

Cross Cultural Representation in Pakistani's EFL Textbooks

Shamim Ali, AIOU, Pakistan

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2017
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The spread of English language as an international language has increased the numbers of its non-native speakers more than its native speakers all over the world .It has arisen the issue of the possession of this language. This study aims at describing and exploring and the type of cultural content found in English Language textbooks in Pakistan. Considering learner's various language needs. Now a days it has become gradually more important that English as a Foreign Language be taught with accompanying other communication skills as well such as; intercultural knowledge ,critical thinking awareness and developing the sharp sense of cultural awareness. Therefore in early 1990's it was felt that EFL textbooks should include Pakistani's culture as students can understand the locally contextualized discourse more easily and effectively. Culture is based on social, political and religious values and norms of a society. The reflection of culture in the textbooks has impact on the cognitive abilities of students as it has more affinity with their life. The model of Risager's Analytical Categories 1990 will be applied to expose cross cultural representation. The study investigates how target culture and Pakistani's culture are portrayed in the textbook of grade 10 level. The culture introduced in these texts has impact on the personalities of the students. The present study highlights the depiction of both cultures in these textbooks. In this study, it will be investigated how texts are exploited for introducing the culture and values of the society in which these texts are produced and how they entail the invisible ideologies.

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

1. Introduction

This study focuses on representation of cross cultural elements in English textbooks taught in Pakistan at HSSC Level. During my school life my teachers used to say that to command over a language we need to know 3Ls. And those 3Ls are Life, language and literature. These three are associated with culture. Therefore to understand the culture we need to learn language. This statement has been approved and experimented by the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, which tells that language shapes culture. This hypothesis suggests that language and culture are integral part and we cannot detach language from culture, and secondly to teach language means to teach a culture. Therefore this is a common trend to incorporate culture in language teaching.

In recent times, English language has been used in different contexts and we can see the production of different varieties of English language. In the traditional teaching methods teachers in Pakistan were only concerned to develop learners linguistics ability as a result it was noticed that learners were unable to communicate freely with foreigners. In recent years it is observed a paradigm shift which led English language teachers, and text book designers to review their methodologies in order to develop useful communicative competence. Therefore the teachers, textbook writers and language planners have become more interested to find out the important role of culture in English teaching and to make our learners aware of the significance of cross-cultural competence.

Textbooks plays vital role in developing the cognition of students, and they have great impact on the thought process of students. My research investigates that how these textbooks represent the Pakistani's culture and the foreign culture. At the same time the study examines how discourses included in these textbooks make or have impact on the world view of students who read these textbooks. In this study, the I tried to find out the description of events, Images, characters, typical cultural events and entire fabric of arts and intellectual activities in the light of comparison between Pakistani's culture and foreign culture.

EFL textbooks that I have selected for the current study are written and approved by Pakistan Education ministry. These textbooks are studied by thousands of students every year, hence; they have a great impact on the cognitive abilities of students. Being a Professor in Allama Iqbal Open University ,and making students assignments in every semester it gave me an idea to analyze the books of HSSC, EFL textbooks from cross cultural perspective.

Teaching English as a foreign language has been included in Pakistan from the basic level. Being an official language of Pakistan English language enjoys the high status and it is widely used in the legislative ,executive, and judicial and in the officer ranks of Pakistan's armed forces. Pakistan's. Law and Constitution of our country are written in English It is also widely employed as a medium of instruction in our schools, colleges and universities .English is taught for communicative purposes at international level while our native language Urdu fulfils their communicative needs at local level.

1.1 Background

Language is the most ingredient of culture and shaped by culture. Language is the carrier of culture and it reveals the cultural features of a community in which the language is spoken. Language and culture are closely related to each other therefore we can say that ethnicity strengthens its roots because of language. From the aspect of language teaching we have to keep in our mind that, to teach a foreign language is to edify another culture, to learn a language is also to gain knowledge of another culture. Steffensen, Joag-Deve, & Anderson, 1979 highlight in their study which is related to cross-cultural comprehension. They were in the opinion When the EFL learners read the passage about the daily activities from their own culture they learn more rapidly because they recall a big amount of information, create more culturally appropriate elaborations and embellish the content an appropriate manner. At the same time if they read the daily activities passages in "foreign language they read the passage more slowly and culturally-based distortions take place. Their results signified that cultural context influences knowledge, and this phenomenon occurs regardless of an individual's background.

English is an International Language and cultural issues stemmed from a post Cold War conception of the expansion of English. Crystal says (1997), the spread of English starts in the 1950s, at that time the picture of English as a world language was quite dim and theoretical, and its practical aspects had not been highlighted.

Cook (2008) states that English has become 'hyper central language' and has spread in all societies. As it has become an international language therefore it is used everywhere in different fields of life. It has become a globalized language from corner to corner of the world. The English language circle has increased and most of the non-native speakers employ it in their day to day conversation. As this is the known fact that Language transmits its culture to learners and at the same time we transmit the culture through language therefore, we notice cross cultures elements in EFL classroom. Brown (2009) discussed 9th principle on the language culture connection that teaching a language infuses its cultural norms, way of thinking, customs, values, traditions and entire code of conduct.

English is the most important language used as second language in all walks of life in the world. Richards & Schmidt (2002) opined that the term EIL (English as an International Language) confirms the status of English as the most important language .Moreover, it is used in different varieties in the world. It is authenticated by the term 'Englishes'. Chang (2006) is of the view that English is the most important, dominating, prominent and influential language in educational fields ,thus it has prevailing influence in our day to day life .In the most of the part of the world it is a major language which is learnt as a foreign language.

As English language is associated with globalization therefore the EFL textbooks designed for learning of language help in communication and facilitating the process of learning the target language. As it carries the culture of the people who present and produce them. The culture travels along with EFL textbooks Gray (2002) states that

EFL textbooks are primarily designed to help in learning the language but unconsciously, foreign culture is embedded into the readers. Most of the universities all over the world offer courses to international graduate students in English as a foreign language (EFL) and at the same time they offer training courses for prospective EFL teachers in their Linguistics Department.

AIOU offers Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). It is a 30 credit hour programme and it was introduced and launched in the late 1980s. The aims and objectives of this programme are to give understanding about different techniques, approaches and methods which can be used for learning and teaching of English as a foreign language in the classroom in Pakistan. It covers theoretical and practical aspects of English teaching. It is quite beneficial not only for those teachers who are already teaching English but also for those who want to instruct English as a foreign or second language in future.

Teaching English to non native people started from 15th century as Jenkins (2000) states and its purpose was to help non-native speakers to communicate effectively with the native speakers.

With globalization the concept of teaching English almost changed. Pennycook (2007) affirms that English language is linked with globalization. Most of the people study English language, as the key for developing their international understanding and to know the world regulation. In the whole process of globalization, English language has played an important and very significant role.

Bottery (2000) says that globalization is linked to the wide spread authority of English language. Due to the internet English language has transformed the world into global village and all humans on the earth are gathered at one platform. The supremacy of English language is striking in all this process termed as globalization. It is very important to mention here that globalization and English language have great harmony and both of them walk side by side, towards the goal of business, communication and world politics, making its simpler and easier ways around the world. Globalization and English language are exposed to the practical use in the everyday of the human's life, wherever they are around the world.

The status of English is understood as a powerful economic tool for development. In the entire globe the status of English as an international language has increased its role in discourse and scholarship. It is a most important instrument for any kind of Cross-Cultural Communication and for cultural Awareness. Brumfit (1995) states "the ownership of an interest in English has become international in the last half century. He further emphasized that scholarship about English has become international and is recognized by all communities. The users of English language have witnessed an enormous increase in the 20th century in number. Widdowson (1994) is of the opinion that the terms of 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' had to be restructured, reframed and it should be substituted with terms of 'monolingual English speaker' and 'bilingual English speaker'. And the term bilingual English speaker is very appropriate. Because BES are able to learn new words easily. They can use

information in new ways. BES always come up with solutions to problems when they connect with others.

With the increasing awareness of the non-native speakers of English language, it is the need of time that English should be focused and it should be used as lingua franca. In the present scenario, English is known as common lingua franca all over the globe. And it is a fact that almost 80% are non-native speakers, as the speakers of English belong to poles apart cultures and backgrounds therefore it should be value free. It should not be only in the hands of native speakers but it is the equal property of all speakers who use either as a native speaker or non-native speaker. (Sowden, 2011).

The community of English language speakers is increasing day by day. The native speakers used English for social, political, financial and cultural benefit. Phillipson (2009) calls it 'linguistic imperialism' and it is which is related to 'cultural imperialism'. Through the expansion of English language in the world, the culture of the British also transfers to the non-native speakers. We can say that culture is a major and indivisible component of any language language, it is in my opinion one of the most enjoyable aspects of acquiring a new language. It develops your interests and your motivation Richards & Schmidt (2002) state that cultural imperialism is communicated through teaching of language and promoting the culture of the owners of the language. The invisible ideology of the target culture works through language. Culture has its roots in environment and technology and it flourishes with increase of energy resources

2. Theoretical Framework

This study investigated the representation of the source culture and the target culture in EFL textbooks of HSSC level through micro and macro level. It examined how both cultures are introduced in these textbooks used for the teaching of English as a foreign language and at the same time this study compares the representation of the foreign culture and the Pakistani's culture. The data will be analyzed by applying the model of Risager's Analytical Categories (1990, pp 182-183). Risager model provides for each series of the textbooks proper analysis. The listing, provides with quantitative data as regards the amount of references for the representation of local target and international cultures in each of the series under consideration. Following elements will be considered at micro and macro levels

1. At micro-level following points will be considered
 - a. The geographical definition of characters
 - b. The social definition of characters
 - c. Material used for developing the sense of environment
 - d. Different situations of communication
 - e. Subjectivity and interaction of the characters: such as their feelings, attitudes, values perceived notions and their culturally related problems

2. At macro-level following points will be considered
 - a. Social, political and historical issues:
 - b. Sociological facts about present-day
 - c. Socio cultural problems and their effect on the society
 - d. Historical background

At the same time International and intercultural issues will be discussed Comparisons between the International and intercultural will be dealt with the perspective of ESL students point of view

3. Statement of the Problem

EFL learners need to connect with course on three basic levels; text to text, text to self, and self to the world. Every ESL learner tries to bring something to the classroom. And if the text or the course book is familiar with the backgrounds and/or prior knowledge of ESL learners it helps a teacher to engage students in learning experiences that connect with their diverse cultural backgrounds and it helps them building their knowledge .It is my personal observation that a single teacher may not be able to represent as many cultural perspectives as he/she may like, teachers can make her/his curriculum useful by adding variety of resources in order to make the learning more swift and their text more culturally accessible and relevant. Textbooks exercise impact on the cognitive abilities and behaviours of students. The ideologies introduced through these textbooks influence the thoughts of the students. This study examined the representation of Pakistani's culture and foreign culture in the textbooks.

4. Significance of the Present Study

The study aimed to investigate the portrayal of cultures in discourse practices and images. This study tried to find out the depiction of cross cultural elements in the texts of ESL textbooks. The study explores that how glimpses of cultures are introduced and promoted through textbooks. This study is quite significant in this sense that how a text connects to their lives or to give an example of a particular idea as they would experience it in their native language. Teachers can bring the text in the classroom and it is quite valuable because even if they speak about their culture with their teachers they will learn more.

5. Objectives of the Research

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To highlight representation of Pakistani's culture and foreign culture in EFL textbooks at HSSC Level.
- To find out similarities and differences in the discourse practices in Pakistani's culture and foreign culture.
- To examine how culture is introduced through teaching of English language in Pakistan.

6. Research Questions

The current study will find out answers of one primary and four subsidiary research questions:

Primary Research Question How are Pakistani's culture and foreign culture portrayed in ESL textbooks at HSSC level?

Subsidiary Research Questions

1. How is cultural anthropology portrayed in English textbooks?
2. How are historical, political and social glimpses exhibited in English textbooks?
3. To what extent do you find proportion of international and Pakistani's cultural issues?
4. What sort of literary style dominates in the English textbooks?

7. Delimitation of the Study

The study is delimited to English textbook of HSSC Level of AIOU. This helped in facilitating the comparison of Pakistani's culture and foreign culture introduced through textbooks selected for the present study.

8. Focus of the Study

This study finds the portrayal of foreign culture and Pakistani's culture in EFL textbooks at HSSC level. It examines how culture is introduced in textbooks through the teaching of English language. In this study it is investigated how representation of two cultures differ in the textbook.

9. Material

The corpus of my study was the text book of AIOU. These representative ESL/EFL textbooks are currently being used in Pakistan for teaching English at secondary level. The AIOU English textbooks considered in this study were selected based on their representativeness of the most commonly used materials in Pakistan. Sample of texts from book was highlighted. And especially that text was highlighted in which cultural awareness was shown. The following criterion was kept in mind for analyzing the ESL textbook

- **Goals:**

Awareness of skills, knowledge, understanding the formal properties of language

- **Tasks:**

ESL learners can process and synthesize cultural information. Students can use the language in meaningful

- **Presentation:**
Culture for raising, showing cultures for relevance, direct or indirect ,implied or stated
- **Representation and perspective:**
Biasness ,stereotyping
- **Cultural Artifacts:**
People, languages, places and activities

10. Questionnaire

For the research purpose I underwent two phases for evaluation .First I gave questionnaire to the teachers .Those two phases were the analysis of the textbook and the questionnaire . to the teachers. My both phases were quite interesting because it was the major aim of my research to find out the answers of my research questions. In both phases I defined the criteria for evaluation .I developed various checklists

11. Participants

A total number of twenty teachers of Islamabad and Rawalpindi (Pakistan) were taken for this research. I gave them ESL textbook for my research, some of the teachers were already teaching this book. Questionnaires was disseminated to teachers and they were requested to give their impartial opinions about the ESL textbook taught by them at HSSC level by AIOU.As I have mentioned it earlier that my aim was to investigate ESL textbook at grade 10 from perspective of cross culture representation. Nature of my study is primarily textual analysis with qualitative and quantitative analysis. So this study tried to highlight how Pakistani's culture and foreign culture are integrated into the textbook.

12. Data Analysis

12.1 Questionnaire for Teachers

	Questions for Teachers	Yes	%	No	%
a.	Does the used ESL textbook reflect students' culture adequately?	20	100%		
b.	Do students feel comfortable while reading the elements related to the foreign culture?	15	75%	5	25%
c.	Do you find an over use of the foreign culture in the ESL textbook of AIOU?			20	100%
d.	Do the majority of students develop their comprehension well when it is demonstrated through the foreign culture?	15	75%	5	25%
e.	Do the pictures in ESL text book show students' cultural, ethnic and religious background?	20	100%		

f.	Do the pictures used in ESL textbooks reflect students' background their cities, traditions and landscapes?	20	100%		
g.	Do you smooth the progress of text sometimes to avoid the foreign culture?	10	50%	10	50%
h.	Is there enough exercises based on the language of local culture in the proposed ESL textbooks?	20	100%		
i.	Would you like to design EFL textbooks considering EFL learners environment?	20	100%		
j.	Do you replace some foreign elements with the local one during your teaching time?	10	50%	10	50%

12.2 Questionnaire for Students

	Questions for Students	Yes	No
a.	Does your ESL textbook reflect your culture adequately?	100%	
b.	Do students feel comfortable while reading the elements related to the foreign culture?	83%	17%
c.	Do you find any representation of Pakistani famous personalities in your ESL textbook?	100%	
d.	Do you develop your comprehension well when it is demonstrated through the foreign culture?	67%	33%
e.	Do the pictures in ESL text book show your' cultural, ethnic and religious background?	100%	
f.	Do the pictures used in ESL textbooks reflect your background your cities, traditions and landscapes?	100%	
g.	Does your teacher smooth the progress of text sometimes to avoid the foreign culture?	67%	33%
h.	Is there enough exercises based on the language of local culture in the proposed ESL textbooks?	100%	
i.	Would you like to help designers for writing textbooks considering your needs?	87%	13%
j.	Do you want your teacher to replace some foreign elements with the local one during their teaching time?	87%	13%

English textbook of HSSC Level has been selected for the analysis of this study. Thousands of students study these textbooks every year in Pakistan. The discourse generated through these ESL textbooks influences the worldview of students. The ideologies introduced through these textbooks have deep impact on the cognitive abilities of students.

According to the analysis of the questionnaire, the results indicated that teachers and ESL learners were more excited to teach, learn and participate effectively in the classroom. Most of the ESL learners agreed that they have the ability to understand the content well when it targets their local cultural and religious background. This demonstrates that local culture has a great influence on students learning process. At the same time most of the teachers also relied on the local culture while teaching a particular aspect which is presented through foreign culture in the imposed English textbooks. The statistical data proved evidence above that students are more relaxed and engaged when teachers facilitate items using students' own culture and local topics related to their surroundings and to their real life.

13. Conclusion, Findings and Recommendations

In conclusion, I must say that introducing the students to the other culture is important. Because they should be aware of other cultures too. They should be open to change. But using it abundantly and arbitrarily may leave negative impact on them. This study of mine is not against using the foreign culture in the English textbooks, my opinion is these students are in need of learning the language more than knowing the other culture. Whereas, it is against the overuse of it. The results showed that students of HSSC level are more in need of learning the language more than knowing the foreign culture. ESL learners do not comprehend effectively inside the classroom when they were dealing with features presented through the foreign culture. In my opinion our Education ministry should adopt new research for designing ESL text book and they should take them into consideration while designing a textbook.

In conclusion I must admit that AIOU English text books contain aspects that make ESL learners comprehend the content easily because their religious beliefs, their cultural background and environment have been discussed in an explicit manner. AIOU textbooks writers follow bottom-up approach which enable textbook writers to know students' needs

The majority of texts reviewed in this study meets the specifications required for effective cultural awareness. Most of the contents address the criteria and it fosters optimal intercultural inquiry. It develops awareness and understanding of the local culture as well as the cultures of English-speaking countries. Major findings from each research questions were delineated. The recommendations for future research is offered based on the findings of this study

References

- Bottery, M. (2000). *Education, policy and ethics*. London: Continuum.
- Brown, H. D. (2009, January 12). Brown's 12 Principles. Retrieved April 28, 2015, from <http://seattlecentral.edu/faculty/jgeorg/TELSLSCCC/12PrincHTML.htm>
- Brumfit, C. J. (1995). *The role of English in a changing Europe: where do we go from here? Best of ELTECS*. The British Council.
- Chang, J. (2006). Globalization and English in Chinese higher education. *World Englishes*, 25(3), 513–525. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971X.2006.00484.x> retrieved on February 27, 2014
- Cook, V. (2008). *Second language learning and language teaching* (4th ed.). UK: Hodder Education.
- Gray, J. (2002). The global coursebook in ELT. In D. Block & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and languageteaching* (pp. 151-167). New York: Routledge.
- Jenkins, J. (2000). *The phonology of English as an international language*. Oxford: OUP.
- Murphy, M. D. (n.d.). Functionalism - Anthropological Theories - Department of Anthropology - The University of Alabama. Retrieved April 28, 2015, from <http://anthropology.ua.edu/cultures/cultures.php?culture=Functionalism>
- neoevolutionism | anthropology. (n.d.). In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved April 28, 2015, from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/408861/neoevolutionism>
- Pennycook, A. (2007). *Global Englishes and transcultural flows*. NY and London: Routledge.
- Phillipson, R. (2009). *Linguistic imperialism continued*. NY and London: Routledge.
- Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rd ed.). UK: Pearson Education.
- Risager, K. (1990). Cultural references in European textbooks. An evaluation of recent tendencies. IN B. Dieter & M. Byram (Eds.), *Mediating languages and cultures. Towards an intercultural theory of English language teaching*. Clevedon and Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Sowden, C. (2011). ELF on a mushroom: the overnight growth in English as a Lingua Franca. *ELT Journal*,

Widdowson, H. G. (1994). The ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(2), 377-389.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3587438> retrieved on February 26, 2014.