
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Representation of Culture in Moroccan EFL Textbooks: An Investigation of Reading Texts

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ABSTRACT

As language and culture cannot be isolated, the teaching of culture in foreign language textbooks has gained great attention from experts in the field. The issue of which culture to introduce and how to introduce it has been a subject of debate among practitioners. The present study examines the representation of culture and its potential influence on the development of learners' intercultural awareness in three popular Moroccan EFL textbooks, namely "Window on the World", "Ticket to English 1" and "Ticket to English 2". A quantitative research design is adopted to examine how the textbooks represent (i) learners' native culture, (ii) English-speaking culture and (iii) international cultures. The results show varying degrees of cultural integration across the three textbooks. While "Window on the World" emphasized English-speaking culture in particular, potentially shaping learners' perceptions of global diversity, "Ticket to English 1" showed a lack of cultural references, indicating a gap in integration. In contrast, "Ticket to English 2" relatively adopted a more comprehensive approach, incorporating learners' native culture, English speaking culture and broader international cultures. Despite this variety, the study revealed that the textbooks did not integrate culture effectively to enhance learners' intercultural awareness. These findings suggest that a systematic and balanced approach to cultural integration is essential for Moroccan EFL textbooks. A gradual approach is recommended, through introducing learners' native culture first, followed by English-speaking culture and finally including international cultures. The present study provided some empirical evidence for the discourse on cultural integration in EFL contexts and offered insights into its impact on intercultural awareness. The findings have some implications for the pedagogical practices in Morocco and highlights the need to promote the learners' cultural awareness in foreign language learning environments.

KEYWORDS

Culture, Moroccan EFL textbooks, intercultural awareness, cultural integration, reading texts

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1. Introduction

Language and culture are intertwined. To communicate effectively and accurately, people need to share the same code. When people from diverse cultural backgrounds do not share a common linguistic and cultural background, they may encounter cross-cultural misunderstandings or violations of cultural norms. A common example of this is in native and non-native communication, which results in socio-pragmatic failures and breakdowns of communication. In other words, when two cultures come into contact, conflicts are possible.

The interconnectedness between language and culture can make foreign language learning ineffective if the culture of the community in which it is used is not addressed. Although the teaching of culture may not be the explicit goal of EFL courses, culture plays a significant role in the content taught (Kramch, 1996).

According to the National Charter for Education and Training (2000), the first foreign language in Morocco, i.e. French, is introduced in the second year of primary school, with a focus on oral skills. As for the second foreign language(s), namely English, Spanish, German, etc., they are introduced in the fifth year of primary school, with a focus on oral and aural skills. The National Charter of Education and Training does not specify a particular foreign language. However, under the impact of globalization and the current situation in the world, English is the most widely opted for by learners.

Considering the available pedagogic and human resources and following the progressive implementation suggested by the national charter, foreign languages, in general, and English in particular, are introduced in the third year of the secondary school¹ (9th grade). For each foreign language, specific cultural, technological, and scientific modules are to be designed and taught in that language.

In 2007, the Pedagogical Guidelines for Secondary School outlined the following five core areas for effective EFL instruction:

1. **Communication:** Develop skills in both oral and written forms, including comprehension, cultural sensitivity, and audience-tailored presentation. Master three communication modes: interpersonal (dialogue), interpretive (text analysis), and presentational (public speaking).
2. **Intercultural Understanding:** Deepen understanding of both own and other cultures, exploring perspectives, practices, and expressions.
3. **Cross-Curricular Connections:** Bridge EFL learning with other disciplines, using English as a tool to access and utilize information across subject areas.
4. **Comparative Awareness:** Recognize and analyze similarities and differences across cultures and languages, fostering deeper insights into both.
5. **Expanding Learning Communities:** Extend learning beyond the classroom walls, utilizing resources like the internet to connect with the outside world and foster global awareness.

The aforementioned areas describe the overall content of teaching and learning. It should be noted that a significant focus on culture, both one's own culture and other cultures, is a key aspect of English teaching.

The present research investigates the representation of culture in Moroccan EFL textbooks and its potential impact on the development of the learners' intercultural awareness. According to the English Language Guidelines for Secondary Schools (2007), communication and cultural awareness are essential skills that require learners to know their own culture and other cultures. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support the idea that textbooks incorporate various cultural aspects to enhance learners' knowledge and prepare them for effective intercultural communication. The aim of this study is to determine whether EFL textbooks used in Morocco foster learners' intercultural awareness, or simply expose learners to their native culture and strengthen their own cultural understanding. The research seeks to reach two main objectives, namely (i) to identify the types of cultures included in Moroccan EFL textbooks and the extent to which they are represented (ii) to assess whether the integration of the cultural component and dimension in the national textbooks enhances EFL learners' intercultural awareness.

2. Literature Review

Cultural content in EFL textbooks plays a vital role in language teaching and learning as it contributes to the development of not only communicative competence but also intercultural competence, which entails effective and appropriate interaction with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997). However, not all textbooks present the cultural content in a balanced and inclusive manner; they do sometimes include content reflecting bias, stereotypes, or an ignorance of the complexity and diversity of cultures. Consequently, an evaluation of the cultural content of EFL textbooks could contribute to its improvements for the benefit of both learners and teachers.

Some scholars have investigated the same topic in different contexts. Weninger and Kiss (2013) study of EFL textbooks in Hungaria advocated for a semiotic approach to analyze culture in EFL textbooks, emphasizing the dynamic nature of cultural meaning-making and the need for critical and reflexive understanding. The study highlighted the dominance of linguistic competence over critical cultural understanding.

Song's (2013) investigation of cultural biases in Korean EFL textbooks revealed that while the curriculum promotes cultural diversity, the textbooks favor American English and culture, perpetuating social inequalities related to race, nationality, and gender.

¹ Note that starting from the academic year 2023-2024 an initiative for introducing English in the 7th grade has been launched in some schools, with the objective to generalize it in the future.

Setyono and Widodo's (2019) analysis of the representation of multicultural values in an Indonesian EFL textbook, identified themes such as respect for diverse ethnic and religious groups, conflict avoidance, and appreciation of cultural products. They suggested the inclusion of multicultural materials from different cultural backgrounds in English language teaching.

Studies focusing on cultural content in Moroccan EFL textbooks have highlighted the issue of cultural integration and its role in enhancing or hindering intercultural awareness and competence. Three decades ago, Adaskou et al. (1990) suggested that Moroccan EFL textbooks should include three types of cultures to develop students' intercultural sensitivity, avoid stereotypes, and foster appreciation for cultural differences. However, subsequent studies have indicated that Moroccan textbooks still lack adequacy in achieving this objective.

Ababneh (2012) conducted a case study on "Gateway to English 2," a Moroccan EFL textbook for the second year of the baccalaureate level. The study showed that the textbook tended to present a monolithic and stereotypical view of culture, favoring the target culture over the source and international cultures, and hindering the development of intercultural awareness and critical thinking.

El Hachimi (2014) conducted a case study on a Moroccan EFL textbook for second year baccalaureate students (12th grade), focusing on how culture is presented and its relevance to learners' needs and expectations. The study revealed that the textbook gave a simplified and distorted view of culture, neglecting the learners' source and international cultures and failing to promote critical thinking and intercultural dialogue.

In contrast to the aforementioned studies, Kerr (2016) claimed that the cultural content of Moroccan EFL textbooks achieved a balanced representation of the source culture, target culture, and international culture, without any culture being dominant or marginalized. The study argued for a balanced cultural approach and suggested improvements to enhance the cultural content in Moroccan EFL textbooks.

Elghazali (2022) conducted a quantitative study that examined the cultural content in the 12th-grade textbooks and its intercultural adequacy in developing students' Cultural Intelligence (CQ), which refers to the ability to adapt to different cultural contexts. The study concluded that textbook activities were insufficient to develop students' CQ and proposed ways to enhance the intercultural content of the textbooks.

The reviewed literature emphasizes the importance of critically examining the cultural content in EFL textbooks. The studies show that an excessive focus on linguistic competence can inhibit the development of critical cultural understanding, resulting in an imbalance in the representation of cultures. Moreover, the findings point out the need for addressing cultural biases and promoting inclusivity through the inclusion of multicultural materials from diverse backgrounds. This underscores the crucial role of EFL textbooks in cultivating cultural awareness, respect, and understanding among language learners.

It should be noted that most of the studies conducted in the Moroccan context were centered on second-year baccalaureate textbooks (12th grade), which neglected cultural integration across different languages. However, they highlighted the challenges and inconsistencies involved in the integration of culture in these textbooks. Some studies indicated shortcomings involving simplified and stereotypical depictions of cultures, while others suggested balanced cultural content. In order to enhance intercultural awareness and competence among learners, Moroccan EFL textbooks need to effectively address the cultural content. By addressing these issues, EFL textbooks can be improved to promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures.

3. Theoretical Framework and Textbooks and Culture

Language textbooks serve as valuable resources for acquiring knowledge covering both linguistic and cultural aspects. However, textbooks do approach culture in different ways, reflecting varying cultural orientations. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) identified three types of cultural information included in materials and textbooks, which leads to their classification as follows:

- Source culture materials (C1): These materials primarily focus on the learners' own culture as content.
- Target culture materials (C2): These materials center around the culture where the target language is used as a native language (L1).
- International target culture materials (C3, C4, C5, etc.): These materials incorporate various cultures from both English-speaking and non-English speaking countries, emphasizing international cultural exchanges and intercultural competence.

Building upon Cortazzi and Jin's classification (1999), the first category of textbooks predominantly reflects the source culture. These textbooks aim to familiarize learners with their own culture and reinforce their understanding of it. Such textbooks are typically produced at the national level, and researchers have discussed examples used in different countries. For instance, Chinese textbooks emphasize cultural content that reinforces Chinese norms and values (Scott, 1980). Venezuelan textbooks provide information about national heroes (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Indian and Yemeni materials reflect national aspirations and values (Krishnaswamy and Aziz, 1978). Saudi Arabian textbooks situate all settings within the source culture (Al-Quraisi et al., 1988; Ali Akbari, 2004).

As for the second category, Japanese textbooks serve as an example of this type. Shimako (2004), as cited in McKay (2004), argues that Japanese textbooks often feature Western characters and values. Foreign cultures are typically portrayed within the context of "Western visitors, particularly Americans, being introduced to Japanese culture by locals" (Abdullah & Chandran, 2011).

Regarding the third category, Cortazzi (2000) notes that cultural content in C3 category textbooks is evident in books from America and Asia. Characters in such textbooks come from various parts of the world and communicate in English as an international language. These textbooks explicitly aim to develop intercultural skills.

Overall, Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) classification sheds light on the representation of culture in textbooks. The first category focuses on the source culture, the second category incorporates elements of foreign cultures, and the third category emphasizes international cultural exchanges and intercultural competence.

One of the main challenges in presenting cultural content in EFL textbooks is striking a balance between the representation of the source culture, target culture, and international target culture. Some textbooks may excessively focus on the target culture, neglecting or marginalizing the source culture or other cultures. This may create a sense of alienation or inferiority among learners who feel that their own culture is undervalued or disrespected (Zhang & Su, 2021). It may also lead to a superficial or stereotypical understanding of the target culture and/or other cultures (Weninger & Kiss, 2013). On the other hand, some textbooks may excessively emphasize the source culture, overlooking or excluding the target culture or other cultures. This limits the learners' exposure and awareness of different cultural perspectives and realities (Gómez Rodríguez, 2015) and hinders their development of intercultural communication skills and opportunities (Mehisto & Asser, 2007).

4. Method

The study adopted a quantitative research method, based on the statistical analysis of the various cultural aspects displayed in the three textbooks selected. The study tried to answer two main research questions, concerning (i) the degree and nature of the cultural dimension in Moroccan EFL textbooks, and (ii) the potential of the cultural content in Moroccan EFL textbooks to enhance learners' intercultural awareness.

The study focused on the examination of three textbooks, namely "Window on the World" for the Common Core level, "Ticket to English 1" for the Baccalaureate level 1, and "Ticket to English 2" for the Baccalaureate level 2. All three books follow the same structural design. Each book consists of ten units and each unit consists of six main sections, including vocabulary, reading, functions, grammar, and writing. Though they are designed in the same way, variations exist in the sequence of each section and the content across the three books. Likewise, additional sections such as, "Explore the picture", "Learn how to learn", "Learn with fun", "Cultural corner", "Project work" and "Check your progress" exhibit disparities among the textbooks. The primary focus of this study was to analyze the content of the "Reading" section, as it assumes an essential role in introducing new information to learners. The selected textbooks were chosen because they are widely used in Moroccan schools, including the researcher's current school and the schools he has worked in before. They are preferred because of their clear and simple structural design. Moroccan EFL teachers find them easy to use in class and they are not challenging for students while preparing them for the national exam.

Syllabus design and the development of textbooks and their publication in Morocco are regulated by the Moroccan government, with schools mandated to utilize the prescribed textbooks. Since there is more than one book for each level of study, every school is assigned a particular book to use. This is determined by the provincial delegations.

The analysis of the textbooks was based on a coding scheme comprising seven categories:

1. Reference to Morocco
2. Reference to Arab and Islamic countries
3. Reference to Islam and Islamic tradition
4. Reference to English speaking countries
5. Reference to non-English speaking countries

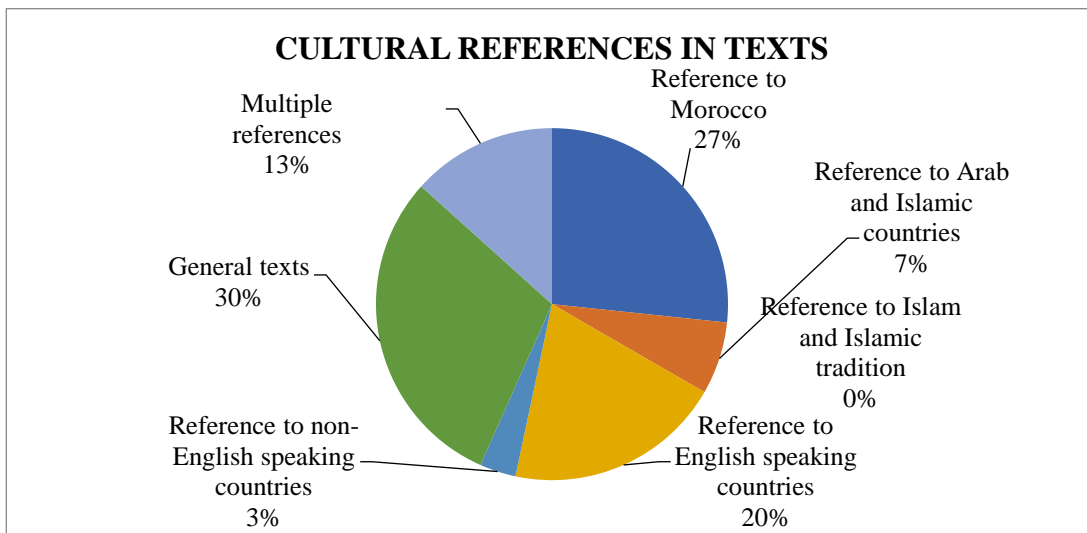
- 6. General texts (texts with no focus on lifestyle or tradition, such as those related to science, biographies, or historical events; that is texts which concentrate on the introduction of a scientist, a world figure or a man of will).
- 7. Multiple cultures (with reference to several cultures without focusing on one specific culture)

5. Results and Discussion

Data analysis involved a content analysis of the textbooks' reading passages in light of the seven categories drawn based on the coding scheme mentioned above. Each reading text was considered a unit of study and was analyzed individually. The total number of units was thirty texts, i.e., ten texts in each book. Texts were examined and their respective references to different countries were presented in graphic figures.

The texts collected are represented in Figure 1, which displays the percentages of cultural references in texts. Based on the coding scheme, each text was classified into one of the categories mentioned above. The frequency of cultural references was high in three main categories, namely general texts at 30%, reference to Morocco, at 27%, and reference to English speaking countries, at 20%. The category multiple references formed 13% of the content of texts, while reference to Arab and Islamic tradition formed 7% of the content of texts, and reference to non-English speaking countries formed 3%. However, reference to Islam and Islamic tradition was not represented in any of the texts.

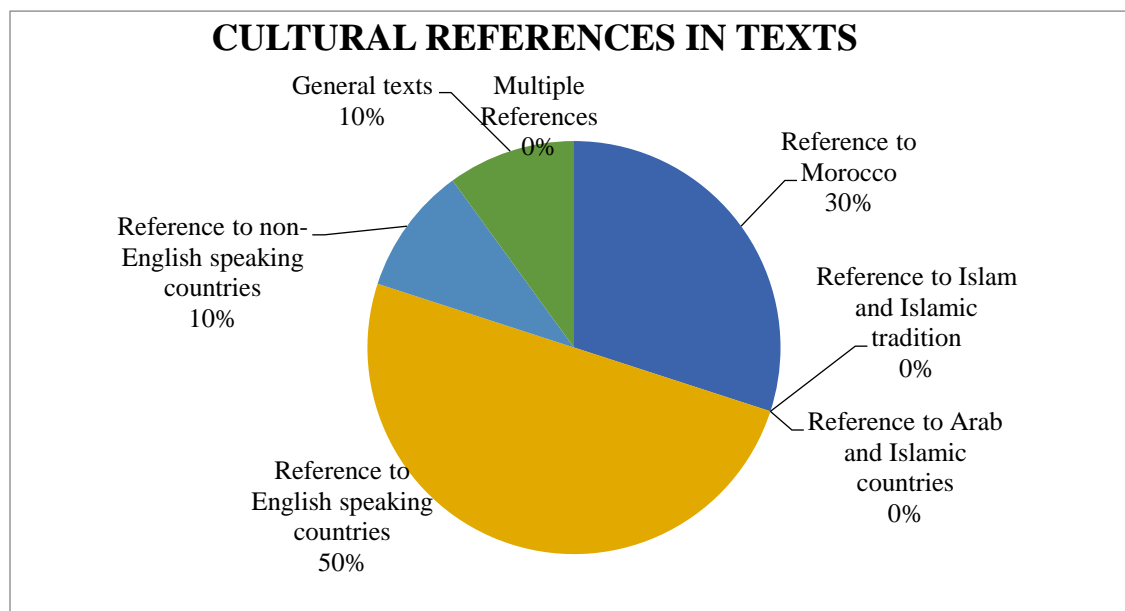
Figure: 1: Cultural References in Texts in the three textbooks



The above figure illustrates the nature of the reading texts included in the three textbooks in general according to the coding scheme seven categories. In what follows, an analysis of the typology of texts in each textbook is presented.

5.1 Textbook one "Window on the World"

Textbook one, "Window on the World" was designed by Bagui, Kessab, Mejber and Ouajjani and published in 2005 by Nadia Publishing House. The study uses the 2020 edition, which is used for Common Core level (10th grade). The title of the book itself "Window on the World " suggests an opening on the other countries and cultures. Indeed, the individual analysis of its reading texts in light of the seven categories of the coding scheme, presented in Figure 2 below, shows the percentages of cultural references in the texts. The most frequent reference was to English speaking countries, with 50%, followed by Reference to Morocco, with 30%. Reference to non-English speaking countries and General texts both accounted for 10% each. There was, however, no reference to three categories, namely Arab and Islamic countries, Islam and Islamic tradition, and Multiple references in the texts (0%) (See figure below).

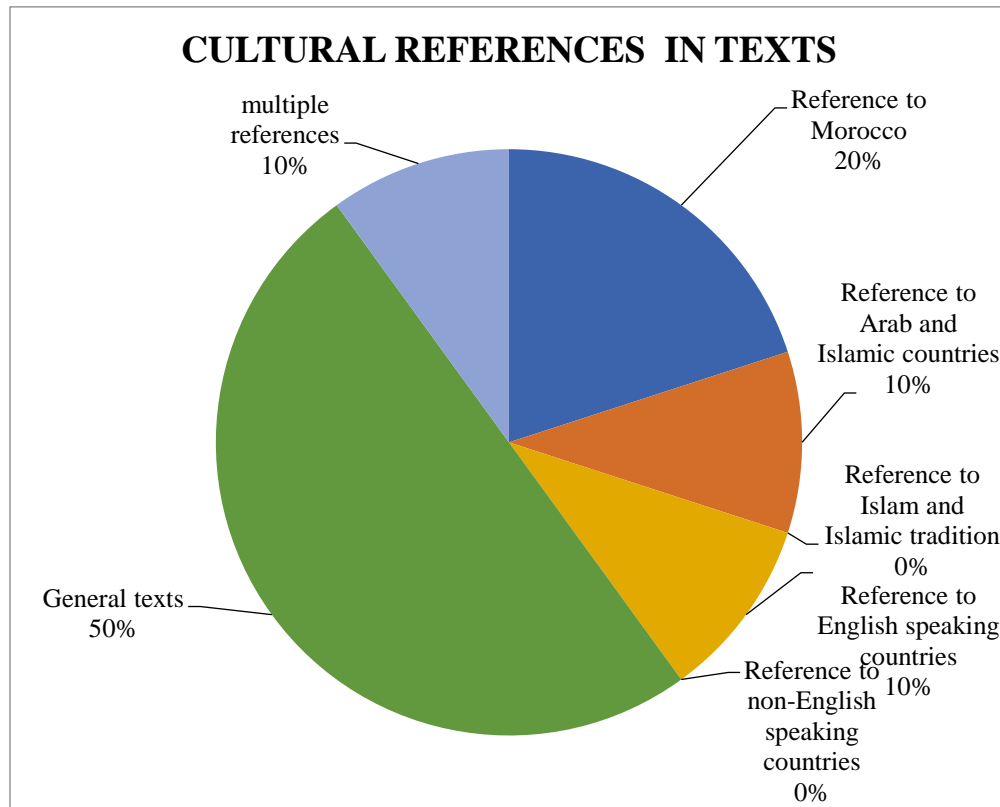
Figure 2: Cultural References in Texts in “Window on the World”

The rates for the different categories somehow support the title of the textbook, i.e. “Window on the World”, as half of the texts, i.e. 50%, refer to the English-speaking countries. The figures also show reference to Morocco, with 30%. This reveals that the textbook also tries to develop the learners’ awareness of their local culture. The rate for general texts is 10%, and so is the rate of reference to non-English speaking countries.

5.2 Textbook two “Ticket to English 1”

Textbook two, “Ticket to English 2” was designed by Hammani, Ait Ahssen, and Tensaoui and published in 2006 by D.I.O. El Hadita Publishing House. The study uses the 2020 edition, which is used for First Year Baccalaureate level (11th grade). Once again, the title of the book is significant; the term “Ticket” implies ‘access’ to the English language. Figure 3 illustrates the percentages of cultural references in the reading texts used in the textbook. The most frequent category was General texts, which accounted for half of the texts, i.e. 50%. The second most frequent category was Reference to Morocco, with 20%. Multiple references, Reference to Arab and Islamic countries, and Reference to English speaking countries each accounted for 10%. There was no reference to Islam and Islamic tradition or Reference to non-English speaking countries in the texts (See figure 3 below).

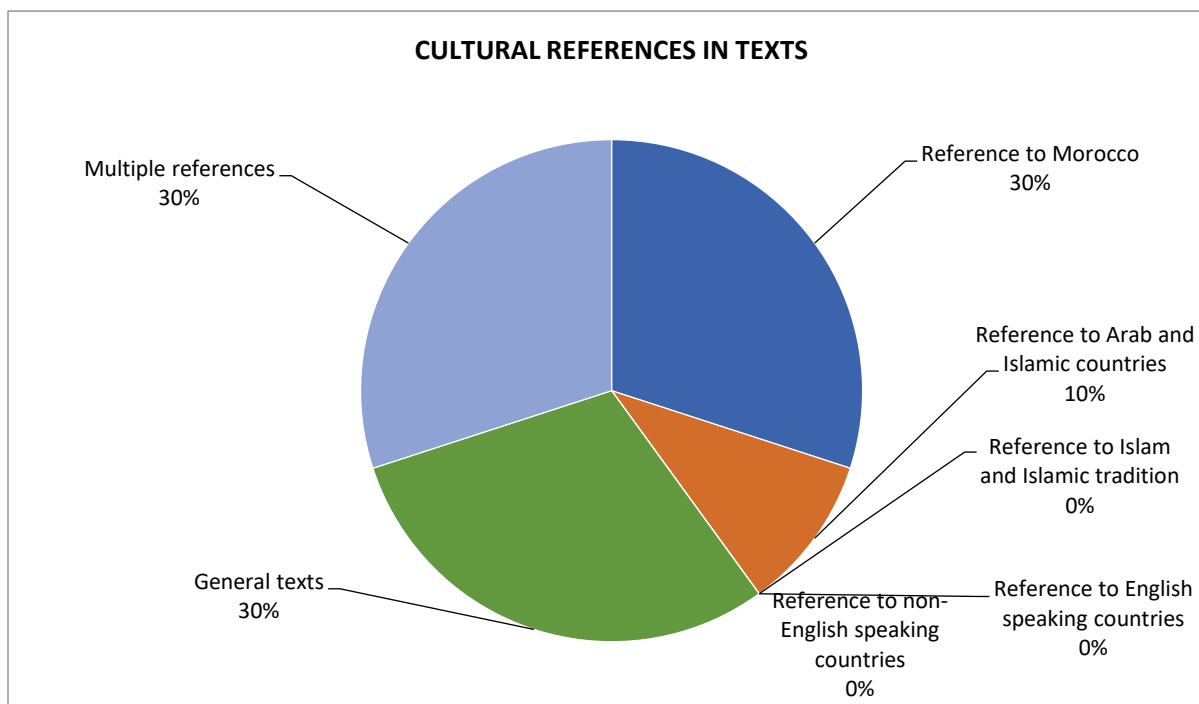
Figure 3: Cultural References in Texts in "Ticket to English 1"



A close look at the above figure reveals that the textbook focuses on general texts, i.e., texts that do not focus on lifestyle or tradition, or highlight cultural aspects such as those related to the biographies of some leading figures, or historical events. This shows that the cultural dimension is not included. Texts referring to Morocco represent only 20%, compared to the previous textbook.

5.3 Textbook three "Ticket to English 2"

Textbook three, "Ticket to English 2" was also designed by Hammani, Ait Ahssen, and Tensaoui and published in 2007 by D.I.O. El Hadita Publishing House. The edition examined is the 2020 edition, which is used for Second Year Bacallaureate level (12th grade). The cultural references included in book two of "Ticket to English 2", illustrated in Figure 4 below, differ from "Ticket to English 1". The cultural content focuses on three main categories, namely, reference to Morocco, with 30%, multiple references, with 30% and general texts with 30%. Reference to Arab and Islamic countries represent only 10%, while the categories reference to Islam and Islamic tradition, reference to English speaking countries, and reference to non-English speaking countries are not at all included. See figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Cultural References in Texts in "Ticket to English 2"

The presentation of the figures for the cultural references in the three EFL textbooks in use in Morocco for the Common Core, First Year Baccalaureate, and Second Year Baccalaureate shows that there is no agreed-upon model followed in the syllabus design of the EFL textbooks in Morocco. The following section provides a detailed discussion and interpretation of the results. This is done through a comparison and contrast of the content of the three textbooks.

6. Discussion

A close examination of the results presented above reveals that all the cultural categories (C1, C2 and C3) are represented in the textbooks, though with varying frequencies. One of the main cultural references, i.e., C1 category, included are the learners' own culture as content; this concerns the three textbooks, with 30% for both "Ticket for English 2" and "Window on the World" and 20% for "Ticket to English 1". The second cultural references, i.e., C2 category, which concerns the English-speaking countries, represent 50% of the content of the reading texts in the first textbook, "Window on the World", while it represents only 10% in the second textbook, "Ticket to English 1" and is completely missing in the third textbook, "Ticket to English 2". The category C3, i.e. general texts, represent 50%, 30% and 10% of the texts in "Ticket to English 1", "Ticket to English 2" and "Window on the World" respectively. Reference to Arab and Islamic countries, Islam and Islamic tradition, and to non-English speaking countries is very limited and poorly represented. In fact, the three cultural categories are represented in the texts in general; the individual representation of each culture is not comprehensive. Reference to C1 focuses mainly on Morocco and ignores Islam and Islamic tradition, though Islam is an essential element of the Moroccan culture. The same might be said about reference to Arab and Islamic countries, which share a lot of cultural elements with the Moroccan culture including language, religion, history, and traditions and customs.

A comparison of the presence of cultural references in the three textbooks, i.e. "Window on the World," "Ticket to English 1," and "Ticket to English 2" reveals that "Window on the World" shows the highest frequency of cultural representation as it includes 50% of references to English-speaking countries. It also includes references to Morocco, i.e., the learners' culture. This leads to conclude that Book One primarily emphasizes C2 while acknowledging the presence of C1 to a certain extent. Category C3 is, however, rarely represented in the textbook. This is consistent with the findings of Abadneh (2012) and El Hachimi (2014) who claim that EFL textbooks tend to favor the target culture and ignore source and international cultures, which hinders intercultural awareness and critical thinking.

As far as the second textbook, "Ticket to English 1", is concerned, it is observed that cultural references are notably very limited across all three cultural categories (C1, C2, and C3). Only two texts concern specifically reference C1, while one text involves the other cultural categories such as Arab and Islamic countries, English-speaking countries, and multiple references. The main focus in this book revolves around the general topics, with a rate of 50%, that lack a distinct cultural representation. This finding provides

support for Ababneh's (2012) conclusion that EFL textbooks tend to present stereotypical views of culture, favoring the target culture and hindering the development of intercultural awareness and critical thinking.

The third textbook, "Ticket to English 2", follows a relatively comprehensive approach to cultural representation, and includes all the three cultural categories (C1, C2, and C3) The rate for the different categories is balanced, with 30% for each category. These textbook findings align with what is advocated by Kerr (2016), who argued for a balanced cultural approach in Moroccan EFL textbooks and suggested improvements to enhance their cultural content.

The comparison of the three textbooks can be summarized as follows:

- a. Book One (*Window on the World*): Primarily centers on C2 (English-speaking countries), with moderate representation of C1 (Morocco) and minimal representation of C3.
- b. Book Two (*Ticket to English 1*): Demonstrates weak cultural representation across all three cultural categories, predominantly focusing on general topics devoid of specific cultural references.
- c. Book Three (*Ticket to English 2*): Exhibits a relatively inclusive approach, encompassing all three cultural categories (C1, C2, and C3), with the presence of multiple references reflecting the representation of diverse cultures within the text.

The above results and discussion show that Moroccan EFL learners are subject to varying degrees of exposure to C1, C2, and C3; their exposure to C3 is significantly low, which confirms the concerns in the literature, including Elghazali's (2022) emphasis on the need for more comprehensive content. This can lead to the conclusion that the textbooks do not include the cultural dimension as they should and are, thus, not efficient in promoting ELF learners' intercultural awareness. In addition, cultural integration in these textbooks lacks a systematic approach and does not follow any specific criteria. However, despite the pedagogical guidelines advocating the need for "*learners (to) gain a deeper understanding of their culture(s) and other cultures,*" the incorporation of culture in Moroccan EFL textbooks appears to be arbitrary.

To address the identified shortcomings and enhance the integration of culture and the promotion of intercultural awareness in Moroccan ELF learners, an intercultural approach is recommended. The objective of English teaching should extend beyond the linguistic competence and encompass the preparation of learners for successful intercultural communication in the globalized world. This necessitates a "*thorough and systematic intercultural training,*" as asserted by Chlopek (2008, p.12).

Though classes in Morocco schools are characterized by homogeneity, it is, however, essential to note that learners may not possess a comprehensive knowledge of their own culture(s). Learners from the various regions of the kingdom bring diverse customs, traditions, and values to class. Therefore, a staged approach to cultural integration is proposed. The integration of culture needs to be implemented at three stages, aligned with the three levels of English teaching in Moroccan high schools, namely (i) Common core (10th grade), (ii) First Year Baccalaureate (11th grade) , and Baccalaureate (12th grade). The process of integrating culture in these levels is presented and discussed below.

(i) Stage one

During this initial stage, learners need to be introduced to and made aware of their own native culture(s) and encouraged to perceive it objectively, without regarding it as the only reference "*point for perceiving and evaluating other cultures*" (Chlopek, 2008, p.12). It is crucial to anticipate and prevent the marginalization of C2 and C3. Learners should be provided with opportunities to encounter diverse cultures and view their own culture as one among the existing world cultures. They should be motivated and empowered to explore and compare the different cultures.

(ii) Stage two

Upon reaching this stage, learners will have gained knowledge about the various aspects of their own culture(s). They are then prepared to embrace English-speaking world cultures (C2) and engage in comparing and contrasting the different cultures and recognizing the similarities and differences between them. Learners should not view other cultures as mere subjects of curiosity, but rather as viable alternatives. In addition to being introduced to UK and US cultures, learners should also explore other English language cultures. Texts should be accompanied by activities that promote reflection, analysis, and comparison of learners' own culture(s) with the cultures being presented.

(iii) Stage three

The third and final stage marks the progression towards "*true intercultural education*" (Chlopek, 2008, p.15), which will help learners broaden their cultural knowledge and deepen their understanding of other societies. Having developed a strong foundation of

their own culture(s) and acquired knowledge about target-language cultures, learners possess the necessary tools to recognize and appreciate the various aspects of other societies. Authentic texts should be incorporated, as they present significant knowledge and enable a more meaningful exploration of cultural facts. This approach facilitates dialogue among world cultures while ensuring that the language level of the texts remains appropriate for learners. However, adequate preparation and activation of learners' background knowledge are prioritized to optimize their engagement and understanding.

7. Conclusion

The present study investigated the integration of cultural content in Moroccan EFL textbooks across three high school levels: Common Core (10th grade), First Year Baccalaureate (11th grade), and Second Year Baccalaureate (12th grade). Specifically, it explored the extent to which culture is incorporated into reading comprehension texts. The study focused on three EFL textbooks: "Window on the World" for Common Core, "Ticket to English 1" for First year Baccalaureate, and "Ticket to English 2", used for second year baccalaureate. Data analysis revealed that culture was indeed represented in the three textbooks, but with varying frequencies. Textbook one focused on a specific cultural aspect, the English-speaking countries, with moderate representation of Moroccan culture and minimal representation of other cultures. Textbook two presented general facts without specifying any particular culture. Textbook three introduced a relatively balanced representation of cultures. However, a lack of systematicity was observed in the integration of cultural content in textbooks. Based on the conclusions of the present study, a model for the integration of culture was proposed. The model highlights specific types of culture and the level at which they should be introduced in textbooks. The implementation of such a model would benefit learners as it involves a more structured and comprehensive approach to cultural integration.

Despite the pertinent conclusions, the findings of the present study have some limitations and cannot be generalized to all Moroccan EFL textbooks since the study focused only on three textbooks and their reading sections. First, it addressed only one textbook at each level, while there are more textbooks used for each level. Second, it focused solely on the analysis of cultural integration in reading texts.

Further research could address these limitations by expanding the scope of analysis in several ways. Firstly, including other textbooks used at different levels would provide a more comprehensive picture. Secondly, analyzing cultural integration in other language skills, such as speaking, writing, and project work would offer a richer understanding of its presence in Moroccan EFL textbooks. This expanded scope aligns with Byram's (2008) framework for intercultural competence, which emphasizes the importance of developing skills in all language domains. Conducting focus group surveys with students could also provide valuable insights into their perceptions of the intercultural content presented in the textbooks, their preferences for cultural representation, and any challenges they encounter. This approach is consistent with Cook's (2001) concept of "learner agency," which emphasizes the importance of understanding students' experiences and perspectives to develop effective pedagogical practices. Finally, exploring the effectiveness of the proposed model in real classroom settings could provide empirical evidence of its validity and allow for further refinement. This aligns with Burns' (2010) call for "evidence-based practices" in language education to ensure that pedagogical approaches are based on sound research and proven to improve student learning.

In conclusion, future research that builds upon this study by addressing its limitations and incorporating the suggested approaches can significantly contribute to a better understanding and improvement of the integration of culture in Moroccan EFL textbooks.

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