

Cultural Perspectives of Turkish ELT Coursebooks: Do Standardized Teaching Texts Incorporate Intercultural Features?

Türkiye'deki İngilizce Ders Kitaplarının Kültürel Perspektifleri: Tek Tip Öğretim Materyalleri Kültürlerarası Özellikleri İçeriyor mu?

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Abstract

The integration of language and culture has been one of the focal concerns of language pedagogy. This integration has become progressively more important with the increasing role of English as a global lingua franca. Therefore, it is important for language teaching materials to present various cultural elements in order to pave the way for the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence. Until now, it has been claimed that most of the government-issued coursebooks used in language classes in Turkey fail to create a meaningful relationship between home and target cultures, thereby overlooking the importance of cultural diversity. The present study is an attempt to explore whether this kind of limited cultural content persists in language teaching materials. Accordingly, a series of three coursebooks used as core language teaching texts at public elementary schools in Turkey was evaluated in terms of four cultural aspects: products, practices, perspectives, and people. It was found that contrary to the previous studies, all three of the coursebooks do take diverse cultures into account, although with a clear emphasis on Europe.

Keywords: Culture, language teaching, coursebook, Intercultural Communicative Competence, EFL, ELT

Öz

Dil ve kültür arasındaki güçlü bağ pek çok dil eğitim çalışmasının odak noktası olmuştur. Dil ve kültürün ayrılmaz doğası, özellikle İngilizcenin küresel iletişim dili haline gelmesiyle daha da önem kazanmış ve kültürlerarası iletişim yeteneği kavramını eğitim dünyasının gündemine taşımıştır. Öğrencilerin bu yeteneklerini geliştirebilmeleri için öğretim materyallerinin çeşitli kültürel öğeleri içermesi son derece önemlidir. Ancak bugüne kadar Türkiye'de yabancı dil eğitiminde kullanılmak üzere devlet tarafından hazırlanan ders kitaplarının bu temel unsuru göz ardı ettiği ve dolayısıyla öğrencilerin küresel dünyada sağlıklı iletişim kurmada zorluklar yaşayabileceği tartışılmıştır. Bu çalışma, sınırlı kültürel içeriğin hâlâ dil eğitim materyallerinde mevcut olup olmadığını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye'deki devlet okullarında ilköğretim ikinci kademedeki İngilizce dersleri için hazırlanan ve ülke genelinde temel kaynak olarak kullanılan üç ders kitabından oluşan bir dil eğitim serisi şu dört kültürel bileşen açısından incelenmiştir: ürünler, uygulamalar, bakış açıları ve kişiler. Önceki çalışmaların aksine, bu içerik incelemesi söz konusu dil eğitim serisinin, her ne kadar Avrupa odaklı olsa da öğrencilerin kültürel bakış açılarını genişletmelerine yardımcı olabilecek farklı kültürel öğeleri içerdiğini tespit etmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kültür, dil öğretimi, ders kitabı, kültürlerarası iletişim yeteneği, EFL, ELT.

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Introduction

The global spread of English as a lingua franca has developed the notion of Intercultural Communicative Competence, a concept which has great significance in the field of foreign language education. With over 1.5 billion people speaking English as a second or foreign language, and more than one hundred nations integrating English into their standardized school curricula (Crystal, 2012), it has been argued that the main objective of modern language education is to equip students with the necessary skills for communicating with people from diverse cultures; thus, teaching materials should not be limited to those which exemplify native English speaking cultures alone (Alptekin, 2002; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Developing learners' skills in intercultural communication is appropriate in the context of foreign language education, because today, it is not necessary for people to travel in order to interact with others from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As Cortazzi and Jin (1999) reason, "popular music, the media, large population movements, tourism, and the multi-cultural nature of many societies combine to ensure that sooner or later, students will encounter members of other cultural groups" (p. 198).

In light of this issue, the teaching materials used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts might be expected to include a diverse array of intercultural elements. However, not all English Language Teaching (ELT) coursebooks live up to this expectation. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) categorize the coursebooks used in EFL/ESL classrooms in terms of their cultural content as based either on source culture, target culture, or international cultures, noting in reference to this last category that "English is frequently used in international situations by speakers who do not speak it as a first language" (p. 209).

In Turkey, English has no official status, being used primarily as a means for international access. Yet due to its overall significance, English language instruction has been emphasized in the formal education procedure. As Doğançay-Aktuna and Kızıltepe (2005) explain, "The most significant function of English in Turkey is its instrumental use within public and private educational institutions that also act as the main agents of language spread" (p. 254). Furthermore, Turkey's current European Union (EU) membership bid has created an even greater need for ELT (Kırkgöz, 2009); however, a number of figures have addressed the inefficiency of English language instruction in Turkish public schools (Büyükkantarcıoğlu, 2004; Kırkgöz, 2009). Among the reasons given for this shortcoming is the use of ELT coursebooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), which do not always support a communicative approach (Büyükkantarcıoğlu, 2004; Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005; Kırkgöz, 2007a, 2007b, 2009).

Although these coursebooks are held to be problematic in terms of their cultural content (Çakır, 2010), they are seen as authoritative by teachers and students; thus, the texts are often treated as a syllabus (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005), and teachers are expected to rely on them for standardization. Furthermore, as Turkish ELT teachers do not have the latitude to select their own teaching texts, classroom instructors must develop the ability to properly evaluate their top-down materials and to make the necessary modifications to ensure the cognitive, emotional, and social development of their students.

The role of culture in language teaching has previously been addressed in the Turkish context (Çakır, 2010; Hamiloğlu & Mendi, 2010; Işık, 2011; Türkan & Çelik, 2007). However, the increasing use of English as a lingua franca stresses the need for promoting an international perspective, and there remains much to discover about the global status of English-speaking cultures as presented in EFL texts. The present study is the first of its kind, as it investigates the extent to which Turkish educational materials incorporate world cultures guided by a framework based on the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*, which was first published in 1996. A second edition of this work was released in 1999, and an updated third edition, entitled *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, was published in 2006. These publications were the result of the National Standards for Foreign Language Education Project (NSFLEP) (1996, 1999, 2006), a cooperative effort between the American Council on the

Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and several professional, educational and community organizations which was directed at creating nationalized content standards for foreign language learning in the United States. The resulting principles describe the content of language learning and provide a framework for standards-based instruction. The goals of foreign language learning are said to be diverse, ranging from career advancement to appreciation of other cultures and peoples to fulfilling educational requirements. Therefore, “five goal areas that encompass all of these reasons: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities—the five C’s of Foreign Language Education” have been identified (Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Executive Summary, n.d., p. 3). The culture goal area comprises two standards. First, students are expected to exhibit “an awareness of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the target culture” (p. 4). Second, students should evidence “an awareness of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture” (p. 4). In addition to the “Three P’s” of products, practices, and perspectives, the present study analyzes a fourth “P,” a category added to the existing framework by Yuen (2011) representing “persons.”

Bearing in mind the above picture concerning Turkish foreign language education policy and the importance of intercultural communicative competence, the present study sets out to investigate the extent to which a series of commonly used ELT coursebooks published by the MoNE represents the cultures of the world and sensitizes students to cross-cultural values. The intertwined nature of culture and language is reviewed, as well as the present dimension of English as a foreign language in Turkey. In addition, the content of the sampled coursebooks is analyzed according to Yuen’s (2011) framework of products, practices, perspectives, and persons. It is hoped that raising awareness about these issues may strengthen the cultural aspects of English language teaching.

Review of Literature

The Importance of Culture as Context in Language Learning

Numerous discussions on the relationship between language and culture have emerged from the importance attached to context (Byram & Feng, 2005; Halliday, 2007; Kramsch, 1993). Hymes (1972) claims that starting with context, rather than language itself, is the key to comprehending language in its entirety (as cited in Kramsch, 1993, p. 34). Halliday and Hasan (1989) capture the nature of context when they write that “The situation in which linguistic interaction takes place gives the participants a great deal of information about the meanings that are being exchanged, and the meanings that are likely to be exchanged” (p. 12); essentially, context has the power to shape the meaning of utterances.

Kramsch (1993) organizes the dimensions of context into five categories: linguistic, situational, interactional, cultural and intertextual. The concept of linguistic context denotes textual details such as pronouns, substitutions, and deixis. Yet linguistic context forms only the internal framework of language and may not be enough to establish the relevance and meaning of utterances. As she puts it, meaning also depends on external factors which constitute the situational context, including facial expressions, gestures, body movements, participants, environment, time, place and so on. The dimension of interactional context is shaped by interlocutors through their existing beliefs and presuppositions. This type of context includes the established knowledge of a particular society, as speakers of a language combine their individual voices and the society’s memory to relay their messages. In addition, Kramsch describes intertextual context as the relationship between a text and other texts, assumptions, and expectations. Halliday and Hasan (1989) explain that a text can be described as “any instance of living language that is playing some part in a context of situation” (p. 12); thus, individuals tend to create their own texts out of the surrounding texts that constitute the language they use. In essence, Kramsch (1993) argues that the ways in which context is shaped in the classroom determines the extent to which students discern various types of meanings, asserting that “The more potential meanings they are encouraged to discover, the richer the opportunities for learning” (p. 67). This shows that culture is as important

as the other four dimensions in ensuring the enrichment of students' understanding of a foreign language.

A number of other researchers have also addressed the interdependence of language and culture in foreign language education. For example, Byram (1991) asserts that "language should 'unlock the door' to the culture" (p. 17), pointing out that once people have learned a foreign language, they often turn their attention to various endeavors of the associated culture, such as aesthetics, philosophy, history and science. Buttjes (1991) similarly underlines the educational motive for integrating culture in language classrooms as leading to "the individual's enrichment through the acquisition of a wider world-view and through an access to the non-native cultural capital" (p. 8).

The social and technological transformations taking place worldwide have significantly altered the nature of foreign language education, placing great emphasis on the concept of intercultural communicative competence (Baker, 2012; Houghton, 2009; Jenkins, 2009; Rajagopalan, 2004; Seidlhofer, 2005; Sowden, 2012). In offering a definition of this term, Meyer (1991) explains that "intercultural competence ... identifies the ability of a person to behave adequately and in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures" (p. 137); Baker (2012) further stresses that standard English is no longer adequate for intercultural communication and that "a more extensive ... understanding of the varied cultural contexts of English use is necessary" (p. 64).

In her discussion of intercultural communicative competence, Dasli (2011) argues that the "discourse of intercultural communication has experienced three 'moments': cultural awareness, cross-cultural mediation, and critical intercultural language pedagogy" (p. 21). The first moment, cultural awareness, focuses on the national language and culture. The second moment, cross-cultural mediation, emphasizes the development of intercultural competence through respect and tolerance for others. The last moment, critical intercultural language pedagogy, highlights the need to meet the self with the other, thus raising the awareness of learners about the limitations that dominant ideologies bring to the cross-cultural domain.

The Role of Coursebooks in Culture Teaching

It is widely acknowledged that coursebooks are among the most common foreign language teaching materials (Allen, 2008). Teaching texts are intended to guide the learning process (Hasan & Raddatz, 2008), fulfilling the functions of teacher, map, resource, trainer, authority and ideology (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). On the other hand, Tomlinson (2008) calls attention to the role of coursebooks as de-skillers, arguing that overreliance on standardized teaching materials may result in the failure of many language learners. By focusing on linguistic items only, classroom texts do not engage learners cognitively and affectively; thus, he finds these texts inadequate in that they do not help students to participate in meaningful communication, which is required for the development of intercultural communicative competence. Furthermore, he emphasizes that coursebooks are often designed primarily to meet the needs of students in preparing for standardized exams, which do not assess cultural values. As Byram and Feng (2005) argue, these educational contexts reinforce the problem of 'teaching to the test,' and consequently, they do not prioritize the inclusion of cross-cultural elements.

By highlighting the historical development of textbooks, Byram (1991) further calls attention to the separation of language and culture; he explains that the texts used in the period of the Audio-Lingual method left all dimensions but the linguistic one out of the context, a failing which he finds unacceptable. Correspondingly, Risager (1991) illuminates a shift in policies, stating that before 1950, language teaching texts primarily played a linguistic role, but from the 1970s onward, they have generally incorporated the social context of the related foreign countries. As she argues, "Today, the pedagogical milieu considers it a *sine qua non* that modern textbooks for beginners contain some references to the foreign culture" (p. 181). This shows that it is of utmost importance for modern language coursebooks to serve as instruments of various cultures,

because “English as the global lingua franca has become increasingly depoliticized and culturally neutralized in the process of separation from its native-speaking sources” (Buttjes, 1991, pp. 6-7). Alptekin (2002) reinforces the necessity of avoiding the traditional adherence to teaching about native English speaking cultures, arguing that this policy is invalid for using an international language in cross-cultural settings. In this process, Byram (1991) emphasizes the role of teachers as educators, rather than mere instructors, assigning them the task of helping students to realize that the world is neither monolingual nor monocultural. By doing so, it is believed that teachers can expand the horizons of students, develop their sense of respect toward other cultures, and enhance both international and intercultural communication.

The Present Dimension of English in Turkey

Although Turkey falls into the classification of countries where English is regarded as a foreign, rather than an official language (Kachru, 2005), English language instruction has been highly emphasized in compulsory national education. The renewed *English Language Curriculum for Primary Education (ELCPE)* (MoNE Board of Education, 2006) attributes the educational significance of English to its status as a lingua franca; Turkey’s membership in the United Nations (UN) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); the fact that approximately two thirds of all of literature has been written in English; and the reality that most business meetings, political discussions and international trade are carried out in English.

The influence of the Council of Europe (CoE) on the language education policies of the countries that fall under its domain has been reviewed by numerous experts (Mirici, 2008). Turkey, which has been a member of the CoE since 1949, has adopted many of the educational implementations of the EU, particularly the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* and the *European Language Portfolio (ELP)*. The former serves as a common basis for evaluating various elements of education, such as language syllabi, curricula and coursebooks; it also covers the cultural context in which language is set (CEFR, 2001). The CEFR determines the current aim of language education as plurilingualism, which emphasizes the fact that not only the home culture, but also the cultures of other peoples, contribute to the global citizenship of learners. The promotion of plurilingualism is believed to pave the way for the development of intercultural communicative competence by increasing learners’ receptivity to new cultural experiences. The framework is sensitive to the presence of intercultural elements in foreign language education in that the ultimate objective of language learning is regarded as enhancing students’ whole personalities through their experiences of other languages and cultures of the world. In this process, the CEFR highly encourages the use of the ELP, which records students’ qualifications and other significant linguistic and cultural experiences. Turkey has adopted the new ELCPE (MoNE Board of Education, 2006), which is based on the implementations of the CEFR and the ELP; all of the coursebooks written under the supervision of MoNE have the imprints of the CEFR.

Despite Turkey’s attempts to implement effective foreign language instruction, the expected outcomes have not been reached (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005; Kırkgöz, 2009). The unsatisfactory ELT materials that are written locally under the supervision of MoNE have been touched upon as one of the reasons for the inefficiency of language instruction in Turkey (Büyükkantarcioglu, 2004; Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005; Kırkgöz, 2007a, 2007b, 2009). As these texts carry the authority of the MoNE, language teachers are compelled to rely on them as the official foreign language teaching curriculum. Their cultural content is often “taken at face value and often unjustifiably considered as correct, or even as the only interpretation” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p. 200). Consequently, the locally published classroom materials reflecting the cultural policy of the government indirectly construct the students’ view of culture.

The monocultural content of locally published coursebooks in Turkey has been addressed by numerous educators. As cited in Cortazzi and Jin (1999, p. 205), *Spotlight on English*, written by Dede and Emre (1988), mirrors only the source culture. Various details of the home culture, such

as Turkish food, history and weather, are included in the material. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) point to this issue as reinforcing the view that “students learn English to talk to visitors who come to their country, but they are not expected to travel to target countries or to learn about target cultures” (p. 205). Similarly, Özil (1999) analyzed the coursebook *A Modern English Course for Turks 7*, which was taught in elementary schools from 1972 to 2008; as with the findings of Cortazzi and Jin (1999), he determined that the material covered only cultural elements with which students were already familiar.

Another coursebook analysis was undertaken by Çakır (2010), who analyzed three English language teaching texts, *Spring 6*, *Spring 7*, and *English Net 8*, in terms of their culture-specific elements. He found that most of these teaching materials do not contain adequate cultural elements, such as idioms, superstitions, and other cultural references, indicating that the authors did not focus on the target language culture. He concluded that such coursebooks do not “sufficiently foster learners’ pragmatic competence which can be achieved with the activities and materials designed in the realistic and authentic perspective” (p. 187).

Purpose of the Study

As indicated by the literature, although Turkey has undertaken initiatives to include cultural diversity in language teaching materials in recent years, the outcomes are as yet unsatisfactory. In view of the existing research, it can be argued that the developers of ELT materials in Turkey should consider that the coursebooks they design serve not only as teaching materials, but also as a language teaching methodology and syllabus that are followed closely by Turkish teachers (Işık, 2011). This dependency increases the significance of teaching material analysis studies. Despite the concern about the integration of cultural elements into teaching materials, recent studies undertaken by Turkish educators such as Çakır (2010) show that the traditional dependence on home culture still survives in Turkey, and consequently, there is room for further research in the field. Thus, the present study aims to find out whether MoNE-authorized language teaching texts account for the development of global citizenship, helping students to look beyond the limits of Turkey, appreciate beauty in cultural diversity, avoid stereotyping of others, and in the end, contribute to global understanding. In addition, by shedding light on the cultural content of a series of commonly used coursebooks, this study may promote the development of materials with greater cultural variety and help teachers to improve the quality of foreign language instruction. Accordingly, the researchers set out to determine whether the imprints of intercultural communicative competence could be traced in locally-published EFL teaching materials through answering the following questions:

1. Does the series of ELT coursebooks adopt a local, target, or international policy toward culture?
2. How do these coursebooks portray culture in relation to the four-P framework of Yuen (2011)?

Methodology

In order to investigate how culture is presented in a currently-used series of ELT coursebooks published by the MoNE for Turkish public elementary school students, descriptive content analysis was employed. According to Neundorf (2002), content analysis is a research technique that is used to examine content in an objective and quantitative way; as Krippendorff (2004) suggests, this approach is appropriate for making valid inferences from written materials created for people to read, interpret, and understand. In this study, content analysis was chosen as the data-gathering technique due to five advantages. First, it is unobtrusive, in that it allows the researcher to gather data without interruption. Second, content analysis may simplify the data-gathering process by enabling the researcher to return and correct mistakes. Third, it is reliable, in the sense that it allows replication; researchers in different contexts can expect to obtain the

same findings when they apply the same technique to the same data. In addition, verification is easy, because the content is in a permanent form, and categories of analysis are explicit. Lastly, clarity and parsimony of analysis may result in its popularity, in that researchers' conclusions are limited to the content being studied.

The Material

Three coursebooks were sampled for the purposes of this study: *Spot On 6* for sixth graders, *Spot On 7* for seventh graders and *Spot On 8* for eighth graders attending Turkish public elementary schools. The coursebooks were initially written and edited in 2008 by a team of Turkish educators; in the present study, the latest versions of the coursebooks, the 2011 editions, were analyzed. These coursebooks were chosen for two reasons. First, they are commonly used as core teaching materials in Turkish public elementary schools. The MoNE also allows the use of ELT coursebooks published by eight other private publishing companies for grades six through eight: *Atlantik, Bilge, Adalar, Doku, Özgün Matbaa Sanayii, Yıldırım, Evrensel İletişim and Pasifik Presses*; however, the *Spot On* series is the only MoNE publication that language teachers are given at the beginning of the educational term (MoNE Department of Publications, 2011). Second, this series is held to be different, in the sense that it is a student-centered coursebook series that aims to develop learner autonomy and communicative competence (Bacanlı-Kurt, Ünlü-Buldur, Çoban, Norşenli, Sarandal, M., Tekir, S., & Sayner, İ, 2011). It is also claimed that the topics are within the frame of the *CEFR*, and they are compatible with the renewed curriculum, which is based on constructivism and a communicative approach.

All three coursebooks have sixteen units, covering topics such as friendship, body care, running errands, study skills, technology, environment, miracles, and so on. The main characters in the texts are the Thomson family, with their two children, Tessa and Trevor, and a pet dog. The characters take part in various activities related to the topics above. In addition to the family, new characters are introduced in each unit. All of the prescribed language skills are thought to be integrated, and the series makes use of a three-way model: Spotlight, Language Spot, and Check Spot. Spotlight aims to attract students' attention and make them think about the language; Language Spot presents them with language skills and their functions; and Check Spot serves as an evaluation tool.

Data Analysis

The descriptive content analysis was conducted on the basis of the data analysis framework of Yuen (2011), who was influenced by the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (NSFLEP, 1996, 1999, 2006). This framework organizes cultural elements into four categories: products, practices, perspectives, and persons. The first category, *products*, encompasses tangible products, such as books or paintings, and intangible products, such as oral tales or traditional dances. In accordance with Yuen's (2011) framework, the cultural elements related to food, entertainment, merchandise, print, tools, dwellings, clothing, laws, education, religions, and travel were grouped as products. For example, in the following sentence taken from *Spot On 8*, "Britain's highest mountain, Ben Nevis, is less than 1400 meters high and it is hard to climb" (Bacanlı-Kurt et al., 2011, p. 77), two target culture products were counted: Britain as a country, and Ben Nevis as a destination within that country.

The second category, *practices*, refers to the behavioral patterns of a particular society; these include its customs and information about daily life, forms of address, use of personal space, and rituals. For example, in the following sentence taken from *Spot On 6*, "On December 23rd, people celebrate the Emperor's Birthday" (p. 151), one intercultural practice belonging to Japan was counted.

The third category, *perspectives*, refers to the underlying beliefs and values, inspirations, myths, superstitions, and world views of a particular society. In the following example taken from *Spot On 7*, "Heroes who shed their blood and lost their lives! You are in the soil of a friendly

country. Therefore, rest in peace" (Bacanlı-Kurt, Ünlü-Buldur, Çoban, Sarandal, M., Tekir, S., & Saymer, İ, 2011, p. 31), the famous saying of Atatürk, was counted as a home culture perspective.

Lastly, the fourth category, *persons*, encompasses famous individuals and fictitious or unknown people from a particular society. For example, in the following sentence taken from *Spot On 8*, "Recently, Daniel Goleman has introduced the concept of emotional intelligence" (p. 107), Daniel Goleman was counted as a target culture person.

The increasing role of the English language as a medium for international communication makes associating the language with a particular country and heritage problematic; yet neither can English truly be considered as culturally neutral (Baker, 2012). A survey of the related literature indicates that the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US), in particular, are considered as native-speaker communities (Alptekin, 1993; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Hamiloğlu & Mendi, 2010; Jahan & Roger, 2006; Türkan & Çelik, 2007), as their sociocultural norms, including their practices, perspectives, persons and products, are often labeled as the definitive elements of target culture in EFL contexts. For example, while analyzing target language culture in EFL materials, Alptekin (1993) touched upon the fact that most EFL textbooks written by native English speakers focus on cultural references to the US and UK as being elements of target culture. Similarly, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) categorize EFL textbooks which portray the sociocultural values of the UK and US as based on target culture. Türkan and Çelik (2007) provide readers with unit plans which include teaching about American holidays as target culture practice; while a study conducted by Jahan and Roger (2006) to explore the views of ESL and EFL teachers and learners from various global contexts concluded that although the participants did not have a distinctive definition of the target culture, they tended to equate the elements grounded in Western countries, most notably from the US, with English-speaking culture. Finally, in a study which explored the cross-cultural elements found in EFL coursebooks, Hamiloğlu and Mendi (2010) provided a similar perspective, portraying cultural elements belonging to the US and UK as references to the main target culture.

In the present study, the researchers agree with Alptekin's (1993) assertion that considering the UK and US as the primary native settings for English speakers is not only unrealistic, but misleading. However, as such political issues are beyond the scope of this study, they adopted the established view of target culture. Therefore, cultural references belonging to Anglosphere nations that reflect the traditional sociocultural and linguistic bases of English (Jahan & Roger, 2006), such as the UK, Scotland, Ireland, the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, were counted as target cultural elements.

The primary concern of the content analysis was the frequency calculation of product, practice, perspective, and person in the coursebooks, because, as Yuen (2011) states, the breadth of cultural elements in teaching materials can be established by frequencies. Each of the recurring elements in a single unit was counted once. All of the visual and written texts were analyzed, and the results were reviewed by two colleagues in the field in order to verify the credibility of the findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The results related to each category have been presented in tabular form.

Findings

With a view to answering the first research question on the cultural policy of the series, all of the cultural elements presented in each coursebook were analyzed in terms of three patterns of culture: home culture, target culture, and the cultures of other countries. By the same token, in order to find out how the sampled texts viewed culture in relation to the four-P framework, all of the references to the three types of culture found both in the texts and the pictures were categorized into four aspects: products, practices, perspectives, and persons. While carrying out the quantitative analysis, fractional numbers were rounded to whole numbers: for example, an intercultural element percentage of 42.666 was written as 43%, while 21.111 was written as 21%.

The Culture-Teaching Policy of the Series

The frequencies of elements belonging to different cultures found in each coursebook are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1.

Representation of Elements in Terms of Culture Pattern in the Series

Coursebook	Home Culture Patterns	Target Culture Patterns	International Culture Patterns	TOTAL
Spot On 6	40 (25%)	63 (39%)	57 (36%)	160
Spot On 7	47 (31%)	70 (46%)	35 (23%)	152
Spot On 8	59 (56%)	23 (22%)	24 (22%)	106
TOTAL	146 (35%)	156 (37%)	116 (28%)	418

As presented in Table 1, all three coursebooks involve cultural elements not only from Turkey, but also from target culture countries and other nations around the world. The frequency of cultural elements found in *Spot On 6* shows that the book incorporates 40 (25%) home culture, 63 (39%) target culture, and 57 (36%) intercultural elements. Content pertaining to target culture countries, which include the UK, the US, Canada, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand and Australia, outnumbers both home culture and intercultural elements. The second most represented elements belong to countries such as Germany, Italy, France, Greece, Poland, Switzerland, Spain, Brazil, Japan, China, Thailand, Russia and India. Cultural elements representing Turkey occurred least often in *Spot On 6*.

The frequencies displayed in the table above indicate a similar portrayal of cultural elements for *Spot On 7*, as the number of elements associated with target culture exceeds its Turkish and international counterparts. A counting of cultural elements shows a distinct difference among three types of cultural patterns. While target culture is represented 70 times (46%), home culture and international culture fall behind with 47 (31%) and 35 (23%) elements respectively.

The findings related to the content of *Spot On 8* differ markedly from the findings of *Spot On 6* and *Spot On 7*. The cultural elements belonging to Turkey appear twice as often as the elements from target and international cultures. The almost-equal number of target culture and intercultural references shows that the target culture does not dominate the cultures of other countries around the world. Contrary to the other books, however, *Spot On 8*, with 59 cultural references to Turkey, shows a clear focus on home culture.

The overall content analysis shows that target culture elements are represented more frequently than their home culture and intercultural counterparts. However, with a frequency of 35%, the occurrence of home culture elements in the series is almost equal to the number of target culture references. Likewise, the frequency of 28% for the total number of intercultural elements shows that the series makes room for other cultures. Yet the materials do demonstrate an asymmetry in cultural elements from different continents. Cultural features of European countries, most notably Germany, dominate the series, while Asian and African countries are referenced only on occasion.

The Cultural View in Relation to the Four-P-Framework

In an attempt to answer the second research question in relation to the four-P-framework of Yuen (2011), all of the cultural aspects found in the passages, listening scripts, exercises and tasks were counted and organized. Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 present the findings related to these four aspects respectively: products, practices, perspectives, and persons. Table 2 presents the content on products in the series.

Table 2.

Content on Products in the Series

Coursebook	Home Culture Products	Target Culture Products	International Culture Products	TOTAL
Spot On 6	25 (23%)	43 (39%)	42 (38%)	110
Spot On 7	35 (36%)	41 (42%)	21 (22%)	97
Spot On 8	43 (55%)	16 (20%)	20 (25%)	79
TOTAL	103 (36%)	100 (35%)	83 (29%)	286

The findings show that content regarding the cultural aspect of products appears most frequently in all three of the coursebooks. Frequencies of products displayed in Table 2 demonstrate that home culture products (25) fall behind target culture (43) and intercultural products (42) in *Spot On 6*. However, target culture products exceed the others in *Spot On 7*. Out of 97 products, 35 belong to Turkey, while 21 are representative of other countries. Furthermore, the findings related to this cultural aspect in *Spot On 8* are not in line with the other two coursebooks. The occurrence of 55% shows that home culture products appear more frequently than those of other cultures, while target culture falls behind in this category.

It can thus be concluded that although home culture products (36%) appear more frequently in the series, the texts cannot be said to be dominated by a Turkish focus, as they include a similar frequency of products from target and international cultures (35% and 29%) respectively. In addition, the results show that the range of products related to places to visit, such as Bodrum, Manchester, Madrid and Warsaw; food items, such as Turkish kebab, baklava, English breakfast, fish and chips, and sushi; historical places, such as the Topkapı Palace, the Maiden’s Tower, the Statue of Liberty and the Taj Mahal, appear most frequently in the coursebooks. However, although products from six continents are presented in the series, Africa is underrepresented among these.

When compared with the cultural aspects of products and persons, it is seen that the content on practices is limited. Table 3 presents the results related to content on practices in the series.

Table 3.

Content on Practices in the Series

Coursebook	Home Culture Practices	Target Culture Practices	International Culture Practices	TOTAL
Spot On 6	1 (7%)	13 (86%)	1 (7%)	15
Spot On 7	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1
Spot On 8	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3
TOTAL	4 (21%)	13 (68%)	2 (11%)	19

As the table above indicates, the number of target culture practices in *Spot On 6* exceeds the number of home culture and intercultural counterparts (1 element for each). However, while one practice was counted for international culture, practices from either Turkish or target culture were not found in *Spot On 7*. In addition, the frequencies show that all three practices included in *Spot On 8* belong only to home culture. Overall, it can be seen that out of 19 practices, 13 (68%) belong to target culture, while only 4 (21%) and 2 (11%) represent home and international cultures respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that the representation of cultures in terms of practices is dominated by target culture. When the content of these practices is analyzed, it is seen that, as with the content of products, the series does not present a well-balanced visibility

for the occurrences of practices from a global perspective, and the practices from Africa and Asia fall behind the cultural elements of Europe and America. Furthermore, when compared with the total number of cultural elements concerning products (n=286), the number of items concerning practices (n=19) falls strikingly short. This may be attributed to the fact that the authors find these elements much easier to portray, and that they assume that primary school students may prefer learning about products and persons such as food, drinks, clothes, and famous people, which they frequently encounter in films, songs, and other mass media in their daily lives.

In addition, the findings related to the third cultural aspect, perspective, are in line with the findings for practices. Among the four aspects of culture, perspectives are the least-represented elements in the series. Table 4 includes the frequencies of each book in terms of the occurrences of perspectives.

Table 4.

Content on Perspectives in the Series

Coursebook	Home Culture Perspectives	Target Culture Perspectives	International Culture Perspectives	TOTAL
Spot On 6	0 (0%)	1(100%)	0 (0%)	1
Spot On 7	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)	2
Spot On 8	6 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6
TOTAL	7 (78%)	2 (22%)	0 (0%)	9

According to the findings in Table 4, the least represented aspect of culture in the coursebooks is perspective. *Spot On 6* includes only one target culture perspective. Similarly, while one perspective belonging to both home and target cultures can be seen in *Spot On 7*, *Spot On 8* includes only 6 Turkish cultural perspectives. None of the coursebooks incorporate perspectives from countries other than Turkey and English-speaking nations. The marked difference among the total number of references to perspectives (n=9) and the other cultural aspects may be attributed to the fact that the series was written by Turkish scholars and teachers, who may find it more difficult to integrate abstract examples of perspectives than the concrete applications regarding products and persons.

The category of persons is the second most represented cultural aspect, following products. Table 5 presents the related frequencies.

Table 5.

Content on Persons in the Series

Coursebook	Home Culture Persons	Target Culture Persons	International Culture Persons	TOTAL
Spot On 6	14 (41%)	6 (18%)	14 (41%)	34
Spot On 7	11 (21%)	28 (54%)	13 (25%)	52
Spot On 8	7 (39%)	7 (39%)	4 (22%)	18
TOTAL	32 (31%)	41 (39%)	31 (30%)	104

As presented in the table above, a total of 104 persons associated with a particular nationality were counted in the three coursebooks. The findings show that in *Spot On 6*, Turks appear more frequently than individuals from other cultures. Out of 34 persons, 14 are Turkish; target culture persons (18%) fall behind the home and intercultural examples. However, the findings regarding *Spot On 7* are not in line with the previous book, in that people representing the target culture outnumber people from the other two categories. Out of 52 persons, 28 (54%) belong to target

culture countries; and contrary to *Spot On 6* and *7*, Turkish people comprise the least-frequently represented category. In addition, there is no distinction between home and target cultures in terms of persons in *Spot On 8*, as they each include 7 occurrences. People from nations other than the home or target culture countries fall behind the first two categories.

The overall analysis demonstrates that the representation of cultures in terms of persons in the series is dominated by people from target culture countries. This dominance may be attributed to the fact that the series portrays the life of an English family. In addition, the findings of the content analysis reveal that the category of persons mostly comprises famous individuals, such as scientists (Mehmet Öz, Daniel Goleman, Antonio Damasio, Marie Curie), inventors (Alexander Graham Bell, Louis Pasteur, Guglielmo Marconi) and celebrities (Beyazıt Öztürk, Oprah Winfrey, Madonna). In accordance with the findings related to products, practices and perspectives, the content regarding persons is dominated by people from Europe.

Discussion

In view of the findings above, it can be said that the series presents a well-balanced view of diverse cultures, involving elements not only from the home culture, but also from target and international cultures. Although the number of elements belonging to target culture is greater than the other two categories, the frequencies do not evidence a marked difference overall. Therefore, the findings of the present study are not in accord with the findings of other studies carried out on Turkish EFL texts, such as those of Cortazzi and Jin (1999), Özil (1999), and Çakır (2010). In contrast to these studies, which found that elements of the home culture dominated the materials published by the MoNE, the present study shows that the language teaching texts have expanded their frame of cultural reference; thus, the series exposes students to the cultures of diverse nations as the characters visit different parts of the world and converse about different lifestyles.

However, although the series involves three kinds of cultural patterns, these representations are skewed toward the cultures of Europe, particularly those of Germany, France, and Italy. Cultural aspects from Asian countries such as Japan and China are also included to a degree, but Africa is de-emphasized. These findings are similar to those of Yuen (2011), who underscored the limited, fragmented and stereotypical content of two coursebooks used by students in Hong Kong.

In addition, the findings of the present study show that the least frequently represented cultural elements comprise practices and perspectives. These results are in line with Yuen's (2011) study, which concluded that the analyzed texts had relatively limited content concerning practices and perspectives, as compared to products and persons. This could be explained by the fact that these two aspects are more concrete and easier to teach to young learners than the abstract aspects of practices and perspectives; in addition, incorporating visible facets of culture, such as food (Türkan & Çelik, 2007), places to travel, and famous people is useful for attracting students' attention. However, as Çakır (2010) argues, the abstract but vivid components of culture such as superstitions, idioms, proverbs, sayings, and the details of daily life should be included in teaching materials in order to raise students' awareness about these important features. Furthermore, these cultural aspects may be of considerable interest to young learners who may be curious about how children of other cultures live; incorporating these details may serve to create greater motivation for learning. Therefore, the authors recommend that consideration be given to the integration of practices and perspectives of diverse cultures in future editions of the analysed series. In addition, more attention should be directed towards representing cultural elements from around the world.

Overall, the fact that the series does tend to expose students to various cultural aspects, rather than Turkish culture alone, can be interpreted as the alignment of Turkey's cultural strategy with the goals of the *CEFR*. It is hoped that this focus on intercultural communicative

competence will provide language learners with communicative proficiency, the development of cultural identity, the awareness of other identities, a stabilization element in the world of rapid change (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999), an increase in students' intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 1994), and an expanded linguistic repertoire that enables learners to understand others and make sense of meaning in a multicultural communicative context (Piasecka, 2011).

Conclusion

As Baker (2012) emphasizes, the role of English as a lingua franca has made it impractical to associate the language with only one culture in particular. Understanding the sociocultural norms of the UK and the US alone, for example, is not enough to engender successful intercultural communication. Because English is used extensively in the outer and expanding circles of Kachru's (2005) classification, language classrooms should be designed so that they could virtually exist within these circles. Thus, Baker (2012) advocates adopting a cultural approach which will serve to establish a healthy communication between local and global contexts. In order to put such an idea into practice, language teaching materials should present a mixture of diverse cultures. The analyzed series can be said to be successful, as it familiarizes students with cultural elements that extend beyond the home or target culture. By doing so, these materials may provide students with the ability to recognize English as a world language serving for the preservation of diverse cultures. The existence of a multicultural policy in the 2011 edition of the coursebooks shows that attention has been given to improving language teaching materials; it is only since the 2000s that including cultural elements from diverse nations has become common practice (Hamiloğlu & Mendi, 2010). However, the authors believe that there is still room for improvement in the analyzed series, in that the coursebooks should portray a broader cross-section of world cultures, rather than focusing primarily on Europe.

It should be noted that the inclusion of numerically similar elements from diverse cultures does not in itself lead to increased awareness of cultural diversity. As Shin, Eslami and Chen (2011) point out, teaching about culture is "much more than a simple presentation of cultural facts" (p. 265). However, as an investigation of the cultural depth of the material calls for more detailed research, this remains outside the confines of the present study. On the other hand, by revealing that government-issued language learning materials do, in fact, represent cultural elements of diverse nations, rather than limiting their views to home and target cultures, this study may provide a departure point for the development of enhanced teaching resources that can promote the development of "international-minded citizens" (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006, p. 225) who are equipped with the intercultural communicative competence which will enable them to interact successfully with members of diverse cultural groups. In addition, the findings of the present study are expected to initiate an argument for improved culture teaching in the Turkish EFL context through raising language teachers' awareness about how to engage their students in a multicultural experience.

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