more required. Some behaviors may differently be interpreted by members of different cultural background. The observation proved the notion of Tomalin and Stempleski's (1993) behavior culture which includes culturally influenced beliefs and perceptions that makes the entrance to target language culture more easier. Gaining greater intercultural competence depends more on more small "c" elements. Similarly, CEFR (2001) argues for small "c" elements because they can "appreciate fully the sociolinguistic and sociocultural implications of language used by native speakers and can react accordingly" (p. 122).

In Advanced 1 the theme of Everyday Living is the highest, may be due to the fact that they are related to the basic needs of learners. In Advanced 2 Social Conventions and Everyday Living are respectively the highest. Social Conventions are more related to appropriate behavior in different occasions. In addition, in Advanced 3 the highest number belongs to themes of values, beliefs, and attitudes

that are more related to abstract concepts such as minorities, security, and national identity.

The focus of Advanced 1 is on the themes of big "C" especially Art, Economy, Geography, and People. Getting learners familiar with the cultural achievements of every country or region form the preliminary picture in the learners' mind, and this is mainly done in Advanced 1 in which themes of big "C" outperforms those of little "c". The trend of distribution of cultural themes of big "C" both in Advanced 1 and 2 are somewhat similar, that is, Art, Economy, And Geography are proportionally same and Institution and People are the highest respectively. While Advanced 2 & 3 maintains slightly more number of themes of little "c," the total number of themes of big "C" in all textbooks are much higher than little "c".

As the findings in this study show, a 12.4 % material in Advanced 2 engage learners in critical reflections on intercultural relationships that provide food for thought for EFL learners and develops their criticality and reflexivity. At the same time, the amount of ethnocentrism could be diminished and broader cultural competence can be achieved. However, 8.26% and 2.3% of materials are assigned to intercultural interaction in Advanced 1 & 3 respectively.

Conclusion

Although the finding suggests that the textbooks in their ascending order include more instances of little "c" dimension, big "C" dimension with its related themes predominate (63.9%). Researchers believe that having more little "c" culture dimension is pedagogically appropriate (Hinkel, 1999; Kramsch, 1993; Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993).

The ignorance of some cultural themes reflects imbalanced representation of the aspects of culture in that some cultural themes received more emphasis such as everyday living, people, and institutions while there were themes like living condition, body language, and history with the least mention.

Cultural references to target culture are the most, but enhancing ICC requires the fairly distributed of cultural categories or references. Corbett (2003) asserts that one of the main goals of language teaching is to enhance learners' understanding and tolerance of two different cultures, i.e. source culture and target culture. Although the ELT textbooks of ILI are published locally, the least attention is given to source culture (Iran). As was mentioned earlier, more awareness of source culture enhances sensitivity to other cultures. Intercultural awareness (7.7 %) should be given more emphasis in ELT material because purposefully this reference provides more information about cultural difference and similarities.

It is hoped that this research provides language teachers with some insights regarding the teaching of culture in English textbooks, and helps them recognize the cultural pattern and distribution when engaged in the process of teaching of culture. Textbook writers also need to focus on not only enhancing Iranian learners' cultural identities and values but also including the diversity of cultures in the English language textbooks, which transform them into intercultural learners.

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