



## The Hidden Culture in EFL Textbooks: Analysing the Cultural Content of ‘English for Libya’ Textbook for the First Year of Secondary Education in Libya

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### Abstract:

The analysis of EFL textbooks’ cultural content has received considerable attention nowadays, as these textbooks can reflect various elements of culture. The current study thus aims to analyse the cultural aspects presented in the ‘English for Libya’ Secondary One textbook and whether it reflects the Arabic Islamic culture, British culture, or international cultures. A checklist consisting of 15 items was utilised to examine the textbook’s cultural aspects relating to the Big C and Small c culture themes. The content analysis revealed that the textbook’s overall cultural presentation was largely imbalanced, with the dominance of the Arabic Islamic culture and the high occurrence of surface cultural aspects: names, leisure time, and geography. Based on these findings, pedagogical implications and suggestions are made for improving the textbook’s cultural presentation to better meet the needs of Libyan students and teachers. Further studies are also recommended.

### Keywords:

**content analysis, cultural aspects, EFL textbooks.**

### 1. Introduction

Culture is a complex term with numerous definitions and dimensions. In language teaching, it has been defined as “a way of life” that represents the “ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools” that distinguish particular society members during a certain time (Brown, 2007, p.188). Culture has narrow and broad senses (Ur, 2012). In a narrow sense, culture includes highly appreciated aspects of a society such as music, literature, and artworks. The broader sense of culture refers to the “behaviours, customs, attitudes, and beliefs” of specific society members (Ur, 2012, p.218).

Similarly, culture can be classified into big C and small c themes. Big C culture or achievement culture includes history, geography, institutions, literature, art, music, and lifestyle (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). On the other hand, small c themes represent small everyday tasks such as how a native speaker behaves, speaks, eats, and lives, as well as their practices, beliefs, and values (Kramsch, 2013). The thematic

classification of big C and small c was used for developing the checklist items for this study.

Moreover, cultural awareness has been greatly emphasized in second and foreign-language classrooms since the 1990s. Introducing cultural knowledge and understanding in EFL classrooms is based on the belief that language and culture are interwoven and cannot be separated (Byram, 1997; Hinkel, 2014; Kramsch, 2013). Brown (2007), thus, maintains that learning a second or foreign language should involve learning a second culture.

Nevertheless, separating language and culture would result in incomplete learning of a target language (Ulum & Bada, 2016). Consequently, grammatical or linguistic knowledge is considered insufficient for successful language learning. To communicate appropriately and effectively, learners must be exposed to the sociocultural context of the target language (Ekmekçi, 2014). Therefore, the intercultural dimension needs to be highlighted in EFL classrooms to allow learners to participate in

various communicative situations with people from diverse cultural backgrounds to facilitate language development.

Considering the relationship between language and its culture, EFL textbooks are believed to reflect visible and invisible cultural aspects. They usually reflect the social norms, behaviours, practices, and beliefs of a certain society. Such cultural reflection is labelled as the “hidden curriculum” of language textbooks (Cunningsworth, 1995). Since the language textbook is the primary teaching and learning tool in the Libyan context, their cultural contents must be scrutinized and analysed.

## 2. Study Context and Rationale

The English curriculum for the first secondary year was designed by a British company, Garnet Publishing Ltd., with the supervision of a committee from the Curricula and Educational Research Centre in Libya. The Secondary One English curriculum consists of a coursebook, a workbook, an audio CD, and a teacher's book. Garnet has updated and redesigned secondary one curriculum content in the academic year 2018-2019. This update was caused by the decision of the Libyan Ministry of Education to start English teaching from the first grade instead of the fourth grade.

According to the secondary one teacher's book, the course emphasizes 21st-century skills such as study skills, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The teacher's book also indicates that the secondary one textbook follows the communicative approach, teaching the students how to use English in real-world situations. The Secondary One coursebook is organized into eight units focusing on topics, functions, the four language skills, and linguistic structures (Garnet Education, 2019).

In the Libyan context, little research has examined the cultural content represented in secondary school EFL textbooks. One study by Elarbash (2019) investigated the attitudes of Libyan secondary school teachers and students towards the presentation of Western cultures in the EFL textbooks. Elarbash, however, did not conduct a content analysis of secondary school EFL textbooks. Thus, there is a need to fill this gap by analysing the cultural content of the first

secondary year English textbook using the content analysis method.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 Theoretical Framework:

#### 3.1.1 Importance of Culture in Language Classrooms:

Culture has recently received increased attention in language classrooms because it is generally believed that language and culture are closely connected. The main argument in the literature for this interconnected relationship is that language does not exist in a vacuum. It is rather used within a social context to communicate and express cultural values, beliefs, and worldviews (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999), which vary from one country to another.

Brown (2007) argues that learning a second language involves learning a second culture, and if the two are separated, either language or culture will lose its meaning. Ulum and Bada (2016) maintain that learning a language effectively requires both systematic and schematic knowledge, where systematic knowledge refers to the learning of linguistic features of the language, and schematic knowledge means acquiring sociocultural awareness. Therefore, separating language from its culture is regarded as incomplete learning of a target language (Ulum & Bada, 2016). Ekmekçi (2014) points out that mastering the grammatical and lexical properties of language is insufficient for successful communication without being exposed to the sociocultural context of the target language. In other words, some learners may use correct grammar and pronunciation, but they still cannot use this grammatical knowledge to communicate appropriate expressions in specific life situations, such as greetings for example.

Given the nature of today's globalized world, developing the students' intercultural communicative competence is seen as an integral component of language teaching (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Therefore, Brown (2000) argues that teachers need to highlight cross-cultural differences (between the source and target cultures) to foster intercultural awareness. Genc and Bada (2005) clarify that teaching culture helps learners to develop global perspectives and

to avoid ethnocentric views. That is to say, preparing the learners to view the world from multiple cultural lenses rather than a monocultural one. Since the “English for Libya” curriculum emphasizes the development of the student’s communicative competence, it becomes evident that culture should be integrated with language teaching.

### 3.1.2 Culture in EFL Textbooks:

Textbooks are cultural mirrors (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999), and constitute a “hidden curriculum” because they “directly or indirectly communicate sets of social and cultural values” (Cunningsworth, 1995, p.90). Cortazzi and Jin (1999) also label textbooks as ideological constructs reflecting cultural values and systems that are imposed on both teachers and learners, which indirectly influence their perceptions of culture.

The controversy of whether to include or exclude culture in language classrooms is long forgotten because most scholars agree that language and culture are intertwined. The debate now concerns which type of culture should be included in a language textbook and how each type should be presented (Weninger & Kiss, 2015).

Cortazzi and Jin (1999) highlight three types of culture that can be represented in EFL textbooks, namely the source culture, target culture, or international culture. The source culture refers to the students’ local culture, while the target culture belongs to the society that speaks the target language natively, i.e., British culture in our case. International cultures refer to various cultures using English as an international means of communication. Many studies investigating EFL textbooks’ cultural content adopted Cortazzi and Jin’s classification as analysis criteria, and the current study follows their lead.

McKay (2003) warns against teaching only the target culture because this foreign content may be irrelevant, demotivating, and unfamiliar to the learners. Thus, it is safer to teach both the source and target cultures by making comparisons and contrasts to facilitate intercultural understanding (Alptekin, 1993). Therefore, textbook authors should strive to include both the

source and target cultures in the textbook’s content. They must construct bridges between the students’ local culture and move from this familiar knowledge to presenting unfamiliar information about the target culture (Alptekin, 1993; Tomović, 2013). This means that there should be a gradual introduction of the target culture, and this introduction should be made alongside the source culture.

With the status of English as an international language, it is now preferred that EFL textbooks should include references to a plethora of cultures around the globe. English is not exclusive to its native speakers anymore (Alptekin, 1993; McKay, 2003). Ur (2012) argues that “most learners need to become aware of a diverse, international, cosmopolitan set of cultural customs, literature, art forms and so on, rather than those of a single community” p. 5. Tomović (2013) notes that such knowledge of international cultures prepares learners to act in global settings. Many scholars recently favour the mixture of local and global cultures which is currently labelled “glocalization” such as Mahmoud (2015), who maintains that glocalization helps learners to realize their cultural identity by noticing the similarities and differences between different cultures.

Thus, the cultural load in language textbooks makes them a valuable source for analysis and evaluation. Weninger and Kiss (2015) explain that textbooks are one of the teaching tools that can be easily accessed and evaluated. Mohamad (2014) maintains that the cultural analysis of EFL textbooks in a country such as Libya is critical because they are the primary teaching sources that teachers and students solely use. The learning process would only be successful with the guidance of textbooks. A textbook plays an influential role in EFL classes, and thus, they are worthy of investigation (Chapelle, 2016).

### 3.2 Related Studies:

It is essential, first, to mention that reviewing the pertinent literature here is only confined to studies conducted on textbooks produced for local use in intermediate or secondary public education schools in various contexts. Other studies focusing on commercial textbooks, usually used internationally, are

beyond the scope of this review as these textbooks may have different implications and orientations.

Literature has documented numerous studies that analysed the cultural aspects of EFL textbooks produced for local use in different contexts. For instance, Dweik and Al-Sayyed (2015) analysed the cultural content of Action Pack 12 (student book and workbook) used at the third-secondary level in Jordanian public schools. The researchers deployed a cultural checklist to figure out whether the textbooks used represent the source, target, or international cultures. The researchers concluded that the textbook's cultural aspects heavily reflected the Arabic Islamic culture followed by international cultures, while the British culture received little attention. The textbook was found to be full of references relating to literature, science, history, and politics, whereas religion and social behaviour "etiquette" were under-represented. Dweik and Al-Sayyed consequently advised curriculum developers to increase the references to target cultural elements in Action Pack 12 to achieve a balanced distribution of different cultures.

Moreover, Shreeb (2017) analysed only the student book for the 6th preparatory grade in Iraq, covering the following cultural categories: social, personal, environmental, political systems, religion, art, and humanities. The study also examined whether these categories belonged to the source, target, or international cultures in addition to a fourth type labelled "culture-free" references. The quantitative content analysis revealed that the textbook contained insufficient cultural content because most aspects reflected culture-free and source culture categories. Shreeb noted that target culture representations were very few. Social themes were found to be dominant, such as work, population, nationality, and leisure activities.

Additionally, Alobaid et al. (2019) conducted another study in Iraq that examined the cultural representation in three textbooks to find out whether the textbooks promote acculturation and if the cultural elements reflect surface or deep culture. Results showed that the textbooks were heavily loaded with source culture references "Iraqi", while the target culture received little representation. This shows that the textbooks do not result in acculturation. It was further found

that the textbooks were full of surface cultural elements such as people's names, celebrations, and food, making them resemble tourists' guidebooks (Alobaid, et al., 2019). They finally recommended that the imbalanced cultural representation should be adapted to improve the quality of Iraqi EFL textbooks.

The findings of the previous two studies (Shreeb, 2017; Alobaid et. 2019) are significant to the current research because the same British company, Garnet Education, publishes the textbooks used in the Libyan and Iraqi public schools. After viewing secondary school Iraqi EFL textbooks, the researchers believe that the content of the textbooks in both countries is slightly identical.

Furthermore, Dahmardeh and Kim (2020) investigated the cultural aspects presented in five English coursebooks used in Iranian secondary schools. The researchers employed content analysis to find whether the cultural references corresponded to the source "Iranian Islamic", target, international, or universal cultures. Results showed that the textbooks contained various references to the four cultural dimensions; however, most reflected the source culture. The target, international, and universal cultures received little representation. Dahmardeh and Kim maintained that the mere presence of the source culture needs to be improved for developing the learners' intercultural competence, and does not meet Iranian learners' needs in today's globalized world.

Likewise, other studies such as (Aissa, 2018; Al-Obaidi, 2015; Faruk, 2015; and Ariwan, 2020) documented similar results. They concluded that the studied local textbooks contained an imbalanced presentation of the source, target, and international cultures, usually over-emphasizing the source culture. The studies also reported that the target culture representation in these textbooks is insufficient, and they fail to address important cultural aspects that promote intercultural understanding.

In contrast to the previous studies, El Shawa (2011) arrived at a different conclusion. She evaluated the cultural elements in the textbooks for grades 11 and 12 in Palestinian secondary schools. A content analysis card was used to decide if the cultural elements reflected



Palestinian or non-Palestinian cultures, i.e., target and other cultures. The researcher employed analysis criteria of three cultural dimensions, namely products, practices, and perspectives. The quantitative analysis showed that references to non-Palestinian cultures outnumbered those of Palestinian culture. This contradictory finding may relate to the fact that the researcher only analysed the coursebooks' activities and excluded the illustrations, listening texts, and the workbooks' activities, which may contain additional cultural aspects. Her results indicated that the textbooks promoted intercultural learning through many references to different cultures. Elshawa noted that Islamic topics were very scarce; the textbooks need to introduce appropriate vocabulary to enable students to talk about their Islamic religion in English or the Palestinian issue.

By reviewing the related literature, one can notice that despite the abundance of research on the cultural content of EFL textbooks in the Arab world, research on the cultural content of EFL textbooks used in Libyan secondary schools seems lacking. Therefore, the present study intends to analyse the cultural aspects presented in the secondary one English textbook to extend the research focus to other EFL settings, Libyan secondary schools in this case. Moreover, it can be elicited that researchers used different analysis criteria to analyse EFL textbooks' cultural content. This relates to the fact that culture has many definitions and dimensions. Therefore, the previous studies' results cannot be generalized to other EFL contexts as the findings may change according to the studied textbook, the chosen analysis criteria, and the teaching context. It is thus critical to extend the cultural analysis to other language textbooks in different teaching settings, the Libyan context in our case, to determine whether the results confirm or refute previous findings.

#### 4. Research Objectives and Questions

The research investigates the cultural content of the EFL coursebook and workbook designed for the first year of the secondary level in Libya. Specifically, the study examines what types of culture are presented (source 'Arabic Islamic', target 'British', or international cultures). Additionally, it analyses how culture is

reflected based on the criteria of fifteen cultural aspects (history, politics, economy, geography, literature and arts, social customs and etiquette, education, music, food, dress, leisure time and tourism, sport, religion, family and male-female relationship, names).

Thus, this study attempts to address the following research questions:

- How is culture reflected in the studied textbook based on the criteria of fifteen cultural aspects addressed in this study?
- What types of culture are presented (source 'Arabic Islamic', target 'British', or international cultures) in the studied textbook?

### 5. Methodology

#### 5.1. Research Design:

The present research sheds light on the cultural content presented in the "English for Libya" textbook taught in the first secondary year. To this end, the content analysis method was employed to generate quantitative and qualitative data using frequencies, percentages, and written descriptions of cultural aspects. This triangulation of data would increase the validity and reliability of the research findings (Dörnyei, 2007).

The study analysed the cultural aspects presented in only the coursebook and workbook. The teacher's book served as a source of key answers to the workbook exercises during the textbook analysis. The analysis focused solely on the reading and listening passages and illustrations because these components are believed to contain heavy cultural loads (Elshawa, 2011). The research was conducted in the academic year 2021-2022.

#### 5.2. Research Instrument:

Content analysis procedures were employed in the study to analyse the cultural aspects and types represented in the first secondary year textbook. Cohen et al. (2018) explain that "content analysis takes texts and analyses, reduces and interrogates them into summary form through the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes in order to generate or test a theory" p.675.

To perform content analysis, the researchers developed a checklist (see Appendix A) based on analysis criteria utilized in previous research such as Cortazzi and Jin (1999), Dweik and Al-Sayyed (2015), and Aissa (2018). The checklist analysed the existence of 15 cultural aspects in the studied textbook, to identify whether a specific cultural aspect refers to the Arabic Islamic culture, British culture, or international cultures. Each cultural aspect was defined and described using sub-categories in the attached checklist. The motive was to ensure the validity of the instrument.

To increase the content analysis validity, three professors in the Libyan Academy, Misurata, reviewed the checklist and commented on its validity and appropriateness. The checklist was then edited and amended based on their feedback. Furthermore, the researchers conducted the content analysis of the textbook twice to ensure reliability. The scores of the two analyses were compared using Microsoft Excel to extract the reliability coefficient. It was found that the level of consistency reached 90%, which suggests that the analysis is highly reliable.

**5.3 Data Collection Procedures:**

The content analysis adopted in this study follows the procedures suggested by Cohen et al. (2018). First, words, phrases, paragraphs, and pictures that denoted a cultural reference were considered units of analysis. These units were coded and then assigned to the appropriate cultural aspect in the checklist. Each cultural item has been counted only once, regardless of the frequency of its appearance in the textbook, to avoid redundancy. The researchers manually counted the overall references under a specific category to generate a frequency, which was then transformed into a percentage.

**5.4 Data Analysis:**

The total number of references for each cultural aspect was counted manually to generate the frequency. Then, each frequency was transformed into a percentage. The frequencies and percentages of each cultural aspect occurrence were shown in a summarizing table. The quantitative data was subsequently interpreted and clarified by qualitative written examples from the coursebook and workbook.

**6. Results**

**Table (1) Total Cultural Aspects Represented in Secondary One Coursebook and Workbook**

Cultural Aspects	Types of culture						Total	
	Arabic		British		International		Fr.	%
	Fr.	%	Fr.	%	Fr.	%		
Names	54	64.3	18	21.4	12	14.3	84	31.3
Leisure Time	19	45.2	8	19.1	15	35.7	42	15.7
Geography	13	32.5	4	10	23	57.5	40	15
Dress	15	88.2	1	5.9	1	5.9	17	6.3
Economy	3	25	8	66.7	1	8.3	12	4.5
Social Customs	4	33.3	5	41.7	3	25	12	4.5
Education	4	33.3	6	50	2	16.7	12	4.5
Politics	0	0	1	10	9	90	10	3.7
History	6	66.7	3	33.3	0	0	9	3.4
Sport	0	0	2	22.2	7	77.8	9	3.4
Religion	7	100	0	0	0	0	7	2.6
Food	3	50	3	50	0	0	6	2.2
Family	3	50	0	0	3	50	6	2.2
Literature & Arts	1	50	0	0	1	50	2	0.7
Music	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	132	49.3	59	22	77	28.7	268	100

Note. (Fr. means frequency, % means percentage).

Table (1) shows the frequencies and percentages of the cultural aspects that are reflected in the first secondary year coursebook and workbook. The cultural aspects are presented from the highest to the lowest in the frequency of occurrences in the analysed books.

As shown in the table, the aspect of names has the highest number of representations among the other cultural aspects, scoring 31.3%. Leisure time comes in second place with a percentage of 15.7%, followed by geography, which is slightly less in the number of references than leisure time. The religious aspect is marginalized as it is given a low percentage of 2.6%. The lowest percentage is given to the aspect of literature and art, with a score of 0.7%. References to music are non-existent in either the coursebook or workbook. Each cultural aspect and its corresponding type of culture and examples are thoroughly presented in the following sections.

**Aspect 1: Names:**

Names have scored the highest number of occurrences amongst the other cultural aspects in

the textbook. Arabic names are mentioned 54 times, such as Sami, Omar, Fawzi, Huda, Hala, and Reem. On the other hand, English names appear 18 times. Amongst these names are Susan, Helen, Jane, and Tim. International names are the lowest in occurrence, with only 12 names presented in the textbook. Some of these names are Sean, Patrick, Niall, and Maeve, which appear in a lesson about an Irish family in unit five. Justine and Denise are presented as the names of two African girls from Uganda in unit two. These names were assigned to the international names category.

### Aspect 2: Leisure Time:

Leisure time is the second-highest represented aspect in the textbook. Most leisure time references relate to the Arabic culture, with a percentage of 45.2%, followed by the international culture, which scores 35.7%. The British culture is the least represented, with a percentage of 19.1%.

Unit three in the textbook covers the theme of travel and tourism. Many references to entertaining activities and tourist places can be found in this unit. These cultural references are manifested through pictures, words, and texts. Interestingly, in one lesson, the aspects related to leisure time reflect various types of cultures including, Arabic, British, and international cultures. The presentation is not limited to one type of culture. For example, the following extract in Figure (1) from the coursebook, unit three, page 32, shows different tourist places in Egypt, Libya, England, and Greece.

**Figure (1) Tourist Attractions from Arabic, British, and international cultures**



References to Libyan tourist places are addressed. The cover page of the textbook

portrays a picture of a traditional house in the old town of Ghadames, a tourist destination in Libya. Other references include Leptis Magna, Sabratha, and the National Museum of Libya at the Red Castle in Tripoli. The coursebook also mentions another tourist place located in the east of Libya in unit seven on page 81. A character describes her journey by saying, "I'm having a great holiday with my family in Aljabal Alakhdar, doing a lot of canoeing and fishing".

The content analysis also revealed that the textbook employs comparison between cultures, especially in the reading texts and workbook tasks. For instance, the workbook activity in unit four, page 46, asks students to compare and contrast some cultural aspects of two cities 'Tripoli and Tokyo' based on the text presented in the coursebook.

### Aspect 3: Geography:

The geographical aspect has also gained a reasonable percentage of 15% amongst the other cultural aspects. International geographical aspects receive the most emphasis in the textbook, with a percentage of 57.5%. The Arabic culture is the second in emphasis in terms of geography, which receives a percentage of 32.5%. The geographical aspects relating to the British culture are kept to a minimum of 10%.

Rivers are mentioned from multiple cultures, such as the Nile in Egypt, the River Thames in Britain, the Colorado River in America, and the Franklin River in Australia. Different seas appear in various lessons, such as the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. Mountains are also present, such as Aljabal Alakhdar in Libya, Mount Everest in the Himalayas, and the Scottish Highlands in the UK. Plants from various cultures are portrayed, such as the pictures of date palms, pine trees, the Chamhari tree in Libya, and the cherry blossoms in Japan. Animals from different cultures are also found, such as polar bears, buffalo, hummingbirds, and the hawksbill sea turtle.

In unit seven of the coursebook, a text presents the weather forecast of two Middle East countries (the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia) and two North African countries (Libya and Egypt). The two final paragraphs in the text



describe the weather forecast for the United Kingdom and the United States.

#### Aspect 4: Dress:

The dress aspect is represented with a score of 6.3%. It is primarily manifested in the form of visual illustrations. The Arabic Islamic culture is superior in terms of the total references (88.2%), especially through the characters wearing hijab, which is considered the typical clothing of Muslim women. Nevertheless, the rest of the women and men characters in the textbook are wearing conservative clothing that conforms to the convention of the Arab Islamic community. Other aspects relating to the Arabic culture appear in unit two of the coursebook on page 21, showing a picture of an Omani school uniform. In unit five of the coursebook, there is a description of the wedding costumes of Bedouin women in the Gulf.

One reference to British culture is found in unit five about the wedding ceremonies where “the bride wears white to symbolize purity” on page 56 in the coursebook. Similarly, only one reference is made to international cultures through a picture portraying African women’s traditional casual clothes in unit two of the coursebook.

#### Aspect 5: Economy:

The economic aspect has received little amount of representation in the textbook. It has significantly appeared in the form of currency. The largest portion is given to the British culture, with a percentage of 66.7%. The British pound ‘£’ has appeared approximately eight times in the textbook. The second in the number of economic representations is the Arabic culture, which scores 25%. The Libyan dinar appeared casually in one of the pictures on page 38 in the coursebook, “LD 240”. Furthermore, an illustration of an Emirati coin is depicted in the workbook on page 10. Other international cultures were scarce in the representation of this aspect. A passage about UNICEF talks about child labour in some Arabic and international countries, including Lebanon, the Ivory Coast, and the Philippines.

#### Aspect 6: Social Customs and Etiquette:

This aspect has scored a low percentage of 4.5% compared with the other cultural aspects. The British culture has the highest number of

occurrences, with a percentage of 41.7%, especially in the etiquette category. The Arabic culture has a close percentage of 33.3%, while international cultures are the least represented (25%).

The textbook exclusively introduced British terms of address, such as Mr., Mrs., Madam, and Sir. On the other hand, Arabic address terms are non-existent. The text about wedding customs in unit five briefly presents different ways of celebrating weddings worldwide. Some examples include the bride’s henna, Bedouin traditional dances in the Gulf, the groom being carried in a special chair in Morocco, Filipinos marrying in group ceremonies, etc. An additional exercise is found in the workbook on page 57, requiring students to write a paragraph about wedding customs in Libya to prompt cultural comparison.

Other social celebrations mentioned are the New Year and (It’s a girl) birth announcement in unit five of the coursebook, as shown in Figure (2). Furthermore, the goat symbol in the Chinese tradition is said to bring good luck and happiness in unit six.

Figure (2) Social Customs around the World



#### Aspect 7: Education:

Education is the third cultural aspect that gets a score of 4.5%. Half of the educational aspects are related to British culture. The Arabic culture is referred to less frequently, with a percentage of 33.3%, while international cultures fall behind with a score of 16.7%.

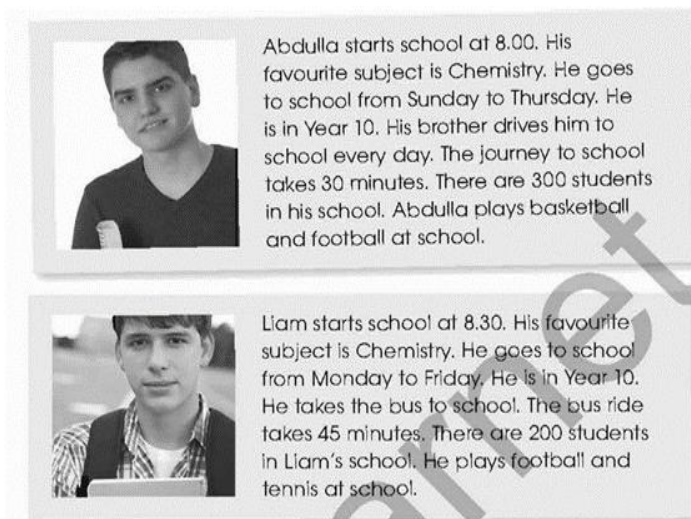
Unit two is entirely devoted to the aspect of education. Most of the unit’s content references the education of Arabic, British, and international countries. Nevertheless, British culture still



dominates the overall references. For example, a character in the textbook is planning to go to England on an exchange programme. There is also a discussion in the listening passage about a summer study programme in the UK. Unit four includes a text about 'gap year' in the UK, where many students leave school temporarily to do something else. The workbook also presents advertisements for two schools in London highlighting their features and programmes.

It should be noted that the textbook compared the educational systems in different countries. In the workbook, unit two, on page 19, two paragraphs give information about the schools of Abdulla and Liam. For instance, they study in the same grade but attend school on different days. Abdulla goes to school from Sunday to Thursday, while Liam goes from Monday to Friday, as shown in Figure (3).

**Figure (3) Comparison of Education in Different Cultures**



Additionally, there is a comparison in the listening passage on page 112 between an Indian and an Algerian man describing their school in the past. The Indian man used an abacus instead of a calculator and went to school by rickshaw, while the Algerian man walked to school and used a slate and chalk to answer exercises in class.

#### **Aspect 8: Politics:**

The political aspect has received little representation, with only ten total references. Examples of international politics are found nine times, making it the most dominant type, while

one reference is made to the British culture. On the other hand, Arab politics is totally neglected in the textbook.

Different flags worldwide are presented in unit one, such as the flags of America, Spain, Germany, Brazil, Russia, France, and Portugal. There are also references to relations between countries in unit one. This is reflected in the sentences: "the number of Indian students studying in the UK is rising steeply" and "many people in the United States prefer to study Spanish because they think it is more useful" on page 10 in the coursebook. Unit two includes a text about UNICEF, an international non-government organization.

#### **Aspect 9: History:**

The historical aspect has received nine references scattered throughout the textbook. The lead is given to the Arabic culture, which has been mentioned six times. Only three examples of British history are found, while the history of international countries is not represented.

Unit one in both the coursebook and workbook includes a lesson that discusses the history of Arabic and English languages in two texts. The first text talks about some major events in the history of the Arabic language, how it spread throughout Europe, and how it survived with the help of the Holy Qur'an. The history of the English language brought out the discussion of the colonization of Britain by the Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, and Normans.

The history of Libya has received scarce references. In unit five, page 59 in the coursebook, a text talks about the National Museum of Libya and mentions three major civilizations in Libyan history, namely, the Neolithic ages, Pre-historic Libya, and the Phoenician era. The text is accompanied by some pictures of some of the artifacts of these civilizations in the Libyan museum. Additionally, a famous Libyan figure, Omar Mukhtar, is mentioned in the coursebook, unit seven, page 81.

#### **Aspect 10: Sport:**

The sports aspect is represented with a total percentage of 3.4%. Seven sports related to international cultures are found, receiving the highest representation compared to the other two. British sports are mentioned twice, while Arabic

sports are not depicted in any form in the textbook.

Some mentioned international sports are Gaelic football, dragon boat racing, dance sport, and roller sports. Some international sports games are the Asian Games, the Olympics, and the World Cup. British sports are also present, including the games of cricket and squash.

### Aspect 11: Religion:

Religion has received little representation in the textbook, scoring 2.6%. All the references are related to Islam, showing a homogeneous reflection of religion. Religious aspects of the British and other international cultures are not presented.

Some of the Islamic features that are mentioned in the textbook are the Holy Qur'an, mosques, and Friday prayers. Eid Al-Adha, an Islamic festival and a religious holiday, is discussed in unit four. It talks about the practices of Muslims on this holy day, such as sacrificing a ram and sharing the meat with family, friends, and poor people. Muslims wear new clothes and go to the mosque for prayers and thank Allah (the Islamic word for God).

### Aspect 12: Food:

Food is the second least represented aspect, with a score of 2.2%. Only a few examples, pictures mainly, are found. Interestingly, the Arabic and British cultures share an equal 50% each. International foods, on the other hand, are not presented at all.

Arabic food includes pictures of meals eaten on Eid Al-Adha (grilled meat, hummus, salads, and Arabian delights) and a reference to the traditional combination of milk and dates served in special Arab celebrations. As for British food, there is a picture of cola, cheese sandwiches, and crisps and another illustration of fish and chips.

### Aspect 13: Family and the Roles of Men and Women:

The family aspect has the same percentage of 2.2% as the aspect of food. There are few references to Arabic and international cultures in the textbook, and each has an equal score of 50%. References to the British culture are not included.

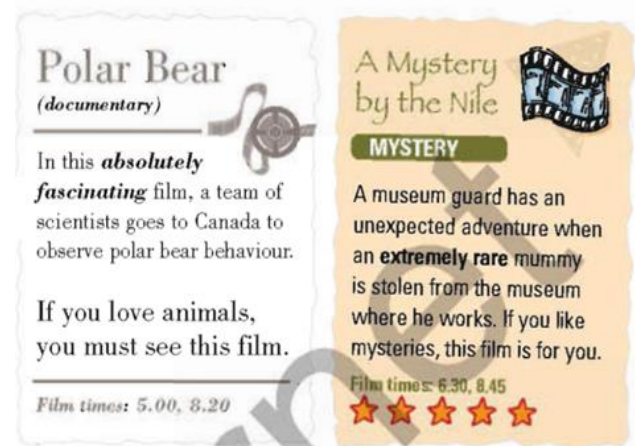
Unit two in the coursebook depicts the life of an African girl, showing her duties in the family. This quote is found on page 24 "She has to collect water with her sisters. They carry 10 litres of water ... After school, she goes home and helps her mother to water the garden. The family have some goats, and Justine has to feed them. She also collects food for the family". Additionally, a follow-up exercise asks students to write a paragraph comparing their daily routine with that of the African girl.

Another example is found in unit five on page 57 about an Irish family having a custom called Welcome Home Week. This week, the family members return home after being abroad to join special events such as concerts and sports competitions. Additionally, family references to the Arabic culture are also included. There is a description of a family gathering in Msillata, Libya, to celebrate Eid Al-Adha, where the family members spend a couple of days with their relatives to do special events. Furthermore, a family tradition in Morocco shows how a mother-in-law welcomes her son's bride into her home with milk and dates.

### Aspect 14: Literature and Arts:

Literature and arts have scarce representation in the textbook. One example is found on page 53 in the coursebook about some films; two refer to Arabic and international cultures. The following extract in Figure 4 describes the 'Polar Bear' documentary in Canada and 'A Mystery by the Nile' film in Egypt. However, no references to literature are found in the textbook. The following example relates to the art aspect.

Figure (4) Arabic and International Films

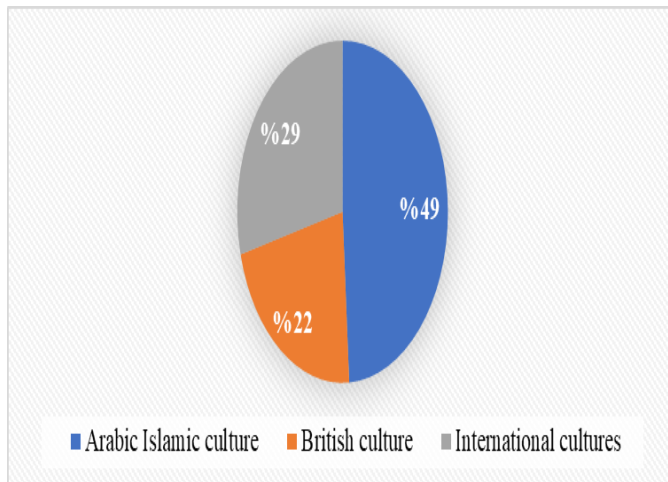


### Aspect 15: Music:

The aspect of music has no presence in the textbook. It has scored 0%. No references to the Arabic, British, or international cultures were found in the coursebook or workbook.

To sum up, data about the distribution of the Arabic, British, and international cultures are presented in a pie chart in Figure (5):

**Figure (5) Total Representations of the Arabic, British, and International Cultures in Secondary One Textbook**



The data presented in Figure 5 illustrate that the first secondary English textbook depicts a mixture of Arabic, British, and international cultures. However, there is variation in the distribution of these cultures in the textbook. The Arabic culture occupies approximately half of the cultural content, while the remaining half is distributed between the British and international cultures. Individually, international cultures score a moderate portion of 29%, the British culture receives the lowest percentage of 22%, whereas the Arabic culture dominates a large portion of the textbook's cultural content.

## 6. Discussion

The content analysis initially answered the first research question regarding the cultural aspects reflected in the first secondary year textbook. The analysis showed that the coursebook and workbook reflected fourteen cultural aspects with different percentages allotted to each. The cultural aspects that received the highest percentages in the textbook are names, leisure time, and geography. These aspects constitute more than 50% of the overall cultural references. On the other hand, dress, economy,

social customs and etiquette, education, politics, history, and sports have received low percentages. Meanwhile, the aspects of religion, food, family, and literature were under-represented.

The aspects of names, leisure time, and geography have received the highest references in the textbook. They constitute a large portion of the textbooks' overall cultural representation at the expense of other important cultural aspects such as history, politics, religion, dress, family, social customs and etiquette. Similarly, Alobaid et al. (2019) found that Iraqi EFL textbooks at the intermediate level included many references to names, food, historical places, landmarks, entertainment, etc. They regarded such representation as traditional and superficial, resembling "tourist guidebooks". Likewise, it can be argued that the Secondary One textbook contained a superficial cultural presentation.

Interestingly, references to politics, education, social customs, and etiquette were mainly directed towards British culture. These three aspects have received a similar percentage of 4.5%. The British authors may have been more comfortable presenting these deep cultural topics from their native cultural perspective. Covering these aspects from the source culture's point of view can be quite demanding, requiring the authors to spend extra time and effort to collect such unfamiliar cultural material. The aspects of religion and dress received quite low percentages. The content analysis revealed that dress has received a score of 6.3%, which is higher than the score of religion (2.6%). Dress and religion are sensitive topics; consequently, the authors may have covered them briefly to avoid cross-cultural conflicts. However, exposure to international clothing systems would enable the students to understand and accept diversity. It may also make them proud of their national clothing style. Nonetheless, traditional and modern Libyan clothes are not portrayed in any form (textual or visual) in the textbook. Moreover, religion should be given more emphasis in Libyan EFL textbooks. The authors were cautious in tackling religious aspects, choosing only to cover the Islamic religion to avoid causing cultural controversies.

It was additionally found that general references to politics and history were very scarce. Discussing political issues may create



conflict and rage. For this reason, the authors may have chosen to represent politics through flags and brief statements about international relations between countries. Arabic historical aspects were the most represented, yet Libyan history is covered briefly in one or two lessons. Including the historical aspect in EFL textbooks is crucial to educate the learners about their own country and other countries (Dweik & Al-Sayyed, 2015).

The analysis also revealed that literature works were absent in the textbook lessons. It needs to give an idea about some literary genres or topics related to the arts. The lessons consequently do not prepare the students who may choose to specialize in the literary section after passing the first secondary year. Additionally, references to music were non-existent. Teenagers may find it interesting to read about some music types or the names of popular music.

Regarding the second research question that addresses the culture types presented in the studied textbook, the analysis unveiled that the Arabic, British, and international cultures are present in the textbook with varying degrees. This finding suggests that the linguistic content of language textbooks can reflect visible and invisible elements of culture. This conclusion is in line with Cunningsworth (1995), who argues that a textbook can visibly or invisibly transmit social and cultural values, and therefore a textbook can never be neutral. Furthermore, the culture reflected is not necessarily related to the language being taught, i.e., English. However, the content can disseminate elements from various cultures such as the students' native culture and other international cultures (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Since these cultural aspects are present in the analysed textbook, addressing and teaching these aspects becomes necessary at the secondary one level.

In addition, the analysis showed that Arabic culture has received a large portion of the textbook's presentation (49%), followed by international cultures (29%), and finally British culture (22%). The secondary one English textbook (coursebook and workbook) prioritises the source and international cultures over the target culture.

It is evident that the dominance of the source culture documented in this study's results

bears similarity to other studies reviewed in section 3.2, such as Dweik and Al-Sayyed (2015), which was conducted in Jordanian secondary schools and Alobaid (2015), Alobaid et al. (2019), and Shreep (2017), all the three were conducted in the Iraqi context. This similarity, particularly concerning the Iraqi context, can be attributed to the fact premises that the same British Company, Garnet Education, published the studied English textbooks. The researchers believe that the content of the textbooks in both countries is slightly identical. However, a study examining the cultural content of the English textbook for the first secondary year in Iraq could not be found.

It was found that the three culture types in the studied textbook were not properly proportioned. Textbook authors should strive to balance the source (Arabic Islamic), target (British), and intercultural cultures to promote intercultural awareness and interest among Libyan EFL learners at the secondary level. Nevertheless, the low emphasis on the target British culture in the analysed textbook may be due to the increasing role of English as an international language rather than the private property of the native British speaker (Alptekin, 1993).

Although the Arabic culture received the highest representation, it was mainly manifested in persons' names, leisure time, dress, and religion. It should be added that religious aspects, overall, received limited representation. Highlighting other important topics such as Islamic history, politics, religion, social customs, and etiquette can enable the learners to be aware of their cultural identity and to express themselves using the target language more easily. Therefore, the Arabic cultural representation in the textbook is quite insufficient.

## 7. Conclusion

The findings showed that the overall cultural representation in the textbook was largely imbalanced. Indeed, the three aspects of names, leisure time, and geography dominate the entire cultural content compared to the other cultural aspects in the checklist. The analysis showed that the textbook needs to focus more on more important cultural aspects such as religion, politics, history, social customs, etiquette, literature, etc. Moreover, it was found that the Arabic Islamic culture has received the highest



representation (49%), international cultures come in second place (29%), while the British culture is the least represented in the secondary one textbook (22%). This suggests that these three types of culture were not properly proportioned.

### **7.1 Pedagogical Implications:**

The results indicated that the textbook included imbalanced and insufficient cultural representation. It is thus suggested that textbook designers need to consider balancing the linguistic and cultural aspects of the secondary One English Textbook to increase the student's interest and motivation in learning a foreign culture. This can be achieved in two complementary ways. The first is to increase the frequency and depth of the overall cultural aspects. The second way is to include instructional directions for the teachers on introducing some cultural aspects to the students, such as explaining the cultural background of some types of food, sport, dress, social celebrations, etc. The secondary one textbook (the teacher's book specifically) needs to give instructions on how to teach the cultural content to motivate the teachers to include it in their lesson presentation.

The textbook should also create a balanced mix of Arabic and international cultural aspects. This aligns with the advocates of glocalization and intercultural communicative competence (Alptekin, 1993; Mahmoud, 2015), who maintain that presenting the source and international cultures in EFL textbooks would enable the students to understand their culture concerning other cultures. Thus, they can be able to interact in cross-cultural situations.

### **7.2 Limitations of the Study:**

One limitation of the current study is the small sample size which may affect the generalizability of the results. The content analysis examined only the coursebook and workbook for one secondary year. It was not possible, within the scope of this study, to analyze all the English textbooks prescribed for Libyan secondary schools. Nonetheless, the results obtained from one textbook are assumed to be enough to provide in-depth data for exploring the cultural presentation of the first secondary-year textbook.

### **7.3 Recommendations for Further Research:**

Future research can examine the cultural content of EFL textbooks for the second and third years in Libyan secondary schools. Other research may make use of triangulation of different methods, particularly, questionnaires and observations with textbook content analysis.

Moreover, data gathered in this research can be utilized as a springboard for a further study, that is, to investigate the perceptions of stakeholders, mainly Libyan EFL teachers and inspectors, towards the cultural presentation analyzed and documented in this study.

**Appendix: Content Analysis Checklist**

Cultural Aspect	Categories of Culture					
	Arabic (source)		British (target)		International	
	Fr.	%	Fr.	%	Fr.	%
<b>History</b>						
National Heroes and Heroines						
Famous figures						
Major historical events						
Politics						
Leadership in the country						
Flags						
Governments						
Government/non-government institutions						
Relations with other countries						
<b>Economy</b>						
Names of banks						
Currency (coins and banknotes)						
Buying and selling goods (commerce)						
Professions						
<b>Geography</b>						
Rivers, lakes, seas, mountains						
Plants and animals						
Weather and climate						
<b>Literature &amp; Arts</b>						
Short stories, novels, poems, drama						
Famous poets, authors, dramatists						
Famous painters and paintings						
Artistic productions (films, series)						
Famous actors and actresses						
<b>Social Customs &amp; Etiquette</b>						
Social celebrations and traditions						
Addressing people (titles)						
Acceptable behaviours						
Unacceptable behaviours						
<b>Education</b>						
Educational systems						
Kinds of schools						
School subjects						
University subjects						

Cultural Aspect	Categories of Culture					
	Arabic (source)		British (target)		International	
	Fr.	%	Fr.	%	Fr.	%
<b>Food</b>						
Famous dishes						
Hot and soft drinks						
Eating utensils						
Eating habits						
<b>Dress</b>						
Traditional dressing						
Men's and women's clothing						
Casual clothes						
Formal clothes						
Occasion clothes (weddings, funerals)						
<b>Leisure Time &amp; Tourism</b>						
Entertaining activities						
Entertaining programmes						
Touristic places						
<b>Sport</b>						
Traditional sport						
Popular games						
<b>Religion</b>						
Names of religions						
Places of worship						
Religious ceremonies						
Religious holidays						
<b>Family and Male-Female Relationship</b>						
Family relations						
Family gatherings						
Role of women in society						
Role of men in society						
<b>Names</b>						
Names of males and females						
Nicknames						
Unit number ( )						

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