

Cultural Content Analysis of Iranian ELT Coursebooks: A Comparison of *Vision I & II* with *English for Pre-University students I & II*

Zhaleh Saeedi, M.A., English Department, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza, Iran

zhalesa.zs@gmail.com

Mohsen Shahrokhi*, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza, Iran.

shahrokhi1651@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study was conducted to evaluate the cultural contents and cultural elements represented in *Vision (I & II)* and *Pre-University English (I & II)*. This study also aimed at determining if there were significant differences between these series in terms of cultural content and cultural element representation. To this end, the two ELT coursebook series were selected and analyzed based on Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) framework and the framework proposed by Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990). The results revealed that there were significant differences between these two series in terms of cultural contents and cultural elements. While the *Vision* series contained more L1 and Neutral-cultural contents, *Pre-University* series showed tendency to contain L2 and L1 cultural contents. With respect to the cultural elements, both series contained more esthetic and semantic cultural elements. This study has implications for EFL curriculum designing in Iran and can make Iranian EFL instructors familiar with the importance of culture as an indispensable part of language.

Keywords: Iranian ELT coursebooks, cultural contents, cultural elements

Introduction

The integral relationship between language and culture has led to numerous debates on the role and impact of English language teaching in general and of the English language programs in Iran in particular (Aliakbari, 2004). Since language emerges from societal interactions, L2 learners cannot learn the language without acquiring knowledge about its culture so learning about another culture is now one of the core objectives in the foreign language classrooms. Language teaching and learning about target culture are so tightly integrated that one cannot be fully accomplished without considering the other. Language is deeply ingrained in culture and culture is reflected by language. They are best acquired together (Emmitt & Pollock, 1997). Brown (2007) describes the interrelatedness of language and culture stating "that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. The acquisition of a second language, except for specialized, instrumental acquisition [...], is also the acquisition of a second culture" (p. 189-190). Based on these findings, it is clear that language and culture learning are inextricably linked.

Literature Review

When it comes to the realm of teaching and learning a language, as Gao (2006) presents it, "the interdependence of language learning and cultural learning is so evident that one can conclude that language learning is culture learning and consequently, language teaching is cultural teaching" (p.59). Gao further states that foreign language teachers should be aware of the place of cultural studies in foreign language classroom and attempt to enhance students' cultural

awareness and improve their communication competence. Foreign language coursebooks reflect the goals of the profession to teach culture as part of the introductory courses. Despite the variation in how this goal is approached in specific coursebooks, the commitment of authors to the teaching of language and culture has been evident since the 1960s at least (Chapel, 2016).

When teaching a foreign language such as English, teachers must take different aspects into account including the role of culture in language and the role language plays in the cultural expressions we make. These elements, as McKay (2003) points out, have differing and important impacts on language acquisition. McKay (2003) contends that culture has impact on language teaching either linguistically or pedagogically: The former affects the semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of the language while the latter influences the choice of the language materials because cultural content of the language materials and the cultural basis of the teaching methodology are to be taken into consideration when deciding upon the language materials. For example, while some materials developers provide examples from home culture, some others use target culture materials. One of the major goals of teaching English as an international language is to make it easier for learners to communicate their ideas and cultural understandings in the medium of English. Intercultural competence, the ultimate aim of acquiring language, cannot be attained if the coursebooks focus solely on the learners' native culture or the target culture. Victor (1999) and Majdzadeh (2002) propose that the coursebooks should contain home, target, and global culture. When the learners learn a language, they learn to think differently, they learn to behave differently, they actually cross linguistic border for communication.

Since language and culture are inseparable, the presentation of culture is an integral part of EFL learning and teaching. As a result, second and foreign language learners necessarily become learners of the second culture because a language cannot be learned without having a firm grasp of the cultural context in which it is used. Therefore, the major objective of this study is to find out, whether the Iranian senior high school ELT coursebooks (*Vision* series and *Pre-university English* series) provide sufficient content for students' cultural understanding and make them ready for intercultural communication.

Research Questions

In the course of the study, the following questions will be answered:

RQ₁. How is cultural content represented in *Vision I & II*?

RQ₂. How is cultural content represented in *Pre-University English I & II*?

RQ₃. How are cultural elements represented in *Vision I & II*?

RQ₄. How are cultural elements represented in *Pre-University English I & II*?

RQ₅. Is there any significant difference between *Vision (I & II)* and *Pre-University English (I & II)* in terms of cultural content representation?

RQ₆. Is there any significant difference between *Vision (I & II)* and *Pre-University English (I & II)* in terms of cultural elements representation?

Methodology

This study is based on a quantitative design and a descriptive method. The main variables that are under investigation in this study is the representation of the cultural content and cultural elements in the Iranian high school ELT coursebooks.

Corpus

The data of the current study were collected from the Iranian EFL materials, namely *Vision I & II* and *English for Pre University students I & II*.

Vision series coursebooks are designed by The Office of Public and Secondary Teaching coursebooks in 2016 to teach English to the Iranian high school students with age range of 16_19. These books are designed based on similar pattern and structure. Each book contains 4 lessons. All four skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing are integrated in these ELT coursebook series. Each lesson starts with 'Get Ready' section which is an introduction to the lesson. 'Conversation' and 'New Words' sections provide new vocabularies and new information. There are also sections for 'Reading' and 'Grammar'. 'Listening', 'Speaking', 'Pronunciation' and 'Writing' comprise the next sections. At the end 'what you learned' section (reviewing lesson) helps student to internalize the information obtained in this lesson.

Pre-University coursebooks are designed by Research and Planning Organization edition (2017). This series contains 8 lessons. Each lesson starts with 'Reading' section that intends to enhance reading skills. 'Vocabulary' section provides new vocabularies related to reading section. And 'Grammar' section that helps students to learn the grammatical points.

Models of Analysis

To achieve the cultural content types, Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) framework was used. Based on Cortazzi and Jin (1999) the material in a coursebook culturally are categorized into the source culture, the target culture, and the international culture. By analyzing the coursebook based on this framework, the cultural content represented in the coursebook can be revealed. The source culture materials refer to materials presenting language learners' own culture. The aims of the source culture materials are accommodating learners' need to talk about their culture with visitors and helping learners to be more aware of their own cultural identity. The coursebooks of this category are the most popular instruction materials in the EFL context. The aim of the target culture materials usually is exposing users to the cultural contexts of the target language. International culture materials refer to materials presenting a wide variety of culture in countries where English is not used as first or second language but as an international language. The aims of the international culture materials are raising users intercultural awareness and making users familiar with various socio-cultural contexts.

The second data analysis framework used is the one proposed by Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990) to draw cultural elements of the ELT coursebooks. This framework covers the general categorizations of culture. The culture within this framework is categorized into four elements: the aesthetic element, the sociological element, the semantic element, and the sociolinguistic element. The aesthetic element of culture refers to the media, the cinema, music, and above all literature-research (literary researches) which are often to be one of the main reasons for language teaching. The sociological element of culture refers to the organization and nature of family, home life, of interpersonal relations, material conditions, work and leisure, custom, and institutions. The semantic element of culture refers to the conceptual system embodied in the language. Many semantics areas (e.g., food, clothes, institutions) are culturally distinctive because they relate to a particular way of life that is to our sociological sense of culture. The last, the sociolinguistic element (or pragmatic) refers to the background knowledge, social skills, and paralinguistic skills that, in addition to mastery of the language code, make possible successful communication.

Data Procedure

The criteria used for cultural content in this study was categorized in terms of L1 culture, L2 culture and international culture based on Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) classification and Culture-neutral proposed by Aliakbari (2005). The purpose of this classification was to provide a

comprehensive image of how culture was portrayed in each coursebook. The corpora of the present study were series of English coursebooks entitled *Vision I & II*. In this study, textual elements (conversations, reading comprehension passages, exercises and tasks) presented in each unit of the coursebooks were analyzed.

Data Analysis

Using the aforementioned frameworks, different sections of the ELT coursebooks (*Vision* series and *Pre-University English* series), were examined for their cultural content and elements. The examples of the cultural contents along with their cultural elements in these series were discussed. To answer the first and second research questions of this study, the framework of Cortazzi and Jin (1999), was used to count the frequency of each cultural content. To answer the third and fourth research questions, the framework proposed by Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990) was used. To answer the fifth and sixth research questions inferential statistics were used. To this end, chi-square statistical procedure was employed to check whether there is significant difference between cultural content and cultural elements in *Vision* series and *Pre-University English* series.

Results

In the following sections, detailed analysis of the study is presented.

First and Third Research Questions

In order to answer the first and third research questions, *Vision I & II* was examined for their cultural contents and cultural elements. The examples of the cultural contents along with their cultural elements of this *Vision I* are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Category of cultural contents and cultural elements in Vision I*

Cultural contents	Cultural elements			
	Aesthetic	Sociological	Semantic	Sociolinguistic
L1 culture	Iranian names, Islamic names(e.g. Ali), Iranian wildlife, Iranian Scientists, historical sites of Iran, cultural monuments, knowing about Iran, New day holiday (Norooz),	–	Quran verses, tradition, dates and months in Persian calendar	–
L2 culture	Foreign names(e.g. David), Names of planets	Using such expression is not common in Persian	Days, months and seasons in L2 countries, English proverb	British accent, appropriate intonation for asking questions
International culture	Names of continents and countries (e.g. Asia, China), world tourism attractions (e.g. Nile river), story about scientists and	–	–	–

	researchers (e.g. Edison, Fleming)			
Culture-neutral	–	–	–	Saving nature, take care of injured animals, travelling rules, respect to others

Table 1 shows that *Vision I* contains all types of cultural elements. A lot of attention has been paid to L1 cultural content in case of aesthetic element, for example, the most commonly used names are Iranian and Islamic names such as ‘Maryam’ and ‘Ali’. Among four conversations in *Vision I*, three conversations included interactions about Iranian wild life, Iranian scientists and Iran tourism attractions. For instance, in the conversation of lesson four a Spanish tourist is planning for his summer vacation and a travel agent offers a trip to Iran:

Diego: I heard Iran is a great and beautiful country, but I don't know much about it.

Carlos: Well, Iran is a four-season country. It has many historical sites and amazing nature. Also, its people are very kind and hospitable. (Vision I, conversation 4, p.102)

There is a reading passage about Iran in lesson four too. The title of this reading is ‘Iran: A True Paradise’, and it is about tourism attraction of Iran and other countries. Also in activity sections, tourism attraction of cities like ‘Shiraz’ and Persian celebrations like ‘Norooz’ have been addressed. As for semantic, the Persian Months (e.g. ‘Shahrivar’) and dates (e.g.1395) are used in teaching of propositions along with English dates. Also Islamic beliefs are very evident in this series. Every lesson starts with one verse of Quran or tradition of the Holy prophet which is relevant to the subject of that lesson. For instance, the title of lesson one is ‘saving the nature’ and it starts with this verse of Quran: ‘We made from water every living thing (Al-Anbia 30)’. The title of lesson three is ‘the value of knowledge’ and it starts with a tradition of the Holy prophet: ‘Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave (Holy Prophet) PBUH’.

L2 culture has not been considered sufficiently as related to esthetic cultural element. The only items that can be considered in this category are the use of foreign names like ‘David’ in conversations and the names of planets like ‘Mars’ in lesson two. As for sociological element, there are some expressions in conversations that are common in L2 culture such as ‘how is it going?’. As for semantic element, the order of seasons and parts of day in English has been referred to in an activity section on page 110 (e.g. the spring/ summer/fall/winter); also the title of reading passage in page 80 is an English proverb (no pain, no gain) which is relevant to life story of ‘Edison’ and its equivalent has been provided at the bottom of the page. The audio files of these series in British accent can be considered as L2 culture sociolinguistic elements. These audio files can familiarize students with the accent of the L2 culture but these files are not recorded by native English speakers; actually they have been collected by Iranian English teachers with British accent.

There are some instances of international culture aesthetic elements in this series but other elements have not been addressed. Names of countries (e.g. Africa, Japan and Egypt) and their tourism attractions (e.g. Nile river, pyramid and Japanese food) have been used extensively, also there are some stories about great scientists of the world such as ‘Edison’ and ‘Fleming’. Finally, with regard to culture-neutral elements, *Vision I* contains only some examples for sociolinguistic

elements. For instance, the first lesson of this series is dedicated to saving the nature and there are a lot of warnings about saving endangered wildlife, taking care of injured animals and preventing the destruction of forests in conversation, reading and activity sections. In grammar section of lesson four there is a text which can familiarize students with travelling rules (e.g. As a tourist, we should be careful about our behavior in a foreign country) and in writing section of this lesson, there are some sentences about respecting others (e.g. Soheil never talks to his parents rudely).

The frequency of every category of cultural contents and cultural elements is displayed in the following figure.

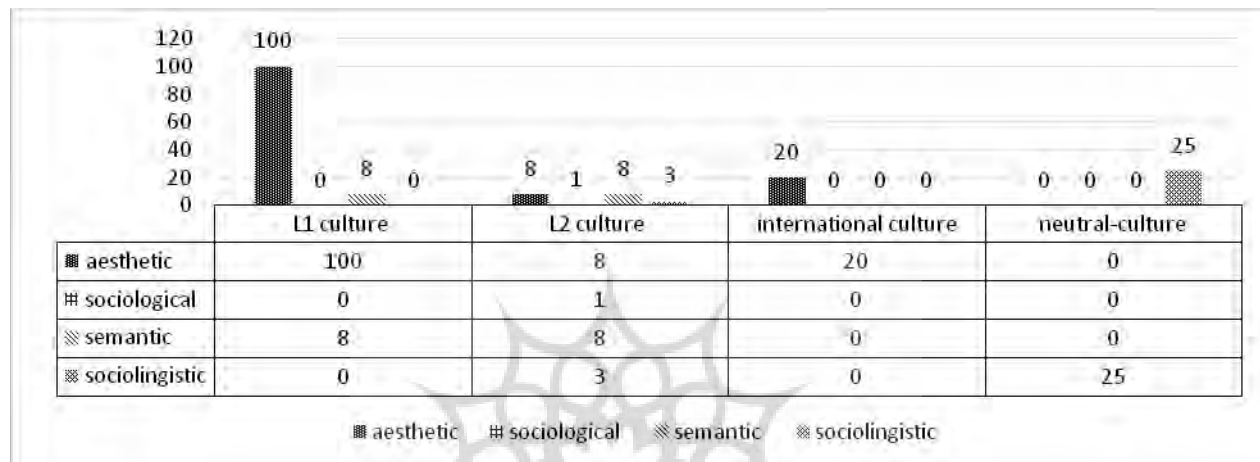


Figure 1. Frequency of cultural contents and cultural elements in Vision I

Figure 1 shows that the L1 cultural content of *Vision I* includes some 100 aesthetic elements and 8 semantic elements; yet, there is no representation of L1 cultural sociological and sociolinguistic elements. L2 cultural content of this series includes some 8 aesthetic elements, 1 sociological element, 8 semantic elements and 3 sociolinguistic elements. The international cultural content of *Vision I* just includes some 20 aesthetic elements and also cultural-neutral just includes 25 sociolinguistic elements. Figure 1. indicates most of the cultural contents have been composed of aesthetic elements.

Table 2. Category of cultural contents and cultural elements in Vision II

Cultural contents	Cultural elements			
	Aesthetic	Sociological	Semantic	Sociolinguistic
L1 culture	Iranian names, Islamic names(e.g. Ali), Iranian handicrafts, mother tongue, Toman	–	–	–
L2 culture	Foreign names(e.g. Alice), planets,	Using English expressions	–	British accent, appropriate intonation for

	Dollar			asking questions
International culture	Names of continents, countries and cities (e.g. Australia, China, Paris), international languages (e.g. French, Russian)	activities and sports	–	Endangered languages
Culture-neutral	Names of foods and fruits	–	Interesting facts	–

Table 2 shows that *Vision II* contains all types of cultural contents. L1 cultural content includes only aesthetic element. For instance, the most commonly used names in conversations and activities are Iranian and Islamic names such as ‘Ali’ and ‘Meysam’. The title of first lesson is ‘understanding people’ and it is about language, the importance of saving endangered languages and maintaining the native language because when a language dies, the knowledge and culture disappear with it, so in the reading passage and conversation of this lesson the authors have tried to show that mother tongue is as important as other languages are. For example, a high school student is interviewing Mr. Saberian for his school project:

Meysam: Four! Really?! What languages do you know?

Mr. Saberian: Besides my mother tongue, Persian, I know English, French and Russian well.

(Vision II, conversation 1, p.19)

‘Toman’ as the currency of Iran has been used in a dialogue between a seller and buyer in page 34 which directly refers to L1 culture:

A: Um... How much are those?

B: 20 000 Tomans.

A: What about these?

B: 10 000 Tomans.

(Vision II, conversation 2, p.34)

Lesson three of this series is dedicated to Iranian art and culture. It includes some information about Persian art and handicrafts such as ‘Persian carpet’, ‘Isfahan Termeh’ and ‘Qashqai Gabbeh’.

However, L2 culture has not been considered sufficiently. As for aesthetic elements, the only items that can be considered are the use of foreign names like ‘Alice’ or the names of planets; also ‘Dollar’ is used in a conversation between a tourist and Iranian seller:

Tourist: Wow! How touching this Gabbeh is! How much is it?

Reza: It is 85 dollars. If you buy more than 100 dollars, you’ll get a 20 percent discount. You can take this calligraphic tile for only 30 dollars.

(Vision II, conversation 3, p. 85)

As for sociological elements, there are some expressions in conversations that are common only in L2 culture such as ‘how is it going?’ The audio files of these series like *Vision I* is in British accent which can be considered as L2 culture sociolinguistic element. There are

some instances of international culture aesthetic elements in this series. Names of continents, countries, cities and (e.g. ‘Asia’, ‘China’ and ‘Paris’) have been used extensively in reading passages and activities; also international languages like ‘French’, ‘Russian’, ‘Portuguese’ have been introduced in lesson one. The subject of lesson three is ‘a healthy lifestyle’ and activities like ‘surfing the net’, ‘jogging’, ‘go sailing’ and ‘playing gulf’ are examples of sociological elements.

As for sociolinguistic elements, there is a reading passage in lesson one about endangered languages and the ways of protecting them by the people of the world. Finally, with regard to culture-neutral element, *Vison II* includes some aesthetic elements such as names of foods, fruits and vegetables. As for semantic elements, unlike *Vision I* every lesson starts with some interesting facts related to the subject of each lesson which can increase general knowledge of students. These facts are not related to a specific culture, so can be classified as culture-neutral. The frequency of every category of cultural contents and cultural elements is displayed in the following figure.

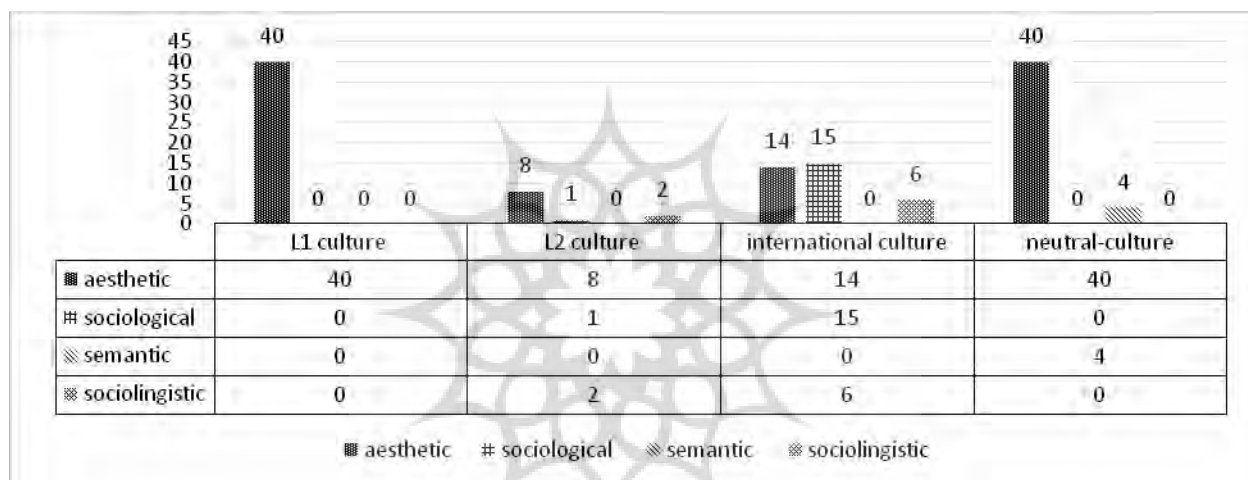


Figure 2. Frequency of cultural contents and cultural elements in *Vision II*

Figure 2 shows that the L1 cultural content of *Vision II* includes some 40 aesthetic elements but there is no representation of other cultural elements. L2 cultural content of this series includes some 8 aesthetic elements, 1 sociological element and 2 sociolinguistic elements. The international cultural content of *Vision* includes some 14 aesthetic elements, 15 sociological elements and 6 sociolinguistic elements. The cultural-neutral content includes some 40 aesthetic elements and 4 semantic elements.

Second and Fourth Research Questions

In order to answer the second and fourth research questions, *Pre-University* series was examined for its cultural contents and cultural elements. The examples of the cultural contents along with their cultural elements of this series are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that the *Pre-University English* series contain all types of cultural elements. L1 culture has not been considered adequately as related to aesthetic elements. Only items that can be consider in this category are the use of Iranian and Islamic names (e.g. ‘Leila’ and ‘Ali’) and names of great Iranian men and women (e.g. ‘Parvin E’tesami’ and ‘Abu-Reihan Birooni’). Also, reading skills sections have been taught in Persian.

Table 3. *Category of cultural contents and cultural elements in Pre-University I & II*

Cultural contents	Cultural elements			
	Aesthetic	Sociological	Semantic	Sociolinguistic
L1 culture	Iranian names, Islamic names(e.g. Ali), great Iranian men and women (e.g. Parvin E'tesami), teaching reading skills in Persian	–	In the Name of Allah	–
L2 culture	Foreign names(e.g. Philip), names of countries and cities (e.g. Canada, London, Ohio), names of planets, American space, US Army	–	Idioms and expressions, the order of dates , Roman Catholic school, nun	American accent
International culture	Stories about great men and women (e.g. Mother Teresa),	Human right, child labor, International Labor Organization, United Nations ,ILO, UNICEF	–	–
Culture-neutral	–	the importance of exercise, Global warming	Nobel Peace Prize	how to give a good speech

Table 3 shows that the *Pre-University English* series contains all types of cultural elements. L1 culture has not been considered adequately as related to aesthetic elements. Only item that can be consider in this category is the use of Iranian and Islamic names (e.g. 'Leila' and 'Ali') and names of great Iranian men and women (e.g. 'Parvin E'tesami' and 'Abu-Reihan Birooni'). Also, reading skills sections have been taught in Persian. As for semantic elements, every lesson starts with 'In the Name of Allah' which support Islamic beliefs; yet, much attention has been paid to L2 culture.

As for aesthetic English names (e.g. 'Philip'), names of L2 countries and cities (e.g. 'Canada' and 'London') and names of planets have been used. Also there are some examples of scientific and military equipment of The 'United States of America' (e.g. 'American space' and 'US Army') as a L2 country. In this series there are some instances of L2 culture semantic elements too. The last page of this series is dedicated to idioms and expressions. There are

twenty-five English idioms and expression in this page and students are asked to write a Farsi equivalent for them. There are some instances of L2 culture semantic elements in the life story of ‘Mother Teresa’ such as information about ‘Roman Catholic’ schools and life of a nun. The American accent audio files of these series can be considered as sociolinguistic elements which familiarize students with the accent of the L2 culture.

As for international culture aesthetic elements, *pre-university* series includes some stories about the life of great men and women such as ‘Mother Teresa’ and ‘Thomas Edison’ and as sociological elements; this series includes some information about ‘human rights’, ‘child labor’ and related organizations like ‘International Labor Organization’, ‘United Nations’, ‘ILO’ and ‘UNICEF’. Moreover, the title and content of reading passages in this series are not specific to a particular culture so they are categorized as culture-neutral. As for sociological elements, there are two reading passages about the ‘importance of exercise’ and ‘Global Warming’ which are the main concerns of all people in the world. The concept of ‘Nobel Peace Prize’ and promotion of peace and brotherhood among the nations can be considered as semantic element. As for sociolinguistic, there is a reading passage about how to give a good speech and the ways to use the communication power tools which can be useful for all students in the world.

The frequency of every category of cultural contents and cultural elements is displayed in the following figure.

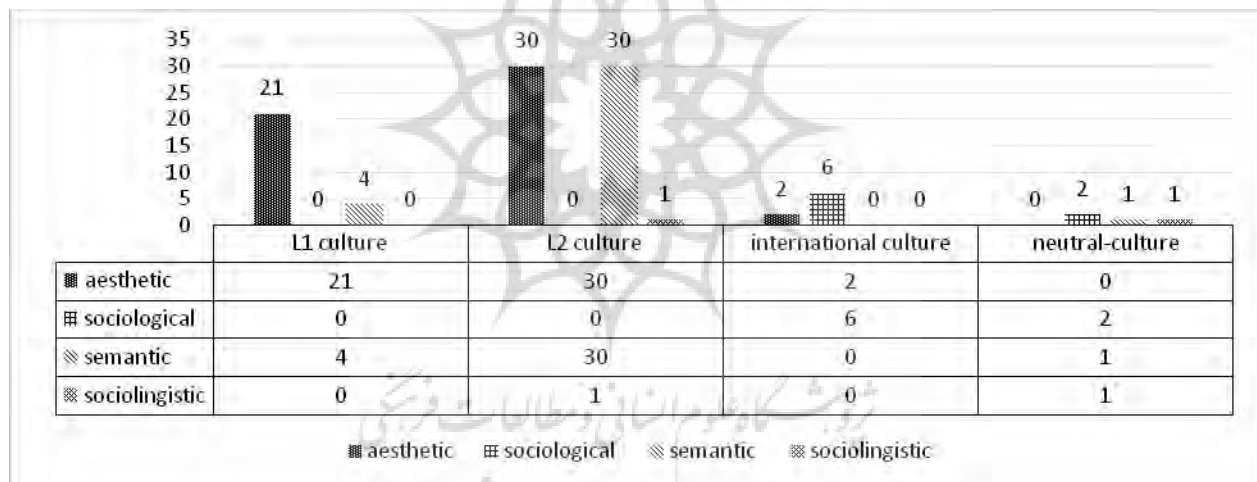


Figure 3. Frequency of cultural types and cultural elements in Pre-University I & II

Figure 3 shows that the L1 cultural content of *Pre-University English* series includes some 21 aesthetic elements, and 4 semantic elements; yet, there is no representation of sociological and sociolinguistic elements. L2 cultural content of this series includes some 30 aesthetic elements, 30 semantic elements and 1 sociolinguistic element. The international cultural content of this series includes 2 aesthetic elements and 6 sociological elements. Also cultural-neutral just includes 2 sociological elements, 1 semantic element and 1 sociolinguistic element.

Fifth Research Question

Using the adopted framework of Cortazzi and Jin (1999), the frequency counts of each cultural content were obtained. Data analysis was based on the frequency of occurrence of four categories of culture (L1 culture, L2 culture, international culture and culture-neutral) in the coursebooks analysis. The distribution of these four categories of culture in each unit of these

series are presented in this section. The results of the analysis on textual and visual elements of these coursebooks are presented in tables below.

Table 4. Frequency of cultural contents in *Vision I & II* and *Pre-University I & II*

Cultural contents		Coursebooks		
		Vision I&II	Pre-University I&II	Total
L1 culture	Count	148	25	173
	Expected Count	130.7	42.3	173.0
	% within cultural contents	85.5%	14.5%	100.0%
	% of Total	36.9%	6.2%	43.1%
L2 culture	Count	31	61	92
	Expected Count	69.5	22.5	92.0
	% within cultural contents	33.7%	66.3%	100.0%
	% of Total	7.7%	15.2%	22.9%
International culture	Count	55	8	63
	Expected Count	47.6	15.4	63.0
	% within cultural contents	87.3%	12.7%	100.0%
	% of Total	13.7%	2.0%	15.7%
Culture-neutral	Count	69	4	73
	Expected Count	55.2	17.8	73.0
	% within cultural contents	94.5%	5.5%	100.0%
	% of Total	17.2%	1.0%	18.2%
Total	Count	303	98	401
	Expected Count	303.0	98.0	401.0
	% within cultural contents	75.6%	24.4%	100.0%
	% of Total	75.6%	24.4%	100.0%

Table 4 indicates the frequency of cultural contents in *Vision I & II* and *Pre-University I & II*. As shown in table 4 the most frequent cultural content in *vision* series includes 148 L1 cultural content, followed by some 69 neutral-cultural contents as the second most frequent cultural content. Some 55 international cultural contents were recognized as the third most frequent cultural element. And some 31 L2 cultural content were identified as the least frequent cultural element. This signifies that L1 culture has been highlighted compared to other categories of culture in *Vision* series.

The most frequent cultural contents in *Pre-University* series include 61 L2 cultural contents, followed by 25 L1 cultural contents as the second most frequent cultural content. Also 8 cases of international cultural contents were recognized as the third most frequent cultural content. And 4 culture-neutral were identified as the least frequent cultural content. According to Table 7 *Vision series* pay their foremost attention to their L1 culture but *Pre-University* series do

not pay adequate attention to L1 culture. On the other hand, *Pre-University* series contains more L2 cultural content than *Vision* series does. In *Vision* series more international cultural content can be observed when compared to *Pre-University English* series. Also *Vision series* contains more culture-neutral than *Pre-University English* series does.

Table 5. Chi-Square for the differences between *Vision I & II* and *Pre-University I & II* in terms of Cultural content

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	115.580 ^a	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	106.519	3	.000
Linear-by-linear Association	3.261	1	.071
N of Valid Cases	401		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.40.

As it can be seen in Table 5, the difference between the frequency of *Vision I & II* and *Pre-University I & II* in terms of Cultural content was statistically significant $\chi^2(3) = 115.580$, $p \leq 0.05$. According to the above table, the significance value (0.000) corresponding to this comparison was less than the p value (.05). The conclusion to be drawn from these analyses would be that there is a significant difference between *Vision I & II* and *Pre-University I & II* in terms of Cultural content.

Sixth Research Question

Using the adopted framework proposed by Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990) the frequency counts of each cultural element were obtained. Data analysis was based on the frequency of occurrence of four elements (the aesthetic element, the sociological element, the semantic element and the sociolinguistic element) in the coursebooks analysis. The distribution of these four elements of culture in each unit of these series are presented in this section. The results of the analysis on textual and visual elements of these coursebooks are presented in tables below.

Table 6. Frequency of cultural elements in *Vision I & II* and *Pre-University I & II*

Cultural elements		Coursebooks		
		Vision I&II	Pre-University I&II	Total
Aesthetic	Count	230	53	283
	Expected Count	213.8	69.2	283.0
	% within cultural contents	81.3%	18.7%	100.0%
	% of Total	57.4%	13.2%	70.6%
Sociological	Count	17	8	25
	Expected Count	18.9	6.1	25.0
	% within cultural contents	68.0%	32.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	4.2%	2.0%	6.2%

Semantic	Count	20	35	55
	Expected Count	41.6	13.4	55.0
	% within cultural contents	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%
	% of Total	5.0%	8.7%	13.7%
Sociolinguistic	Count	36	2	38
	Expected Count	28.7	9.3	38.0
	% within cultural contents	94.7%	5.3%	100.0%
	% of Total	9.0%	0.5%	9.5%
Total	Count	303	98	401
	Expected Count	303.0	98.0	401.0
	% within cultural contents	75.6%	24.4%	100.0%
	% of Total	75.6%	24.4%	100.0%

Table 6 indicates the frequency of cultural elements in *Vision I & II* and *Pre-University I & II*. As shown in table 6 the most frequent cultural element in *Vision* series includes 230 aesthetic elements followed by some 36 sociolinguistic elements as the second most frequent cultural elements. Some 20 semantic elements were recognized as the third most frequent cultural element. And some 17 sociological elements were identified as the least frequent cultural element.

The most frequent cultural element in *Pre-University* series includes 53 aesthetic elements followed by some 35 semantic elements as the second most frequent cultural elements. As the third most frequent cultural element, *Pre-University* series includes some 8 sociological elements. And as the least frequent *Pre-University* series includes 2 sociological elements. According to Table 6 aesthetic element has been highlighted in these coursebooks. The sociolinguistic element is the next element with the highest frequency in *Vision series*; sociolinguistic elements are not considered adequately in *Pre-University series*. But *Pre-University* series has paid a little more attention to semantic element compared to *Vision* series. Also *Vision* series contains more sociological element than *Pre-University* series does.

Table 7. Chi-Square for the differences between *Vision I & II* and *Pre-University I & II* in terms of Cultural elements

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	59.100 ^a	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	53.909	3	.000
Linear-by-linear Association	6.694	1	.010
N of Valid Cases	401		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.11.

As it can be seen in Table 7, the difference between the frequency of *Vision I & II* and *Pre-University I & II* in terms of Cultural elements was statistically significant $\chi^2(3) = 59.100$, $p \leq 0.05$. According to the above table, the significance value (0.000) corresponding to this

comparison was less than the p value (.05). The results imply that there is a significant difference between *Vision I & II* and *Pre-University I & II* in terms of Cultural elements.

Discussion

The first research question of this study was: “How is cultural content represented in *Vision I & II*?”. Using the adopted framework of Cortazzi and Jin (1999), the frequency counts of each cultural content were obtained. The results showed that L1 culture has been highlighted over other categories of culture in this series. Neutral-culture content was recognized as the second and international cultural was categorized as the third most frequent cultural content. Also, L2 cultural content was identified as the least frequent cultural element in this series.

Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) investigated the representation of culture in international and localized coursebooks used in Iran. The analysis revealed that most of the cultural elements embodied in the localized coursebooks were culturally neutral and only a few were based on the TL and other cultures. Furthermore, in the localized coursebook corpus, first language/local culture did not feature at all, while sociological values were highlighted over than the aesthetic aspects of culture. These findings are not in line with the results of the current study since in this study L1 culture in *Vision* series was highlighted more than other cultures. And a lot of attention has been paid to local culture. This can be explained as follows: In recent years, more attention has been paid to cultural issues in new editions of Iranian coursebooks, although this amount of attention to L2 culture is not sufficient and should be modified in later versions. It is also worth noticing that the difference in the findings of this study might be due to the types of the data collected, since this study was set out to analyze textual and visual elements.

The second research question of this study was: “How is cultural content represented in *Pre-University English I & II*?” The results showed that L2 culture was the most frequent cultural content and L1 cultural content was the next cultural content with highest frequency in this series. International cultural content was recognized as the third most frequent cultural content and culture-neutral was identified as the least frequent cultural content.

These results are in line with Liu and Laohawiriyanon (2013), Herman and Noerkhasnah (2012), and Mahmood, Asghar and Hussain (2012) findings. Liu and Laohawiriyanon (2013) have reported that higher percentage of the content of EFL college English coursebooks for Chinese non-English major students is devoted to the target culture. Herman and Noerkhasnah (2012) have concluded that in the data collected from coursebooks “Grow with English”, the prominent focus is on the target culture. Mahmood, Asghar, and Hussain (2012), in their theory-based content analysis have found that the main focus of the EFL coursebooks is on the non-native culture. The explanation for the results obtained could be that Iranian material developers have understood the importance of L2 culture in compiling coursebooks because they understand the need for students to communicate with the world.

The third research question of this study was: “How are cultural elements represented in *Vision I & II*?” Using the adopted framework proposed by Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990), the frequency counts of each cultural element were obtained. The results showed that aesthetic element has been highlighted over other categories of culture in this series. The semantic element was the next cultural element with the highest frequency in these series. Sociolinguistic element was classified as the third most frequent cultural content, and sociological element was identified as the least frequent cultural content.

The fourth research questions of this study was: “How are cultural elements represented in *Pre-University English I & II*?” The results showed that aesthetic element was the most frequent cultural element following semantic elements as the second most frequent cultural

content. sociological element was recognized as the third most frequent cultural element and sociolinguistic element was identified as the least frequent cultural element.

Rashidi and Meihami (2016) investigated the cultural content of the ELT coursebooks of the inner, outer, and expanding circle countries; and they also examined the cultural elements of these ELT coursebooks. The results of the study showed that the inner and outer circle ELT coursebooks contained more L2 aesthetic cultural elements, whereas the expanding circle ELT coursebooks tended to represent their cultural elements through L1 aesthetic and sociolinguistic cultural senses. These results are in line with the findings of current study since in *Vision* and *Pre-University* series aesthetic element was highlighted over the other categories of culture. The explanation could be that English coursebooks in expanding circle countries have not paid enough attention to other elements; they may not need to use English in real situations due to the less international communications.

The fifth research question of this study was: “Is there any significant difference between *Vision (I & II)* and *Pre-University English (I & II)* in terms of cultural content representation?” As displayed in table 4.16. there is a significant difference between *Vision I & II* and *Pre-University I & II* in terms of cultural content.

Dehbozorgi, Amalsaleh and Kafipour (2014) analyzed cultural content of three mainstream intermediate level EFL coursebooks. It was found that generally both little "c" and big "C" are present in the coursebooks. However, in all the three coursebooks little "c" has gained higher frequency than big "C". It was also revealed that the percentage of little "c" in Top Notch is more than other books and little "c" percentage in Four Corners is the least. These results are in line with the findings of current study since there is a significant difference between *Vision* series and *Pre-University* series in terms of Cultural content. The explanation could be that these significance differences between coursebooks are because of dominant cultural types of the materials which are different in every coursebooks.

The fifth research question of this study was: “Is there any significant difference between *Vision (I & II)* and *Pre-University English (I & II)* in terms of cultural elements representation?” As displayed in table 4.18. there is a significant difference between *Vision* series and *Pre-University* series in terms of Cultural elements.

Rajabi and Ketabi (2012) examined the cultural elements in four English language coursebooks: Interchange, Headway, Top Notch, On Your Mark currently used in Iran in order to determine the most prominent cultural dimension portray. The results of the study showed that almost all the culture distinctive occurrences are sociological in nature. However, in this study it is found that though sociological dimension is prominent the other three dimensions of culture, that is the semantic, the aesthetic, and the pragmatic (sociolinguistic) senses are not totally neglected. These results are not in line with the findings of current study since there is a significant difference between *Vision* series and *Pre-University* series in terms of cultural elements. The explanation could be that international language teaching books have the same goal in conveying culture through sociological elements but Iranian English coursebooks prefer to transfer culture through aesthetic and semantic elements.

Conclusions

Undoubtedly, culture is an important aspect of language and it has been studied by so many researchers (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2012; Brown, 2012; Byram, 2002; Gao, 2006). When it comes to the realm of teaching and learning a language, as Gao (2006) presents it, “the interdependence of language learning and cultural learning is so evident that one can conclude that language learning is culture learning and consequently, language teaching is cultural

teaching” (p.59). Therefore, an attempt was made in this study to investigate the cultural contents and cultural elements of two current highschool English coursebooks of Iran (*Vision I&II* and *Pre-University English I&II*). After evaluating these two coursebooks based on two frameworks of Cortazzi and Jin’s (1999) and Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990), it was found that there are significant differences between these two series in terms of cultural contents and cultural elements.

Vision series pay their foremost attention to their L1 culture but *Pre-University* series do not pay adequate attention to L1 culture. On the other hand, *Pre-University* series contain more L2 cultural content than *Vision* series do. *Vision* series have paid more attention to cultural contents than *Pre-University* series. Aesthetic element has been highlighted in *Vision* series and *Pre-University* series. The sociolinguistic element is the next element with highest frequency in *Vision* series which is not considered adequately in *Pre-University* series. But *Pre-University* series has paid a little more attention to semantic element than *Vision* series. Also, *Vision* series contains more sociological element than *Pre-University* series does.

The semantic element is the next element with highest frequency in *Vision* series; yet, there is no representation of this element in *Pre-University* series. Also there is no representation of sociolinguistic element in *Pre-University* series. Generally speaking, *Vision* series contained more L1 and Neutral-cultural content, yet; *Pre-University* series showed tendency to contain L2 and L1 cultural content and both series contained more aesthetic and semantic cultural elements. And, there was a significant difference between the two series both in terms of cultural content and in terms of cultural elements.

The most important function of a language is the transfer of "meaning," but "meaning" is created in the context of a culture, and it is practically impossible to distinguish a language from the cultural context of that language (Chastain, 1998; Brown, 2007). When trying to learn the language of a particular group, learners are inevitably exposed to the language of the speakers of that language. The study of the relationship between culture and language suggests that the inclusion of teaching culture in English language education is essential and important. Therefore, it is expected that English language instructions provide students with information about similarities and differences between mother tongue and foreign languages, as many students are interested in learning how to live in the English language countries. One of the most important goals of English language education is to connect with people of other countries of the world and empower students to meet their future needs, which in many cases requires students to get acquainted with the culture of the speakers of that language. Students will also have a greater incentive to learn this language by becoming aware of the role and application of English language in their lives. Therefore, one of the main tasks of the English coursebooks is to make students aware of the role of English in the contemporary world. Students will also have a greater incentive to learn this language by becoming aware of the role and application of English language in their lives.

These important points in *Vision* series and *Pre-University English* series are not considered sufficiently. For example, most of the texts, conversations, names and exercises of *Vision* series are about Iran; also, there is no conversation section in *Pre-University* series. The existence of such native and artificial situations makes students think that learning English is in vain, and this affects their motivation for learning English. The purpose of learning English is not to speak to family and Iranian friends, but to communicate with people from different countries and cultures. It would have been better if the authors, instead of presenting these artificial and domestic situations, benefited from more realistic and more practical situations because this question comes to the mind of the students why, although characters are Iranian, they speak

English together. Most of the names used in these series are Iranian and Islamic names which can be replaced with English names and it is better to use such conversations between tourists and Iranian in historical sites of Iran or Iranian as tourists in other countries. Of course, it is natural that every country in its formal education system strives to promote its national and religious culture but it should be noted that this does not mean negating and neglecting the second language culture. The respected authors are recommended to devote themselves to promoting the values of Iranian-Islamic culture through the use of target culture, instead of paying attention to the appearances and structures of national culture, such as the use of names, images, and Islamic and Iranian events.

In these series the cultures of the English-speaking countries are not considered adequately. There are no signs of culture and tourism attractions of England and The United States as the main English speaking countries in *Vision* series, and *Pre-University* series has used only the names of these countries. In these two series there has been no mention of important events, celebrations and new year holidays of other countries while it is the best way to introduce culture of other countries to students. There is also an attempt to introduce international culture but these series have just introduced tourism attractions of other countries and the other aspects of international cultures such as their customs, festivals, foods and beliefs have been ignored. These instances of international culture can be very interesting for students and material developers should consider them in new version of these coursebooks. Using these examples, students will learn the role of the English language in international communication.

In addition, most of the attention in these series has been paid to aesthetic element and other cultural elements have not been considered adequately while these elements play a key role in improving communication abilities of students. Sociological element can familiarize students with interpersonal relations and customs of other cultures and also sociolinguistic element can enhance their social and paralinguistic skills, so more attention should be paid to these elements. The audio files of these series are not recorded by native English speakers, actually they are collected by Iranian English teachers. Maybe it is more similar to an Iranian teacher's accent but it is better for students to get acquainted with the native accent from the beginning.

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