



A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF (NON-) ESSENTIALIST CULTURAL DISCOURSES EMBEDDED IN THE TEXTBOOK SERIES “ENGLISH FILE”

(Araştırma Makalesi)

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Abstract

In today's various language learning contexts in which the reflection of English language uses for intercultural communication becomes prominent, the core resources of the language classrooms, be they virtual or face-to-face, are still textbooks. Therefore, the stance taken while constructing the multimodal components in the textbooks would influence whether language learners will develop an understanding of the target language community in line with an international perspective or not. In this vein, our study is a critical examination of (non)-essentialist cultural discourses in cultural representations in the visuals and the texts of English File Fourth Edition Elementary, Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate Student's Books. Taking account of multimodality in both semiotic and social-historical rhetorical senses and acknowledging the pedagogic-didactic nature of the textbooks, we focused on different meaning-making tools like images and texts and the interaction between them within the scope of this article. Findings showed that the textbooks mostly perpetuate an essentialist perspective of culture, favouring “Western”, especially British, and American cultural representations, besides some texts addressing neo-essentialist perspectives. The elementary book has the highest number of essentialist texts in which “the West” is described and emphasised constantly, while the pre-intermediate book, albeit with a few texts from a critical perspective, is mostly composed of neo-essentialist elements. Lastly, the intermediate book can be viewed as the most non-essentialist one among others, since it consists of the highest proportion of interpersonal and intercultural exchanges without a specific reference to a cultural arena that is both predefined and defining in the series, though half of the texts still make a reference to the “Western” countries in the intermediate book as well.

Keywords: *EFL Textbook Analysis, Cultural Discourses, (Non) Essentialism, Neo-Essentialism, Intercultural Communication.*

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“İngilizce Dosyası- English File” Kitap Serisindeki Gömülü Özcü (Olmayan) Kültürel Söylemlerin Eleştirel İncelemesi

Öz

Kültürlerarası iletişim için İngilizce kullanımlarının yansımalarının ön plana çıktığı günümüzün çeşitli dil öğrenme bağlamlarında ister sanal ister yüz yüze olsun, dil sınıflarının temel kaynakları hâlâ ders kitaplarıdır. Bu nedenle, ders kitaplarındaki çoklu biçimli bileşenleri yapılandırırken sergilenen tutum, dil öğrenenlerin hedef dil topluluğu ile ilgili uluslararası bir bakış açısına uygun bir anlayış geliştirip geliştirmeyeceğini etkileyecektir. Bu bağlamda çalışmamız, dördüncü basım “İngilizce Dosyası- English File” temel seviye, orta seviye öncesi ve orta seviye öğrenci kitaplarının görsellerindeki ve metinlerindeki kültürel temsillerdeki temel özcü (olmayan) kültürel söylemlerin eleştirel bir incelemesidir. Hem göstergibilimsel hem de sosyal-tarihsel retorik anlamda çoklu biçimselliği göz önüne almak ve ders kitaplarının pedagojik-didaktik doğasını kabul etmekle birlikte, bu makale kapsamında görseller ve metinler gibi farklı anlam oluşturma araçlarına ve bunlar arasındaki etkileşime odaklandık. Sonuçlar, onların, yeni-özcü bakış açılarını ele alan bazı metinlerin yanı sıra, çoğunlukla “Batılı”, özellikle İngiliz ve Amerikan kültürel temsillerini destekleyen özcü bir kültürel bakış açısını sürdürdüğünü gösterdi. Temel seviye kitabı, “Batı” konusunun sürekli olarak anlatıldığı ve vurgulandığı en çok özcü metin sayısına sahipken; orta seviye öncesi kitabı, eleştirel bakış açısına sahip birkaç metin içerse de, yoğun bir şekilde vurgulanan "Merkez-Batı" konulu metinlerin yanı sıra, çoğunlukla yeni-özcü unsurlardan oluşuyor. Son olarak, orta seviye kitabı, diğerleri arasında en özcü olmayan kitap olarak görülebilir, çünkü dizide hem önceden tanımlanmış hem de tanımlayıcı bir kültürel alana özel bir atıfta bulunulmaksızın kişilerarası ve kültürlerarası alışverişlerle ilgili metinler açısından en yüksek orana sahiptir; ancak bu kitaptaki metinlerin yarısı da yine “Batılı” ülkelere atıfta bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Ders Kitabı İncelemesi, Kültürel Söylemler, Özcülük (Karşıtlığı), Yeni-Özcülük, Kültürlerarası İletişim.*

1. Introduction

The focus of education should be on problematic issues in learners' lives so that learning could be composed of not only acquiring the knowledge but also creating the knowledge and reality in social interaction (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). Likewise, the materials used in the classrooms should be related to students' reality and meet their needs so that learners can be aware of the society they live in and claim their rights, which leads to empowerment (Ooiwa-Yoshizawa, 2018).

In language education, resources should help learners raise critical consciousness of current realities and develop skills of problematising the given (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012). Today, course books supplemented by authentic texts, audios in addition to multimedia remain as the main resource for the input. They provide not only language samples but

also cultural products (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013) and windows to the world (Risager, 2021). Considering that course books are the main sources of language input for learners from different countries, cultural representations should be unbiased. Learners need to be able to keep their own cultural beliefs while getting the perception of other cultural practices (Pasand & Ghasemi, 2018). However, the way culture is presented may create overgeneralised and inaccurate abstractions which are types of "stereotypes" of the targeted language community (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). In the present study, we aim to investigate how (inter)cultural aspects have been presented in the English File Fourth Edition Series from a critical perspective. In doing so, we pay attention to the textual and visual elements in the books by considering any ethnocentric or stereotypical texts according to a dynamic and moving conceptualisation of culture. Next, we will explicate on the conceptual framework including the meaning of culture and different perspectives on cultural discourses prior to a comprehensive review of literature. These perspectives will set ground for the critical analysis of the textbooks in the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Conceptualisation of Cultural Discourses

Culture lacks a precise definition as a result of the fact that it has been viewed from different aspects. The definitions are neither wrong nor complete. As a common view, Spencer-Oatey & Franklin (2009, p.15) define culture as "a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people".

Holliday (2010) explicates different perspectives on culture as follows: essentialism, non-essentialism, neo-essentialism, global cosmopolitanism along with critical cosmopolitanism. Firstly, he examines the essentialist perspective and explains that culture is seen as a separate entity comprising particular functions and territories with clear-cut boundaries, which closely correlates with nations and languages. According to him, societies are seen as solid and describable systems in essentialism, and behavioural traits are closely associated with the groups over personal choices. Secondly, he explains non-essentialism which is the opposite of essentialism by stating that culture is complex and that it depends on the discourse rather than the functions in the systems. Thus, it cannot be limited to nations or clear-cut boundaries. It is dynamic with blurred boundaries. Thirdly, Holliday points out that neo-essentialism emerged as a reaction to essentialism. He states that culture is viewed beyond national borders with smaller cultures included and that cultural diversity is recognized. However, it is still under the influence of essentialism because of seeing nations as fundamental in developing 'cultures'. In other words, nations play the biggest role in shaping the 'cultures'; hence, culture is still mainly under the influence of nations. Moreover, Holliday considers global cosmopolitanism as a perspective that achieves to elude essentialist views. He asserts that global cosmopolitanism aims at providing all individuals in a single community with equal opportunities. However, the idea of including everyone in one community results in dominating and oppressing the less

powerful ones. Lastly, he articulates critical cosmopolitanism emerging as a resistance to the oppressive ideology of global cosmopolitanism. Culture is viewed in a global political arena rather than between national borders, and it is claimed that the oppressed should be provided with opportunities to express themselves in resistance to oppression. According to Holliday, critical cosmopolitanism is highly opposed to global cosmopolitanism which promotes domination by positively discriminating “Centre”, which refers to “Western”, from “Periphery”, which refers to “Non-Western”. Thus, critical cosmopolitanism denies the consciousness which is falsely created only by the Centre and advocates being open to Periphery discourses as well (Holliday, 2010). We will approach the cultural representations in the textbook series to be analysed in this study, bearing these perspectives in mind, which is why it has been important to draw on them briefly as above. In what follows, analytical studies about the cultural representations in language course books will be unfolded in consideration of international and Turkish contexts.

2.2. Studies in the International and Turkish Contexts

There have been many world-wide studies investigating cultural perspectives presented in the course books (Garcia, 2005; Gholami, Pasand & Ghasemi, 2018; Rashidi, Meihami, and Gritter 2016; Reimann, 2009). Garcia (2005) revealed that few of the books dealt with intercultural issues, that most of the focus in the books were on the UK, and that very few of the books discussed the relationship between English speaking nations. Gholami, Pasand and Ghasemi (2018) and Reimann (2009) examined whether the textbooks provided realism in cultural content accurately and objectively and showed that representations of cultural topics were limited, and that they did not raise cultural awareness effectively.

Song (2013) examined cultural representations in Korean EFL textbooks to see whether the cultural representations matched with the national curriculum which promoted cosmopolitan citizenship and revealed that the course books favoured “American and British cultures” and that presentation of different “cultures” were highly limited. Different from other studies, Zacharias (2005) focused on the beliefs of teachers about international English coursebooks and conducted a research study with teachers to investigate their beliefs on internationally published materials. The results of the study displayed that teachers preferred internationally published materials as they believed that English-speaking countries use “the perfect English”. As the researcher pointed out the participants tended to see native speakers of English superior in some ways although the native speaker model was abandoned.

In their study, Rashidi, Meihami and Gritter (2016) focused on L1, L2, international and neutral cultural content with aesthetic, sociological, semantic, and sociolinguistic elements and revealed that L1 cultural content was dominant in the books, and that the books from inner circle countries involved L2 cultural content as well. They also found out that the books from outer circle countries focused on international cultural content besides L1 and that the books from expanding circle countries involved both L2 and international cultural content.

In the Turkish context, there have been many studies on cultural elements in course books as well (Arıkan, 2005; Çakır, 2010; Çelik & Erbay, 2013; Şimşek, 2017; Ulum & Bada, 2016). Arıkan (2005) claimed that teachers and the students are exposed to images that affect their perceptions and worldviews in ELT coursebooks, and stated that the visual depictions may promote stereotypical thinking. He investigated the visuals in two ELT coursebooks in terms of age, gender and social class and revealed that there were many problematic visuals of social imbalances in terms of cultural, psychological and social references. In another study, Çakır (2010) investigated the target culture-specific elements in three course books used in elementary education. As a result, he displayed that most of the activities did not provide cultural elements sufficiently and that the frequency of cultural expressions did not enable learners to be exposed to the authentic situations.

Şimşek (2017) explored pre-service teachers' reactions to culturally-inappropriate materials and revealed that half of the teachers did not make any changes in the materials. Also, Çelik and Erbay (2013) investigated three coursebooks in terms of four cultural aspects: products, practices, perspectives and people and found out that the coursebooks involved cultural aspects yet "the culture of Europe" was dominant. Like the study of Rashidi, Meihami and Gritter (2016), Ulum and Bada (2016) also investigated inner and outer circle cultural elements in Turkish-authored EFL course books recommended by the state in Turkey and found that mostly outer circle cultural elements were employed in the books and the cultural elements were composed of six categories: social, economic, political, geographical, entertaining and touristic.

As indicated in the literature, there have been many studies on cultural representations in course books. Yet, most of them are not from a critical perspective, and they are limited to essentialist descriptions and categories of L1, L2, inner circle countries, outer circle countries, etc. without any awareness of cultural discourses in them. Due to the limited number of critical work on cultural representations in course books, the present study aims at critically examining (non-)essentialist cultural discourses embedded in the texts and visuals of the English File Fourth Edition Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, and Intermediate Student's Books (Latham-Koenig, Oxenden, Lambert, Seligson, & Oxford University Press, 2019), which have been published by a well-known and respected publisher, Oxford University Press. The books are highly popular as the main source for English input in English language teaching in higher education. Overall, the study aims at answering the following question: "What aspects of (non-)essentialist cultural discourses are evident in the texts and in the visuals in the English File Fourth Edition Elementary, Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate Student's Books?"

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Samples

This study has a qualitative nature in that it involves the content analysis of the chosen documents, i.e., course books, and a framework for the content analysis which was adapted from Littlejohn (1998), Cunningsworth (1995 as cited in McGrath, 2002, p.25)

and Risager (1991) have been used. This framework has been chosen for the analysis of texts and visuals as it allows us to critically analyse the underlying cultural values presented in the books in terms of cultural representations at micro, macro, international and intercultural levels and according to the perspectives of authors.

The books named above are used in many Schools of Foreign Languages in Turkey, which is why they have been chosen as the samples of analysis. They are aligned with Common European Framework (CEFR). The series aims at enhancing communicative confidence by providing grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and skills development. The units which are thematic provide vocabulary and grammar practices to reinforce linguistic structures, authentic texts, listening activities which promote clear pronunciation, documentary videos, dramas and interactive activities that enable students to record themselves (Latham-Koenig et al., 2019).

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Each book was analysed twice separately. In the first review, the first section of the framework was used, and the visual analysis was conducted. Visuals were examined in terms of gender, skin colour and ethnicity and analysed quantitatively to investigate the distribution of given categories related to these elements. The nationalities were detected in the visuals by means of the contexts described, and the surrounding objects. To prevent stereotyping, physical appearances and clothing were not considered as evidence of a particular nationality, and such people were listed under the category of Not Determined. In the second review, the texts were taken into consideration, and they were analysed by means of the second section of the framework focusing on cultural representations at micro and macro levels, international and intercultural issues, and authors' point of views.

3.3. Ethical Considerations

In this study, ethical requirements related to the disciplinary principles in the process of publication have been considered. The scope of the study which includes materials analyses have not required any ethical board approval.

4. Findings

4.1. Visuals of Gender and Ethnicity

The analyses of gender and ethnicity in the coursebooks were carried out separately. The visuals that are drawn and that consist of blurred background, or crowded places such as a school garden, a concert, etc. were excluded from the analysis.

In the English File 4th Edition Elementary Book, 80 pictures of women are displayed, while 63 pictures of men are displayed. In the English File 4th Edition Pre-Intermediate Book, the numbers of genders slightly increase as follows: 82 women and 69 men. On the other hand, numbers of the displays and the gender distribution in the English File

4th Edition Intermediate Book are significantly different: 98 pictures of women and 152 pictures of men. While more than 50 % of the visuals comprise women in Elementary and Pre-Intermediate Books, the percentage of the visuals involving women drops to 39.2 % in the Intermediate Book. The ethnicities of people have been determined through the analyses of related dialogues, texts and backgrounds of the pictures in the visuals. People who are not provided with a clear context have been admitted as "Not Determined" (ND), while people whose ethnicity could be detected in the context but who cannot be grouped under the pre-determined groups such as Canadian or Argentinian have been admitted as "Other". Although "Not Determined" scales seem higher, it should be kept in mind that the ethnicities of such people are not clear thus that they cannot be assigned to a particular ethnicity. Hence, it can be indicated that the series mainly exhibits the visuals of American or British people. Only one Turkish person has been detected in the series. The English File Fourth Edition Elementary displays the highest number of pictures of American/British people, while the English File Fourth Edition Intermediate displays the least number of them. The results show that the English File Fourth Edition Intermediate maintains the greatest diversity. As for the distribution of visuals in terms of the skin colour, white-skinned people are dominant in the series. Almost 95% of the visuals comprise people with white skin in the English File Fourth Edition Pre-Intermediate, while the percentage drops to almost 82,5 % in the English File Fourth Edition Intermediate.

4.2. Repertoires of Cultural Representation

For the cultural representation, the texts of each book were analysed separately. To be able to be critical and reveal the hidden ideologies presented in the books, texts from each book were selected and critically analysed based on the framework. The findings were reported below under the headings of books.

4.2.1. The English File 4th Edition Elementary Student's Book

The micro analysis displays that majority of the texts include essentialist cultural discourses focusing on specific countries' cultural artefacts and instances as the main topic. To illustrate; the text "What to do in London at different times of the year" in Unit 5 and the text "Good times, bad times" in Unit 6 expressed the meaning of particular days for people from the UK. Neo-essentialist elements have been also detected in some of the texts. In order to include diversity, nations are again mentioned as important characteristics in the texts. For instance, the text "Busy lives" in Unit 4 includes a typical day of a successful woman who is an Iranian surgeon, and the text "What are their secrets?" underlines the nationality of the characters while explaining their secrets of living a long healthy life. Apart from having different nationalities, the characters in the texts vary in age, occupation, and gender. Some texts focus on celebrities, all of whom are from the UK or the USA. Celebrities of other nations are not included in the book.

The texts are not limited to the classroom environment. The events in the texts take place in houses, cars, neighbourhoods, streets, night clubs, pubs, hotel rooms, restaurants,

and in online platforms. Yet, places from “Western” countries are depicted with positive adjectives such as “fun, fantastic, beautiful”, while the places from “Non-Western” countries are depicted without adjectives or with negative adjectives such as “poor, crowded, etc.”. Interactions between characters also vary such as complaints, arguments, fortune telling, family talks, investigations, interviews, and reviews. Like the depiction of the environment, the interactions that happen in “Western” countries are represented as equal as in the argument of Lisa and John, in which both sides have the freedom of speech in Unit 2. However, the interactions in “Non-Western” countries are represented as limited as in the story of “The Glass Bottle” in Unit 6, in which Hassan from a “Non-Western” country is given a gift by the prince and forbidden to open it for some time. Feelings of the characters who are from “Western” countries or who work in such countries are often described positively. The characters are generally happy about living in those countries and have positive feelings towards the conditions in the country. For instance, “What the British like about Britain” in Unit 3 includes positive adjectives such as “fantastic, great, happy”. The emphasis on “Western” countries, particularly the UK and also the USA may indicate that the domination of such countries is promoted in the book.

The macro analysis of the book also reveals essentialist elements as well. The presentation of social facts mainly focuses on issues at the national level such as the problems of American teenagers in Unit 4, fantastic activities to do in London in Unit 5, differences between American and British English in Unit 2, the lifestyles of people from Greece, Japan and Costa Rica in Unit 4, popular activities of pubs in London in Unit 9, life in New York in Revise & Check 1&2, crossing the road in Vietnam in Unit 10. As in the examples, most of the social realities presented in the units belong to “Western” countries. Under the heading of socio-political problems, “Western cultures” are again promoted. The implications that can be deduced from the text in Unit 3 are that people from all over the world live in the UK happily, that English is an international language and that it results in effective communication, that a British radio channel broadcasts interesting and educational programmes, that the weather is suitable for everyone, and that cuisines around the world are served the best in the UK. Another instance of “Western” superiority can be detected in “What foreigners who live in Britain think”. People from Iraq, Turkey, Oman, Canada, China express their opinions on Britain and refer to British people as friendly, British women as free, the scenery as beautiful. In the text, the person from Oman implies that women in Oman are not free while mentioning the freedom of women in the UK. Although there are not many references to historical backgrounds, the texts including history are not limited to nations. For instance, the text in Unit 11 tells how life was before the internet, or the text in Unit 9 expresses the history of sugar and salt. The only historical background which is based on nations is the birth of detective novels, in which only the UK is considered.

Regarding the intercultural and cultural issues, the book is mainly restricted to essentialist views as mentioned earlier. Most of the comparisons between “cultures” are nation based. The comparisons are either between “Western” and “Non-Western” countries or between “Western” countries. The text in Unit 11 displays the opinions

of people from Ukraine, Pakistan, Belarus, India, Canada about the USA. In the text, people compare their eating, work, tipping, income cultures on the country basis with the relevant cultures in the USA. In Unit 7, a woman talks about her new year celebration in Iceland and expresses her surprise at people watching TV on New Year's Eve. Another text which is about crossing the road in Vietnam in Unit 10 describes the difficulty that a tourist has while crossing the road, and the traffic problem is attributed to the nation. The examples of intercultural situations in the texts include the opinions of people who live in Britain about the UK, the opinions of people who live in America about the USA in Unit 11, Brad Pitt's brother's life story, which connects the life of a celebrity and an ordinary person, the life of a German woman who travels around the world and who lives in other countries temporarily.

The book contains many examples of stereotypes and images that create false illusions of specific groups. The text in Unit 2 consists of the argument of a couple with an infant. In the text, the family is on the road to their holiday site, and the man drives the car. The sentences of the woman such as "I'm cold. Can you close the window?", "Please don't drive fast! The road is dangerous", "I'm tired, and it is dark", "Alfie is hungry", "Alfie is cold", "Alfie is tired" result in promoting the stereotype that women always complain and that women take care of the baby as it is her duty. The text that consists of comments of people from several countries in Unit 3 promotes stereotyping in that women in Oman are dependent and that they are not free according to the comments: "In the UK women have a lot of freedom. In my country, if I want to go to the bank, I take my brother and he does everything for me." Another similar example can be illustrated from the text in Unit 4. An Iranian woman who works as a surgeon in the UK is very happy about her life in the UK. It may promote the domination of "Western" countries by praising the life there. The story of a glass bottle in Unit 6 depicts a family living with low income in a village in the mountains. The story might foster the stereotype of people from the Middle East living in villages and deserts. Also, the main character, Hassan, sacrifices himself and takes a long journey to help the family. This may also reinforce the image that people from the Middle East are "collectivist". The text in Unit 5 creates a highly positive image of London by expressing the activities that can be done throughout the year. The text in Unit 10 explains that it is difficult to cross the road in Vietnam, and taxis can take people from anywhere for a few dollars. This might create the image of Vietnam as a poor country, and it might be deduced from the description that people in the traffic do not follow any rules there. In the text in Unit 10, a woman goes to fortune teller and learns about her future. Her lines indicating that having a boyfriend restricts her from moving to another city might create the image of women as dependent, and the words of the fortune teller on falling in love with someone dark might be indicated as racism, as nobody who has light skin colour is mentioned specifically in the whole book.

When authors' views are considered in terms of multi- and mono- perspectives, it can be indicated that their views are mainly in favour of "Western cultures" with positive depictions. The principal focus seems to be on cosmopolitanism by taking countries as clear-cut boundaries in the presentation of "cultures".

4.2.2. The English File 4th Edition Pre-Intermediate Student's Book

The micro analysis shows a wide range of cultural elements, characters, environments, and interactions in the English File Fourth Edition Pre-Intermediate Student's Book. Similar to the elementary book, the cultural resources addressed are mainly based on "Western" countries although there are still a limited number of texts that do not emphasise a country. The examples of the texts with no emphasis on a country are the story of ice-cream sellers in Unit 4, the text on the first day in a new office in Unit 7, and the text on phobias that could be related to anyone around the world in Unit 9. The rest of the texts in the book emphasise a country, and most of them comprise a "Western" country. To illustrate, the text about online dating in Unit 1 introduces a British father and a daughter and explains how the daughter helps her father find the true love via online dating. Unit 2 includes a story sent by a reader from the UK to an online magazine, which is about losing a mobile phone on holiday in the Alps. Another text in Unit 2 explains a section in the Guardian, a British newspaper, in which people describe their photos in famous places, and the section presented in the book is the description of the photo of a British person and of a French person in a park in Paris. Unit 3 includes a text about French siblings starting a new tour business around Europe. The text in Unit 4 focuses on the results of a survey about how British people lie about their weekends on social media. Unit 7 presents a text about how British people learn new languages.

As for the range of characters, the results are similar to the English File Fourth Edition Elementary Student's Book. The age of the characters and their occupations vary, yet the presence of young adults is prevalent. Also, there are not any significant differences in the distribution of gender in the texts. In terms of interaction, "Western" countries are not depicted as superior to "Non-Western" countries. Nevertheless, "Non-Western" countries are not emphasised openly, unlike "Western" countries, which could be the reason for this situation. The interactions between the characters such as friends, lovers, family members, interviewers and interviewees, a presenter and competitors, a journalist and readers take place in many forms such as social media, newspapers, TV shows, competitions, arguments, gossiping, and giving speeches. Unlike the English File Fourth Edition Elementary Student's Book, it may be indicated that this book does not aim at praising British people constantly. The text "A boring weekend? Don't tell anybody!" in Unit 4 presents the results of a survey that some of British people tend to tell lies on social media. The text "Are the British really so bad at learning languages?" in Unit 7 explains language learning experiences of British people and claims that this situation is partly true. Nonetheless, the statement that English is spoken by everyone around the world is given as one of the reasons for being bad at learning new languages, which promotes the domination of England and highlights the differences between "Centre" and "Periphery".

As for the results of the macro analysis, the book seems to focus more on real-life issues although the sources are "Western" countries. The text "No more boring stopovers! – go on guided tours" in Unit 3 focuses on the fact that long stopovers at the airports can

be boring all around the world and presents French entrepreneur siblings who started guided tours at some European airports. Unit 4 includes a text on housework, which is a world-wide issue, and presents the results of a research study conducted in Canada and a law on children helping with the housework which passed in Spain. Today, people are becoming more impatient thanks to advances in technology, and the text in Unit 5 focuses on this issue by presenting results of a survey in the UK. Another study adapted from the British press explains the benefits and the harms of alcohol, coffee, juice, milk, tea and water. The story about gossiping in Unit 12 aims at giving advice to everyone although it takes place in a small town in Eastern Europe. The text "How to take better holiday photos" offers tips to the readers and shares some photos taken in Belgium, France and Japan with the comments of their owners. The text "The story of ice cream sellers" in Unit 4 discusses the economic situation by explaining the reason for opening similar shops in close distances. In terms of socio-political issues, the text "What are the most and least honest cities around the world?" explains an experiment conducted in sixteen cities around the world. The results of the experiment are reported in a listening section as a follow-up activity. Yet, the most distinguished text regarding socio-political issues is about the life of Mahalia Jackson, who is an important member of Civil Rights Movement in the USA. Although the movement is based on the USA, its powerful effect was examined all over the world. The text may be indicated as the only example that focuses on the "Periphery". The text could be included in historical background category in the framework. The text "900 new words in 3 months" presents how new words are added into English language depending on the changes in the world could be given as another example although it does not particularly explain the past in the history.

The presentation of intercultural and cultural issues is not based on the comparisons of countries, yet examples of stereotypes can still be found in the book. Comparing to English File Fourth Edition Student's Book, the number of cultural comparisons from an essentialist perspective has decreased. The most obvious essentialist example can be given as the text in Unit 5, which is about the most and the least honest cities in the world. Other comparisons are made between pessimist and optimist people in Unit 6, the popularity of men's and women's sports in Unit 10, and the school lives of celebrities who were not famous at that time in Unit 11. Regarding intercultural issues, the texts about organizing stopover tours for airports in Unit 3, the story of ice cream sellers in Unit 4, medical research into drinks in Unit 5, the first day in a new office in Unit 7, phobias in Unit 9 and the traditional story about gossiping in Unit 12 can be given as examples of intercultural issues. The text about Murphy's law which provides examples of the law in Unit 8, and the text about queues at the supermarkets which offers tips on how to reduce wait times in the queues also deal with intercultural issues. This book contains many examples of stereotypes and images that create a false illustration of particular groups as well. The survey results about British people on social media in Unit 4 create the image that British people tend to lie for self-impression. The experience in the most and the least honest cities around the world in Unit 4 may result in negative stereotypes besides the positive ones, and it could arouse prejudices. The text about the first day in a new office

may create the image that the first day at work is always challenging and result in negative consequences such as anxiety in learners. Including the opinion that “everyone speaks English nowadays” may promote the ideology of domination.

Gender stereotyping is also evident in some texts. For example, the text about queues serves to gender stereotyping with the sentence “Men are less patient than women.”. The text about athletes in Unit 10 also includes many sentences that perpetuates gender stereotyping. In the text, “Men hit the ball harder.”, “Men are faster, stronger, more athletic.”, “The women probably run / swim / ski slower than the men.”, are some of the stereotypical sentences that prevent equality in life. In Unit 12, the story “False Alarm”, which is about a man who screams while trying to kill the spider and about his neighbours who call the police in case of domestic violence, attributes screaming to women. The story “Left Behind”, which is about a husband who leaves his wife at a gas station and who does not notice doing so for some time, depicts the man as the driver, the child as the one whose only concern is the mobile phone, and the woman as the one who screams and kicks the car. The text about Mahalia Jackson creates a positive image of empowerment by including the famous speech of Martin Luther King “I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character...”.

The views of authors are slightly different from the English File Fourth Edition Elementary Student’s Book in terms of focusing on the UK. The book still includes “Western” countries as the main sources or environments, yet countries in Europe are mentioned more often than the UK. The story of Mahalia Jackson appears to be the only example corresponding to critical cosmopolitanism.

4.2.3. The English File 4th Edition Intermediate Student’s Book

According to the results of analysis at the micro level, the cultural resources addressed are mainly related to specific countries in this book, as in the previously analysed books. Among the countries, “Western” countries, especially the UK and America, are mentioned the most, while Middle Eastern countries are not mentioned at all. The book displays some cultural practices other than nationally defined cultures as well. Some of them are not mutually exclusive as they reflect the affordances or the zeitgeist of the century in which we live, while some practices are more related to personal needs, choices, and social interactions within smaller cultures. For example, food and drink culture in the 21st century is presented in the text in Unit 1 with such assumptions that most people drink coffee as soon as they wake up in the morning, that people do things whenever they suit them. In another text in Unit 1, family culture is approached in terms of the position in the family. In Unit 6, there are texts presenting the world of extras in movies, profile pictures on social media, and sports for certain types of bodies. In Unit 9, there are texts about how people who feel lucky and unlucky approach life without emphasising any country names.

The rest of the texts deal with “cultures” with an emphasis on specific countries. For instance, the culture of the charity sector is explained by the text “The polar challenge”,

which narrates the challenge story of a British TV presenter for a charity and by the text "Leftover Pret a Manger baguettes go to homeless" which concerns the famous British sandwich chains helping a cathedral in the UK. Another unit includes a text about a famous British TV show, Top Gear, figuring out the fastest way to get across London. A text in Unit 3 presents the results of an American research study on the reasons for car accidents. In terms of the arts, an incident that happened in a concert hall in Spain is reported. In Unit 4, a book on modern social manners in the UK is introduced. The text on practising English outside the class includes the suggestions of people from Europe, Colombia, Brazil, Russia, Mexico, and Australia. With an emphasis on family bonds, the text about world triathlon in Mexico highlights the sacrifice of a British for his brother. The text in Unit 7 compares the education systems of Britain and China. The characters in the texts vary in age, occupation and background as the other books do. Celebrities of sports, movies, TV are also mentioned in the book. Like the other books, the environment of the texts is not limited to an interior place, and a lot of places such as concert halls, stadiums, streets, mountains, social media, press, movie sets, supermarkets are used as the setting of the texts. Situations of interactions mostly favour the "Western" countries (Unit 2 and 8).

The macro analysis reveals that the focus is mainly on the contemporary life and that the book does not provide information on hot topics or lead students to question any significant issues. Also, the presentation of historical background is highly limited. As one of the assets of the 21st century, digital life is dealt in several texts. For instance, a text in Unit 4 presents annoying things that people do while using mobile phones; a text in Unit 6 explores the hidden meanings in the profile pictures of people on social media; a text in Unit 9 presents the results of a study on the tendency of taking a break from technology in Britain. The book also includes texts that are related to economy from several points such as spending money, donating for a charity, the insistence of shop assistants, and marketing tactics (In Unit 2 and 8). Unlike other books, the texts do not include the presentation of touristic areas or activities in specific countries. The topics are mainly about the issues which can be observed all around the world, but most of them are presented with the emphasis on "Western" countries. For instance, that living with parents has both advantages and disadvantages is a general issue, yet the book puts the UK centre stage in the text. Similarly, extras take part in the movies or TV shows all around the world, but only extras in the UK and the USA are discussed in the text in Unit 6. Another example is that social media is very popular and that it is used by customer services of brands for advertisements all around the world. Yet, the text in Unit 8 especially presents stories of British and American customer services on social media. The book does not provide any information on history. Some texts refer to historical background with a few sentences. For instance, the text about London Dungeon explains a London attraction which enables customers to discover the dark side of London history and legends. Another text presenting bits of history is about an unsolved crime from 1888 in the UK.

It can be indicated that the number of intercultural situations presented in the book is greater than the comparisons of cultures. The most essentialist example of a cultural comparison can be seen in the text "Chinese v British – which education system is

better?”. As indicated in the name, Chinese and British education systems are compared, and an experiment in which Chinese educators teach in British schools for four weeks is described. Other examples can be given as the comparison made between men and women in a text in Unit 3, the text concerning how lucky people and unlucky people create their good and bad luck, and the text about the best sports based on body types. As for intercultural situations, the text about how to practise English outside the class with the answers of people around the world, the text comprising comments on whether studying at university is worth or not in a website, or the comments of people on living with parents, the text on how to be charismatic and on the story of a TV presenter being trained by a charisma coach can be given as examples.

Like in the other books, stereotypes and images can be found in some texts in this book too. Unit 1 includes a text about the influences of birth order in personality and presents some assumptions on people based on their birth order. For instance, firstborn children are assumed to be “sensible, responsible, anxious and insecure”; middle children are seen to be “sociable, sympathetic, and unambitious”; the youngest children are assumed to be “outgoing, immature”, and the only children are regarded as “self-confident, spoilt”. Although they are presented as possibilities, the stereotypes on these people are reinforced. A text on gender stereotypes, “Common stereotypes about men and women – but are they really true?”, is allocated in Unit 3. Although the text has been intended to draw attention to the inaccuracy of stereotypes, the examples given may reinforce the use of these assumptions. “Debbrett’s Guide to Modern Dilemmas” in Unit 4 presents the “proper” behaviours in social situations in the British context. Thus, it may create the image that the UK should be considered to learn about “proper” behaviours, and it may reinforce the domination of “Western” countries. As another example of praising “Western” countries, the text about the world triathlon includes the statement: “Nobody will remember who won the world triathlon in Cozumel, Mexico, in 2016”. This statement de-emphasises the African triathlete who wins the medal and praises the British brother, with these additions: “Instead, they will remember the sacrifice of Allistair Brownlee, who stopped to help his brother... instead of winning the gold medal himself”. Also, the text on Chinese and British education promotes the stereotype of Asian’s being more successful.

The authors of the book include cultural practices other than the “Western” culture in the book yet still take “West” as the “Centre”. Either the texts are from British or American sources or the characters are from “Western” countries.

5. Discussion

Cultural realities, artefacts, arenas, and practices could be conveyed through texts, activities, videos and audios in course books. Cultural representations in the books analysed in this study were mostly based on nationalities. The analysis of the visuals displays that diversity is included more at the advanced levels. Unlike the results of the study conducted by Arıkan (2005), the visual depictions are not stereotypical. Yet, there is a significant difference in the number of people based on their skin colours. On the other hand, the analysis of the texts in the books indicate that culture is highly related to nations

although different concepts of culture such as education, religion, arts, and behavioural conventions are included. Similar to the results of the studies conducted by Song (2013), Çelik and Erbay (2013), Rashidi, Meihami and Gritter (2016), the presentation of "British and American cultures" is also dominant in the English File Fourth Edition Series.

Among the books, the English File Fourth Edition Elementary Student's Book, which describes "the West" positively, presents the most essentialist perspective within the series through the texts about topics in which "Western countries" are emphasised. The reason for this could be that learners at this level are just beginners who are recently introduced to language and that one must get to know the cultural resources which exist in a society as stated by Holliday, Hyde and Kullman (2004). However, the positive descriptions of "Western cultures" with very limited descriptions of "Non-Western cultures" may reinforce the division between "Centre" and "Periphery" and the domination of the former over the latter.

Some texts have also been constructed from a neo-essentialist perspective. For instance, diversity is emphasised in a text in which "foreign" people living in the UK express their opinions on what living in this country is like; however, their nationalities are highlighted. In another text in which British people state their opinions on Britain, a commenter claims that it is a multicultural country because people from all around the world live there. Thus, the texts express nations as fundamental to 'cultures' (Holliday, 2010). The book includes a wide range of environments, and most of them are emphasised as belonging to "Western" countries. Places in "Western" countries are depicted with positive adjectives, while "Non-Western" environments are depicted mostly with negative adjectives such as poor, crowded etc. Similarly, interactions between people seem different according to whether they take place in a "Western" country or not. While some patterns of the interaction in "Western" countries promote equity such as freedom of speech, patterns of the interaction in "Non-Western" countries indicate hierarchy, chaos and collectivism. In terms of intercultural communication, "Western cultures" are implied to be presenting "proper" examples, and they are dominant in intercultural exchanges. For instance, "foreigners" living in the UK get used to "the British culture", or a "Western" person has difficulty crossing the road in Vietnam because the drivers do not follow any rules.

Although the texts mainly focus on "British and American cultures", the English File Fourth Edition Pre-Intermediate Student's Book provides mostly a neo-essentialist perspective by introducing different "cultures" while taking nations as fundamental. Although some practices such as shopping, and technology are introduced without a connection to a language or a nation, the sources which are only from the USA or the UK are usually cited. The examples which the book introduces from other countries are mostly from Europe as the second highly cited context. They are not depicted as superior to "Non-Western" countries, which could be due to the fact that very few examples of "Non-Western" countries are highlighted in the texts. According to Holliday (2010), critical cosmopolitanism is opposed to the false consciousness developed by the "Centre", and it promotes "Periphery". Thus, this book can be counted as the closest of the series to critical cosmopolitanism as "British culture or people" are not praised constantly and as some critical texts are included; for example, some texts mention the negative sides of

British people, and a text about the Civil Rights Movement which is about resistance to oppression represents the voice of “Periphery”.

The cultural representations of the English File Fourth Edition Intermediate Student’s Book can be mainly divided into two as the “cultures” that are closely associated with “Western” countries and the ones that are not related to any specific countries. Thus, it can be counted as the book that involves the most non-essentialist perspective in the series. Topics such as social media, eating and drinking, and luck do not address a particular group of people. Nevertheless, the texts also include cultural comparisons based on countries. For example, the text about education systems compares China and Britain from a very essentialist perspective. Also, the book often praises “Western” countries, especially the UK.

Course books as the main materials for input should present various intercultural contexts in an equal way. However, the depictions of the characters in the books reinforce stereotypes generally in terms of gender and nations. Stereotypes regarding nationality, especially at elementary and pre-intermediate levels, tend to promote “Western cultures” while creating negative images for other countries. Some of the examples regarding nations include such stereotypes as “Women in the UK are free, yet women in Oman are dependent on men.”, “People in the Middle East live in dessert with low income.”, “People in the Middle East are dependent on family members, and they are collectivist.”, “Britain sets the “proper” examples of social manners.”, “People in Vietnam do not follow any traffic rules.”, “British people tend to lie on social media for self-impression.”, and “Asians are more successful in education.”. In the intermediate book, a text is allocated to gender stereotyping. Even if the text is intended to question such stereotypes, it may result in the perpetuation of prejudgements. Overall, such stereotypes could foster oppression and prevent empowerment as learners are provided mostly with inaccurate assumptions rather than opportunities for claiming their rights (Ooiwa-Yoshizawa, 2018). To sum up, a high proportion of the texts in the series are allocated to the cultural references attributed to the “Western” national groups, and gender stereotyping was also evident in the texts with the aim of drawing attention to this issue; nevertheless, their presence could also be argued to promote stereotyping.

6. Conclusion

Education should promote critical consciousness and knowledge development by learners (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012). Also, learners should be considered as active agents rather than passive recipients. In this vein, the provided materials should help learners raise critical consciousness. In language education, coursebooks are the main resources for the necessary input which integrate cultural knowledge besides linguistic skills. Therefore, cultural representations should be examined critically to reveal hidden aspects as in the present study. This study is limited to the texts and the visuals of three student’s book in the series. Further studies could be conducted with a consideration of all the books in the series and with a reference to a wider range of skills presented in the books.

The results of the study indicate that most of the cultural realities addressed in the books are based on “Western” countries and that learners may be unfamiliar with the

cultural context of "Western" countries. Critical pedagogy emphasises that education should include the topics that are related to learners' own lives, or the learners become passive recipients who cannot question the given (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). Therefore, learners may feel isolated from the cultural references addressed in the books, and learning could turn into memorisation. Moreover, positive descriptions which learners cannot relate to their own knowledge may promote domination, as it may create the image of the oppressor as divine and that of the oppressed as obedient (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). Another result about the books implies that the books do not include any hot topics that promote critical thinking. As the variety of cultural representations are limited to "Western" countries, learners may give up on their cultural beliefs, as they are constantly exposed to the cultural realities of the "Centre".

Considering the hidden structures of the analysed book series and similar course books, we suggest that teachers should be aware of the lack of cultural diversity and of the high exposure of British and American cultural representations, since they have a great responsibility for integrating learners' real-life interests and needs and for promoting a culturally diverse EFL classroom by raising their critical awareness of the current sociocultural issues in the world. Future research studies could be conducted through the integration of further multimodal dimensions of course books ranging from semiotic and social-historical rhetorical factors to pedagogic-didactic issues.

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