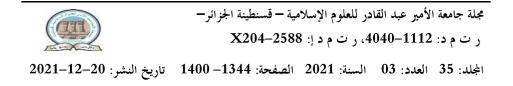# بناء التمركز العرقي والعولمة ما بين الثقافات في الكتب المدرسية الجزائرية للغة الإنجليزية في المستوى الدراسي المتوسط في منظور المعلمين: سلسلة "كتابي للغة الإنجليزية" نموذجا

Ethnocentric Identity Construction vs. Intercultural Globalization in the Algerian EFL Middle School Coursebooks of English: Teachers' Perspectives on "My Book of English" Series

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الملخــــص:

يعد تدريس اللغة نشاطًا ثقافيًا يتم من خلاله تلقين الكفاءات والسلوك التي تسمح للمتعلم الخوض بسهولة في عالم أين التنوع اللغوي والثقافي أصبحا مؤشرين جوهرين. يُقترح التعليم المتعدد الثقافات كاستراتيجية لتعزيز الوعي الثقافي والتفاهم بين الثقافات، بهدف تسهيل الانتقال من المركزية العرقية إلى النسبية العرقية والتسامح. أكثر من اكتساب كفاءات متعددة اللغات ومتعددة الثقافات ، يسعى التعليم المتعدد الثقافات إلى إزالة الغموض عن مفاهيم مفتاحية مثل الهوية الذاتية ومبدأي الآخَريّة والعالمية في

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نفسية المتعلمين. في هذا الصدد، أعطت مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية الجزائرية التي تم إصلاحها مؤخرًا اهتمامًا غير مسبوق للبعد الثقافي للغة، والذي تم حتى الآن إهماله وتقليل قيمته عبر المناهج والممارسات التعليمية. وبالتالي، هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى تقييم المحتوى الثقافي ضمن مجموعة كتب اللغة الإنجليزية المصممة حديثًا بعنوان "كتابي للغة الإنجليزية" لمتعلمي الطور المتوسط ومدى ملاءمتها في تعزيز الوعي بين الثقافات والتفاهم والتواصل الثقافيان. ولهذه الغاية، طُلب من 112 معلمًا في المرحلة المتوسطة الإجابة على استبيان يشتمل على 45 بندًا لتقييم الكتب من حيث سبعة معايير رئيسية. كشفت النتائج عن تباين بين الثقافات الممثلة في الكتب وندرة الفرص والآليات التي تبني وتديم التعددية الثقافية. من المستحسن أن يكون المحتوى الثقافي أكثر وضوحًا وإثارة للاهتمام وتنوعًا وشمولية، ويجب استغلال ميزات تعدد الوسائط التعليمية وتعدد التخصصات أكثر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تقويم الكتب المدرسية؛ الثقافة وتعدد الثقافات؛ العرقية مقابل العولمة؛ الهوية الوطنية؛ آراء المعلمين.

Abstract:

The latest Algerian educational reforms sought a balance between national identity, otherness and universality in language teaching. A need for proficient intercultural communication skills was felt to promote ethno-relativism and tolerance. Thus, it was necessary to design teaching materials that inform teachers' practices, and accommodate educational needs and international standards. This qualitative study aimed to explore Algerian EFL middle school teachers' opinions about the cultural content of the "My Book of English" series to determine its suitability in dispensing cultural knowledge and intercultural competences. A research-informed questionnaire was administered to 112 participants. The findings reported

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favorable opinions about local and universal culture awareness and appreciation, but unfavorable ones regarding the unauthenticity, decontextualization, and avoidance underlying the target culture. It is recommended that designers provide tangible culture teaching practices, support multimodality and interdisciplinarity, and seek balance between identity and diversity.

Keywords: textbook evaluation; culture and interculturality; ethnocentrism vs globalization; national identity; teachers' views.

Article Content:

Teaching a language is a cultural activity wherein learners are taught how to navigate in a global world where linguistic and cultural diversity is a growing norm. Intercultural education is proposed as a strategy to foster cultural awareness and understanding, with the aim of facilitating the transition from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism and tolerance. More than the acquisition of plurilinguistic and pluricultural competences, intercultural education seeks to demystify and harmonize the concepts of self-identity, otherness and universality within the learners. In this regard, the recently reformed Algerian curricula of English gave an unprecedented attention to the cultural dimension of language, hitherto neglected and undervalued across instructional materials and practices. Thus, the present study aimed to evaluate the cultural content within the newly designed set of coursebooks of English titled "My Book of English" for middle school learners and its suitability in fostering intercultural awareness, understanding and communicativeness. To this end, 112 middle school teachers were asked to complete a checklist questionnaire comprising 45

items and evaluating the book in terms of seven major criteria. The findings revealed a significant imbalance with regard to the recurrence of the cultures in presence and the scarcity of opportunities and mechanisms that build and sustain interculturality. It is recommended that the cultural content should be more explicit, interesting, diverse and inclusive, and multimodal features ought to be exploited.

1. Introduction

The Algerian educational system has sustained several controversial reforms in an attempt to bring forth renewal and progress. This overhaul took place principally after the chaotic period of socio-politico-economic unrest experienced during the 1990s, then the washout of the successive educational reforms implemented in an effort at establishing solid grounds for national identity construction, learning, productivity and progress. We can cite, in this respect, the Arabization Reform (1962), The Fundamental Schooling System Reform (1976), the English in Primary School Reform (1993) and the Higher Education Reforms (1971-1990). At the center of this, the tug-of-war between Arabization, French-Arabic bilingualism and the status of the English language in Algeria that is still ongoing without any particular consensus. This state of affairs, however, emphasizes the importance of language for the Algerian society with regard to national determinism, identity establishment and policies endorsement. This rehabilitation engendered the latest reforms: the reform of the First Generation (2003) succeeded by the one of the Second Generation (2016) although viewed, in many regards, as one single reform extending to several phases.

In this respect, many changes have been adopted, ranging from minor to major revisions of curricula, textbooks, teaching

and evaluation methods at both pre-tertiary (primary, middle and secondary education) and tertiary levels (university). These revisions strived to accommodate the demographic reality of a growing youth population seeking employment as well as a concerning number of dropouts.

These amendments also set to conform to the deliberate choices undertaken by the policy-makers, rooted in Algerian nationalism and Islamo-conservatism. In Algeria, the cultural patterns and behaviors are historically shaped and regulated by Islamic rules along with Algerian local traditions. Nevertheless, this is not necessarily perceived as an obstacle, as Islam is considered as a global religion that transcends time and space. Islam is also known to encourage social interactions and acceptance of the "Other". Deeply ingrained in the Competency Based Approach (CBA), the latest reforms have sought to breathe new life into the teaching/learning process through the progressive induction of universal symbolism and multilingual discursive devices in new curricula and textbooks, and the promotion of intercultural communication skills. Subsequently, a particular attention has been devoted to foreign language teaching/learning in general, and to English in particular as the literary language of education, science and international communication.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

For the first time in education policy, decision-makers have explicitly recognized the mutual inclusivity of language and culture, and the cultural/intercultural dimension is rehabilitated in learning. Nevertheless, this appeal to "cultural openness" is not as straightforward as it may seem, for the fear of acculturation is persistently looming over the horizon. This

represents a challenging situation for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers who are required to convey a foreign language embedded in its corresponding culture(s) while striving at the same time to circumvent the abyss of acculturation. In other words, to ensure scrupulously that the national languages and local cultures remain of paramount importance, deeply grounded as unquestionable components of the Algerian identity. At this point, textbooks are purposely designed to serve and complement teaching practices, and instill behaviors and educational beliefs crucial to the achievement of desired national outcomes. It is, however, still incumbent to the teachers to make some flexible choices pertaining to the implementation of textbooks in the classroom. Along these lines, the present study aimed at investigating the cultural content within the series of second- generation middle school coursebooks of English titled 'My Book of English', currently in use, from the point of view of EFL middle school teachers.

1.2. Aim of the Study

This study is interested in characterizing the culture-related content of the recently designed and currently in use series of second-generation middle school coursebooks of English titled 'My Book of English' (MBE) from EFL middle school teachers' perspective. The cultural content of the coursebooks is investigated in terms of cultural knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, intercultural awareness and relationship between culture and modes (texts and illustrations); with the premise that middle school period is a crucial period for identity determinism and building as well as the emergence of Higher-Order Thinking skills (HOTs) within the learners.

1.3. Questions of the Study

The answers to the following questions pertaining to the cultural content of the second generation coursebooks of English were sought from EFL middle school teachers' perspectives:

1). Which categories of culture are represented in the coursebooks?

2). Are the cultural elements incorporated in the coursebooks authentic, representative and exempt of prejudice and stereotypes?

3). Is there a significant interaction between the cultures in presence which promotes reflection upon the similarities and contrasts between the source and target cultures?

4). Is the cultural content of the coursebooks sufficient and suitable for developing middle school EFL learners' cultural knowledge, behaviours and attitudes and fostering intercultural communicative competence?

1.2. Significance of the Study

This study might offer curriculum planners and designers some insightful recommendations and/or solutions to ameliorate existing textbooks, or to elaborate new ones that are more effective and satisfactory in terms of cultural coverage, by pointing out the underlying deficiencies and proposing possible amendments and/ or new content.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The series of coursebooks of English "My Book of English" has been introduced recently (2016-2019), and the introduction of the fourth installment titled "My Book of English – Middle School – Year Four" for its inaugural use has been greatly compromised during the academic year 2019/2020 due to the Coronavirus outbreak and subsequent suspending of any

educational activity. Therefore, the insights drawn from its implementation might be approximate and/or introspective.

The study is limited to the intended scope and sample; it professes neither representativeness of the entire EFL middle school teachers' population nor overgeneralization of the results. It is merely exploratory in nature, and it is hoped to be duplicated to similar cases. The beliefs and features investigated in this study are also not exhaustive albeit the most relevant in the researcher's view.

2. Culture and Intercultural Communicative Competence

The cultural identity of a community -and accessorily its members'- is rarely static; it fluctuates with the course of history, current events, migratory movements, the co-operation with other cultural identities as well as the advances and setbacks of civilization. These factors affect the cultural identity of individuals in evolutionary ways. The result is either 1) a desire for cultural homogenization of the postmodern world; 2) a resistance to this homogenization through the affirmation of particular identities, local or national; or 3) the emergence of hybrid identities that take advantage of the decline of national identities. Hence, the concept of cultural hegemony and the subsequent struggles of cultural communities arise in order to preserve distinctive cultural heritages. The rapid change in modern society, including the acceleration of the flow of information, ideologies and discourse patterns under the impact of globalization has resulted in shifting the attention of the educational community from teaching basic literacy skills to teaching higher-order skills and multiple competences (multiliteracies) (Kalantzis et al., 2003). This implies, on the one hand, that it is no longer

sufficient to focus solely on the understanding and interpretation of grammatical rules and linguistic forms (verbal literacy); on the other hand, curricula should go beyond traditional modes and formal school learning, to embrace multimodality and encourage the active involvement of students in real life issues (Kress, 2003). Accordingly, any curriculum needs to consider the ideological, cultural and discursive diversities, enabling the learners to understand, interact, solve problems and take a critical look at the differences in models of meaning from one code to another and from one culture to another, and possibly to innovate new models of signification of their own. Algeria is characterized by the phenomena of multilingualism and multiculturalism which affect the socio-politico-economic life of the Algerian citizens, and gives rise to sociolinguistic needs that must sustain paramount contemplation and discernment in education and language planning as endorsed by the Ministry of Education (2003):

The teaching of English must be imperatively conceived within the objective of helping our society integrate harmoniously into modernity. It concerns a full participation in a new linguistic community that uses English for all types of "transaction". This participation must be based on the sharing and the exchange of ideas and scientific, cultural and civilisational experiences. This will allow knowledge of oneself and the other…. Hence, we will give to each the possibility to access to science, technology and universal culture while avoiding the pitfall of acculturation…. Teaching seen from this angle implies the development of a critical mind, of tolerance and of openness…. learning of English must move to an

interactive and integrative logic. [text translated from French by the author] (p. 41, Cited in Bader, 2017, p.166)
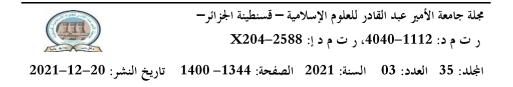
2.1. The Status of Culture in EFL Teaching

Culture and language are manifestly intrinsically interwoven although often delineated across several curricula. One cannot expect language to exist in a vacuum, isolated from its native culture, yet at the same time one cannot imagine a culture without a language that transliterate it (Brown, 2001). However, although culture and language are inherently interlinked, structural concerns about grammaticality, vocabulary and other linguistic aspects have often taken precedence over any cultural or intercultural consideration. The language teaching approaches and methods throughout the centuries from the Grammar Translation Method to the Communicative Language Teaching approach gave little to no importance to culture in their delivery. According to Schmenk (2010, p.38) "the message communicated to students and instructors is often thus: "culture" is an addendum rather than an integral part of language". Should culture be taught? Should it be conveyed implicitly or explicitly? What culture should be taught in school? Elitist or popular? Native or global? How to integrate culture in Foreign Language classes? What aspects of culture should be emphasized? How does the interplay between these cultures affect the learners? These are seemingly trivial and innocuous questions some of which probably should not even arise since the interconnection between language and culture is indisputable and vital; however, things are not so simple. For decades, several researchers and educationalists (such as Kitao, 1991; Byram, 1997; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Bada, 2000; Kramsch, 2001; Pulverness, 2003; McKay, 2003; Tochon, 2009; Dai, 2011;

Zaid, 2011; Zhao, 2011; to cite a few) have strived to elucidate which type of culture would be more advantageous and profitable for the learner, and to establish the best approaches and methods to exploit to that effect. In many regards, the issues pertaining to educational policies and goals mostly stem from cultural considerations. Culture, in this context, takes three forms: a) the utilitarian culture that is taught at school; b) the professional culture of social utility that represents what everyone owes to society; and finally, c) the general culture, knowledge and values, what everyone learns from society.

Furthermore, we are witnessing a reversal of cultural hierarchies: the dominant culture is no longer elitist culture but the popular culture and affiliated sub- and countercultures. In this regard, we can observe that the school is caught in a cleft stick, for it has lost its capacity to act as a body of cultural legitimation for the benefit of the pervasive mass media (television, Internet, etc.) and peer group influence. Added to this is the parental resignation that has taken place with regard to the transmission of a healthy cultural heritage, which further burdened the educational institutions in their mission to establish a humanist cultural model. In fact, this lack of transmission of legitimate culture operates by locking up young people in their particularities and preventing them from seeing the bigger picture. While popular culture immediately provides access to sociability, legitimate culture is still the one that most promotes schooling as well as future social and professional integration.

Notwithstanding, many researchers and educationalists led by Byram (1991) argue that cultural awareness is essential in language teaching, for it optimizes language acquisition and

proficiency. They insist that any language curriculum should include, implicitly or explicitly, different cultural elements because language reflects the speakers' intentions, values and perceptions of the world. The notion of Intercultural Communicative Competence has therefore been introduced as comprising both communicative and cultural competences.

2.2 Intercultural Communicative Competence

Intercultural communicative competence, according to Deardorff (2006), is the "ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes" (p. 247). Byram (1995) described this competence across five dimensions labeled "savoirs". They are characterized as follows:

"Savoir être" or "attitudes towards culture" revolves around attitudes and values, and consists in displaying curiosity, overture and responsiveness. It is about giving both source and target cultures the benefit of doubt, and not favoring one over another.

"Savoirs" or "cultural knowledge" refers to a community's products and practices in addition to the general processes underlying individual and societal interactions in both the native and target cultures.

"Savoir comprendre" relates to interpretation and association skills; in other words, the ability to interpret a discourse or event from the target culture, to explain it, and to establish parallels with one's own culture.

"Savoir apprendre/faire" or "interactive skills" pertains to experimentation, decision- making and problem solving. In other terms, it is the ability to acquire new cultural knowledge, practices and skills, and to apply them in authentic situations of

communication.

"Savoir s'engager, " or "critical cultural awareness and political education" regards critical cultural awareness and/or political literacy skills, which means having the ability to evaluate, critically and objectively, elements of culture in both native and target cultures.

The timid attempts at interculturality to date have proved to be, for the biggest part, ineffective, for they are often implicit and extremely cautious in view of the conflictual relation between interculturality and national identity. The intercultural dimension is undertaught, generally because it warrants the least momentum in curricula with unclear guidelines and little tangible practices as reported in numerous curricula evaluation studies (Messekher, 2014). Therefore, the intercultural competence, and how it influences language use and communication, is sorely lacking within some learners. This consideration stands, even considering their continued extracurricular exposure to media and social networks on the one hand, and their alleged support or belonging to some trendy subcultures on the other hand. For instance, it is not uncommon for some Algerian youths to fancy themselves as nerds, weeabos or emos with little sagacity and understanding of what it entails. Indeed, a large proportion of Algerian learners are insufficiently made aware of the existence of multiple worldviews or different frames of reference, for intercultural awareness is not accentuated and consolidated in their learning. Many of them do not possess adequate background cultural knowledge to fall on that would allow them to link the dots and establish relationships or comparisons between one cultural feature and another. Thus, they are unable to respond

accordingly to a given cultural stimulus (cultural responsiveness); they tend to treat any element of the target culture with an evident lack of empathy, in a way that hinders cultural appropriation and acceptance. The learners, as social actors in a given culture, have to use their personal representations to decode foreign reality; these intrinsic representations must be continuously updated to avoid falling into stereotypy and sweeping generalizations. These latter alternatives are, more often than not, the learners' only recourse when they fail to build their own meaning, but they have to be avoided at all costs.

Language learners must acquire the capacity to evaluate personal thoughts, perceptions, reactions and feelings in order to understand other cultures, and use those experiences to reflect upon their own lives (Byram, 1991). Otherwise, their potential to acquire an intercultural communication proficiency will be greatly compromised resulting in little understanding of pragmatic features (e.g. references, intentions, tone, register, conversational implicature, etc.), figurative language (e.g. idioms or proverbs), or allusions (e.g. paratextual references). This deficiency often leads to ineffectual communication, learned helplessness and to a greater interest in examinations and assessments rather than to the competence itself.

3. Evaluation of the Cultural Content of Textbooks

It is important to design teaching materials and implement teaching practices that can cultivate and foster the intercultural communicative competence, and not relegate culture to the background. The intercultural communicative competence can only be achieved through authentic critical interactive multimodal learning practices. In Algeria, the authenticity and multimodal parts are challenging, mainly because of logistical

considerations (e.g. access to Internet, owning a smartphone or a Personal Computer, time constraints and the like) especially within the classroom; thus, teachers rely primarily on textbooks as main sources of both linguistic and cultural input. A textbook occupies a very important position in foreign language education as asserted by Lässig and Pohl (2009) and concurred in the UNESCO policy paper (2016, p.1):

Few instruments shape children's and young people's minds more powerfully than the teaching and learning materials used in schools. Textbooks convey not only knowledge but also social values and political identities, and an understanding of history and the world. Teachers and students trust textbooks as authoritative and objective sources of information, assuming that they are accurate, balanced and based on the latest scientific findings and pedagogical practice. In some contexts, textbooks are the first and sometimes the only books that a young person may read.

3.1 The Cultural Component inTextbooks

Bayne (1998) defines textbooks as "all forms of printed EFL instructional materials, commercial or non-commercial, bound or loose-leaf, and whole or part of a textbook, and which include coursebooks, self-access materials, supplementary materials and workbooks" (p. 1). It is clear from Bayne's definition that "textbook" is an umbrella term for any EFL material that fits the description including coursebooks, e-books, handbooks and workbooks. Therefore, the textbooks under investigation in this study are intentionally referred to as "coursebooks" as to exclude their corresponding workbooks that have been released by the same editor; otherwise, "textbook" is used for generalization.

Another salient point is that many researchers and linguists invited to caution concerning culturally sensitive materials when designing EFL teaching materials (Tomlinson 2012). Cultural bias or the "Other's" cultural hegemony could possibly interfere with the moral standards, ethical or religious values and traditions of the native culture. In this respect, Gray (2010) points out to some publishers' instructions to ban sensitive (taboo) topics such as religion, politics, alcohol and sex from teaching materials. Tomlinson (2001), however, argues that presenting these kinds of materials in an adequate way could be more profitable for the learners than leaving them in the dark or to their own devices. In other words, receiving accurate and nondiscriminatory cultural input within the classroom context is less dangerous than stumbling across possibly inaccurate or biased information on Internet or from an external party.

The analysis and evaluation of existing textbooks have gained unprecedented momentum during the last decades, and constitute the cornerstone on which existing teaching materials can be amended or improved, and on which newer ones can be designed to suit various educational needs and societal purposes (Lee, 2013).

3.2 Textbook Evaluation of Culture-related Content Frameworks

Having perceived the importance of textbooks' evaluation to improve teaching materials, it is, however, opportune to point out that it is no easy feat, especially when it comes to the cultural component. Indeed, culture-related contents in textbooks are not as systematic and organically present as other elements such as vocabulary items, dialogues and transcriptions that are extremely concrete in comparison (Bewley, 2018). As
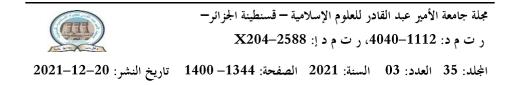
it is, the learners are often encouraged to approach culture through categories and subdivisions. The existing literature pertaining to textbook evaluation is replete with checklists and evaluation criteria. However, concerning 'culture', the situation is different as cultural components are often inherent and implicit, substantiated only through some specific terminology/ labels, discourse markers or illustrations. Some checklists do not mention culture at all, or only imply it in simple questions.

To date, the analysis of cultural content within textbooks remains a relatively underexplored field of study in spite of the potentially important role of textbooks for the development of cultural knowledge and intercultural communicative competence. This study emphasizes the frameworks that are of potential relevance to understanding and characterizing the cultural phenomenon within textbooks.

Chastain (1976) distinguishes between small "c" culture and big "C" Culture. The former refers to knowledge, behaviors and attitudes to adopt in daily life (institutions, customs and activities of a given society) whereas the latter is related to knowledge, behaviors and attitudes in more specific fields of expertise that contribute to the world's progress and prosperity (philosophy, linguistics, medicine, industry, politics, economy, advertisement, etc.)

Among the most renowned frameworks, the most common in culture-centered textbook evaluation is Byram's checklist (1997) that is based on identifying elements of culture and classifying them ranging from micro- to macro-cultural features as follows:

• "Social identity and social groups" include socio-economic status, regional identity, etc.

• "Social interaction" refers to different dialects, registers and degrees of formality

• "Belief and behavior" apply to everyday demeanors, beliefs and rituals

• "Socio-political institutions" include fundamental institutions such as education, law, health…

• "Socialization and the life cycle" concern personal routine and social interactions (family, career, hobbies, etc.)

• "National history" covers historical/ contemporary events as markers of national identity

• "National geography" relates to geographical features and geopolitical borders also perceived as markers of national identity

• "National cultural heritage" comprises monuments and artefacts as emblems of the culture

• "Stereotypes and national identity" include the attitudes, symbols and sociosyncracies through which a society is known to other societies (flag, motto, national symbol, reigning family, etc.)

Moran (2001: 15-18) proposes four categories encompassing both local and target culture, the interplay between the two, and what is expected from the learner:

1) Knowing about, relating to cultural knowledge – facts about products (labels, artifacts), practices (rituals) and perspectives (beliefs) pertaining to both native and target cultures

2) Knowing how, referring to the lifestyles of people of the target culture

3) Knowing why, constituting an understanding of fundamental cultural perspectives – beliefs, values and attitudes

without prejudice (cultural awareness, cultural acceptance)

4) Knowing oneself, concerning the individual learners' self-awareness.

Dweik and Abu Nuwar (2007) constructed a checklist to be used in evaluating the culture-related content of any EFL textbook designed for teaching in foreign language learning contexts. Their effort is presented in a checklist that contained twenty-two evaluative questions distributed under eight dimensions:

1) Rationale and Objectives
2) Social and Cultural Topics
3) Cultural Materials
4) Language Features and Language Skills
5) Class Activities and Cultural Activities
6) Exercises and/or Home Assignments
7) Teaching Aids: Illustrations
8) Teaching Aids: Teacher's Book and the Tape Scripts of the Audio Cassettes.

Chao's (2011) five categories of culture are arguably more geared towards neutral textbook evaluation since they are intent on categorizing culture-related contents by source and purpose, independently of the learners' idiosyncrasies or sociosyncracies. They are as follows:

1) Source Culture (SC) refers exclusively to the local culture of the country whereby the textbook was published, in this case the Algerian culture.

2) Target Culture (TC) refers to the culture affiliated to the language being learned. In this case, the culture of English-speaking countries (mainly the UK, Ireland, the USA, Australia and New Zealand).

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3) International Culture (IC) includes the cultures of all countries over the world (European, Latin American, African, and Asian countries).

4) International Interaction (ICI) includes interaction between the source/local/native culture and the target/international one whereby the learners are made aware of the similarities and contrasts between the two cultures and reflect upon them.

5) Universality across Culture (UC) includes general knowledge and/ or symbolism that is not specific to any particular culture or country.

Kilickaya (2004) proposes an in-depth checklist which makes it possible to question one's cultural presuppositions. Unlike the aforementioned frameworks, Kilickaya's offers guidelines instead of categories to evaluate the culture-related content of textbooks. This implies that this framework is more contingent on the assessor' open perspective than the previous ones (which are more category-bound and inexplicit). It is as follows:
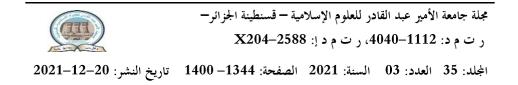
1) Does the textbook give any information, instructions or suggestions about how the cultural content may be handled?

2) Does the textbook target learners with specific needs or is it catering to learners with different learning styles and intelligences?

3) Does the textbook offer clear guidelines pertaining to the teacher's role and practices?

4) Does it include a variety of cultures or just a specific one? Is the recurrence of the cultures in presence the same or is there an imbalance between them?

5) Does it represent the target culture objectively or from

the designers' perspective?

6) Is the cultural information's source valid and up-to-date, based on empirical research?

7) What are the topics addressed? Are they specific to the target culture? Are there any topics that might be culturally sensitive ?

8) What cultural and social communities are represented? Is there variety or strategic selection?

9) Does the textbook contain any stereotypes or generalizations about the culture? Does it help in disproving and invalidating them?

10) Is there any indication about a cultural element being appropriate or inappropriate?

11) Are there visual representations (images, figures, schemas, etc.)? Is there any cultural localization (adaptation of a product to suit the cultural standards of a given society)? Do they need supplementary explanations or are they self-explanatory?

12) What are the activities assigned to the learners? Do they involve interactions and teamwork?

13) Would a teacher using this textbook need specialized training? Does it allow for flexibility?

14) What are the learners supposed to do with the cultural information? Does it encourage active use? Does it foster curiosity and elicit further investigation?

15) What is your overall view of the textbook?

3.3 The Importance of Teachers' Perspective in Textbook Evaluation

In this context, the study endorsed a "constructivist paradigm" in which the main object of investigation is

constructed by its social actors. The underlying assumption is that in order to evaluate or develop ELT materials for a specific context, it is necessary to identify target users' opinions namely, but not exclusively, the teachers and the learners. Teachers' belief systems include the information, attitudes, values, hypotheses, and assumptions that teachers build up over time. In this study, the expression 'teachers' perspectives' is used as an umbrella expression for teachers' beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, values and theories. Teachers' opinions may influence their choice and use of teaching materials. Therefore, it is essential for developers to take into consideration teachers' beliefs and preferences when designing teaching materials (Tomlinson, 2003). Accordingly, it appears judicious to elicit ELT teachers' opinions on the textbooks they incorporate in their teaching. Furthermore, discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices may lead to many teaching deficiencies and faux pas.

The review of the relevant literature has led us to make the following justifications for the present study. First, both cultural and intercultural competences represent a crucial skill-set in our era of globalization, where individuals need to co-exist, interact and cooperate with persons who have been shaped by different values, beliefs and life experiences. Therefore, this aspect of education should sustain a greater attention than it currently warrants in school curricula, teaching practices and content, especially in textbooks. Second, the teachers' personal beliefs coupled with professional experience (epistemological beliefs) and constant contact with the learners grant them a threefold perspective on the teaching/ learning process, and they represent the bridge between policy making

and implementation; thus, their perspectives and insights on teaching materials design may be extremely valuable. Third, culture is abstract and unquantifiable; studies that tally frequency of certain cultural elements are ineffectual without an assessor's objective judgement in order to fully characterize cultural representations and ensuing interpretations. Therefore, a questionnaire derived from research-informed culture-centered checklists appears to be a relevant choice.
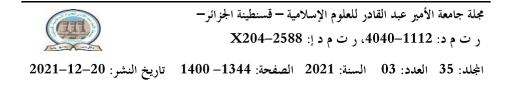
4. Method

4.1. Participants

One hundred and twelve (112) Algerian middle school EFL teachers participated in this study by filling in a questionnaire on the cultural content of the second-generation middle school coursebooks of English based on convenience purposive sampling; this kind of sampling is used when looking for specialized qualifications or experience. In this context, the coursebooks under investigation had been implemented recently (2016-2019); thus, this study emphasizes the responses of the participants who have been actively utilizing these coursebooks since their introduction for valid and relevant insights.

This sample comprised 37 males and 75 females, ranging from 27 to 47 years old, from different geographical, socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, with various trainings and diplomas, teaching both in public and in private middle school establishments, and holding different beliefs about culture and culture teaching.

4.2. Instrumentation

- **Materials**

The material selected for evaluation was the "My Book of

English" coursebooks set. It is a series of EFL coursebooks which accompany Algerian pupils from their first to their fourth middle school year. The bibliographic description of the coursebooks is enclosed in Table 1.

Table 1: Bibliographic Information of the Coursebooks

Name of the Coursebook	My Book of English – Middle School – Year One	My Book of English – Middle School – Year Two	My Book of English – Middle School – Year Three	My Book of English – Middle School – Year Four
Intended Level	1ère AM (1st year of middle school)	2ème AM (2nd year of middle school)	3ème AM (3rd year of middle school)	4ème AM (4th year of middle school)
Author(s)	Tamrabet Lounis (The Inspector of National Education / head of the project) Smara Abdelhakim (Middle School Teacher Trainer) Boukri Nabila (Middle School Teacher Trainer)			
	Hammoudi	Chenni Abdelfetah (Material Writer)		
	Abdelhak (University Teacher)	Biskri Nadia (Middle School Inspector)	Bouazid Tayeb (University Teacher)	Chenni Dallel (University Teacher)
Publisher	ENAG editions	CASBAH - Editions		
Year / Place	2016 / Algeria	2017 / Algeria	2018/ Algeria	2019 /Algeria
Number of Pages	160 pages	160 pages	160 pages	160 pages

Each book encompasses around five units. For each unit, the content pertaining to topics, functions, grammar /vocabulary, four skills and evaluation has been outlined in the
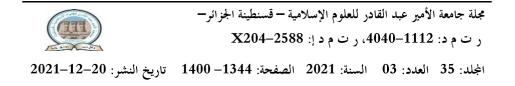
initial pages. The series endorses a communicative paradigm and competence-based approach; the tasks are geared towards learner-centricity (Tamrabet et al., 2016). The authors ensure that the content is learnable and motivating enough to raise students' interest in different aspects of the target language and culture. The four coursebooks are complemented by matching workbooks.

4.1.1 The Questionnaire Adapted from Research-informedChecklists

In this study, a questionnaire consisting of a mixture of open-ended questions and 5- point Likert-type scale questions was adapted from Chastain's (1976), Kilickaya's (2004), Dweik & Abu Nuwar's (2007) and Chao's (2011) frameworks (see Appendix). The reliability index ranged from α-0.60 to 0.86 using Cronbach's Alpha formula (1951); these results indicate high internal reliability. The Likert items ranged from "1-strongly disagree" to "5- strongly agree" as the lowest and highest appreciations respectively, and "3-Neutral" representing indecision or skepticism.

The questionnaire included forty-five items on the whole with seven main subcategories each scrutinizing a specific facet of culture within the coursebooks: Rationale and Objectives, Social and Cultural Topics, Cultural Materials, Cultural Content, Language Features and Language Skills, Cultural Activities, Exercises/ or Home Assignments, Teaching Aids: Illustration and Teacher's Book.

The questionnaire was administered –directly or online via Google Forms- to 112 EFL teachers, who were invited to supply their personal information then to rate the items as accurately and objectively as possible, by ticking (✓) the appropriate
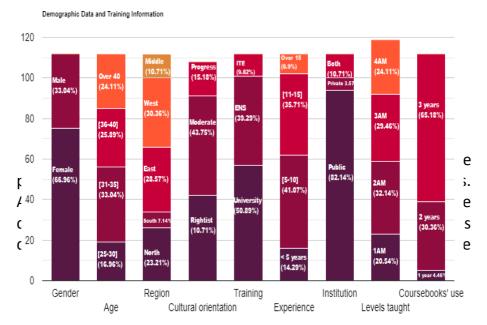
box(es) or making full statements wherever applicable. Participants' permission to ensure their privacy and utilize the data provided by them was secured ahead resolving confidentiality and ethical considerations. After collecting the questionnaires, we inserted the data in SPSS software program for in-depth statistical analysis.

4. Findings and Result Analysis

The data gathered from the participants through the questionnaire has been organized, coded then introduced in the SPSS statistical analysis software for statistical analysis. The participants' responses have been categorized into three categories: "positive feature" (+), "negative feature" (-) or "neutral disposition" (±) determined by the average response value for every question, represented in the corresponding tables.

Section One: Personal Information

Figure 1: Findings pertaining to Participant's Demographic Data and Training Information

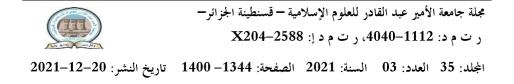Demographic Data and Training Information

classroom. Along these lines, the majority of participants (43.75%) who profess a moderate outlook on culture and society may achieve compromise and harmony between local and target culture in their teaching more successfully than those who advocate conservatism (37.5%) or progressivism (15.18%). The latter could possibly emphasize one culture over the other, even unconsciously, depending on their inclinations providing that the curriculum allow for adaptation and flexibility. It is noteworthy to mention that (3.57%) of the participants eluded this question, assumedly because of uncertainty or unease.

Addressing the participants' training and experience, the coursebooks under investigation have been introduced recently in middle school (from 2016-2019), so the insights drawn from implementation may be sketchy regardless of the participants' training and years of experience. Nevertheless, (65.18%) of the participants have been utilizing the coursebooks for over 3 years, so implementational insights should not be ruled out.

Section Two: Teachers' Perspectives pertaining to Culture Teaching and Syllabi's Content

Table 2: Findings regarding Participants' Beliefs about Teaching Culture in an EFL Context

	1	2	3	4	5	Min	Max	Mean	SD
3.1. Culture is necessary	--	14 12.5%	07 6.25%	48 42.86%	31 27.68%	2	5	4, 00 (+)	0.892
3.3. teachers' beliefs should inform their	05 4.46%	11 9.82%	27 24.11%	53 47.32%	14 12.5%	1	5	3, 55 (±)	0.987

practices								
3.2. There should be a focus on ICC	--	31 27.68%	52 46.43%	29 25.89%	--	2	4	2.98 (-) 0.731
Beliefs about Teaching Culture in an EFL Context	N 112			Average 3.51	St. Dev. 0.870		Variance 0.832	

Overall, the participants' beliefs about teaching culture in an EFL context are divergent; there is a perpetual dissension between "what should be" and "what is defined by the curriculum". The cultural dimension is deemed necessary by (70.54%) of the participants while the remaining proportion, supposedly, view it as important but not essential because any grammatical utterance, sentence or discourse can still be understood even if not culturally-embedded or driven. After all, considering the average personal and professional uses of English in Algeria, one is led to believe that it is restricted to some formulaic expressions for sporadic interactions with English-speaking individuals (especially via Internet or in international companies), or to English for Specific Purposes for professions that involve administrative paperwork or reports in English. It is often thought that ICC has little importance in such contexts. Certain elements of culture or interculturality transpire more in some exchanges in social media such as Facebook, Instagram or TikTok where at least a significant amount of popular culture understanding is needed, but not

necessarily formal teaching. This is probably why the participants adopted a neutral position for the majority (46.43%) on whether to focus more on the ICC rather than on grammaticality and vocabulary acquisition.

The participants also mostly (59.82%) agree that teachers' personal beliefs about culture should inform their teaching practices, for there is a difference between "teaching culture" and "teaching about culture". To begin with, cultural interpretations are always linked to a perspective; in other words, culture teaching cannot be detached from teachers' basic assumptions about the nature of society. Moreover, teaching culture in this context is not about the traditional imparting of knowledge to the learners, it is rather about the acquisition of the competency that will allow them to understand, analyze and reflect about any given culture, and to respond in an adequate manner. Finally, the learners tend to emulate the behaviors of authoritative figures (teachers and parents), and, often, to adopt their ideals and perspectives. This is why it is important for the teachers to communicate cultural awareness and acceptance in every way, from their gestures, their attire, their actions and their general attitudes.

Table 3. Findings regarding Participants' Beliefs about the Middle School Syllabi of English

	1	2	3	4	5	Min	Max	Mean	SD
4.1. National values	--	--	03 02.68%	73 65.18%	36 32.14%	3	5	4.29 (+)	0.511
4.2. Content valid/updated	--	04 3.57%	--	69 61.61%	39 34.82%	4	5	4.28 (+)	0.644
4.6. textbooks syllabi	--	07 6.25%	04 3.57%	78 69.64%	23 20.54%	2	5	4.04 (+)	0.699

4.3. pupils' needs/styles	04 3.75%	32 28.57%	25 22.32%	51 45.54%	--	1	4	3, 10 (±)	0.935
4.4. Universal standards	--	13 11.61%	24 21.43%	66 58.93%	09 8.04%	2	5	3.63 (±)	0.790
4.7. Reliance on textbooks	11 9.82%	28 25%	18 16.07%	36 32.14%	19 16.96%	1	5	3.21 (±)	1.20
4.5. Cultural emphasis	41 36.61%	53 47.32%	18 16.07%	--	--	1	3	1.79 (-)	0.696
4.8. Beliefs about the Middle School Syllabi of English	N 112			Average 4.05		St. Dev. 0.913		Variance 0.878	

Concerning the syllabi of English in middle school level, the participants have globally a positive outlook (4.05). A large number of participants (97.32%) agree that the syllabi's objectives are explicit, up-to-date and coherent with the latest reform in correspondence with national values and hopeful expectations for the future of the English language in Algeria. They also acknowledge that the coursebooks reflect these ideals and objectives (90.18%).

However, two areas of uncertainty are apparent. On the one hand, whether the syllabi reflect learners' real needs as opposed to what learners are expected to need (45.54% of neutral responses). This can be marginally be attributed to the top-down paradigm that has constantly overcasted Algerian curricula policy-making. This process is viewed as a prescriptive importation of knowledge, where learning is shaped conforming to a set of standards leading to a pre-determined result; it amounts to say that learners' outcomes are mapped out, and that they have no control over their own learning. It is also uncertain whether the syllabi cater to the learners' distinctive

intelligences and learning styles particularly when it comes to culture learning, for it is essentially a social process that usually requires interpersonal intelligence and social skills that some students lack.

On the other hand, it is undecided whether the syllabi need to concur with modern international standards (58.93% of uncertainty). It is assumed that the participants are congenial to cultural openness and tolerance but not to cultural globalization, for there is always a fear that strong exposure to another culture may constitute a threat to a settled identity. Therefore, a line must be drawn between the cross-cultural adaptation to a target culture for utilitarian purposes and the cultural appropriation of a foreign culture. Besides, any cultural consideration is to be transmitted with care and fairness because any attempt at imposing a culture is often met with resistance.

Pertaining to the frequency of use of the coursebooks, the participants' responses oscillate between overreliance and downright disregard. Some view it as a prescriptive teaching material to be followed religiously (49.1%) whereas others consider it as a tool conceived to complement teaching but not to be its central part (34.82%). We tend to agree with the latter because overreliance on books can create boredom and disinterest within the learners. In addition, the coursebooks cannot cater similarly to the requirements of every classroom, so a need for variety (other materials) and adaptation is perceived.

A great number of participants (83.93%) indicate that the cultural component is not given the attention it deserves within the syllabi, and that the cultural content is still notoriously

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unprincipled and ambiguous. Linguistic considerations such as grammaticality and vocabulary enrichment as well as mastery of the four skills (listening-speaking- reading- writing) prevail persistently, overshadowing what is considered by many experts in the field as "the fifth language skill". The lack of explicit guidelines and tangible practices within the syllabi make it even easier to overlook.

Section Three: Teachers' Perspectives about the Cultural Content of "My Book of English"

Table 4. Findings regarding Participants' Perspectives about Objectives and Rationale

	1	2	3	4	5	Min	Max	Mean	SD
5.1. Goals are set	--	--	--	87 77.68%	25 22.32%	4	5	4, 22 (+)	0.416
5.2. Content is adequate	02 1.79%	07 6.25%	05 4.46%	59 52.68%	39 34.82%	1	5	4, 13 (+)	0.888
5.3. Cultural ethics	06 5.36%	28 25%	15 13.39%	63 56.25%	--	1	4	3, 21 (±)	0.692
5.4. projects	11 9.82%	73 65.18%	20 17.86%	08 7.14%	--	1	4	2, 22 (-)	0.716
5.5. Culture awareness	27 24.11%	63 56.25%	21 18.75%	02 1.79%	--	1	4	1.98 (-)	0.703
Objectives and Rationale		N 112	Average 3.15		St. Dev. 0.683		Variance 0.538		

The coursebooks objectives are judged by all the participants as clearly stated, and most of them (87.5%) consider that the global content of the coursebooks is consistent with

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their general objectives. However, when it comes to the cultural component specifically, the participants express a certain ambivalence. They are skeptical about the coursebooks' suitability and efficiency in enhancing the learners' understanding of cultural conventions in situations of communication. We assume that the coursebooks are not much self- explanatory in terms of formality, etiquette, suitable topics for conversation or cultural paralinguistic cues. Even if the coursebooks so much as hint to these aspects via appositive descriptive phrases or demonstrative illustrations (a formal handshake or a traditional attire), the teacher has to emphasize these aspects and explain them; otherwise, the learner may not even notice. This is apparently why a large number of participants (80.36%) are doubtful pertaining to the coursebooks' capacity to develop intercultural awareness within the learners. Since learners' observational skills and intelligences are not the same, some leaners may draw insights from visual representations or some linguistic structures, but others cannot without adequate prompting and clarifications. In the same vein, the projects in each unit aim at the active use of what is learnt in meaningful tasks that are often cultural in nature. For instance, creating one's family tree is a task that is cultural in nature since it pertains to identity, which is an intrinsic part of one's personal culture. Those projects are generally collaborative tasks requiring interaction and communication with classmates, but unfortunately, they are often administered as something akin to a homework usually because of time constraint. Therefore, even if the groups meeting outside the classroom to realize the project is interaction enough, it is a missed opportunity for classroom interaction in the target language. The social and

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communicative merits of these projects are often disregarded, and generally, more attention is given to the correct use of the learned linguistic features (grammar, vocabulary, textual devices).

Table 5. Findings regarding Participants' Perspectives about Social and Cultural Aspects

	1	2	3	4	5	Min	Max	Mean	SD
6.1. "c" culture	--	--	--	42 37.5%	70 62.5%	4	5	4.63 (+)	0.484
6.2. "C" culture	--	--	27 24.11%	47 41.96%	38 33.93%	1	4	4, 10 (+)	0.755
6.3. Local culture	--	--	--	25 22.32%	87 77.68%	4	5	4, 78 (+)	0.416
6.4. Target culture	13 11.61%	57 50.89%	07 6.25%	32 28.57%	03 2.68%	1	4	2, 60 (-)	1, 100
6.5. Universal culture	--	--	07 6.25%	61 54.46%	44 39.29%	2	5	4, 33 (+)	0.588
Social and Cultural Aspects	N 112		Average 3.25		St. Dev. 0.669		Variance 0.768		

The participants appear to be satisfied regarding the recurrence of both small "c" and big "C" culture elements and references. Therefore, the coursebooks' content seemingly covers relevant areas of cultural knowledge, behaviors and attitudes appropriate in everyday contexts (small "c") and in specific contexts (Big "C"). However, the issue appears to be the source in which those cultural elements are inscribed. The local culture (LC) is unanimously considered as present and abundant which is expected in view of the curricula's propensity to nationalism and identity establishment. The universal culture

(UC) is a close second (93.75%), for it is needed to concur with the wide-ranging implications brought up by globalization. There is a plethora of universal behaviors and attitudes such as recycling, healthy consumption of food, patrimony preservation and the like that are encouraged. The target culture (TC), however, is with (31.25%) of the participants, the least represented. For instance, typical products, behaviors or attitudes specific to English-speaking countries are sparsely brought up, and there is little opportunity for critique or comparison with matching elements of the local culture. Conclusively, a global culture seems to be the best compromise that the coursebooks has to offer for the learners in terms of cultural openness.

Table 6. Findings regarding Participants' Perspectives about Cultural Materials and Skills

	1	2	3	4	5	M	Ma	Mean	SD
7.4. LC Appreciation	--	22 19.64%	14 12, 5%	60 53.57%	16 14.29%	2	5	3, 63 (±)	0.955
7.1. Interculturality	21 18.75%	48 42.86%	17 15.18%	26 23.21%	--	1	4	2.43 (-)	1.041
7.2. Participation	31 27.68%	57 50.89%	--	24 21.43%	--	1	4	2.15 (-)	1.053
7.3. Generalization/ stereotypy	--	11 9.82%	09 8.04%	61 54.46%	31 27.68%	2	5	4.00 (-)	0.866
7.5. authenticity/ context	06 5.36%	53 47.32%	29 25.89%	24 21.43%	--	1	4	2.63 (-)	0.876
Cultural Materials and Skills	N 112		Average 2.97			St. Dev. 0.958		Variance 0.872	

Generally speaking, the ratings for "Cultural Materials and Skills", as reported in Table 6, are unfavorable (2.97). Even

though (82.14%) of the participants estimate that the coursebooks are effective in fostering awareness and appreciation for the local culture, the rest of the participants remain skeptical. There is always the possibility that some learners may perceive some aspects of the native culture, any native culture that is, as outdated and tedium (history, artifacts, crafts, etc.) Many youngsters appreciate and value the richness of their local culture, but unfortunately, others are more directed towards modernity and materialism, considering this cultural heritage as relics of the past.

(61.61%) of the participants express their uncertainty at the coursebooks' capacity to endow the learners with values and principles of etiquette (manners, diligence, and punctuality). Presumably, they consider that such behaviors and attitudes can only be reproduced by observing peers or authorities (teachers and parents) and through actual practice; the coursebooks alone may not be explanatory enough unless they provide explicit clarifications.

Conjointly, (78.57%) of the participants do not give credit to the coursebooks for enhancing participation or active involvement. It is probable in this case that the content is not authentic, interesting, challenging or motivating enough to elicit active participation, inducing tedium and lethargy instead. The lack of authenticity and contextualization has been confirmed in question 7.5 whose answers were predominantly in disfavor of authenticity (52.68%). It can be observed that most content in the coursebooks is semi- authentic, geared towards the acquisition and/or consolidation of a specific learning trait (usually a linguistic one). Hence, it is highly unlikely to encounter a vernacular text or dialogue script, especially not at

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the level of forming years (first and second) at which level the learners may not be equipped enough to deal with the implications and the nuances.

Another negative point is that there seems to be instances of stereotypy and generalizations according to (82.14%) of the participants. Nevertheless, we consider that what may be perceived as discrimination towards a specific gender, nationality or institution is merely a simplistic restrictive outlook on societal phenomena. For instance, the cliché roles ascribed and drilled into males and females or the reductive views about some institutions (blended families, women working in predominantly masculine fields, etc.) Accordingly, a mechanic, a carpenter or a football player are generally portrayed as males while nurses, teachers and cooks are often portrayed as females even though their respective counterparts exist in those domains. In the same vein, when listing the members of a family, there is no mention of a step-parent, a step-sibling or a tutor even if these are not so uncommon in the Algerian society. It is unclear whether these omissions are deliberate or simply reductive and/or normative.

Table 7. Findings regarding Participants' Perspectives about Language Features and Language Skills

	1	2	3	4	5	Min	Max	Mean	SD
8.1. Culture-bound vocabulary	--	12 10.71%	05 4.46%	67 59.82%	28 25%	2	5	3.99 (±)	0.850
8.2. Four skills and culture themes	07 6.25%	35 31.25%	22 19.64%	33 29.46%	15 13.39%	1	5	3.12 (±)	1.173
Language Features and Language	N 112			Average 3.56		St. Dev. 1.011		Variance 0.942	

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Skills				

Most of the participants (84.82%) agree that the coursebooks provide rich vocabulary input affiliated to the topics being taught although there is a lingering doubt underlying the "culture-bound" part, especially when it comes to the target culture. For instance, if one browses the topic of "food", it is highly unlikely to find terms such as "coleslaw", "sausage gravy" or "bagel" which are typical American dishes all the same. Culturally sensitive topics aside, the vocabulary proposed appears to be more generic than representative.

The same hesitancy is perceived pertaining to the themes used to develop the four language skills (listening- speaking- reading- writing); in other words, the content of the paragraphs, dialogues and listening scripts used to that effect. In that respect, we are inclined to think that it depends on whether the attention of the learners is orientated exclusively towards linguistic patterns (recognizing sounds, correct pronunciation, accurate deciphering of language or cohesive writing) or whether cultural elements are emphasized equally. Another consideration is that even if the theme is cultural in nature, it may serve just as new cultural knowledge, not necessarily to engage behaviors and attitudes that denote cultural awareness and/or responsiveness.

Table 8. Findings regarding Participants' Perspectives about Class Activities and Cultural Activities

	1	2	3	4	5	Min	Max	Mean	SD
9.1. Cross-cultural communication	24 21.43%	65 58.04%	20 17.86%	03 2.68%	--	1	4	2.02 (-)	0.706

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9.2. practice in oral skills t	32 28.57%	55 49.11%	25 22.32%	--	--	1	3	1.92 (-)	0.711
9.3. activities representative of the TL	49 43.75%	52 46.43%	--	11 9.82%	--	1	4	1.76 (-)	0.879
Class Activities and Cultural Activities		N 112		Average 1.90		St. Devi. 0.765		Variance 0.699	

The participants' opinions towards the cultural activities displayed in the coursebooks are highly inauspicious (1.90) as reported in Table 8. 79.47% of the participants estimate that the activities in the coursebooks are not conducive to cross-cultural communication fluency. It is assumed that the activities, mainly written ones, often involve rule-application, deductive reasoning, inference of meaning and even critical thinking to some extent, but rarely solicit cultural knowledge, awareness or responsiveness.

Furthermore, 77.68% of the participants judge that practices in oral skills do not enable the learners to communicate interculturally. After all, intercultural communication involves more than language functions and grammaticality or some formulaic expressions; it demands knowledge about registers, formality, paralinguistic cues, pragmatic features, contextualization and so much more. The content seldom addresses these aspects including the class activities. Likewise, the quasi-totality of the participants (90.18%) deny learners' actual participation in activities representative of the target culture. The conservatism inherent to many communities precludes any foreign celebration, and the unfortunate lack of interdisciplinarity does not encourage much the introduction of elements of English in another course/ subject matter; for example, initiating a baseball play in physical

education (Phy. Ed.). Apart from the odd language games and some controlled forays into poetry and music, there is little concrete involvement in activities representative of the target culture.

Table9. Findings regarding Participants' Perspectives about Exercises/ Home Assignments

	1	2	3	4	5	Min	Max	Mean	SD
10. cultural curiosity/	08 7.14%	41 36.61%	36 32.14%	27 24.11%	--	1	4	2.73 (-)	0.906
Exercises and Home Assignments	N 112			Average 2.73		St. Dev. 0.906		Variance 0.821	

Here is yet another feature that is deemed flimsy and inadequate by a significant number of participants (43.75%). Exercises and home assignments derived from the coursebooks are certainly perceived as effective in consolidating brand-new linguistic knowledge and applying gained knowledge to create meaningful discourse. However, they are ostensibly not contributive to fostering interest and curiosity about culture; that is, they do not motivate the learners to further investigate aspects of culture (both local and target) on their own for additional details or to seek more examples or practice.

Table10. Findings regarding Participants' Perspectives about Teaching Aids

	1	2	3	4	5	Min	Max	Mean	SD
11.1. Cultural characters	--	--	--	83 74.11%	29 25.89%	4	5	4.29 (+)	0.438
11.2. Illustrations	12 10.71%	49 43.75%	22 19.46%	25 22.32%	04 3.57%	1	5	2.57 (-)	1.147

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11.3. localization	--	--	32 28.57%	51 45.54%	29 25.89%	3	5	3.97 (±)	0.737
11.4. guidebook	--	47 41.96%	06 5.36%	59 52.68%	--	2	4	3.11 (±)	0.967
Teaching Aids		N 112		Average 3.49		St. Dev. 0.822		Variance 0.923	

Regarding teachers' aids (illustrations and teachers' guide), the participants' opinions are nonaligned for most features. The participants consensually consider that the visual elements present in the coursebooks pander effectively to cultural variety, displaying culturally diverse characters with all their sociosyncracies (appearance, attire, lifestyle, etc.) as well as different cultural institutions. However, when asked if these illustrations are representative of the target culture, the greater part of the participants (54.46%) expressed their dissent. This is in all probability because the ratio of local culture pictorial representations far exceeds that of the target culture, or that some illustrations portray universals rather than features that are typical to a specific culture.

Cultural localization is a disputed feature although 79.43% of the participants spotted some instances thereof. It is a feature that is underrated in spite of its primordial importance. Cultural localization is about the creation of locally acceptable images and traditionally practiced conventions, involving the modification of sensitive elements to meet local cultural norms. Localization is said to facilitate globalization by addressing linguistic and cultural barriers; it is a form of assimilation far from appropriation or acculturation. Accordingly, some characters' features (attire, posture), products (food) and behaviors (greetings) are culturally localized to suit Algerian

audiences.

The helpfulness of teachers' guides in culture teaching is apparently also a point of contention among the participants; the guidelines dispended for culture teaching are probably not explicit or concrete enough to account for the status of culture in the curriculum and the way to teach it.

Discussion

The result of the overall ratings aiming to investigate the content of the coursebooks through seven main evaluative parameters was in disfavor of the suitability of the coursebooks in terms of cultural coverage. Out of 35 criteria of evaluation, 11 gleaned positive scores, 9 rated neutral responses, but the majority (14) sustained negative appreciations; the results were not particularly conclusive but significantly informative. Beliefs about the importance of the cultural component in EFL teaching and about its relevance in EFL middle school curricula is indisputable; however, a segment of the problems underlying culture teaching appears to be the disharmony between national ideals, learners' genuine needs and the teaching reality (practices, logistics, and constraints). The teachers have to act as mediators between an educational system with clear-cut expectations

-the most prevalent one being seeking balance between identity and universalism-, and some youngsters who strive to embrace globalization with little discrimination and foresight.

The EFL middle school syllabi and subsequent coursebooks reflect the nation's objectives, values and policies, and the content is geared towards the prospective concretization thereof. Correspondingly, the content is judged adequate in terms of local culture coverage, for it is fraught with local

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cultural knowledge pertaining to lifestyle, traditions, history and the like (both "c" and "C" culture) in addition to explicit devices setto promote awareness and appreciation of the local culture, erring on the side of overexposure. In parallel, preferential elements of universal culture are also displayed albeit with less flourish, with an emphasis on suitable global citizen knowledge, behaviors and attitudes (environmental engagement, innovation and progress, knowledge exchange, etc.). Specific target culture elements, however, are sparser and dispensed cautiously in a less authentic and contextualized way, even sustaining some stereotypy, generalizing and sensitive topic avoidance. Even though the content accounts for variety and multiculturalism, there is an effort not to stray from what is established as norms and preserve the status quo, which hinders the acquisition of multiple frames of reference and may amount to tunnel vision. The content of the coursebooks is judged as little conducive to intercultural awareness because there is more input "about the culture" than "how to respond to culture and why". The prominently written discursive input (paragraphs and dialogues), even backed by representative illustrations, is little explanatory when it comes to adopting attitudes and behaviors (manners, gestures, etc.). The latter can be developed through observation, emulation and practice, more so than from latent implications which only observant and cognitively competent learners can decode alone without any assistance from their teachers. The materials, language skill practices, activities and assignments are mainly geared towards grammatical accuracy, vocabulary expansion, intelligible communication, and to some extent, cultural knowledge. There is ostensibly more focus on linguistic exactness than on

implications and nuances such as formality, politeness, appropriateness and figurative language. Therefore, the content is not perceived as promotive of interest, motivation and participation in cultural manifestations; it also fails to elicit curiosity about the "other", autonomous cultural investigation and self-regulation.

5. Conclusion

The latest educational curricular adjustments pertaining to language teaching/ learning have had the undeniable merit of rehabilitating culture in EFL curricula, and making the acquisition of the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) one of the priorities of education in order to concur with the wide-ranging socio-politico-economic implications raised by globalization. The underlying challenge was to find some sort of balance between universalism and identity; that is, "to think globally and act locally" in order to reconstruct the world into a global society, and reduce the gap between globality and locality. These principles are certainly promoted and endorsed in ministerial guidelines and curricula; however, the suitability, and effectiveness of the instrumental coursebooks in conveying those principles was the object of the present study. To this effect, 112 have responded to a questionnaire adopted from research- informed checklists on the evaluation of the cultural content in EFL textbooks. The textbooks under scrutiny were the newly introduced Algerian second generation middle school coursebooks of English titled "My Book of English".

The results obtained from the study suggest that the cultural content of the coursebooks is carefully designed to meet national standards, expectations and values. The results also highlighted a disproportion pertaining to the recurrence of

the cultures in presence. Therefore, local culture representations are abundant, explicit and representative, borderline radically ethnocentric, all set to spur appreciation and dedication to the local culture in addition to some universal terminology and symbolism to contend with globalization. Conversely, specific target culture references are either marginalized, generalized or localized, and there is little attempt to explain them further. There seem to be little interaction between the local and target culture; they coexist in parallel within the coursebooks, but offer little opportunity for the learner to compare, assimilate or reflect upon the target culture, least of all tolerate or accept it. Both the overexposure to the local culture and the unauthenticity and decontextualisation of the target one often results in learners' disinterest, demotivation and bias. Furthermore, the emphasis on linguistic exactness and cultural knowledge over socially appropriate behaviors and attitudes and intercultural communicative skills may be enough for comprehensible communication but not for intercultural communication. The implementational issues surrounding culture teaching are fractionally due to lack of explicit guidelines and practices regarding culture teaching, the inadequacy of interdisciplinary collaboration and the misappropriation of multimodal aids (computers, projectors, etc.) for authenticity, mainly because of logistical deficits. Ethnocentrism, ultraconservatism, chauvinism or post-colonial xenophobia are also parameters to be considered, for such ailments can be particularly counterproductive especially when associated to teachers or learners' parents because these attitudes may exacerbate prejudice and rejection of foreign cultures thus thwarting any

attempt at interculturality. On the basis of the available evidence, we would like to make the following recommendations in order to inform the quality of the coursebooks, and provide feedback for prospective adjustments to future editions:

1) Teachers beliefs and perspectives should be taken into consideration in policy making; their personal and professional experiences as well as their direct intermittent contact with the learners make them aware of the latter's capacities, deficiencies and needs. Teachers' potentials and capacities to inform research and curricula should not be underestimated. As it is, the learners' needs should also be considered, not set apart from the national needs but in concurrence with them, namely to find acompromise.

2) It is crucial for parents to understand the aim of educational curricular objectives and accessorily those of the textbooks, and have a better understanding of how it might assist their children in learning. Effective communication strategies with the parents whether directly or via platforms may externally motivate the learner, increase the coursebooks' use under the tutelage of the parents, and mitigate issues surrounding cultural exposure.

3) A need for efficient interdisciplinary collaboration is felt; the subject matters should not work separately, especially if they have common objectives. Interdisciplinary activities may foster motivation, teamwork, active meaningful learning and constructive reasoning.

4) Culture, in general, and Intercultural Communicative Competence in particular should be considered as necessary language skills, not as addendums. They should be taught explicitly with concrete practices and activities, following

explicit guidelines, with a clear-cut distinction between transmitting cultural knowledge, raising cultural awareness and communicating interculturally. The cultural coverage should be based on learners' interests and "au gout du jour". Moreover, even if local culture appreciation is essential, overexposure may be counterproductive, for imposing a culture may bring up hostility and resistance instead. Policy makers should seek harmony regarding the recurrence of the cultures in the textbooks.

5) Avoidance of the "other's" culture is neither constructive nor profitable. It is akin to ostrich policy in the sense that a danger cannot be faced or overcome by ignoring its existence. The danger in this context lies in cornering the learners into satisfying their curiosity about the "other's" culture through alternative extra-curricular -sometimes unreliable- means, mainly the Internet or peers' input. The aforementioned sources may feed them inaccurate, subjective or propagandist information about culture (whether local or target). In recorded history, many impressionable youths have been successfully brainwashed and enticed into adopting more or less radical forms of sub- and counter-culture. This is ostensibly because the principal guides/instructors (teachers and parents) would have failed to introduce other cultures in an incremental nondiscriminatory way.

6) Multimodality should be introduced and sustained in education to foster multiliteracy, interest, motivation and authenticity. Multimodal teaching/ learning materials support and motivate various types of learners by providing multiple presentations of the content; in other words, readers are given different forms and levels of the subject matter. For example, a

video can explain, in deeper detail, or even in a different way, something that a text cannot. Text can leave holes in understanding that visual and audio sources can inform. Therefore, multimodal materials should be used strategically for eliciting greater participation, authenticity and interest, and for pandering to various learning styles and intelligences.

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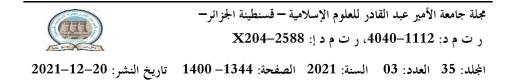
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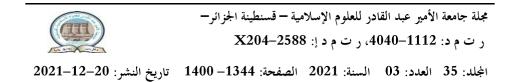
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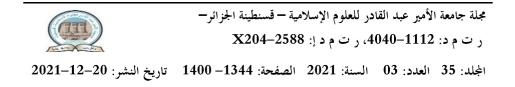
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Appendix

Teachers' Questionnaire

Section One: Personal Information

A. Demographic data

1.1.Gender**:** male ▢   female ▢
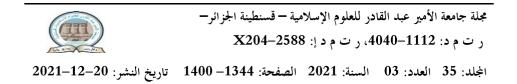
1.2. Age: 25-30 ▢ 31-36 ▢ 37- 42 ▢ more than 43 ▢

1.3. Location: Northern Algeria ▢ Southern Algeria ▢ Eastern Algeria ▢ Western Algeria ▢ Central Algeria ▢

1.4. Cultural orientation: Conservative ▢ Moderate ▢ Progressive ▢

B. Training and Experience

2.1. In which institution have you trained to obtain your teaching certificate?

University ⬚
Institut Technologique de l'éducation (I.T.E) ⬚
Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) ⬚

2.2. How many years have you been teaching English in Middle School?

Less than 5 ⬚ Between 5 and 10 ⬚ Between 10 and 15 ⬚ More than 15 years ⬚

2.3. In what kind of establishment are you or have you been teaching? Public ⬚ Private ⬚ Both ⬚

2.4. Which level(s) have you been teaching?

1st year (1AM) ⬚ 2nd year (2AM) ⬚ 3rd year (3AM) ⬚ 4th year (4AM) ⬚

2.5. How many years have you been using the Second Generation coursebooks?

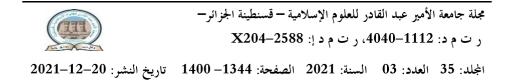1 year ⬚   2 years ⬚   3 years ⬚

Section Two: Teachers' Perspectives pertaining to Culture Teaching and Syllabi's Content

***1-strongly disagree / 2- disagree / 3- neutral or uncertain / 4-agree / 5-strongly agree**

3. Teachers' Beliefs about Culture Teaching in an EFL Context

3.1. Is the cultural dimension necessary in foreign language teaching and learning?	①②③④⑤ ⬚⬚⬚⬚
3.2. Should language teaching focus more on intercultural communicative competence and skills rather than on linguistic competence and accuracy?	①②③④⑤ ⬚⬚⬚⬚
3.3. Can the teachers' personal beliefs about culture influence their teaching practices?	①②③④⑤ ⬚⬚⬚⬚⬚

4. Teachers' Beliefs about the Syllabi in Use

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4.1. Do the current syllabi of English reflect national aims, values and policies?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
4.2. Are the aims of the syllabi you have used, clearly stated?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
4.3. Do the aims of the syllabi reflect the needs of your learners?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
4.4. Do the current syllabi of English need to accommodate international standards?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
4.5. Are cultural and intercultural considerations given significant attention in the syllabi?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
4.6. Do the coursebooks in use reflect the syllabi for middle school English teaching?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
4.7. Do you rely systematically on the coursebooks in your teaching?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢

Section Three: Teachers' Perspectives pertaining to the Culture-related Content of "My Book of English"
5. Rationale and Objectives

5.1. Does each unit in the coursebooks have clearly stated goals?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
5.2. Is the content of the coursebooks consistent with the general objectives?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
5.3. Does the cultural material increase the level of understanding regarding the conventional behavior in various common situations in the target culture(s)?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
5.4. Does the cultural material present foreign cultural projects that	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

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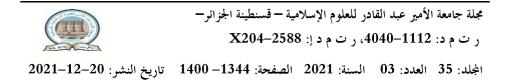
involve interacting and communicating with members of the local community or resources?	⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚
5.5. Does the thematic content develop cultural awareness by understanding the dynamic nature of the target culture(s)?	①②③④⑤ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚

6.   Social and Cultural Topics

6.1. Are the topics rich with different aspects of everyday life (small "c" culture)?	①②③④⑤ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚
6.2. Are the topics rich with different aspects of bigger life institutions and fields of knowledge (big "C" culture)?	①②③④⑤ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚
6.3. Are the topics rich with cultural elements of the local culture?	①②③④⑤ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚
6.4. Are the topics rich with cultural elements of the target culture?	①②③④⑤ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚
6.5. Are the topics rich with elements of a universal (global) culture?	①②③④⑤ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚

7.   Cultural Materials and Skills

7.1. Do the coursebooks promote student's awareness of intercultural understanding?	①②③④⑤ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚
7.2. Do the coursebooks promote active student participation to communicate different values (i.e. punctuality, neat, working hard, mannerism, and courtesy)?	①②③④⑤ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚
7.3. Does the cultural content include generalization or stereotypy about the target culture(s)?	①②③④⑤ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚
7.4. Does the thematic material increase students' awareness and appreciation of his/her own culture, as well as the target culture(s)?	①②③④⑤ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚
7.5. Are the texts, dialogues and any other forms of discourse in the coursebooks authentic and contextualized?	①②③④⑤ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚ ⬚

8. Language Features and Language Skills

8.1. Are new vocabularies repeated in subsequent units for reinforcing the meaning of the cultural content?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
8.2. Do the coursebooks develop the students' four language skills with the themes of cultural content?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢

9. Class Activities and Cultural Activities

9.1. Does the content perform intercultural understanding and cross-cultural communication in both cultures (i.e. knowing the meaning of those words and fitting the words into recognized patterns of class activities)?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
9.2. Do they provide practice in oral skills to communicate the meaning of different forms rather than learning about them, as well as to develop students' productive skills (i.e. speaking and writing skills)?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
9.3. Do the cultural activities provide students with opportunities to participate in games, songs, celebrations, sports, or entertainment representative of the foreign culture?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢

10. Exercises/ or Home Assignments

Are students given opportunities to use their interlanguage system to communicate the meaning of cultural themes in meaningful situations and to further investigate aspects of both cultures on their own?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢

11. Teaching Aids: Illustrations and Teachers' Guide

11.1. Do the characters represent different nationalities, countries, and the local society?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
11.2. Do the illustrations reflect the values of the social groups who adopt them?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢
11.3. Is there cultural localization underlying the illustrations? (adapting the linguistic and cultural content of a material for a	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢

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specific target audience in a specific locale?	
11.4. Does the Teachers' guidebook help the teacher understand the rationale objectives and methodology of the coursebooks as well as understand how social values can be taught?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢ ▢

Thank you very much for your cooperation