

FOSTERING INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS THROUGH ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF GRADE 11 MATERIALS IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

Shoaib Khan^{*1}, Saqib Aziz², Hamid Ullah³, Adnan Ahad⁴

^{*1}MPhil English Linguistics, Department of English (GS), National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan

²MPhil Scholar, Department of English, University of Swat, Pakistan

³BS English, Department of English, Govt. PG Jahanzeb College, Saidu Sharif, Swat, Pakistan

⁴Lecturer, Department of English, The University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Swat, Pakistan

^{*1}shoaibkans555@gmail.com, ²saziz@uswat.edu.pk, ³hamidihsan.edu.pk@gmail.com,

⁴adnan.ahad@uvasswat.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: *

Shoaib Khan

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19047379>

Received	Accepted	Published
17 January 2026	25 February 2026	16 March 2026

ABSTRACT

In an era of globalization, the integration of cultural content in English language textbooks is essential for developing learners' intercultural communicative competence. This study examines the Grade 11 English textbook prescribed by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board in Pakistan to evaluate the representation of native, target, and international cultures. Using a mixed-methods approach, all 22 reading texts in the textbook were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, guided by Byram's (1993) checklist and the framework proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (2013). The analysis revealed an uneven distribution of cultural content, with target culture comprising 31.8%, native culture 9%, international culture 13.6%, and culture-neutral texts 45.45%. Texts representing Pakistani culture addressed historical and social themes, such as the responsibilities of youth and familial relationships, while target culture texts predominantly reflected American social norms, traditions, and festivals. International culture was minimally represented, encompassing Armenian village life, Greek mythology, and Egyptian historical contexts. The findings suggest that while the textbook provides exposure to multiple cultural perspectives, native and international cultures are underrepresented, potentially limiting students' opportunities to develop a balanced intercultural understanding. The study highlights the need for curriculum designers and textbook developers to ensure more equitable cultural representation to foster tolerance, empathy, and intercultural awareness among learners.

Keywords: Cultural content, English textbooks, intercultural competence, Grade 11, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the contemporary globalized world, English functions as an international language that connects people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Consequently, English language textbooks are expected to present not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural

perspectives that reflect local, target, and international contexts. Textbooks play a significant role in shaping learners' perceptions of the world, as they act as one of the primary sources of knowledge in the classroom. In fact, Cunningsworth (2002) describes textbooks as a form of "hidden curriculum," suggesting that

beyond the explicit teaching of language skills, they implicitly transmit cultural values, social norms, and ideological perspectives. From this standpoint, the cultural messages embedded in textbooks can be as influential as the formal curriculum itself.

Education, in its broader sense, aims to cultivate values such as tolerance, mutual respect, enlightenment, and harmony among individuals belonging to different cultures, religions, and social groups. When educational materials are thoughtfully designed, they can promote intercultural understanding and contribute to social cohesion and global peace. Language textbooks, in particular, serve as powerful instruments for introducing learners to different cultural realities and encouraging appreciation for diversity. Therefore, the cultural content included in language teaching materials deserves careful examination.

The relationship between language and culture has long been recognized by scholars in linguistics and anthropology. Language is not merely a system of communication; rather, it is deeply embedded in the cultural practices, beliefs, and historical experiences of its speakers. Words and expressions often carry meanings that reflect the social and cultural contexts in which they originate. As Kramsch (1998) argues, learning a language inevitably involves learning about the culture of the people who speak it. Without an understanding of cultural norms, values, and communicative practices, language learners may find it difficult to use the language appropriately in real-life situations.

Furthermore, language serves as a medium through which cultural knowledge and social values are preserved and transmitted across generations. It functions not only as a tool for interaction but also as a repository of collective identity and cultural heritage. Scholars have therefore emphasized the inseparable connection between language learning and cultural awareness. Norton (as cited in Anbreen, 2014) suggests that when individuals learn a language, they do not simply acquire new vocabulary or grammatical structures; rather, they also engage with new ways of understanding the world.

Given this close relationship between language and culture, the representation of cultural elements in English language textbooks becomes

an important area of investigation. In multilingual and multicultural societies such as Pakistan, it is particularly important for textbooks to maintain a balanced representation of local culture, the culture associated with the English language, and broader international cultural perspectives. Such balance can help learners develop both a strong sense of their own cultural identity and an awareness of global diversity.

In this context, the present study examines the Grade 11 English textbook prescribed by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board. The study aims to analyze the extent to which the textbook represents local, target, and international cultures. By exploring the distribution and nature of cultural content in the textbook, the research seeks to determine whether the material provides learners with a balanced and meaningful exposure to different cultural perspectives.

1.2 Problem Statement

One of the key aims of education is to promote tolerance, enlightenment, and harmony among people of different cultures, religions, races, and sects. English language textbooks play an important role in shaping learners' cultural awareness. However, the cultural content embedded in textbooks has often received limited attention from teachers and researchers, with greater focus typically placed on linguistic aspects of language learning. In the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there is a need to examine how cultural elements are represented in English textbooks. Therefore, this study analyzes the cultural representation and prominence of local, target, and international cultures in the Grade 11 English textbook prescribed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study aims to:

1. To analyze the representation of different cultures in the textbook.
2. To examine the extent to which prominent cultural aspects are represented in the textbook.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How are different cultures represented in the textbook?

2. To what extent are prominent cultural aspects represented in the textbook?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The inclusion of cultural content in language textbooks plays an important role in developing intercultural communicative competence, which goes beyond basic communicative competence. While communicative competence includes linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic abilities, these alone are not sufficient for effective interaction in a multicultural world. Hinkel (1999) emphasizes the importance of intercultural competence in enabling learners to understand and interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

In today's globalized world, awareness of different cultures helps learners broaden their perspectives and communicate more effectively with people from other societies. It also enables students to critically examine cultural practices, including those of their own communities. According to Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004), exposure to diverse cultures through educational materials promotes cultural awareness, empathy, and tolerance among learners.

Textbooks remain one of the most trusted and widely used instructional resources in classrooms. Both teachers and students often rely on them as authoritative sources of knowledge. Therefore, it is important that textbooks present balanced and accurate cultural information. If cultural representations are limited or misleading, they may shape learners' perceptions in an incomplete or distorted way. By examining the cultural content of the Grade 11 English textbook used in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, this study seeks to highlight the role of textbooks in promoting intercultural understanding. The findings may help educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers better understand the importance of integrating diverse cultural perspectives in language teaching materials to foster tolerance, empathy, and global awareness among students.

2. Literature Review

Language and culture are closely interconnected. Language is not only a component of culture but also a means of accessing and expressing cultural meanings. The Council of Europe (2001) emphasizes that language serves as a gateway to

cultural expression and social interaction. Similarly, Corbett (2003) describes culture as the set of implicit norms, values, and practices that shape social behavior within a community. These norms evolve over time and reflect the adaptive nature of societies.

Kramsch (1998) views culture as membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space, historical experiences, and collective imagination. Even when individuals leave a particular community, they often retain shared frameworks for perception, belief, and behavior. From this perspective, culture forms an essential context within which language is used and interpreted.

The relationship between language learning and culture has therefore been widely emphasized in language education research. Kramsch (1993) argues that culture cannot simply be treated as an additional skill alongside reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Rather, it forms an integral part of language learning from the very beginning. Learners constantly encounter cultural meanings embedded in language, and their ability to communicate effectively depends on understanding these cultural contexts.

In response to this relationship, scholars have proposed various approaches to incorporating culture in language teaching. One prominent perspective is the intercultural approach, which aims to develop learners' intercultural communicative competence (ICC). According to Corbett (2003), this approach enables learners to understand cultural meanings and mediate between their own culture and the target culture. The goal is not necessarily to achieve native-speaker competence but to develop the ability to interact effectively across cultures. In this approach, linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge are given equal importance.

Intercultural competence has been widely discussed by several scholars. Lund (2001) and Sercu (2002) define intercultural competence as the ability to remain open and receptive to cultural differences, regardless of whether these differences arise from national, ethnic, social, or institutional contexts. Similarly, Hinkel (1999) argues that traditional communicative competence—comprising grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence—is no longer sufficient for effective

communication in a globalized world. Intercultural competence is therefore essential for meaningful interaction across cultural boundaries.

A comprehensive model of intercultural competence was proposed by Byram (2001), who identifies three key components: intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Intercultural attitudes involve openness and willingness to engage with other cultures. Intercultural knowledge refers to an understanding of social structures, cultural identities, and practices in different societies. Intercultural skills enable learners to interpret, compare, and relate cultural practices across contexts. Byram also introduces the concept of critical cultural awareness, which refers to the ability to evaluate cultural practices and perspectives critically in both one's own culture and others.

Another influential perspective is intercultural language learning, which integrates language, culture, and learning as interconnected elements. Liddicoat, Scarino, Papademetre, and Kohler (2003) propose an educational framework that views language learning as a process of cultural dialogue. In this approach, learners engage with multiple perspectives and negotiate meanings through interaction with different cultural viewpoints. Such an approach not only enhances language proficiency but also encourages learners to develop broader cultural understanding.

In the context of textbook analysis, scholars have proposed various frameworks for examining cultural representation. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) identify three main types of culture that can appear in language textbooks: source culture, target culture, and international culture. Source culture refers to the learners' own cultural context, while target culture represents the cultures of native speakers of the target language, such as British or American culture. International culture, on the other hand, includes cultural references from other societies around the world. A similar classification is also discussed by McKay (2003), who highlights the importance of exposing learners to a range of global cultures through language education.

2.1 Target Culture

The inclusion of target culture in textbooks helps learners understand how the language

functions within its original social and cultural context. Byram (1991) argues that exposure to target culture allows learners to observe authentic patterns of communication. Politzer (1959) strongly supports this view, emphasizing that teaching language without its cultural context reduces language to meaningless symbols. However, Kachru's (1992) concept of *World Englishes* challenges the dominance of traditional target cultures by recognizing the diverse global varieties of English used in different regions.

2.2 Source (Native) Culture

According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999), incorporating learners' native culture in textbooks enables students to relate language learning to their own social environment. This also empowers learners to express their cultural identity using the target language. Alptekin (1993) further argues that familiarity with local culture facilitates language learning by providing a meaningful and accessible context. When learners move from familiar cultural knowledge to unfamiliar cultural concepts, comprehension and engagement are enhanced.

2.3 International Culture

The inclusion of international cultural content broadens learners' perspectives beyond both local and target cultures. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) highlights the importance of exposure to diverse cultural contexts in order to promote intercultural understanding. Such representation encourages learners to appreciate global diversity and prepares them for communication in multicultural environments.

In countries like Pakistan, awareness of international cultures can be particularly valuable. As globalization increases opportunities for education, employment, and migration, learners are more likely to interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, textbooks that present a balanced representation of local, target, and international cultures can play an important role in fostering intercultural awareness and global understanding.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The data for the study consist of the Grade 11 English textbook prescribed by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board (KPTBB), Peshawar, Pakistan. The textbook contains 22 reading texts, which serve as the primary unit of analysis. The book was authored by Prof. Hamidullah and reviewed by English teachers and subject specialists appointed by the textbook board.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The analysis in this study is guided by the frameworks proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (2013) and Byram (1993). Cortazzi and Jin's model is used to classify cultural representation into three categories: source (native) culture, target culture, and international culture.

To further examine cultural elements in the textbook, Byram's (1993) checklist for cultural analysis in language teaching materials is employed. The checklist includes the following cultural dimensions:

1. **Social groups and identity** (e.g., social class, regional identity, ethnic minorities)
2. **Social interaction** (e.g., levels of formality and insider-outsider relations)
3. **Beliefs and behavior** (e.g., moral and religious beliefs, daily practices)
4. **Political and social institutions** (e.g., governance, health care, law, and social systems)
5. **Socialization and the life cycle** (e.g., family, education, employment, rites of passage)

6. **National history** (historical and contemporary events shaping national identity)

7. **National geography** (significant geographical features)

8. **National identity and stereotypes** (symbols and representations associated with a nation)

3.3 Method of Data Analysis

The reading texts in the textbook are first categorized into four groups: source (native) culture, target culture, international culture, and culture-neutral content. The frequency of each category is presented in tabular form to provide a quantitative overview of cultural representation.

In addition, each reading text is analyzed qualitatively using Byram's cultural categories to identify the cultural themes and aspects reflected in the material. This combined approach allows for a systematic examination of both the distribution and nature of cultural content in the textbook.

4. Data Analysis

This section presents the distribution of cultural content in the Grade 11 English textbook. The reading texts are categorized into source (native) culture, target culture, international culture, and culture-neutral content, following the framework of Cortazzi and Jin (2013). The results are summarized in Table 1 and followed by a qualitative discussion based on Byram's (1993) cultural checklist.

Table 1

S.N	Name of Reading Texts	Target Culture	Native Culture	International Culture	Cultural Neutral
1	Responsibilities of the Youth		✓		
2	His First Flight				✓
3	Good Timber				✓
4	From Mother with Love	✓			
5	It's Country for Me	✓			
6	Mother to Son	✓			
7	Choice of Career				✓
8	Wasteland				✓

S.N	Name of Reading Texts	Target Culture	Native Culture	International Culture	Cultural Neutral
9	The White Lamb			✓	
10	The World is Too Much with Us			✓	
11	The Importance of Family	✓			
12	The Blanket	✓			
13	Ozymandias			✓	
14	A Long Walk Home				✓
15	University Days				✓
16	School vs Education				✓
17	What You Do is What You Are	✓			
18	A Dream Within a Dream				✓
19	Drug Abuse in the Youth of Pakistan		✓		
20	How to Take a Job Interview				✓
21	The Road Not Taken				✓
22	The Progress	✓			

Grand Total

Category	Number of Texts	Percentage
Target Culture	7	31.8%
Native Culture	2	9%
International Culture	3	13.6%
Cultural Neutral	10	45.45%

The Grade 11 English textbook contains 22 reading texts. Among them, 31.8% represent target culture, 9% represent native culture, and 13.6% represent international culture. A substantial portion of the texts (45.45%) are categorized as culture-neutral, as they do not clearly represent any specific cultural context.

4.1 Native Culture

Only two texts in the textbook represent the native culture of Pakistan. The text *Responsibilities of the Youth* is an excerpt from a speech by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. It highlights the responsibilities of young citizens in building the nation and emphasizes values such as discipline, integrity, truthfulness, and commitment to the state. The text also references Pakistan's early history and the challenges faced after independence,

reflecting aspects of national identity and social responsibility.

Similarly, the text *Drug Abuse in the Youth of Pakistan* addresses a contemporary social issue within Pakistani society. It emphasizes the role of parents in shaping the physical, emotional, and social development of their children. The text highlights the importance of strong family relationships and suggests that poor communication between parents and children may lead to social problems such as drug abuse and other destructive behaviors. These themes reflect the cultural significance of family and social responsibility in Pakistani society.

4.2 Target Culture

Several texts in the textbook portray elements of target culture, particularly American culture. Texts such as *From Mother with Love* by Zoa

Sherburne and *It's Country for Me* by Patricia Demuth include proper nouns such as *Minta Hawley*, *Dr. Morton*, *Grace*, and *Joel*, which indicate American cultural identity. The texts also refer to places such as Illinois, Iowa, Chicago, and Dubuque, further reinforcing the American context.

Cultural elements such as festivals (Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Halloween) and clothing items like *stockings*, *housecoats*, and *polo coats* also reflect American social life. Recreational activities such as visiting beaches and sunbathing are depicted as common leisure practices.

Similarly, the poem *Mother to Son* presents the emotional relationship between a mother and her child, reflecting social values within American society. Other texts such as *The Importance of Family* highlight themes of gender equality and social change, while *The Blanket* portrays generational conflict and changing family dynamics. Together, these texts present aspects of social life and interpersonal relationships within the target culture.

4.3 International Culture

The textbook also includes a limited representation of international cultural contexts. The story *The White Lamb* by the Armenian writer Sero Khazandian portrays the rural life of Armenian villagers. Cultural practices such as hospitality, teamwork, gardening, and offering fruits like figs and watermelons to guests reflect the traditional values of Armenian society.

The poem *The World is Too Much with Us* contains references to Greek mythology, including figures such as Proteus and Triton, which illustrate ancient religious beliefs and mythological traditions.

Similarly, the poem *Ozymandias* refers to the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses II, presenting aspects of ancient Egyptian civilization, including royal authority, monuments, and historical legacy. These texts introduce learners to cultural elements from different parts of the world.

4.4 Cultural Neutral Content

A considerable number of texts in the textbook fall into the culture-neutral category. These texts primarily focus on universal themes such as personal development, education, career

choices, and philosophical reflections. Since they do not strongly represent any specific cultural context, they are categorized as neutral. Consequently, detailed cultural analysis of these texts is limited.

5. Discussion

The findings of the present study reveal an uneven distribution of cultural representation in the Grade 11 English textbook prescribed by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board. The analysis shows that target culture accounts for 31.8% of the reading texts, while native culture is represented in only 9% of the material. Similarly, international culture constitutes 13.6%, whereas a significant portion of the texts (45.45%) are categorized as culture-neutral. These findings suggest that the textbook provides limited exposure to the learners' native cultural context. Considering that English is taught as a second language in Pakistan, the inclusion of local cultural references can help learners relate language learning to their own social realities. This view is supported by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Alptekin (1993), who argue that incorporating learners' own culture facilitates language learning and enables students to express their cultural identity through the target language.

The relatively higher proportion of target culture in the textbook reflects the traditional tendency of English language materials to focus on cultures associated with native speakers, particularly American and British contexts. While exposure to target culture is important for understanding authentic language use, excessive emphasis on it may create an imbalance in cultural representation. According to Kachru's (1992) concept of World Englishes, English is now a global language used in diverse cultural contexts; therefore, language teaching materials should reflect this diversity rather than prioritizing a single cultural perspective. The representation of international culture in the textbook is also relatively limited. Only a few texts introduce learners to cultures outside the native and target contexts. However, exposure to international cultures is essential for developing intercultural communicative competence, which enables learners to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. As emphasized by Byram (2001), intercultural

competence requires knowledge, skills, and attitudes that allow individuals to interpret and relate cultural differences critically.

Another significant finding is the large proportion of culture-neutral texts in the textbook. While such texts may focus on universal themes like education, career development, or personal growth, their absence of cultural context may limit opportunities for learners to develop cultural awareness. Language learning is most effective when linguistic skills are integrated with meaningful cultural content, as suggested by Kramsch (1998) and Corbett (2003).

Overall, the findings indicate that although the textbook contains examples of target, native, and international cultures, the representation is not balanced. A more systematic integration of cultural perspectives could enhance students' intercultural understanding and align language learning with the realities of a globalized world.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the cultural representation in the Grade 11 English textbook used in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The analysis revealed that the textbook includes elements of target, native, and international cultures, but their distribution is uneven. Target culture occupies a relatively larger portion of the material, while native and international cultures receive comparatively limited attention. In addition, a considerable number of texts are culturally neutral. The findings highlight the importance of incorporating diverse cultural perspectives in language teaching materials. Since language and culture are closely interconnected, textbooks should provide learners with opportunities to explore their own culture while also becoming familiar with other cultures. Such balanced representation can contribute to the development of intercultural communicative competence, which is essential for effective communication in today's interconnected world.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Greater inclusion of native culture should be ensured in English textbooks so that

learners can relate language learning to their own cultural and social environment.

2. Textbook developers should aim for a balanced representation of native, target, and international cultures in order to promote intercultural awareness among students.

3. Curriculum designers should incorporate cultural themes and contexts that encourage students to reflect on cultural similarities and differences.

4. Teachers should be encouraged to supplement textbook content with additional cultural materials in order to provide learners with broader cultural exposure.

5. Future textbook development should consider the global status of English and include cultural references from a wider range of societies rather than focusing primarily on traditional English-speaking cultures.

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