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A Visual Analysis of Multiculturalism in the Algerian Fourth-Year EFL Primary School Textbook

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Abstract

This article evaluates the integration of multiculturalism in the Algerian fourth-grade primary school English textbook, specifically focusing on the cultural representation within its visual content. The study employs a qualitative research design centered on visual analysis to assess how effectively multiculturalism is promoted through the textbook's images, illustrations, and graphics using a visual analysis framework based on theories of visual communication drawn from the works of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006); the research examines the extent to which native (Algerian), target (English-speaking), and other cultures are represented. The significance of this study lies in enriching the body of research on the role of textbooks in developing multiculturalism, as well as providing practical recommendations for educators and policymakers on how to enhance cultural representation in educational materials. Findings reveal that while the textbook includes various visual depictions of cultures, there is a significant emphasis on the native culture, which may limit students' exposure to target and other cultures. Nevertheless, this focus is important for identity and belonging, and necessary for effective communication in a multicultural world.

Keywords: Algeria, English as a Foreign Language, ICC, Multiculturalism, visual analysis

ملخص

تقيّم هذه المقالة دمج التعددية الثقافية في كتاب اللغة الإنجليزية الخاص بالسنة الرابعة من التعليم الابتدائي في الجزائر، مع التركيز على التمثيل الثقافي في محتواه البصري. تعتمد الدراسة على تصميم بحثي نوعي يتمحور حول تحليل بصري لتقييم مدى فاعلية تعزيز التعددية الثقافية من خلال الصور، والرسوم التوضيحية، والجرافيكس في الكتاب المدرسي، باستخدام إطار لتحليل الصور يستند إلى نظريات كريس وفان ليووين (2006) حول التواصل البصري. تفحص الدراسة مدى تمثيل كلّ من الثقافة الأصلية (الجزائرية)، والثقافة المستهدفة (الناطقة بالإنجليزية)، وثقافات أخرى. تكمن أهمية هذه الدراسة في إثراء مجموعة الأبحاث حول دور الكتب المدرسية في تطوير التعددية الثقافية، بالإضافة إلى تقديم توصيات عملية للأساتذة وصانعي السياسات في الجزائر حول كيفية تعزيز التمثيل الثقافي في المواد التعليمية. كشفت النتائج أنه على الرغم من أن الكتاب المدرسي يتضمن تصورات بصرية متنوعة للثقافات، إلا أن هناك تركيزًا كبيرًا على العناصر الثقافية الأصلية، مما قد يحدّ من تعرض الطلاب للثقافات المستهدفة وغيرها. ومع ذلك، فإن هذا التركيز على الثقافة الأصلية مهمّ لتعزيز الهوية والانتماء، وهو ضروري للتواصل الفعّال في عالم متعدد الثقافات.

كلمات مفتاحية: التعددية الثقافية، تعزيز الكفاءة التواصلية بين الثقافات، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجزائر، التحليل البصري.

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Introduction

In recent years, the role of multiculturalism in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has gained significant attention. However, in many contexts, including Algeria, EFL teaching materials often emphasise native culture while neglecting a balanced representation of target and global cultures.

The research problem addressed is the limited integration of diverse cultural elements in EFL textbooks, particularly in the visual content of the Algerian fourth-grade textbook. While textbooks play a crucial role in shaping learners' perceptions of the world and their language skills, the overrepresentation of native cultural elements may limit students' exposure to the target culture, reducing their readiness for intercultural communication.

The rationale lies in the importance of fostering a more globally aware and culturally competent student body. Given that visual content is a powerful tool in education, understanding how visual representations of cultures influence language learning is vital. By evaluating the textbook's visual content, this study seeks to uncover how effectively intercultural competence is being promoted and whether students are being exposed to the diverse cultural contexts necessary for meaningful cross-cultural communication. This analysis aims to:

- Analysing the visual representation of native (Algerian), target (English-speaking), and other cultures in the Algerian fourth-grade English language textbook.
- Examining the extent to which the textbook's visual content promotes the development of students' multicultural competence.
- Determining whether the visual content of the textbook provides a balanced depiction of diverse cultural contexts, ensuring adequate exposure to both native and target cultures.
- Providing recommendations for improving the integration of multicultural elements in EFL textbooks to foster globally aware and culturally competent learners in Algeria.

Thus, the main research questions guiding this study are:

1. How are native and target cultures visually represented in the Algerian fourth-grade English language textbook?
2. To what extent does the visual content of the textbook promote multiculturalism?

Literature Review

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is the coexistence of diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups within a society, where each group maintains its unique cultural identity while contributing to the broader societal fabric. This concept emphasises the preservation, recognition, and respect for different cultural backgrounds, fostering an environment of inclusivity and equality. According to Banks (2009), multiculturalism advocates for the harmonious integration of various cultural practices, traditions, and languages, ensuring that no single culture dominates or marginalises others. By promoting mutual understanding and respect, multiculturalism seeks to create a pluralistic society where diversity is celebrated as a strength rather than a source of division.

The significance of multiculturalism lies in its ability to foster social harmony and reduce prejudice within a society. In multicultural settings, individuals are encouraged to appreciate and learn from different cultural perspectives, which diminishes stereotypes and promotes peaceful coexistence (Parekh, 2000). This environment of mutual respect and

understanding is crucial in mitigating social tensions and conflicts that often arise from cultural misunderstandings or biases. Furthermore, multiculturalism enriches cultural diversity by broadening individuals' horizons and encouraging the exchange of ideas, traditions, and innovations. This cultural interplay not only enhances personal growth but also stimulates creativity and innovation, contributing to the overall progress of society.

The importance of multiculturalism extends to various aspects of societal development, including education, economic growth, and national identity. In educational settings, multiculturalism equips students with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate a globalised world. Exposing learners to diverse cultural norms and practices fosters intercultural competence, which is essential for effective communication and collaboration in an increasingly interconnected world (Holliday, 2018). Additionally, multiculturalism plays a pivotal role in strengthening national identity by acknowledging and integrating the contributions of different cultural groups. This inclusive approach ensures that all members of society feel valued and represented, thereby enhancing social cohesion and unity.

A significant gap in multiculturalism research lies in its limited contextualization within non-Western, postcolonial nations like Algeria, where sociocultural and linguistic dynamics differ markedly from those in Western contexts. While global studies often emphasise textual representation in education, there is a notable lack of focus on the role of visual content in shaping cultural awareness, particularly in Algerian textbooks. The intersectionality of linguistic and cultural representation, especially in a multilingual nation like Algeria, remains underexplored, as does the portrayal of multiculturalism in media and digital platforms. Furthermore, while policies such as the recognition of Tamazight as an official language represent progress, their real-world impact on education and society has not been thoroughly examined. Addressing these gaps could provide deeper insights into the unique challenges and opportunities multiculturalism presents in Algeria.

Multiculturalism in Algeria

Multilingualism serves as the backbone of Algeria's multiculturalism. The coexistence of Arabic, Tamazight, French, and, increasingly, English, highlights the country's linguistic diversity. Arabic remains dominant in public life, while French persists as a legacy of colonisation, especially in education and administration. Tamazight’s integration into regional education systems underscores efforts to protect indigenous culture. Simultaneously, English is gaining traction due to globalisation and its perceived utility in international communication (Daoudi, 2017).

Algeria's multiculturalism is a testament to its historical, linguistic, and cultural diversity. The country’s identity is shaped by its colonial past, indigenous heritage, and evolving globalisation dynamics. While multiculturalism enriches its society, it also presents challenges tied to identity, education, and policy-making. Algeria's history of colonisation significantly influenced its multicultural framework. Under French colonial rule (1830–1962), the imposition of the French language led to the marginalisation of Arabic and Tamazight, creating social and linguistic hierarchies. The Arabization policies after independence sought to revive and prioritise Arabic but often neglected Tamazight, sparking tensions. The recognition of Tamazight as an official language in 2016 marked a pivotal step toward inclusivity, reflecting a broader acceptance of Algeria's Indigenous Heritage (Rouabah, 2022; Daoudi, 2017).

Education and media are vital in representing and fostering multiculturalism. Primary school textbooks often prioritise native culture, with limited inclusion of global perspectives, thereby restricting students' exposure to intercultural competence. Visual and textual content in these resources tends to overemphasise national identity, potentially limiting preparedness for cross-cultural communication in a globalised world (Daoudi, 2017; Rouabah, 2022). Balancing cultural preservation with globalisation remains a complex issue in Algeria. While Arabization and recognition of Tamazight strengthen national identity, they also risk sidelining the global relevance offered by French and English. Additionally, the rise of digital communication tools like e-Arabic—blending Arabic, French, and English—demonstrates how technology is reshaping linguistic practices and creating new discourse communities (Daoudi, 2017)

Algeria's multiculturalism encapsulates both historical struggles and aspirations for a harmonious, inclusive society. By addressing linguistic inequities and enhancing multicultural representation in education and policy, Algeria can leverage its rich cultural diversity as a strength. Future strategies must focus on fostering intercultural competence and embracing global connections without undermining national heritage.

Multiculturalism in EFL Education

In recent decades, the concept of multiculturalism has become a significant focus in the field of language education, particularly in EFL contexts. It involves the ability to communicate and interact effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, integrating knowledge of cultural practices, values, and beliefs into linguistic skills. According to Byram (1997), intercultural competence is not just an add-on to language learning but is central to the development of communicative competence. This view has been echoed by Kramsch (1993), who argues that language learning without culture is incomplete, as language reflects and transmits the values and norms of the people who speak it. In EFL contexts, developing students' intercultural competence is essential for preparing them to communicate in a globalised world. This approach is critical as it prepares students to communicate effectively in multicultural settings, promoting mutual respect and understanding across cultures (Byram, 2021; Holliday, 2018).

Byram (1997) developed a comprehensive model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), which includes five key components: attitudes (curiosity and openness), knowledge (about social groups and their products and practices), skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. This model emphasises that language learners must not only acquire linguistic skills but also learn to understand, appreciate, and navigate cultural differences. Byram's model has become foundational in intercultural education, particularly in EFL settings.

Kramsch (1998) also underscored the importance of developing intercultural competence through language education. She contends that language classrooms should not only focus on the linguistic code but also on how language and culture are interconnected. This perspective aligns with the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, which suggests that language shapes how individuals perceive and think about the world. Thus, teaching a language without teaching the culture in which it is embedded limits learners' ability to engage fully with the language and its speakers.
However, research by Houghton (2014) suggested that while the theoretical frameworks of multicultural competence are well-established, their practical implementation in EFL textbooks

is often limited. Many textbooks prioritise native culture or focus solely on grammatical and vocabulary exercises without integrating cultural content. This creates a gap in the development of intercultural competence, as students are not exposed to the cultural contexts necessary for meaningful communication. This gap forms a significant part of the motivation for the current study, which aims to evaluate the effectiveness of visual content in promoting intercultural competence in an Algerian EFL textbook.

Incorporating multicultural perspectives in EFL classrooms offers numerous benefits. First, it allows students to engage with the cultural contexts of English-speaking countries while respecting and maintaining their own cultural identities. For instance, textbooks and instructional materials that balance native, target, and global cultural representations enhance students' ability to appreciate cultural diversity (Rodríguez, 2020). Additionally, activities such as cultural role-playing, cross-cultural discussions, and analysis of literature and media provide practical opportunities for students to develop intercultural skills.

However, research highlights challenges in implementing multiculturalism in EFL education. In many contexts, including Algeria, teaching materials often emphasise native culture at the expense of global and target cultures, limiting learners' exposure to diverse perspectives (Rouabah, 2022). Moreover, educators may lack sufficient training to address cultural diversity effectively, underscoring the need for professional development programs that equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge (Celik & Dikilitaş, 2020).

To address these challenges, EFL educators and curriculum developers must prioritise culturally responsive pedagogy. This includes selecting materials that reflect diverse cultural narratives, designing activities that encourage critical thinking about cultural differences, and fostering an inclusive classroom environment. Technology can also play a vital role by facilitating virtual exchanges with peers from different cultural backgrounds, thereby enhancing students' exposure to global perspectives (Reinhardt, 2019).

In conclusion, integrating multiculturalism in EFL education is essential for fostering globally competent learners. While challenges remain, adopting inclusive pedagogical approaches and embracing technological advancements can bridge gaps in cultural representation. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, preparing students to engage with diverse cultures through language education remains a vital goal.

The Role of Textbooks

Textbooks are critical in shaping learners' perceptions and attitudes towards other cultures. According to Tomlinson (2011), textbooks provide both linguistic and cultural input, serving as a bridge between the learner and the target language culture. Textbooks not only transmit knowledge but also reflect the ideologies and cultural norms of the societies they are created. However, one of the key challenges is that textbooks often emphasise the native culture of the learners while providing limited exposure to the target culture, thus inhibiting the development of intercultural communicative competence (Alptekin, 2002).

In a study by Hurst (2018), the author examined the representation of culture in a set of EFL textbooks used in European classrooms. The findings revealed that many of the textbooks placed a strong emphasis on European cultural norms and values, with limited representation of non-European cultures. This raises concerns about how textbooks in non-Western contexts, such as Algeria, balance the representation of native and target cultures. Collins (2020) similarly found that textbooks in the Middle East often focused on local cultural values, with minimal exposure to the target culture of English-speaking countries. The dominance of native

culture in textbooks could potentially limit students' ability to develop a well-rounded intercultural competence. Collins (2020) stated that:

> The limitations of such textbooks are that while they promote cultural pride and identity, they often fail to provide learners with the necessary tools to understand and appreciate cultural diversity in a global context. This leaves students with a narrow view of intercultural communication, which can hinder their ability to navigate the complexities of multicultural environments. (p. 12)

Comparatively, Lee (2019) found that EFL textbooks in East Asia attempted to incorporate more intercultural content by including dialogues and texts that featured cultural exchanges between speakers from different backgrounds. However, the study also noted that such efforts were superficial and failed to engage students in deeper reflection on cultural differences. These findings highlight a gap between the theoretical emphasis on intercultural competence and its practical application in textbook content.

This gap becomes even more significant in the Algerian context, where textbooks are created with a strong emphasis on national identity and cultural preservation (Benmoussat, 2017). While these are important goals, they must be balanced with the need to prepare students for communication in multicultural contexts. The current study aims to address this gap by evaluating how well the visual content in an Algerian fourth-grade EFL textbook represents both native and target cultures and fosters intercultural competence.

Visual Representation in EFL Textbooks

The visual content in textbooks plays a crucial role in language learning by providing context and enhancing students' understanding of both language and culture. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), images are powerful tools for meaning-making, as they convey cultural norms, values, and ideologies in ways that words alone cannot. In EFL textbooks, visual content such as illustrations, photographs, and diagrams can either reinforce or challenge students' perceptions of different cultures. The way people, places, and cultural practices are visually represented can shape how students perceive the target culture and their own (Serafini, 2014).

Despite the importance of visual content, research by Matsuda (2012) revealed that many EFL textbooks fail to use images effectively to promote intercultural competence. Matsuda's analysis of popular EFL textbooks found that most visual content was used to illustrate linguistic points rather than to engage students with the cultural dimensions of the target language. This suggests that the potential of visual content to enhance intercultural learning is often overlooked.

Moreover, studies have shown that visual representations in textbooks are often skewed toward Western ideals and stereotypes. In their analysis of English language textbooks used in Latin America, Torres and Kamhi-Stein (2016) found that images tended to depict Western lifestyles, which could alienate students from non-Western backgrounds and limit their engagement with the material. Conversely, a study by Shin et al. (2011) highlighted that textbooks used in South Korea often focused on Korean culture and included limited visual content related to the target culture, reducing students' opportunities to engage with different perspectives.

> The challenge for textbook authors and educators is to create visual content that not only supports language learning but also encourages students to reflect critically on their own cultural identity while engaging with others. This critical engagement is essential

for developing intercultural communicative competence, as it fosters empathy and openness towards cultural diversity. (Torres & Kamhi-Stein, 2016, p. 58)

The current study builds on these findings by evaluating how visual content in an Algerian EFL textbook contributes to or hinders the development of intercultural competence. By focusing on the balance between native and target cultures in visual representations, this research aims to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook in promoting a comprehensive understanding of cultural diversity.

While much research has been conducted on the role of textbooks in language learning, there is a notable gap when it comes to the specific analysis of visual content in relation to intercultural competence. Most studies focus on the textual content of textbooks, leaving the visual dimension underexplored. Furthermore, while previous research has identified the limitations of cultural representation in textbooks from various regions, there is limited literature on how this issue manifests in the Algerian EFL context, particularly in relation to the balance between native and target cultures in visual content.

Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) Theories of Visual Communication

Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theories of visual communication, presented in *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, provide a robust framework for understanding how visuals convey meaning, especially in educational and cultural contexts. Their approach identifies three key dimensions of meaning-making: representational, interactive, and compositional meanings. Representational meaning examines what is depicted in an image, focusing on the people, objects, and actions portrayed and how they contribute to the overall message. In the context of a fourth-year EFL primary school textbook in Algeria, this dimension can reveal how multiculturalism is represented by analysing whether diverse cultural practices, identities, and experiences are included or omitted. For example, the choice of characters, traditional attire, and culturally specific activities can indicate the extent to which the textbook reflects Algeria's rich cultural diversity.

Interactive meaning, on the other hand, explores the relationship between the viewer and the image, conveyed through elements such as gaze, distance, and perspective. In a textbook, these interactions can influence how students perceive and relate to the visuals. A direct gaze from characters in an image might encourage engagement and a sense of inclusivity, while variations in perspective and proximity can imply power dynamics or emotional connections. For a multicultural analysis, it is essential to consider whether the visuals create a sense of equality and connection among diverse cultural groups or reinforce hierarchies and exclusion.

Finally, compositional meaning refers to the arrangement of visual elements, focusing on how salience, framing, and information value direct the viewer's attention and organise meaning. The placement of cultural symbols, the use of colors, and the balance of visual elements can emphasise certain aspects of multiculturalism or neglect others. For instance, images that prominently feature diverse cultural symbols and traditions in equal measure can highlight inclusivity, while unbalanced depictions may suggest bias or favoritism toward specific groups. Applying Kress and van Leeuwen's framework to the Algerian EFL textbook allows for a critical examination of whether the visuals support a multicultural ethos by promoting representation, equity, and inclusiveness or perpetuating stereotypes and cultural marginalisation. This analysis is crucial for ensuring that educational materials align with the values of diversity and inclusion.

Methods and Materials

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically utilising visual analysis to evaluate the representation of intercultural elements in the Algerian fourth-grade EFL textbook. The focus was on examining how visual content, including illustrations, photographs, and diagrams, contributes to students' understanding of both native (Algerian) and target (English-speaking) cultures.

Sample Text

In this study, the sole subject of analysis was the *My Book of English* textbook designed for fourth-grade students in Algeria. This textbook was selected due to its recent introduction into the curriculum as part of the Ministry of Education's initiative to enhance English language teaching in primary schools. The choice of this textbook allows for a focused examination of how it integrates cultural content relevant to students' learning experiences.

Research Instruments

Data collection in this study relied on a qualitative visual analysis framework designed to evaluate the cultural representation in the textbook.

- **Visual Analysis Framework:** The analysis focused on examining the visual content of the textbook, including images, illustrations, and graphics. The framework utilised aspects of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theories on visual communication, which suggest that images carry cultural meanings and are crucial in shaping learners' perceptions.

  The analysis considered various elements, such as:
- **Cultural Diversity:** The extent to which different cultures were represented visually in the textbook.
- **Balance of Representation:** The ratio of native cultural elements compared to target cultural elements.
- **Cultural Context:** How the images contextualise cultural practices and values, aiding students' understanding of both their own culture and that of the target language.

The rationale for selecting visual analysis as the primary research instrument lies in its ability to provide rich, qualitative insights into how cultural content is visually communicated, which is essential for understanding its impact on intercultural competence development among learners.

Research Procedures

The research was conducted through a systematic examination of the textbook's visual elements. The procedures included the following steps:

1. **Selection of the Textbook:** The *My Book of English* textbook was selected based on its alignment with the Algerian fourth-grade EFL curriculum.
2. **Framework Development:** A visual analysis framework was developed based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) model of visual communication. This framework guided the analysis of the images in the textbook.
3. **Visual Analysis:** The researcher thoroughly reviewed the textbook, identifying and categorising visual content related to both native and target cultures. Each image was analysed for its cultural significance, context, and potential to promote intercultural understanding.
4. **Data Compilation:** The findings from the visual analysis were compiled into a structured format, allowing for an organised presentation of results that highlighted key

themes and patterns in cultural representation.

By employing this structured methodology, the study aims to provide a detailed evaluation of how the textbook visually represents multiculturalism and contributes to the development of intercultural competence among fourth-grade EFL students in Algeria.

Results

Description of the Textbook

The textbook My Book of English is specifically designed for fourth-year primary school students, typically around nine years old. This age group is crucial for developing foundational language skills, making it essential for the material to be both engaging and educational. The cover of the textbook is visually appealing, employing a color scheme of white and green. The title "My Book" is prominently displayed in red, while "of English" is presented in green. This choice of colors is particularly symbolic, as they represent the colors of the Algerian flag, thereby fostering a sense of national pride among young learners.

The cover art features an illustration of two students, a girl and a boy, both clad in the traditional Algerian school uniform. The girl is depicted wearing a pink pinafore, while the boy wears a blue one, reflecting the standard attire of students in Algerian primary schools. This representation not only makes the book relatable for students but also reinforces cultural identity by showcasing local attire. Additionally, a red circle on the cover indicates the educational level for which the textbook is intended, making it easy for parents and educators to identify its suitability for fourth-year students.

Prominently displayed at the top of the cover page is the phrase “The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria,” rendered in Arabic. This is accompanied by the official logos of the Ministry of National Education and the National School Publication Office, which lend credibility and authority to the textbook. The title My Book of English is presented in bold letters at the top, ensuring it captures the attention of potential users. On the left side of the cover, the textbook indicates that it is designed for fourth-year primary school pupils, providing essential information for educators and parents alike regarding the intended audience. This clarity in labeling is crucial for facilitating effective educational planning and resource allocation in schools.

The back cover of the textbook is more straightforward, containing the logo of the printing office, which signifies the source of the publication. Alongside this, the price of the textbook is listed as 250.00 DA, which is relevant information for purchasing decisions. Additionally, copyright information is provided to protect the intellectual property of the authors and the publishing entity. A QR code is also included, which can enhance the learning experience by linking to supplementary resources or digital content that complements the material in the book.

Framework for Analysing Images in the Textbook

The framework used to analyse cultural representation in EFL education emphasises the integration of native, target, and global cultural elements in teaching materials. The analysis of cultural representation in the EFL textbook employs a qualitative framework based on visual and contextual content evaluation. This framework categorises the cultural elements into three primary contexts: native culture (Algerian), target culture (English-speaking), and global or multicultural culture (international elements). Each image or textual description within the textbook is examined to determine the cultural context it reflects, focusing on the themes, characters, and settings presented.

The procedure involves systematic steps:

1. All images, descriptions, and visual elements from the textbook are catalogued with details such as page number, context, and content specifics. This initial step ensures comprehensive coverage of all relevant material for analysis.
2. Each entry is classified into one of the three cultural contexts. For example, depictions of local attire or landmarks are categorised under native culture, while symbols such as Big Ben or interactions with British characters are categorised under target or multicultural culture.
3. Using the established framework, the analysis focuses on the visual, thematic, and symbolic elements in each image. The aim is to assess how these elements contribute to the representation of cultural diversity and their potential role in fostering intercultural competence.
4. The analysis evaluates the balance of cultural representation, examining the distribution and frequency of native, target, and multicultural elements. This step ensures alignment to promote a more inclusive and globally aware EFL curriculum.

By using this structured approach, the framework offers a clear methodology for understanding the representation of cultures in educational materials, enabling researchers to make informed recommendations for enhancing intercultural competence through balanced and diverse content.

The Analysis

Identifying Cultural Symbols

Traditional Clothing: On Page 8, the image of an extended family showcases members wearing traditional Algerian clothing, such as the burnous and haik. This reflects the cultural heritage of Algeria and emphasises the importance of family in local society.

Figure 1. A picture showcasing family members wearing traditional and Islamic clothes (My English textbook, 2024, p. 4)

Food: The depiction of a family gathering on Page 11, where they enjoy traditional bakery

items, highlights native culinary practices such as brik and chakhchoukha, which are traditional Algerian dishes made of wheat, meat and vegetables, further connecting students to their cultural roots. Examine Local Landscapes and Landmarks:

While specific landmarks are not highlighted in the selected images, the Martyr's Monument featured on Page 33 symbolises national pride and historical significance. The inclusion of local landmarks reinforces the cultural identity of Algeria.

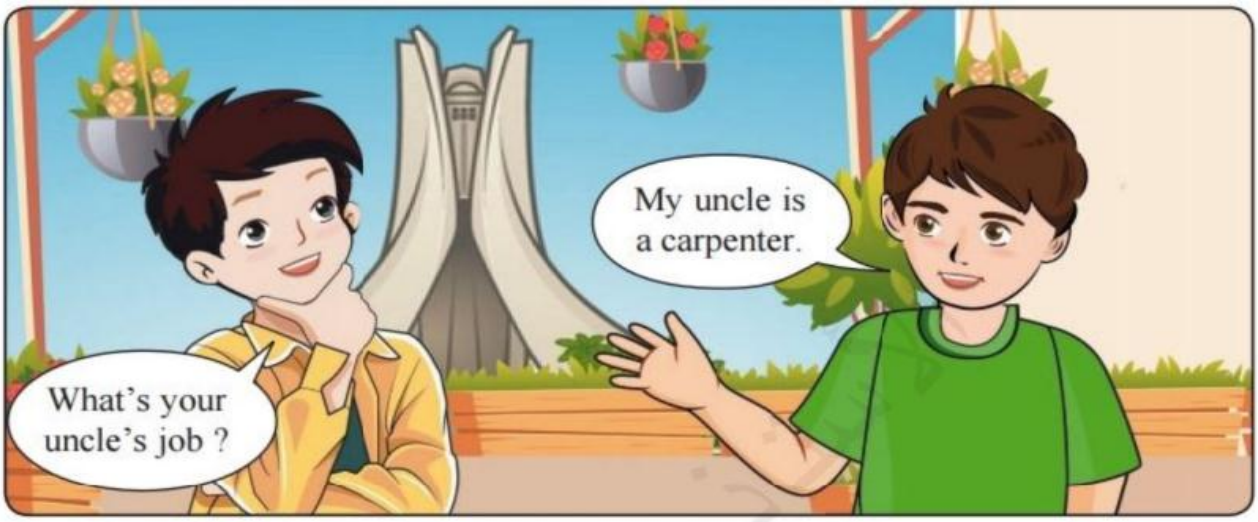

Figure 2. A picture showcasing two kids having a conversation in front of the martyr's monument in Algiers (My English textbook, 2024, p. 33)

A. Social and Cultural Practices:
   a. Festivals: The image on Page 70 of individuals attending the Great Mosque in Algiers for Eid prayer signifies the importance of religious celebrations in Algerian culture. This visual representation instills a sense of belonging and understanding of local customs.
   b. Daily Life: Scenes of family gatherings (Pages 11 and 14) and market interactions (Page 62) provide insights into social customs and the communal nature of Algerian life.
B. Art and Handicrafts:
   a. Although there are no direct images of handicrafts in the provided examples, the traditional clothing and food items serve as implicit symbols of Algeria's artistic heritage. Future representations could include pottery or musical instruments like the oud or derbouka to further emphasise this aspect.
C. Cultural Diversity:
   a. The inclusion of multicultural images, such as the online interactions between students from different countries on Pages 17, 18, and 20, highlights the multicultural aspect of Algerian society. These visuals demonstrate the interconnectedness of cultures in today's globalized world.

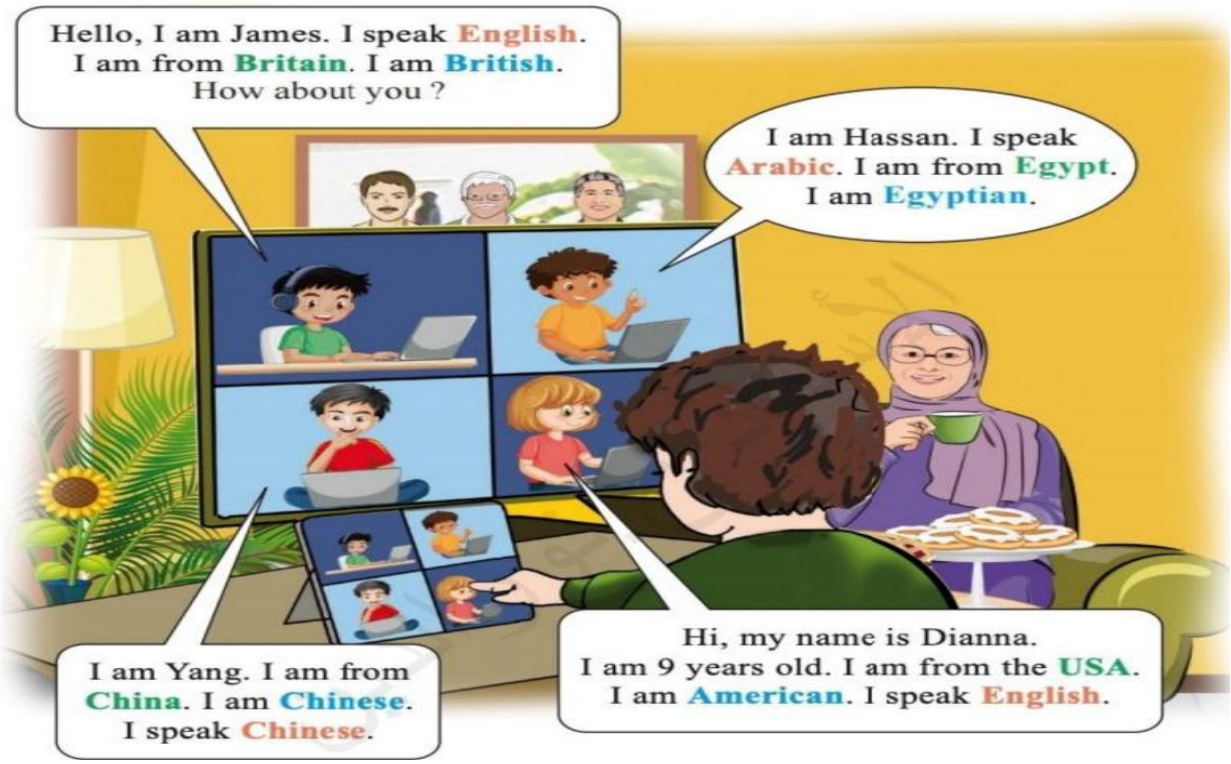

Figure 3. A picture showcasing cultural diversity (My English textbook, 2024, p. 17)

Results

Cultural Diversity

The textbook exhibits a moderate level of cultural diversity, primarily reflected in its visual representations. Several images introduce multicultural elements that include students from various backgrounds, as seen in, Which features a child engaging in an online lesson with classmates from China, Britain, America, and Egypt. Additionally, **Page 18** presents a visual of multiple flags representing different nations, reinforcing the theme of global interconnectedness. However, these multicultural representations are not extensively woven throughout the textbook. While there are instances where diverse cultures are acknowledged, such as the online conversations depicted on **Pages 20, 37, and 59**, the overall emphasis remains predominantly on native Algerian culture. This suggests that while the textbook introduces some aspects of cultural diversity, it primarily prioritises local cultural contexts over a wider exploration of global perspectives.

Balance of Representation

Native culture is visually represented prominently, with numerous images that reflect the daily life, traditions, and social values of Algerian society. For instance, images such as those on **Pages 8, 9, 11, 24, 27, 30, 33, 34, 48, 62, 70, and 85** illustrate various aspects of Algerian culture. These include:

- **Family Dynamics**: Visuals showing family gatherings (e.g., **Page 11**) highlight the importance of family in Algerian culture. The depiction of children in traditional attire (e.g., the girl in a pink pinafore and the boy in a blue one) reinforces the cultural significance of local dress.
- **Cultural Practices**: Images related to celebrations like **Eid** (e.g., **Page 70**) demonstrate the religious customs that are central to Algerian life. These images help students

connect with their cultural heritage and instill a sense of pride in their identity.

- **Occupations**: Visuals of conversations about family occupations (e.g., **Pages 24 and 27**) reflect local labor practices and reinforce societal values regarding work and community roles.

This strong focus on native culture highlights the importance of instilling a sense of cultural identity and pride in students. In contrast, the multicultural images are relatively few (e.g., **Pages 17, 18, 20, 37, 40+47, 59, 66, and 73**), indicating a limited integration of target cultural elements. The presence of international students and global cultural symbols serves to introduce some diversity, but it is evident that native culture dominates the visual content. In contrast, the representation of target cultures—primarily from English-speaking countries—is more limited. While the textbook includes multicultural elements, such as images depicting online conversations between Algerian students and peers from various backgrounds (e.g., **Pages 17, 20, and 37**), these visuals do not provide an in-depth exploration of the cultural practices or social norms of the target cultures. The inclusion of national flags on **Page 18** and interactions with international classmates introduce some elements of cultural diversity, but the overall focus remains on native Algerian culture.

Cultural Context

The cultural context provided by the images effectively aids students' understanding of both their own culture and that of the target language. The visuals representing family dynamics and social customs, such as those on **Pages 11 and 70**, contextualise cultural practices and values in ways that are relatable to Algerian students. Images of traditional family gatherings and celebrations serve to reinforce local customs and foster a sense of belonging and identity among learners. Moreover, the inclusion of multicultural elements in the context of online interactions (e.g., **Pages 17, 20, and 37**) presents opportunities for students to engage with peers from different cultural backgrounds. These visuals contextualise intercultural communication, allowing students to understand and appreciate diversity in a more globalised educational environment. However, while the native cultural images provide a strong foundation for understanding local practices, the limited representation of diverse cultures may restrict students' ability to navigate and appreciate cultural differences outside their own context. To enhance cultural understanding, it is crucial for educational materials to not only highlight native practices but also to broaden exposure to a variety of cultural narratives and experiences.

Discussion

Research Question 1: How are native and target cultures visually represented in the Algerian fourth-grade English language textbook?

The analysis reveals that the visual content of the textbook predominantly represents native Algerian culture, with a significant emphasis on traditional attire, local customs, family life, and national symbols. Target cultures, such as those from English-speaking countries, are less prominently depicted, appearing mainly in multicultural contexts rather than as standalone representations. This imbalance suggests that while the textbook promotes cultural pride and familiarity with learners' local heritage, it provides limited direct exposure to English-speaking cultures, potentially constraining students' understanding of the cultural nuances associated with the target language (Byram, 2021; Gómez Rodríguez, 2020).

Research Question 2: To what extent does the visual content of the textbook promote multiculturalism?

While native culture is heavily featured, the textbook includes a few instances of multicultural interactions, such as visual depictions of online communication between Algerian students and peers from diverse international backgrounds. These elements provide some exposure to global cultural contexts and foster an understanding of cultural diversity. However, the relative scarcity of these representations suggests that the promotion of multiculturalism is limited. This aligns with findings from similar studies, which note that EFL textbooks in non-Western contexts often prioritise local over global cultural elements (Yuen, 2011; Rouabah, 2022).

The findings are consistent with previous research emphasising the predominance of native cultural elements in EFL textbooks from non-Western contexts (Aliakbari, 2004; Yuen, 2011). While this focus reinforces cultural identity and local relevance, it often comes at the expense of adequately preparing learners for intercultural communication. For example, Gómez Rodríguez (2020) argues that an overemphasis on local culture may limit students' ability to navigate cross-cultural interactions effectively. Similarly, Yuen (2011) highlights the importance of including both global and target cultures to foster a balanced perspective and intercultural competence.

Furthermore, the textbook's limited promotion of multiculturalism reflects broader challenges in EFL education. Studies by Celik and Dikilitaş (2020) suggest that insufficient representation of global cultures can impede learners' development of the intercultural communicative competence needed in a globalised world. These findings highlight the need for a more balanced approach in EFL materials, incorporating diverse cultural elements to prepare learners for meaningful engagement in international contexts.

However, the promotion of ICC is constrained due to the insufficient representation of target cultures. While the textbook introduces some multicultural images, such as those depicting online interactions with students from various countries, the lack of depth in these portrayals means that students may not fully grasp the complexities of intercultural interactions. The visual content does not engage students in exploring the values, customs, and communication styles of English-speaking cultures in a meaningful way.

In conclusion, while the textbook's visual content effectively instills a sense of cultural identity through representations of native Algerian culture, it falls short of providing the comprehensive multicultural exposure needed for developing intercultural communicative competence. Enhancing the balance of cultural representation within the textbook by incorporating more diverse and detailed portrayals of target cultures would significantly improve students' preparedness for intercultural communication in their future educational and social interactions.

Conclusion

This study aimed to evaluate the integration of multiculturalism in the Algerian fourth-grade English as a Foreign Language textbook, specifically focusing on the visual representation of native and target cultures and the extent to which the visual content promotes intercultural communicative competence. The primary research problem addressed the need for an effective balance between the representation of native culture and that of target cultures in educational materials, which is essential for developing students' understanding of diverse cultural contexts.

The analysis of the textbook's visual content revealed several key points:

1. **Predominance of Native Culture**: The textbook features a significant emphasis on native Algerian culture, showcasing various aspects of daily life, traditions, and family

structures. Visuals depicting family gatherings, traditional clothing, and local customs reinforce students' connection to their heritage, fostering a sense of identity and pride.

2. **Limited Representation of Target Cultures**: In contrast to the rich representation of native culture, the inclusion of target cultures is markedly limited. While there are some multicultural elements, such as images of students engaging with peers from different countries, these representations lack depth and do not provide comprehensive insights into the customs, values, and communication styles of English-speaking cultures.
3. **Impact on Intercultural Communicative Competence and Multiculturalism**: The strong focus on native cultural elements enhances students' understanding of their own identity, aligning with the concept of **savoir** in intercultural competence. However, insufficient exposure to target cultures may hinder students' ability to effectively engage with and appreciate cultural diversity, which is critical in today's globalised society.

In summary, while the Algerian fourth-grade EFL textbook serves as an effective tool for instilling cultural pride through its representation of native culture, it must enhance its integration of target cultures to foster a more comprehensive understanding of intercultural competence. This will ultimately prepare students for meaningful interactions in an increasingly interconnected world, reflecting the broader goals of language education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the analysis regarding the representation of cultures in Algerian fourth-grade English as an EFL textbook, several recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness of the textbook in promoting ICC and a more comprehensive cultural understanding among students.

1. **Incorporate Diverse Cultural Narratives**: The textbook should include a wider range of visual and textual representations of target cultures, particularly from English-speaking countries. This could involve adding images, stories, and examples that reflect the customs, values, and daily life of various cultures. Including perspectives from different regions within the English-speaking world can broaden students' understanding of global diversity.
2. **Integrate Interactive Cultural Content**: To foster deeper engagement with multicultural perspectives, the textbook could incorporate interactive elements such as dialogues, role-plays, and projects that encourage students to explore cultural differences and similarities. Activities that promote discussions about cultural practices, festivals, and social norms can facilitate meaningful exchanges between students about their experiences and perspectives.
3. **Utilise Authentic Resources**: Including authentic materials such as videos, podcasts, and online resources that showcase the lives of people from different cultures can enrich the learning experience. These resources should present diverse cultural contexts and real-life scenarios that encourage students to think critically about intercultural communication.
4. **Review and Revise Regularly**:
    - Establish a regular review process for the textbook to ensure it remains relevant and inclusive of contemporary cultural dynamics. As societies evolve and cultures interact more globally, the materials used in education should reflect these changes to prepare students for a multicultural world.

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Declaration of AI Refined

This document has benefited from the application of AI-driven tools, including Grammarly and Scholar AI Chat, to refine its linguistic aspects. These tools were utilised to correct grammar and spelling and improve the overall writing style. It is acknowledged that the use of these technologies may introduce certain AI-generated linguistic patterns. However, the core intellectual content, data interpretation, and conclusions presented remain the sole work of the authors.

Statement of Absence of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research, findings, or recommendations presented in this paper. All conclusions drawn are independent and unbiased.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Categorisation of the visual analysis of the textbook

Page number	Cultural context	Description of the image	Culture of origin
Page 8	Family and friends	Image of the extended family, some members wear traditional and Islamic clothing.	Native culture
Page 9	Family and friends	Names of family members, Algerian/Arabic names	Native culture
Page 11	Family and friends	A picture of a family gathering over a meal in their house, eating traditional bakery, and wearing Islamic clothing	Native culture
Page 14	Family and friends	Three related pictures of kids having a conversation about names, family relations and kinship	Native culture
Page 17	Family and friends	A picture of a child having an online lesson with classmates from all over the world (Chinese, British, American and Egyptian)	Multicultural
Page 18	Family and friends	A picture of multiple flags (Chinese, American, British, Egyptian and Algerian)	Multicultural
Page 20	Family and friends	A strip of pictures depicting an online conversation between an Algerian and a British	Multicultural
Page 24	Occupations and jobs	a picture depicting a conversation between two friends	Native culture

		talking about the occupation of their family members	
Page 27	Occupations and jobs	A picture depicting a conversation between two girls about their parents' occupations	Native culture
Page 30	Occupations and jobs	Kids visiting a farm showcasing some local traditions	Native culture
Page 33	Occupations and jobs	Picture of two friends having a conversation in front of the martyr's monument	Native culture
Page 34	School	A kid in front of a school named ألامير عبد القادر	Native culture
Page 37	School	Two kids are having an online conversation about their schools, one is Algerian, the other is British	Multicultural
Page 40+47	School	Two kids having an online conversation about their schools, one is Algerian, the other is British (in the background is Big Ben)	Multicultural
Page 48	Health	A picture of a man visiting his sick father in the hospital, the father is wearing his traditional Algerian clothes.	Native culture
Page 59	Food	A picture of two friends having an online conversation about lunch, one is a European named Alberto, and the other is an Algerian named Nadjib.	Multicultural
Page 62	Food	Two women having a conversation in a local market about groceries, wearing Islamic clothing and with Algerian Names.	Native culture
Page 66	Games	Two kids are having a conversation about sports, one is a British named James, and the other is an Algerian named Nadjib.	Multicultural
Page 70	Celeberations	Picture of people going to the Great Mosque in Algiers for El Eid prayer	Native culture
Page 72	Celebrations	Buble pictures showcasing different national and religious holidays and traditions	Native culture
Page 73	Celabrations	Two pictures showing two different national holidays (the Algerian national martyr day and Mexican Mother's Day)	Multicultural
Page 78	Animals	Two pictures depicting two different natural habitats (a farm in Algeria and the Serengeti Park in Africa)	Multicultural
P 85	Animals	Two Algerian girls are talking about the animals they like	Native culture
P 94	Animals	Kids talking about the animals they like (Mexican, British, and Nadjib)	Multicultural

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