CULTURAL CONTENT AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL EFL COURSEBOOKS

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Abstract:

Due to the importance of cultural representations in textbooks, great efforts are directed to explore the extent to which EFL international and national coursebooks beneficially introduce the cultural elements of the target and source cultures. Thus, this study investigated the cultural content of international and national EFL coursebooks that are taught in Jordan in three areas: the cultural content, the predominant culture, and embedded intercultural aspects. For the content analysis, Headway was selected as the international EFL coursebook, and Action Pack was selected as the national EFL counterpart. For data coding and analysis, the models of Moran (2001), Cortazzi and Jin (1999), and Byram (1997) were adopted. The findings revealed that although both coursebooks employed similar cultural dimensions, they shed light on different cultures. The international coursebook focused merely on the culture of English-speaking countries and ignored the EFL learners' culture. Dissimilarly, the national coursebook introduced all cultural categories more diversely and inclusively. As for the intercultural aspects, they were not embedded or represented adequately in both coursebooks.

Keywords: Cultural Categories; Cultural Content; Cultural Dimensions; English as a Foreign Language (EFL); Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

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1. Introduction

It is not possible to learn or teach any foreign language sufficiently in isolation from its culture since language and culture are inseparable (Duranti, 1997). Brown (2000) posits that culture and language teaching are indivisible; hence, they cannot be separated without missing some major aspects of either language or culture. Faris (2014: 14) states that language is "*the expressions of cultural reality, the embodiments of cultural reality, and the symbols of cultural reality*". The status of English as an international language has increased the necessity to integrate culture into EFL textbooks. The dominant culture that should be incorporated in teaching English has been subject to ongoing debate. According to McKay (2002), the English language can be taught more beneficially by presenting various cultures instead of the culture of English-speaking countries, due to the fact that English is regarded as a global language. On the contrary, Stewart (1982) argues that the culture of native English speakers is regarded as a key characteristic of English language learning. Consequently, EFL students' learning dictates the appropriate framing of cultures that can be developed by representing efficient cultural content in English language teaching (ELT) coursebooks.

EFL coursebooks are the main source for teaching English as they can offer several potential benefits for maximizing learning. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) accentuate that EFL textbooks are the most effective resource for teaching English as a foreign language. Accordingly, these textbooks are supposed to satisfy learners' needs within and beyond the EFL classroom setting. While most countries adopt EFL textbooks from international publishing houses (e.g., Oxford, MacMillan, Cambridge, Pearson, and Simon & Schuster), some of them are designed and published nationally to fit the public taste, customs and traditions of the target students. Regardless of the publishing house, most EFL textbooks are designed to facilitate students' mastery of the four English language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as the three sub-skills, i.e. grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Awwad & Alhamad, 2021). Consequently, predetermined themes comprising cultural elements are represented, such as social life, family and friends, science and literature, and religious rituals (Cheng and Beigi, 2012). According to Astaifi and Allame (2024), the rich resources for gaining knowledge underlying linguistic and cultural elements are language coursebooks. Thus, cultural content within English language teaching and learning has received substantial research interest in a wide range of studies.

Due to the influence of cultural representations in EFL coursebooks on L2 learners, EFL stakeholders strive to understand the overlap between the linguistic and cultural elements in the EFL context. In the globalized universe, intercultural competence has occupied a substantial position in learning, commerce, global diplomatic relations, and universal peace (Chandio, 2025). EFL coursebooks are equipped with cultural elements that are not limited to learning language skills, but also extend to learning successful intercultural communication across languages (Rajabi and Ketabi, 2012). Hence, a research agenda is devoted to exploring ELT textbooks in order to help EFL stakeholders

recognize the relevant cultural and linguistic content that can serve the objectives of designing these textbooks (Abuqudairi *et al.,* 2025). Rashidi and Meihami (2016) highlight that EFL coursebooks are assumed to introduce content with a variety of cultural elements related to different cultures. Consequently, students' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) can be enhanced when foreign language learners are provided with comprehensible content. It is also suggested that textbooks that focus solely on the foreign language culture may increase the complexity of the course materials and tasks, and thus result in decreasing EFL learner engagement (Awwad, 2019).

2. Literature review

2.1 Culture and cultural content

Culture is entangled in every single aspect of real-world life, and hence, it is very challenging to define it comprehensively. According to Kramsch (1998), culture is attached to a certain society with a shared system of criteria for perceiving, believing, assessing, and doing. Brown (2000: 177) defines culture as "*the ideas, customs, skills, arts and tools that characterize a given group of people in a given period of time*". Hence, culture can be considered a heritage system that transmits its characteristics and qualities over time to new generations. Borgerhoff Mulder *et al.* (2006) delimit culture as a series of non-genetically inherited features that characterize human societies. From the broader perspective, Matsumoto (2000: 24) described culture as a "*dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors, shared by a group but harbored differently by each specific unit within the group*".

Since culture is considered a link or a bridge between a culture and its members, cultural content is a significant area to be investigated to unfold how it can function in different contexts. The way in which the members of a certain community demonstrate their beliefs, values, and attitudes can be exposed through exploring the cultural representations in various social and learning contexts (Schwartz, 2014). Riadini and Cahyono (2021) refer to cultural content as data or information that comprises cultural values, including hints, symbols, illustrations, and words. A number of explicit and implicit cultural aspects can be extracted from content containing cultural matters, known as visible and invisible cultures. Hereafter, several models have been devoted to probing this area of research with more focus on EFL coursebooks.

To explore the cultural aspects and representations in EFL coursebooks, a number of theoretical frameworks and models have been proposed. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) have suggested a model to categorize cultural content into three categories, i.e. source culture, target culture, and international culture. Another framework has been proposed by Peterson and Anand (2004) to categorize the themes of culture into big "C" and little "c". Big "C" stands for a series of facts and constants regarding arts, history, geography, business, teaching, and traditions of a target speech society. The little "c" represents the

habitual aspects of life, including routines and daily activities. Adaskou *et al.* (1990) have projected a model that includes aesthetic, sociological, semantic, and pragmatic senses to explore the cultural representations more comprehensively. According to Stern (1983), cultural content has been distributed to three levels: 1) the foundation level; 2) the ethnographic of the target culture; 3) the sociocultural component of the target culture. In order to explore the cultural aspects as represented in the contents of EFL coursebooks, Moran (2001) has designed a model with five cultural dimensions, i.e. products, practices, perspectives, communities and persons.

2.2 Cultural dimensions and categories

Moran (2001) has suggested a system with five cultural dimensions for coding the cultural contents in ELT textbooks. The proposed cultural dimensions have stemmed from the assumption that "*culture is the evolving way of life of a group of persons, consisting of a shared group of practices associated with a shared set of products, based upon a shared set of perspectives on a world, and set within specific social context*" (Moran 2001: 24). Products can be identified as a system of codes that tracks four aspects: 1) artifacts; 2) places; 3) situations; 4) art forms. Practices can comprise the communications and actions of specific community members, which include operations, acts, scenarios, and lives. Perspectives can refer to the cultural representations that transmit particular perceptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes. Communities can indicate certain social contexts, circumstances, and groups that allow participants to practice their cultural lifestyle. Persons can refer to the members who represent certain cultures or societies (Moran, 2001).

Following Cortazzi and Jin (1999), three essential cultural categories have been proposed to classify cultural content in EFL textbooks, i.e. source culture, target culture, and international culture. Later, a fourth category has been added, i.e. neutral culture, to respond to any content that does not belong to any of the three categories. This model has been adopted by a wide range of studies to analyze the cultural content of English coursebooks (e.g., Faris, 2014; Hosseinzadeh *et al.*, 2022; Liu and Laohawiriyanon, 2013). Target culture indicates the culture of English-speaking countries where English is used as a first language. Source culture refers to the EFL students' culture or local culture (McKay, 2002). Ekawati and Hamdani (2012) posit that the potential influence of inserting cultural aspects regarding the source culture in ELT textbooks is to enhance students' awareness of their own cultural identity. International culture comprises all cultures of the countries worldwide in which English is used as an international language or lingua franca. Sihombing and Nguyen (2025) advocate that EFL textbooks need to proportionally introduce all types of cultures since the target aim of English teaching is to equip English learners with the competency to use the target language in all contexts. According to Aliakabri (2005), the cultural categories of Cortazzi and Jin (1999) are not sufficient since some of the cultural content does not refer to any particular culture. Thus, the earlier model has been updated by inserting a fourth cultural category, which is known as 'neutral culture'.

2.3 Intercultural communicative competence

Byram (1997: 70) defines intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as "*individuals have the ability to interact in their own language with people from another country and culture, drawing upon their knowledge about intercultural communication, their attitudes of interest in otherness and their skills in interpreting, relating and discovering*". The essential elements of people's ICC are pinpointed as the participants' cultural perception of the partners' own culture, the effective use of their own language, the knowledge of their concerns, and the capacity to communicate and decode the content of communication (Byram 1997). ICC is also defined as "*a dynamic process by which people draw on and use the resources and processes of cultures with which they are familiar but also those they may not typically be associated with in their interactions with others*" (Young and Sercombe, 2010: 181). Various models have been provided in order to categorize and assess the aspects of ICC in different language-teaching contexts.

Even though several frameworks have been designed to measure ICC components in EFL textbooks, each model has drawn on different criteria. The notion of Hymes (1972) about communicative competence has been adopted by a range of scholars, including Canal and Swan (1980) and Bachman (1990). In the framework of Canal and Swan (1980), three levels of knowledge and competencies have been included, i.e. grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Gudykunst and Kim (1984) have suggested that the interlocutors are both encoders and decoders, and thus, they have provided a model that explores a series of contexts: environmental, cultural, socio-cultural, and psycho-cultural. Byram (1997) has projected a comprehensive model that integrates a number of components with co-orientational models.

Byram (1997) has provided a multi-component model to examine ICC areas within the education system. This model encompasses five elements, i.e. attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Attitudes represent openness and willingness to suspend doubt about other cultures and believe in one's own culture. Knowledge denotes the knowing of social groups' products and customs in one's own and in one's counterpart's country. Skills of interpreting and relating refer to the ability to construe a document or action from another culture to clarify it and link it to a document from one's own culture. Skills of discovery and interaction represent the extent to which a person can acquire new knowledge and behaviors of a culture, and further employ knowledge, stances, and skills under the limitations of real-life communications. The final element in this model, critical cultural awareness, can be identified as the "*ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries*" (Byram, 1997: 101).

2.4 Previous studies

The distribution of cultural content and the effectiveness of ICC in EFL coursebooks have become the main focus of an active line of research. Al-Hishoush (2006) conducted a content analysis to examine two international and national EFL textbooks that are taught

in Jordan, i.e. 'Amra General English One' and 'Headway Advanced'. The cultural content was analyzed following Cortazzi and Jin's model (1999). The findings showed a cultural gap between the two textbooks. The Jordanian culture was the sole focus in 'Amra General English One'. On the other hand, Headway Advanced mainly emphasized the culture of native English speakers. In another study, Chao (2011) studied the cultural representations and the hidden curriculum of an international EFL textbook that is taught in Jordan. The elementary level of New American Inside Out was explored by employing two coding schemes: 'The Five Dimensions of Culture' of Moran (2001) and 'The Categories of Culture' of Cortazzi and Jin (1999). The findings concluded that most cultural dimensions were integrated to emphasize Western products, persons, and perspectives. Furthermore, the target culture dominated a great deal of the content, while local and Asian cultures were given little emphasis.

Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2015) explored the cultural content in global and local EFL textbooks that are taught in Iran. A content analysis was conducted by drawing on the models of Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Adaskou *et al.* (1990) to find out the predominant culture. The study emphasized that most of the contents of the local coursebook were culture-free. Furthermore, the cultural content in the analyzed local coursebook accentuated the sociological sense. In contrast, the global textbook drew attention to the target culture and introduced some intercultural aspects. Rybkova (2018) targeted the cultural representations in three EFL textbooks that are taught in Czech secondary schools to reveal how specific cultures were represented and whether or not the representation of cultures could improve L2 learners' ICC. The cultural content of 'New Headway', 'Navigate', and 'English File' were examined based on Yuen's (2011) model. Cultural contents were further classified into Asian, African, English-speaking, and non-English-speaking countries. The findings revealed that 'New Headway' and 'Navigate' advocated a number of manners to represent various types of cultures. Consequently, they were relevant to support the intercultural aspects of students, as well as ICC-supportive English teaching and learning. In contrast, the study failed to capture any focus on non-English cultures, instead of the English culture in 'English File', which was unsuitable for promoting the learners' ICC.

Maghsoudi (2020) aimed to discover the incorporated ICC elements in Indian and Iranian high school English textbooks. Thus, the Indian textbook 'Standard English', and the Iranian textbooks 'Prospect' and 'Vision' were selected for data collection. Furthermore, Byram's (1997) model and the framework of Celce-Murcia (2008) were adopted. Firstly, the tasks of the textbooks were classified into (1) communication, (2) intercultural, and (3) non-intercultural. Coding, classification, and analyzing the ICC elements in these textbooks demonstrated that the Iranian high school coursebooks did not incorporate sufficient elements of ICC. On the other hand, the Indian high school coursebooks did not prompt students' ICC since the study did not capture any intercultural aspects.

Hosseinzadeh *et al.* (2022) investigated the cultural aspects in two international and national EFL coursebook series: 'Touchstone' and 'Iran Language Institute'. The

researchers adopted the models of Cortazzi and Jin (1999), Tajaddin and Teimournezhad (2015) and Adaskou *et al.* (1990) to discover which culture was more dominant and how the cultural aspects represented the source and target cultures. The study illustrated that the local series showed all types of cultural categories in different portions. On the other hand, the global series ignored the source culture and instead accentuated only the culture of English-speaking countries. However, both series represented the cultural content through the aesthetic and sociological senses.

In another recent study, Agustina and Kencana (2023) examined the cultural content and elements of ICC in two global and local textbook series, i.e. 'English in Mind' and 'When English Rings a Bell'. The findings indicated that the target culture of native-English countries dominated the global series, while the national series concentrated mostly on the source culture of L2 learners. Moreover, the components of ICC were not integrated adequately into the international series, and they were utterly marginalized in the national one, which suggested that the two textbooks were not sufficient to promote L2 learners' ICC.

Lately, Gheisari and Akbari (2025) explored the cultural contextualization of two widely used EFL textbooks in Iran, which are 'Prospect (2014)' and 'Interchange (2021)'. Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) model, and Souryana Yassine's (2021) approach of cultural ideology and otherness were adopted in the study. The findings illustrated that the two textbooks represented source and target cultures differently. 'Prospect' showed a high concentration on the source culture (Iranian), whereas the international textbook genuinely neglected the source culture and promoted the American one. In addition, the representation of self and other indicated the communities' diversity, which was hidden under the ideological positions.

In light of reviewing a number of relevant previous studies, many EFL coursebooks include explicit and implicit cultural elements that influence students' cultural knowledge as well as their ICC. Hence, these textbooks can directly and indirectly shape L2 learners' values, beliefs, and perspectives. Since the findings of the previous studies revealed that most international textbooks show a high emphasis on the culture of English native speakers, they might not suit the more conservative communities of EFL learners or fail to support their ICC. Thus, it is of paramount importance to address the cultural content of ELT textbooks that are taught in Jordan, as one of the conservative countries. Furthermore, there is a dearth of studies that have evaluated both the representations of source and target cultures in EFL coursebooks in Jordan, as well as the intercultural communicative competence, which is a research gap this study strives to address.

2.5 The current study

This study is designed to explore the integrated and hidden elements of cultural contents in two international and national EFL coursebooks that are taught in Jordan, i.e. Headway (Upper-Intermediate and Advanced) and Action Pack (Grades 9 and 10). It further tries to capture the similarities and dissimilarities between the two textbooks in

integrating the cultural representations and aspects. Hence, this study endeavors to identify the cultural dimensions that represent the source and target cultures, the predominant culture, and whether or not ICC is a criterion for designing and selecting these ELT textbooks. Hence, the research questions guiding the current study are:

RQ.1: How are the cultural dimensions presented in the international EFL coursebooks 'Headway' and the national EFL coursebooks 'Action Pack'?

RQ.2: Which culture is more dominant (source or target) in the international EFL coursebooks 'Headway' and the national EFL coursebooks 'Action Pack'?

RQ.3: To what extent do the international and national EFL coursebooks in Jordan support the students' intercultural communicative competence?

2. Method

2.1 The study corpus

The corpus of this study comprises two internationally and nationally published EFL coursebooks that are taught in secondary schools in Jordan for the same age groups. The data for this study were proportionally collected from the international textbook 'Headway' and the national counterpart 'Action Pack'. The selection of these two EFL coursebooks for this contrastive analysis is motivated by the fact that they have been adopted and used for many years to teach English as a foreign language in Jordan. The international EFL series 'Headway' is taught in some Jordanian private schools and is assumed to suit the local culture of the students. The national EFL series 'Action Pack' has been used officially in public and some private schools since 2010. The following table presents key information about the two adopted textbooks in this study.

Table 1: Key information about the international and national coursebooks

Criteria	'Headway' (International textbook)	'Action Pack' (National textbook)
Authors	Liz and John Soars, and Paul Hancock	Virginia Paris & Edwina Johnson (adapted by the evaluation committee)
City	United Kingdom	Jordan
Levels	Upper-Intermediate and Advanced	Levels nine and ten
Publisher	Oxford University Press	Jordanian Ministry of Education
Year	2019	2020
Number of units	12 units per level	10 units per level
Number of pages	168 + 175	87 + 92

Headway is the Fifth Edition textbook series with six levels published by Oxford University Press (Soars and Hancock 2019). It offers six levels, i.e. Beginner, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper-Intermediate, and Advanced. All levels follow the British English standards and focus on the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as the three sub-skills, i.e. grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The Upper-Intermediate and Advanced textbooks were selected in this study. The content of each Headway textbook is divided into 12 topical units that follow

specific social themes as reflected in the title of each unit. The units of Headway Upper-Intermediate level are as follow: *Home and Away, The Ends of the Earth, Kindness of Strangers, a Pack of Lies, Perfect Future, Making it Big, Let There Be Love, Going to Extremes, The Good Old Days, Over my Dead Body, Just Suppose,* and *About Time.* Headway Advanced Level also comprises twelve units that are titled as follows: *What Makes Us Human, In So Many Words, Enough Is Enough, Not All It Seems, Culture Clashes, Fruits of War, Lighten Up, Gender Matters, Body and Mind, Our High-Tech World,* and *Turning Points.*

Action Pack is an adapted and adopted EFL coursebook by the Jordanian Ministry of Education to be the official syllabus in Jordan (Johnson 2013). The evaluation and adaptation committee comprises several Jordanian experts and syllabi designers who have been selected to ensure the suitability of the textbook's content to the Jordanian culture. The Ministry of Education in Jordan decided to teach Action Pack at the local and private schools for classes 1-12 starting from the academic year 2010-2011 (Paris 2013). This study adopted Action Pack 9 and 10 levels as a counterpart to the international textbook. Level nine contains six modules that address 10 topical units, i.e. *Friendships, Famous People from The Past, Traditional Garments, Workplace Ethics, Future Predictions, Science Fiction, Writing and Communication, Money and Volunteering, Traveling and Discoveries,* and *Journeys.* Level ten also consists of ten units: *Rainforests, Treasures of The Earth, The Nobel Prize, Science and Scientists, Exploring Wildlife, Planning a Trip, Weather and Climate, Earth, Tourist Attractions,* and *Cultural Tourism.*

2.2 Procedure

This study has employed a critical content analysis to trace the cultural aspects in Headway and Action Pack. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define content analysis as a research tool that is selected for the subjective explanation of the passage, which is guided by utilizing a consistent and systematic approach to code and extract common concepts and forms. According to Weber (1990), this research technique is assumed to produce valid and reliable inferences regarding the thematic contents of written sources. Thus, the adopted textbooks were observed and analyzed critically to provide reliable answers to the study's research questions, which examined how cultural content is represented, which culture is predominant, and whether ICC aspects are integrated adequately.

In order to analyze the culture-related contents in suitable ELT textbooks for the analysis, the researchers followed a systematic technique by observing carefully all reading passages, visual illustrations, and speaking and writing activities in each unit. Firstly, several international ELT textbook series from different publishing houses were scrutinized and inspected closely in comparison to the national textbook Action Pack. After considering multiple aspects such as the number of units, themes, and levels, Headway was selected as a counterpart textbook to Action Pack. The adopted textbooks were skimmed for general representations and topics. Then, the culture-related aspects were extracted from those textbooks to be analyzed and categorized. The collected cultural representations were classified based on three structured coding schemes: 'cultural dimensions', 'cultural categories', and 'ICC components'.

The descriptive content analysis was carried out based on the theoretical frameworks of Moran (2001), Cortazzi and Jin (1999), and Byarm (1997). In order to reveal how cultural matters were represented, Moran (2001) organized the cultural elements into five cultural dimensions, i.e. products, practices, perspectives, communities, and persons. The framework of Cortazzi and Jin (1999) categorized the representations related to cultures into target culture, source culture, and international culture to identify the more dominant culture. According to Byram (1997), five aspects were proposed for tracing ICC in ELT textbooks' contents, i.e. attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Cultural dimensions

The findings obtained from the content analysis regarding the distribution of cultural dimensions in this study demonstrate that both textbooks have covered different aspects of culture. Even though all dimensions appear in dissimilar ratios, they occupy a large extent of Headway content compared to Action Pack.

Table 2: Cultural dimensions presented in Action Pack

Cultural Dimensions	Cultural Elements	No (%)		Total	
		Head-way	Action Pack	Head-way	Action Pack
Product	Artifacts	(29) 10.6	(25) 13.5	(106) 38.9	(102) 55.1
	Places	(26) 9.5	(45) 24.3		
	Institutions	(5) 1.8	(6) 3.2		
	Art forms	(46) 16.9	(26) 14		
Practices	Operations	(8) 2.9	(11) 5.9	(40) 14.7	(21) 11.3
	Acts	0	0		
	Scenarios	(8) 2.9	0		
	Lives	(24) 8.8	(10) 5.4		
Perspectives	Perceptions	0	(1) .5	(18) 6.6	(3) 1.6
	Beliefs	(5) 1.8	(1) .5		
	Values	0	0		
	Attitudes	(13) 4.7	(1) .5		
Communities	Social contexts	0	0	(10) 3.6	(10) 5.4
	Circumstances	(7) 2.5	(10) 5.4		
	Groups	(3) 1.1	0		
Persons	Individual members	(98) 36	(49) 26.4	(98) 36	(49) 26.4

As depicted in Table 2, Headway presents the five strands of cultural dimensions in varying percentages. The percentage of '*products*' (38.9%) is much higher when compared with the four other dimensions. Most of these products are coded under art *forms* (16.9%), *artifacts* (10.6%), and *places* (9.5%). For instance, the British pound, Shakespeare's 'Richard III', the Berlin Wall, and the American flag are included to represent a part of Headway's content. The second dimension '*persons*' covers 36 percent of cultural content, including Donald Trump, Kate Adie, and Sir Arthur Doyle. Thus, *products* and *persons* represent the

highest percentages. As for '*practices'*, 14.7 percent are introduced to focus on depicting different communicative practices and stories of the culture's members. About 6.6 percent of the content presents '*perspectives'* of specific cultures, especially beliefs and attitudes. *Communities* as a dimension are coded only 10 times, accounting for 3.6 percent of the complete cultural content.

The findings of the national ELT textbook (Action Pack) show that although a wide range of cultural dimensions are integrated, they cover smaller proportions. Products are coded 102 times under different categories. For example, the traditional Japanese garment '*Kimonos*' and Jonathan Swift's '*Gulliver's Travels*' are coded under 'products/art forms'. Up to 1.3 percent of the content presents perspectives, which is the lowest percentage. Several famous people and scientists from the source culture have been presented in this textbook, including *King Abdullah II, Ibn Al Nafis, and Al Zahrawi*, which are up to 26.4 percent.

The Headway textbook introduces part of the cultural content as practices in Western culture. Many pictures accentuate the culture of the target language by presenting wine, beer and champagne as a normal part of their daily cultural practices. In another example, the concept of 'polygamy', which means having more than one wife, is described as a practice of certain tribes from Papua New Guinea. Polygamy has been introduced as an example of culture clash between Western civilisation and other cultures in Africa and Asia. Furthermore, Headway introduces specific 'beliefs', 'values', and 'attitudes' that belong to certain cultures. For example, the attitudes and beliefs of specific community members towards having tattoos are represented. The example emphasizes that having a tattoo is not something wrong and it is part of personal freedom. Gender-neutral parenting is another controversial issue that is presented in Headway Advanced. It refers to a parenting style that is advocated by some people who allow their children to explore their own gender identities. Headway Advanced presents a real story of two parents who have decided to raise their child as gender-neutral, allowing him to self-discover his gender tendency. The above two examples are considered taboos according to many conservative societies, such as in Jordan.

The finding of our content analysis demonstrates that both international and national textbooks present several cultural elements with different frequencies. Cultural dimensions, including 'practices', 'perspectives', and 'communities', are underrepresented when compared to other dimensions. Furthermore, it can be noticed that an overemphasis on 'products' and 'persons' dominates the cultural content of Headway and Action Pack. Even though similar cultural strands are employed to represent the cultural content in both textbooks, different messages, issues, and ideologies are emphasized in each textbook. Headway sheds light on the 'artifacts, 'places', 'beliefs', and famous persons of the American and British cultures and other Western communities. On the contrary, Action Pack overemphasizes the Jordanian culture, English-speaking countries' culture, and the culture of some Arabic and Islamic countries.

The international textbook shows a collection of questionable Western aspects. In both levels of Headway, twelve positions exemplify messages and ideologies that do not fit the Jordanian culture. It can be noticed that the textbook views some issues and shows the positive attitudes of Western people towards them. It further attracts attention to specific practices such as having a boyfriend or girlfriend, leaving parents' home, and drinking alcohol. Moreover, part of the cultural content delivers some hidden cultural messages. For instance, a gender-neutral parenting style that gives children the right to pick up their own gender identity is encouraged as a good social practice, despite the fact that it is irrelevant to the conservative culture of the Jordanians and Islamic teachings.

The findings of this study are consistent with Chao (2011), who posits that the international textbook employs a set of implicit and explicit cultural dimensions to present Western people, products, and perspectives. Since the main focus is on showing Western societies are successful and intelligent, learners are assumed to be charmed with this concept and absorb or follow their practices and perspectives consciously and unconsciously. For example, Headway includes a passage about Elon Musk and his achievements to emphasize Western brightness. To affirm the concept of the American Dream, another example views America as the land of opportunities by presenting the story of Bob Redman, who was living in the treetops and was allowed to keep pursuing his dream. Besides, these findings support those of Moran (2001), who declares that culture can be viewed through a range of shared practices, products, and perspectives of certain people. Thus, the cultural content is introduced by using cultural aspects that relate to a certain group of people, such as fiction, traditional garments, money, values, tourist places, etc.

2.3 Cultural categories

As presented in Table 3 below, only two cultural categories are captured in Headway levels. The target culture is highly dominant in this textbook (67.7%), while all cultures of English native speakers are included, such as England, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. However, there is a great emphasis on the cultures of England and the USA. Regarding the target culture, different cultural items are extracted from texts, activities, or visual illustrations, such as the English author Ruth Rendell and the novel '*Jemima JA*' of the British author Jane Green. The international culture is mentioned 61 times to shed light on different cultures, including French, Italian, and German. The French circumnavigator '*Jeanne Baret*' and the Italian apprentice and street singer '*Enrico Caruso*' are introduced as examples of the international culture. On the other hand, the source culture, i.e. the Eastern cultures like the Jordanian one, is completely marginalized or ignored in the Headway textbook.

Table 3: Cultural categories in Headway and Action Pack

Textbooks	Target culture		Source culture		International culture	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Headway	128	67.7	0	0	61	32.2
Action Pack	33	23.5	38	27.1	69	49.3

Action Pack introduces all cultural categories, but with varying proportions. Drawing on Table 3, it can be noticed that roughly similar weight was given to the target culture and source culture, which were coded 33 times and 38 times, subsequently. The cultural references related to the target culture are dominant by presenting the British and American cultures. For instance, a quotation from the American businessman Bill Gates, a reference to the swimming journey of Martin Strel, and a passage about the Amazon River are extracted from Action Pack as obvious examples of the target culture. Even though the source culture exemplifies students' own culture, it is represented in fewer incidents when compared to the international culture. About 27.1 percent of the cultural content focuses on Jordanian art forms, places, and practices, such as the Jordanian traditional garment, Petra, the Dead Sea, and wearing the Hijab. A great deal of the cultural content of Action Pack is included under the international culture, while it is represented mainly through introducing Arab civilization and a range of Arab communities.

To conclude, the findings reveal that each one of the analyzed textbooks is dominated by different cultural categories. Headway shows an overemphasis on the target culture as more than 60 percent of the content relates to the cultures of English-speaking countries. The target culture is represented by focusing more saliently on the American and British cultures, with underrepresentation or ignorance of other English native speakers' cultures, like New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. Regarding the national textbook 'Action Pack', the international culture dominates both levels (Action Pack 9 and 10). Because the international culture comprises a high number of countries, different cultural items are coded and included under this category. The findings demonstrate that Action Pack turns out to be more balanced in terms of representing all cultural categories. However, a clear emphasis on the Arabic and Islamic communities, as well as Egyptian culture, has been revealed. On the other hand, less focus has been given to the culture of other European and Western countries.

The findings of the current study are in line with Chao's (2011) assertion that the global textbook shows bias in favor of the cultures of the English-speaking countries and ignores the source culture. Furthermore, our findings are consistent with previous studies (e.g., Agustina and Kencana, 2023; Gheisari and Akbari, 2025; Tajeddin and Teimournezhad, 2015) since the explored textbooks in these studies indicate a predominant focus on the target culture at the expense of the cultures of EFL learners. Conversely, the results of this study are not in harmony with Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Al-Hishoush (2006), who advocate that the culture of EFL students is assumed to be predominant in the nationally published textbooks.

3. Intercultural communicative competence

The last inquiry of this study focuses on tracing the included aspects of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in Headway and Action Pack and exploring whether or not these aspects are sufficient to enhance students' ICC after following the five strands of Byram's model (1997) and scrutinizing both textbooks. Diverse percentages are provided to reflect the intercultural aspects in each one. Table 4 below summarizes the frequencies and percentages of ICC components as presented in Headway and Action Pack. According to the results, only four elements of ICC are included in the Headway textbook, i.e. attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting/relating, and skills of discovery/interaction. The last element, 'critical cultural awareness', is completely sidelined and is not located at all in any of the levels of either Headway or Action Pack. In 18 locations, students are encouraged to gain general historical knowledge. For example, a picture of the Trojan Horse is presented, and students are assumed to search for and get information about it. Learners are provided with an opportunity to experience interpreting and relating skills four times. Further, intercultural elements regarding openness and curiosity toward cultures are included in six positions. As illustrated in the example below, some of these elements are introduced in forms of quotations, whereas students are assumed to interpret the practice, evaluate it, and clarify the quote.

"When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace", Jimi Hendrix.

Table 4: ICC's components in Headway and Action Pack

ICC Components	Headway	Action Pack
	No (%)	No (%)
Attitudes	(6) 17.6	(5) 22.7
Knowledge	(18) 52.9	(14) 63.6
Skills of interpreting/relating	(4) 11.7	(2) 9
Skills of discovery/interaction	(6) 17.6	(1) 4.5
Critical cultural awareness	0	0

Although four aspects of intercultural communicative competence are integrated in Action Pack, they occupy a small portion of the cultural content. In this textbook, students are stimulated to get knowledge 14 times, which represents the highest number. The openness towards others' attitudes is shown 5 times. For example, Action Pack 10 introduces a trip to Australia with a set of practices that the visitors can experience. At the same time, the text is demonstrated by a positive attitude, which is clear in the interlocutors' conversation. Furthermore, a text about popular tourist places in Jordan has been provided to present information about the Dead Sea as well as to show its benefits and the attitudes of different people towards it.

This study points out that the textbooks failed to promote adequate intercultural aspects. Although various intercultural components are extracted from the target textbooks, the cultural content in these textbooks is not sufficient to enhance students'

cultural awareness of their own culture and that of any potential interlocutors from other cultures. These findings go in harmony with those obtained by Maghsoudi (2020) and Agustina and Kencana (2023) regarding the global textbooks. All of these studies highlight that EFL coursebooks are not equipped with sufficient intercultural aspects because of the lack of educational material and activities that provoke L2 students' ICC. This study is aligned with Maghsoudi's (2020) assertion that since the explored textbooks do not adequately comprise ICC components, they are not expected to facilitate or support critical cultural awareness. In conclusion, although EFL learners need to be equipped with intercultural elements of other cultures, there is a presupposition that they will not be able to communicate effectively with people from other cultural backgrounds.

4. Conclusion

The present study has been conducted to scrutinize the cultural content of two EFL coursebooks that are taught in Jordan, i.e. an international ELT textbook, 'Headway' and a national textbook ', Action Pack'. The five cultural dimensions proposed by Moran (2001) are adopted to infer which aspects are used to represent the cultural content. The study has also identified the culture that dominates the cultural content of the two EFL coursebooks by adopting Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) framework of cultural categories. Finally, it endeavors to determine whether or not these textbooks can provide EFL students with effective ICC elements by adhering to the five aspects of Byram's model (1997). The findings show that the overuse of 'products' and 'persons' dominates the whole content of both textbooks, despite the fact that diverse cultures and cultural concepts have been introduced. The findings further specify that the target culture is favored in Headway, while the international culture occupies a large portion of the national counterpart. Both ELT textbooks include ICC elements that do not fulfill EFL learners' needs to become better intercultural speakers.

The findings of this study can offer pedagogical implications that are predicted to assist ELT or EFL stakeholders such as teachers, students, and curriculum designers. First, such a study can help teachers and curriculum designers choose suitable textbooks that enhance students' awareness of their own and others' cultures. Second, underlining the deficiency of the aspects of ICC in ELT textbooks can assist teachers in promoting certain strategies with supportive intercultural teaching environments. In this respect, specific intercultural components are supposed to be improved, embedded, included, or excluded. Consequently, it is recommended that ELT textbook designers and curriculum developers balance the cultural representations of the English-native cultures and target learners' cultures to fit the setting of EFL students and teachers. It is further suggested that international ELT/EFL publishing houses take into consideration the cultural limitations and taboos of many conservative countries where English is taught as a foreign language.

It is worth mentioning that this study has analyzed only two ELT textbooks using a content analysis, which is oriented by certain models and theoretical frameworks. Thus,

the findings can be generalized and applicable only to the textbooks that have been explored within the scope of the models and theoretical frameworks that have been adopted. Besides, the suitability of the textbooks has been measured in relation to the Jordanian customs, traditions and culture. It is recommended that future research investigate the content of different ELT textbooks that are taught in different contexts and countries. Furthermore, the content analysis is limited to the content of the textbooks, which is not supported by the viewpoints of the ELT/EFL stakeholders. Further studies can explore the views of students, teachers, syllabus designers, and policymakers by utilizing questionnaires, surveys, or interviews. Collecting data from multiple parties is supposed to expand our understanding of what cultural items should be integrated and how cultural matters should be represented or even taught. Besides, using a mixed-methods study design in future studies may assist in probing the inclusion of cultural representation more thoroughly.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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