



DOES ACCULTURATION HAPPEN IN EFL CONTEXT?

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ABSTRACT: In order to understand the second language culture, understanding the nature of acculturation is necessary. Teaching culture should be integrated into the foreign language textbooks and classroom practices. It is necessary for language teachers to integrate cultural materials and values into their teaching and to make them familiar with the culture of the language they are teaching. The aim of this investigation is to magnify the evidence of English Acculturation in Foreign Language Learning Settings (EAFLLS). And to emphasize the significant role of English text books do and have to play in English as a Foreign Language situations.

KEYWORDS: EF, Acculturation, Culture learning, EAFLLS, cultural values



Council for Innovative Research

Peer Review Research Publishing System

Journal: Journal of Advances in Linguistics

Vol 6, No 2

editor@cirjal.com

www.cirjal.com, www.cirworld.com



INTRODUCTION

Language and culture are often taught separately, but According to Buttjes (1991), several researches have proved the need to teach culture as a part of language learning and teaching. According to Elomaa (2009), textbooks have a critical role in promoting the principles of intercultural learning and teaching because they have the power to affect learners' attitudes towards foreign cultures. Elomaa (2009) states that if the textbook content combined with both formal language teaching and the teaching of culture, it would be possible to create a connection between language learning and intercultural learning. In fact, the best way in presenting the culture is through the textbooks.

Textbooks play a very crucial role in the process of language teaching and learning. By presenting stereotyped attitudes of target and learner's own culture and making them topics of discussions, textbooks can challenge simplification. In addition, textbooks are important resources for teachers in assisting students to learn every subject including English. Elomaa (2009) concludes that textbooks should equally include linguistic and cultural contents. They are the basis of school lessons and they are the primary source of information for teachers. In Iran, textbooks serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that takes place in the classroom.

Cultural topics included in foreign language textbooks can motivate students to undertake individual investigations into comparing cultures and encourage them to observe, analyze, contrast and think independently. Many textbooks now take advantage of cultural issues and include them explicitly in the form of Culture pages. There is a danger, however, that overusing cultural elements without introducing other topics, such as animal world, technology or science, may bring boredom to a foreign language classroom.

The present study carried out an evaluation of three series of ELT textbooks used for teaching English language in Iran.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Many teachers and school authorities believe that there are different factors involved in the Iranian students' achievement in English language (Azizifar, A., Koosha, M. & Lotfi, A. 2010). One of these factors may refer to the culture, which is directly mentioned or implied in the various exercises included in the textbooks, and may result in the probable change in the EFL learners' attitudes towards a foreign language.

In English learning and teaching process, textbooks are crucial tools, which serve various functions (Kobia 2009). In terms of intercultural issues, textbooks are believed to have several roles for students (Lund 2006). She believes that textbooks can provide valuable input when it comes to exposing students to new cultural expressions and to the diversity of cultures. Nevertheless, the main reason for embarking on this type of study lies in the fact that the contents of English textbooks or textbooks in general have a significant association with the learning of the students and it can help learners to be connected with the target culture.

Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of this study provides a useful insight for language teachers to find an appropriate way in finding textbooks, which considers culture as an important factor. In addition, the result of this study can shed lights for syllabus designer in order to design textbooks, which contains target culture, too.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To fulfill the purpose of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

Q₁: Is there any significant relationship between interchange series and acculturation of Iranian EFL learners?

Q₂: Is there any significant relationship between top-notch series and acculturation of Iranian EFL learners?

Q₃: Is there any significant relationship between ILI series and acculturation of Iranian EFL learners?

Q₄: Is there any significant relationship among English interchange series, top-notch series and ILI textbooks and acculturation of Iranian EFL learners?

PARTICIPANTS

All participants of this study have been learning English for about 3 years, they had passed Beginner, Elementary, Pre Intermediate, and Intermediate courses in their institutes.

The number of English learners in this study was 286 intermediate female and male EFL students studying English in ILI GhotbRavandi and Mehregan institutes in Tehran, that participated in this study. The researcher has been to different branches of ILI, having about 97 students of the institute. About 55 were female and 42 male were asked to participate in the research. Their age span was about 18 to 40 because of studying in the adults branch, non of them has been to an English language speaking country, majority of them have had university degrees, mostly studies English in their childhood.

Then about the participants of GhotbRavandi Institute, the institute's teaching material is interchange series. Since it is a coeducational institute about 50 male and 49 female, a few of them had the experience of being in an English language speaking country,. About three people were Armenian that could find some other cultural ideas in comparison with the rest who are Muslim, they have had PHD or MA degrees. They were from 18 to 60 since the institute is adult's.

Topnotch studying learners have been 90 students of Mehregan Institute, concluding 45 men and 45 women, they have never been to any foreign countries, they have been students of school or universities, and their age range was from 15 to 25.



Some students in the background have studied interchange series for one or two terms. They have read English magazines, watched English films and they were in contact with English sources of knowledge to improve their English or to progress in their major.

ACCULTURATION QUESTIONNAIRE

The acculturation questionnaire in this study was made by the researcher, which checked the cultural attitudes of Iranian EFL learners and was designed by referring to three prominent English textbooks. The text books applied are Top notch series, Interchange series, and the books of The ILI Series. In the questionnaire the participants are going to choose the most appropriate item according to the propinquity of what they think about the cultural items presented and what they think.

The questionnaire was devised based on common cultural items according to Uni-dimensional model of Acculturation in all three teaching materials, interchange series, Top notch series and ILI series. The common cases were put in to question and the scale for them was in an axiom of Strongly agree, numbers one to seven, Strongly disagree. The students were to choose according to their point of view which the result showed their degree of acculturation.

There have been 32 questions in the questionnaire based on the items:

Table 3.1 Types and numbers of Cultural Items were chosen according to the common cultural items among the books in the study such as:

Questionnair section	Number of the questions
Art, music, movies	7 Questions
Habits	2 Questions
Food, diet and health	2 Questions
Holiday and Travelling	3 Questions
Marriage and customs and Divorce	4 Questions
Friendship	2 Questions
Having pet	1 Questions
Fashion	1 Questions
Job	2 Questions
Tip and Charity	2 Questions
Risk taking and being adventurous, obeying rules	3 Questions
Shopping	2 Questions
Living alone and family	1 Questions
Punctuality	1 Questions

The items were 32 and selected according to the commonality of them among the textbooks students have studied. They are chosen according to the (AppendixA) The pilot test was run with distribution of the questionnaire to 30 male and female students, it was validated, also its reliability, using Cronbach's Alpha, and its reliability was checked by the first piloting of administering the questionnaire among 30 students.

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

In order to gain in depth understanding calls for the use of qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews was considered the most appropriate method for data collection. An interview was run as the qualitative means of gathering data in this study. As cited in Pathak&Charatdaolntratat "We used semi-structured interviews because they provide a very flexible technique for small-scale research (Drever, 1995)" (2012, p4).

MATERIALS

As Hutchinson and Torres (1994) suggest: The textbook is an almost universal element of [English language] teaching. Millions of copies are sold every year, and numerous aid projects have been set up to produce them in [various] countries...No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook "(p.315). Grey(2000) defends textbooks as a means of cultural debate, and having a two way communication road. The researcher has used three types of materials in this study to get their common cultural items. The applied books are The Interchange fourth edition Series the Intro, Book one and Book two, The ILI series including Started, Beginner, Pre Intermediate and Upper Intermediate and the Topnotch series concluding (Appendix D)



DESIGN

As Johnsen (1993) states, there is no single method for analyzing textbooks. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are commonly. It means the study design is mixed method. It should also be mentioned that this study was a descriptive one, and interested to find out the interrelationship among variables. The age range of the students and the courses acted as distracting variables.

PROCEDURE

Pilot Study

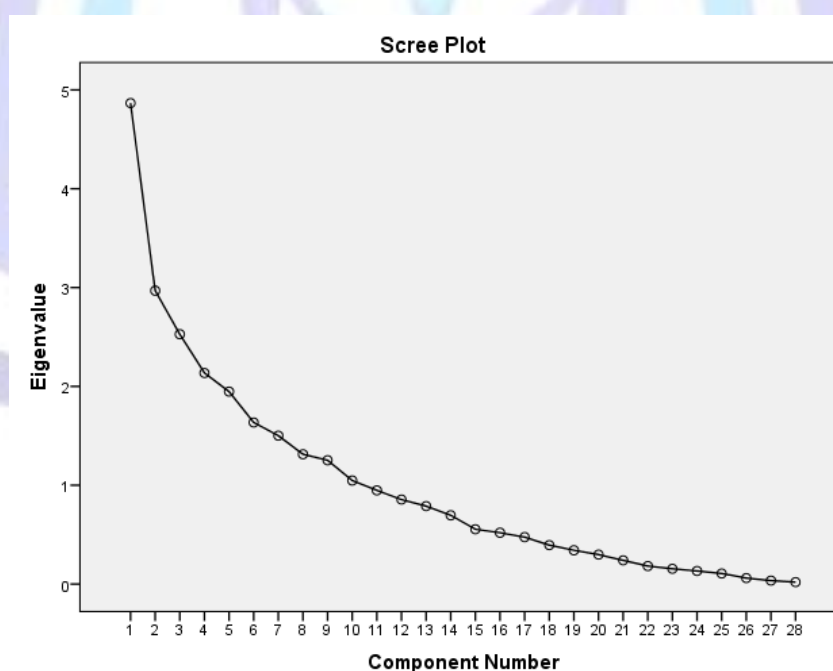
At the outset of the study, a pilot was conducted by administering the first questionnaire to 30 students of Ghotbravandi Institute, there 20 were female and 10 male. The purpose of this pilot Survey was to get direct feedback from respondents about the structure of the questionnaire. The researcher employed a standard questionnaire, using Likert-type scale of 7 values for the 32 questions of its. At this stage, the researcher was specifically interested in assuring that a valid and reliable indication of subjects' attitude could be extracted through the acculturation questionnaire. For this purpose, the researcher randomly chose a pilot population of 30 respondents to the questionnaire, and invited them to answer the questionnaire. The results are presented below.

Procedure for Designing the Questionnaire

In the process of designing the questionnaire according to the topics provided in the textbooks the questions have been chosen. Learners from the three institutes have had seven choices to show the degree of their agreement or disagreement in Likert scale from choices 1 to 7 to get more assured of the degree of their choices. The common items in the books have been designed in many area that made 45 questions. After the pilot study and getting the reliability of the questionnaire the number of the questions have been decreased to 32 questions.

With factor analysis, the construct validity of a questionnaire can be tested (Bornstedt, 1977; Ratray & Jones, 2007). If a questionnaire is construct valid, all items together represent the underlying construct well. As with the course book evaluation questionnaire, a factorial analysis was carried out. The 32 items of the acculturation questionnaire were subjected to principal components analysis (PCA). The PCA revealed the presence of 10 components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 17.38%, 10.602%, 9.028%, 7.62%, 6.95%, 5.84%, 5.36%, 4.89, 4.47% and 3.74% of the variance respectively (table 4.2). An inspection of the scree plot revealed a clear break after the sixth component (Figure.1)

Figure 1. Factor analysis scree plot



MAIN STUDY

In this phase the researcher has gone through the (Appendix A) was distributed among 300 students of ILI institute students studying ILI series, Ghotbravandi institute students studying Interchange series, and Mehrad institute students studying TopNotch series. Of course all the students of ILI institute responded the questionnaires over the institute because of not letting the researcher conducting research within the institute area and time but the management of Ghotbravandi institute and Mehrad institute have had their full cooperation in the process of the Pilot study and Main study.



Data Collection Procedure

Based on the Uni-dimensional model of Acculturation (Gordon, 1964) in the questionnaire, an acculturation test by the researcher was used in this study that contained several categories each of which specifies a certain aspect of the textbooks. These categories included practical considerations, layout and design of the book, activities, skills, language type, subject and content of the book. Common cultural items found in the mentioned books were music, food, travelling, habits, holiday, marriage customs, divorce, fashion, keeping pets, risk taking, driving car, punctuality, and shopping online. (Appendix E) Cronbach's alpha was employed to estimate the reliability of the questionnaire. Overall reliability of all statements of questionnaire was considered.

Also an interview was run in order to check the EFL learners' cultural attitudes. All the interviews was tape-recorded. Because body language sometimes is crucial for understanding the meaning of an utterance, the researcher herself could also take notes. Sometimes this was done during the interview or at other times, right after the interviews. The length of the interviews lasted from 1 hour to 2 hours. The interviews were individually, each got about 15 minutes and they were asked questions about cultural topics. The interviewees were put into challenge to answer, their voices were recorded and then transcribed then a report was presented according to different teaching materials of the learners. Three different reports were presented to show the learners' ideas according to their English learning material.

Data Analysis

To provide the answer to the research questions, a statistical descriptive analysis was carried out. In this way, the frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations of each set of the responses obtained from learners was calculated.

Then to examine the relationship between EFL learners' textbooks and acculturation, Chi square test as well as Spearman correlation was employed to check the hypotheses.

Reporting Questionnaire Results

1 western and Iranian music. The first question inquired respondents to state if they preferred western music over Iranian music. Students who studied ILI coursebooks got the highest average of 4.37. TopNotchcoursebook learners followed them with an average of 3.97. Lastly, those who were studying interchange coursebooks got an average of 3.55.

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for this question. A Chi square test was carried out on questions 1 for the three group (table 4.2). The results in table 4.2 indicate that differences observed were statistically significant.

Table 1
Respondents' preference of western music over Iranian music

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
ILI Av. 4.37	Freq.	13	13	11	10	19	18	15
	Percent.	12.7	12.7	10.8	9.8	18.6	17.6	14.7
Interchange Av. 3.55	Freq.	24	17	16	9	8	13	12
	Percent.	23.5	16.7	15.7	8.8	7.8	12.7	11.8
TopNotch Av. 3.97	Freq.	8	15	14	17	14	11	10
	Percent.	7.8	14.7	13.7	16.7	13.7	10.8	9.8

Table .2
Chi square tests for question 1

	ILI1	in1	t1
Chi-Square	18.432 ^a	19.167 ^b	14.837 ^c
Df	7	7	7
Asymp. Sig.	.010	.008	.038



2 Information on western celebrities. This question inquired respondents to state if they preferred some information on western celebrities presented in coursebooks they were studying. Students who studied ILI coursebooks got the highest average of 4.27. TopNotchcoursebook learners followed them with an average of 4.3. Lastly, those who were studying interchange coursebooks got an average of 3.91. Table 4.6 provides the descriptive statistics for this question. A Chi square test was carried out for the three group (table 4.3). The results in table 4.4 indicate that differences observed were statistically insignificant.

Table 3
Information on western celebrities

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
ILI Av. 4.27	Freq.	11	16	16	9	18	11	20
	Percent.	11	16	16	9	18	11	20
Interchange Av. 3.91	Freq.	14	18	15	19	10	9	17
	Percent.	14	17	14	18	10	9	17
TopNotch Av. 4.03	Freq.	10	15	9	18	16	10	12
	Percent.	10	15	9	17	16	10	12

Table4
Chi square for question 2

	ILI2	in2	t2
Chi-Square	8.821 ^a	5.792 ^b	3.698 ^c
Df	6	6	6
Asymp. Sig.	.184	.447	.718

3 Preferring music to reading books. This question inquired respondents to state if they preferred listening to music to reading books in their free time. Table 4.8 shows that students who studied ILI coursebooks got the highest average of 4.35. TopNotchcoursebook learners followed them with an average of 4.03. Lastly, those who were studying interchange coursebooks got an average of 3.64. Table 4.5 provides the descriptive statistics for this question. A Chi square test was carried out for the three group (table 4.6). The results in table 4.6 indicate that differences observed were statistically significant for ILI and interchange coursebook students and insignificant for Top Notch students.



Table 5
Frequency statistics on proffering music to reading books

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
ILI Av. 4.35	Freq.	10	6	14	13	29	13	10
	Percent.	10.4	6.3	14.6	13.5	30.2	13.5	10.4
Interchange Av. 3.64	Freq.	1	24	12	10	14	14	10
	Percent.	1	25	12.5	10.4	14.6	14.6	10.4
TopNotch Av. 4.03	Freq.	11	7	14	18	12	15	9
	Percent.	11.5	7.3	14.6	18.8	12.5	15.6	9.4

Table 6
Chi square statistics

Test Statistics			
	ILI3	in3	t3
Chi-Square	23.705 ^a	23.500 ^b	6.791 ^c
Df	6	7	6
Asymp. Sig.	.001	.001	.341

4 Preferring western food to Iranian food. This question inquired respondents to state if they preferred western food to Iranian food. Table 4.7 shows that students who studied ILI coursebooks got the highest average of 4.46. TopNotchcoursebook learners followed them with an average of 4.45. Lastly, those who were studying interchange coursebooks got an average of 3.44. Table 4.8 provides the descriptive statistics for this question. A Chi square test was carried out for the three group (table 4.8). The results in table 4.8 indicate that differences observed were statistically significant for ILI and interchange coursebook students and insignificant for Top Notch students. In other words, the answers given by Top Notch students could be more likely to be by chance. The other questions also follow the above format of analysis.

The Interview Results

As stated in the Methods section, an in depth understanding of the culture-related issues calls for the use of qualitative methods. In this way, the semi-structured interview was also included as means of gathering data for this research. This interview method, the semi-structured method, seemed to be the most appropriate method for data collection.

In semi-structured interviews, an interview is run as a qualitative means of gathering data. The decided upon questions were asked from the subjects, studying different course books for learning English. In this section of the study, 10 learners of each of the three groups were randomly chosen. In this way, a total of 30 semi-structured interviews of 5 to 10 minutes were carried out. In carrying out the tests, every required measure was taken into account so to assure reliable and valid interview results. Following, the results of the interviews are provided.

ILI learners. 10 ILI coursebook students participated the interview.

8 of the respondents stated that they liked English names. 9 of these students preferred the U.S. tourist attractions. 7 of the respondents liked English novels more than Persian novels. As for the choice of Iranian or American movies, 6 interviewees preferred American films. However, only 3 of the respondents were open to getting a divorce. As divorced is considered to be a legally allowed but socially tabooed, those who stated that it was easy for them to get a divorce seem to have been moving away from the Iranian traditions of respecting the family.

Meanwhile, 6 students liked shopping online. Interestingly, only 4 of the subjects liked to take risks which are an important factor of an American. Finally, 8 of the interviewees stated that they liked Iranian culture to be followed.



2. Top Notch learners. 10 Top Notch coursebook students participated the interview. 5 interviewees expressed their preference for Iranian names. 6 of these students preferred the U.S. tourist attractions. Just like, ILI learners, Top Notch students demonstrated a high respect for Persian literature; 3 of the respondents liked English novels more than Persian novels. As for the choice of Iranian or American movies, 7 interviewees preferred American films. However, only 3 of the respondents were open to getting a divorce. As divorced is considered to be a legally allowed but socially tabooed, those who stated that it was easy for them to get a divorce seem to have been moving away from the Iranian traditions of respecting the family.

Meanwhile, 4 students liked shopping online. Interestingly, 5 of the subjects liked to take risks which are an important factor of an American. Finally, 8 of the interviewees stated that they liked Iranian culture to be followed.

3. Interchange learners. 10 Interchange coursebook students participated the interview. 6 interviewees expressed their preference for Iranian names. 9 of these students preferred the U.S. tourist attractions. Interchange students demonstrated a high respect for Persian literature; 4 of the respondents liked English novels more than Persian novels. As for the choice of Iranian or American movies, 3 interviewees preferred American films. However, only 3 of the respondents were open to getting a divorce. As divorce is considered to be a legally allowed but socially tabooed, those who stated that it was easy for them to get a divorce seem to have been moving away from the Iranian traditions of respecting the family.

Meanwhile, 6 students liked shopping online. Interestingly, 4 of the subjects liked to take risks which are an important factor of an American. Finally, 4 of the interviewees stated that they liked Iranian culture to be followed.

In conclusion, it can be stated that ILI learners were more interested in assuming U.S. nationality, traveling to the U.S., and reading English literature conspicuously more than the other two groups, namely Top Notch and Interchange respondents. In addition, it can be stated that Interchange respondents showed the highest level of conformity to their native culture values. Table 4.67 provides a summary of the interview results with the figures of the total number of answers showing signs of acculturation.

Table 5
Interview results

	Names	Tourist attractions	Novels	Films	Divorce	Online shopping	Risks	Cultural values	
ILI	8	9	7	6	3	6	4	8	51
Top Notch	5	6	3	7	3	4	5	2	35
Interchange	6	9	4	7	3	6	4	6	45

Based on these findings, it seems plausible to claim that amongst the three course books under study, the unstructured interviews showed that ILI coursebooks do have bigger acculturation effects.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As the researcher believes that triangulation strategies provide a more holistic understanding of the validity of the acculturation study, she employed it in her research. She used a triangulation strategy— Likert scale questionnaire and the unstructured interviews—to obtain her data and to analyze the validity of her findings from multiple perspectives. The idea of triangulation has a long tradition in the social sciences beginning at least as far back as 1950s. From the point of view of advocated of triangulation, a good research should go beyond multiple methods to include triangulation of data sources. Triangulation is an attempt to understand and interpret. Triangulation can help the researcher to “partially overcome the deficiencies that flow from one investigator or method (Denzin, 1989).

In the first phase of this research, In order to provide the answer to the research questions, a statistical descriptive analysis was carried out. In this way, the frequencies, percentages, and means of each set of the responses obtained from learners were calculated. After wards, the information gathered was used to test the research hypotheses. The results of this study indicated that coursebooks do affect acculturation procedures of EFL learners. For this study, three coursebooks were specifically investigated; ILI coursebook series, Interchanges series, and Top Notch series. The results showed that these course books have effect on learners’ acculturation process as was indicated in the results obtained from the questionnaires.

In order to get to this conclusion, the results of the questionnaires were subject to the Non-parametric Chi square test for Goodness-of-Fit. In so doing, the four major assumptions for employing these tests were observed. They included the existence of categorical variables, independence of observations, and exclusiveness of variables. The chi square tests carried out for research questions 1, 2, and 3 indicated that the course book under investigation did affect learners’ acculturation procedure. These results were in going with Zarei, G.R. and Khalessi, M. (2011) who investigated the



cultural load in English language textbooks, specifically designed to focus on Interchange series. Those results exhibited that textbooks are artifacts, which are strongly grounded in cultural assumptions and biases.

In order to find out the coursebook with the biggest effect on acculturation of the students, a parametric operation was put into use. In so doing, the assumption of normality for the data was observed. The results indicated that the ILI coursebooks had the biggest effect on learners' acculturation.

In the meantime, research questions were put under investigation so to study the research questions, qualitatively. It was a part of the attempt to assure a triangulated approach to the problems. Interestingly enough, the results of the structured interviews showed that the ILI series learners gave more answers, signifying acculturation effects. This finding was in going with the findings of the quantitative phase of the study. In this way, the findings of the qualitative and quantitative phases of the research confirm each other.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our special thanks go to those who have supported us with their cooperation in conducting this research.

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