An investigation on the perceptions of high school ELT teachers about the cultural integration in a 9th-grade EFL textbook

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Abstract

Culture is a complex mix of Language, identity, and knowledge, intertwining our global community. Culturally integrated textbooks promote empathy, respect, and cultural understanding in our varied society. This qualitative study investigated the level of cultural integration present in the 9th-grade high school textbook "Uplift." It examined how ELT teachers in high schools evaluated cultural integration in the "Uplift" textbook and analyzed it through a checklist. Sixteen experienced 9th-grade ELT teachers from İstanbul, İzmir and Nevşehir high schools were interviewed semi-structured to provide comments, observations, and critiques on the cultural integration of the EFL textbook. In addition to this, Byram's (1993) social integration criteria were used to evaluate "Uplift"'s efficacy. Trends emerged from the textbook and semi-structured interview insights through thematic and document analysis. According to the researchers' analysis of the textbook, the Uplift textbook is adequate in terms of cultural integration and, in line with this, the findings from the semi-structured interviews show that teachers praised the extensive and authentic cultural material, multimedia tools and cultural integration success of the textbook. They also recommended that sensitive cultural concerns be clarified and that cultural themes, especially underrepresented cultures, be included more in the textbook.

Keywords: Cultural integration, textbook analysis

Lise İngilizce öğretmenlerinin 9. sınıf İngilizce ders kitabındaki kültürel entegrasyona ilişkin algıları üzerine bir araştırma

Özet

Kültür, küresel toplumumuzu iç içe geçiren dil, kimlik ve bilginin karmaşık bir karışımıdır. Kültürel olarak bütünleştirilmiş ders kitapları, çeşitlilik gösteren toplumumuzda empati, saygı ve kültürel anlayışı teşvik eder. Bu nitel çalışma, liselerde görev yapan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin "Uplift" ders kitabındaki kültürel entegrasyonu nasıl değerlendirdiklerini incelemenin yanı sıra ders kitabını bir kontrol listesi aracılığıyla analiz ederek, lise 9. sınıf ders kitabı "Uplift" te bulunan kültürel entegrasyon düzeyini araştırmıştır. İstanbul, İzmir ve Nevşehir'deki liselerde görev yapan 16 deneyimli 9. sınıf İngilizce öğretmeni ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmış ve bu görüşmelerde İngilizce ders kitabının kültürel entegrasyonuna ilişkin yorum, gözlem ve eleştirileri alınmıştır. Buna ek olarak, "Uplift" in etkinliğini değerlendirmek için Byram'ın (1993) sosyal entegrasyon kriterleri kullanılmıştır. Ders kitabından ve yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlardan elde edilen bilgiler tematik ve doküman analizi yoluyla incelenerek eğilimler ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Araştırmacıların ders kitabı analizine göre, Uplift ders kitabı kültürel entegrasyon açısından yeterlidir ve buna paralel olarak yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden elde edilen bulgular, öğretmenlerin ders kitabının kapsamlı ve otantik kültürel materyallerini, multimedya araçlarını ve kültürel entegrasyon başarısını övdüklerini göstermektedir. Öğretmenler ayrıca hassas kültürel konuların açıklığa kavuşturulmasını ve kültürel temaların, özellikle de yeterince temsil edilmeyen kültürlerin ders kitabına daha fazla dahil edilmesini tavsiye etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel entegrasyon, ders kitabı analizi

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Introduction

The strong connection between Language and culture is undeniable. Therefore, cultural integration in foreign language teaching is essential for understanding Language and culture, especially when learning a new language that requires entering a new culture (Purba, 2011). For this very reason, it is meaningless and inadequate to learn English, which is accepted as a global language all over the world today, by leaving culture out. Allen (1985) also proves that second language learning begins with access to the target language's rich literary and cultural fabric. The communicative method in language teaching developed in the 1960s focused on "intercultural communication and understanding". As this method shows, Language and culture should be integrated in order to improve communication. By placing language learning objectives in cultural contexts, learners can better navigate the target language's culture. By studying language use in different social contexts, sociolinguistics illuminates the complex relationship between Language, society, and culture.

Language learners must understand the social dynamics of the Language to fully immerse themselves in foreign or second language courses (Alptekin, 2002). Foreign language acquisition allows students to adopt new cultural norms and viewpoints. This supports Halliday's (1978) claim that students need Language and sociocultural skills. Thus, language teachers must master the target language to help students access educational and economic possibilities in that culture. Integrating Language and culture requires learners to acquire a different way of coping with reality. Risager (1991) stresses that language learning requires real-world communication in the target culture, not only grammar and vocabulary. Thus, active engagement in communication contexts and immersion in the target culture help learners understand and appreciate the cultural nuances and views of the native speakers.

Teaching a new language always introduces students to a new culture. The global use of spoken and written English has also raised interest in studying the Language. Bennett (1997) states that learning a language without comprehending its culture might make you "a fluent fool" who doesn't appreciate its social or philosophical intricacies. No matter how good, language proficiency alone may hinder conversation and bargaining with native speakers owing to cultural ignorance. Bada (2000) stresses the importance of cultural literacy and awareness in English Language Teaching (ELT), especially for learners not exposed to the target society's culture and may misinterpret cultural norms when communicating with native speakers.

The 2023-2024 9th-grade EFL textbook "Uplift," published by the Turkish Ministry of National Education, has not been tested for its ability to promote cultural integration in high schools. Its recent release has led to little study on how English textbooks promote cultural integration, which is essential for improving foreign language training. To close this gap, this study analyses the textbook and ELT teachers' views on cultural integration in the Grade 9 EFL textbook and suggests improvements.

The main purpose of this study is to find out whether the 9th-grade English textbook supports culture sufficiently. For this purpose, the researchers analyzed the textbook using the checklist developed by Byram. The study also aims to understand teachers' views on how EFL textbooks can promote cultural integration in Grade 9, as understanding educators' views on how textbooks can culturally enrich language teaching is crucial for improving high school EFL curriculum and practice. This is because the content of a textbook enriches student and teacher experiences and influences teaching methods and student outcomes by incorporating cultural diversity, inclusiveness and sensitivity into Grade 9 language education.

This study recognizes cultural integration as vital to understanding language mechanics and origins in foreign language teaching. It examines cultural integration in the Grade 9 EFL textbook and teachers' opinions on improving student learning. This study is significant since understanding teachers' perspectives, issues, and solutions helps improve 9th-grade EFL education by facilitating culturally sensitive and inclusive language learning. By revealing how teachers perceive and use EFL textbooks to promote cultural integration, the study helps develop a curriculum that better meets the needs of both teachers and students, preparing students for global communication. This study fills a significant gap in academic research by investigating cultural integration in the new 9th-grade English textbook, opening the path for subsequent research. Most importantly, the relevance of this study touches the heart of education: students. Cultural integration in Grade 9 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education may make Language learning more interesting and rewarding for the students, and this deeper awareness of Language and culture gives students the tools to communicate in our global world.

The main research questions of this study address cultural integration in 9th-grade EFL textbooks and high school teachers' perspectives:

1. Does the 9th-grade EFL textbook promote cultural integration, according to ELT teachers?
2. What are teachers' opinions of the 9th-grade EFL textbook's cultural integration strengths and weaknesses?
3. What can EFL teachers recommend to improve the 9th-grade textbook's cultural integration?
4. Does the 9th-grade English textbook "Uplift" promote cultural integration according to the checklist?

Despite its historical relevance across European languages, culture has a complicated meaning in English and is varied and relevant across academic fields (Williams, 2014). Culture refers to the shared cognitive patterns that differentiate one culture from another, emphasizing its focus on community and social dynamics, as Hofstede (2011) described. The actions and decisions of a community's members not only form that community's culture but also the interactions between communities influence cultural dynamics through adaptation and socialization (Kuran & Sandholm, 2008).

Beyond language learning, foreign language study reveals other cultures' important social and human aspects. It stresses that foreign language communication should help students comprehend and appreciate other cultures, including their own (Mazari & Derraz, 2015). Language educators typically see culture as an extension of Language, called "associated culture", in linguistic studies of Language and Culture (Risager, 2006).

In the literature, researchers agree on the deep and crucial link between Language and culture. For example, Language is essential to culture, and culture is essential to Language, according to Brown (2000). Separating Language and culture would lessen their importance because they are so linked. Hymes (1972) adds "communicative competence", which includes the information needed for effective communication in culturally important circumstances, and according to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT), a community's culture and an individual's cognitive processes are semiotically ordered systems (Vygotsky, 1978).

Parallel to these researchers but also somewhat different, Nida (1998) defines Language and culture as independent but interrelated symbolic systems. Language has direct, indirect, and culturally complex meanings. Each linguistic manifestation is tied to culture, which covers more than Language. Different cultures may interpret the same Language differently. The phrase "drink" may conjure up coke or beer for an English speaker but steamed ayran or şalgam for a Turkish speaker (Jiang, 2000).

Cognitive studies inspired by sociocultural and sociohistorical theories, notably Vygotskyan ones, have examined individuals' Language and cultural resources. In second language acquisition, academics have investigated "second culture acquisition." Lantolf (1999) reviews such studies comparing word connections or metaphor usage among language use and learning environment groups. Despite the tight relationship between Language and culture, some research suggests that second language learners may only thoroughly understand the culture if they live where the target language is spoken. Kramsch (2014) states that Applied Linguistics study has helped us understand how culture affects linguistic signals and their use in recent decades. Culture and Language are mainly analyzed via semiotic, linguistic, and discursive lenses. Language does not influence cognition or emotions, but certain terminologies can affect emotion intensity and cognitive processes.

ELT teachers have different views on culture and language acquisition. According to Çamlıbel's (1998) research, over half of experienced and untrained teachers view culture as unimportant. According to Işık's (2002) study, teachers often have negative opinions on incorporating cultural content into teaching materials. In contrast, Önalan's (2004) and (2005) studies revealed that most teachers favoured including culture in language instruction, and these teachers also included cultural information in their lessons, viewing culture as norms, values, traditions, and social interactions.

Modern education emphasizes the integration of culture and identity. Therefore, in-depth cultural studies have grown, especially in English Language Teaching. Qodriani and Kardiansyah (2018) examined the cultural portrayal of Indonesian middle school English electronic textbooks. A descriptive qualitative technique

explored how educational resources transmit cultural notions. The national textbook examined Indonesian culture's selective assimilation using Moran's (2001) framework of goods, practices, attitudes, persons, and communities. According to the study, teachers and students should understand the complex relationship between Language and culture; the textbook purposely integrates Indonesian cultural themes to help students comprehend the intricate relationship between Language and culture in Indonesia. Another research by Çetin (2019) highlighted teachers' admiration for cultural integration in English language teaching. According to the findings obtained from Çetin's study, most teachers wanted EFL textbooks to include a variety of world cultures rather than only native or target cultures. They argued that EFL textbooks should introduce students to numerous global cultures rather than only national or target cultures. Besides, Syahri and Susanti (2016) found that only half of cultural integration textbook publishers promote local culture, while the other half lack suitable material. This shows that Senior High School English textbooks require more cultural content. Publishers must also balance local and target cultures in their content.

English language education has been studied in several cultures due to the complex interaction between Language and culture. The qualitative study conducted by Saepudin et al. (2022) examined the English In Mind Textbook of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Fourteen textbook chapters illustrated "reality" according to local speakers' sociocultural norms and language use. This study emphasizes the necessity of textbook balance and incorporates students' cultural customs. Since ELT students gain cultural knowledge and respect, such integration is crucial.

English learners interact with many languages and cultures in transcultural and transnational communication. Thus, EFL textbooks must include learners' home cultures, global viewpoints, and Anglo-American or British cultures. Setyono and Widodo (2019) examined an officially recognized Indonesian EFL textbook for senior high school students' multicultural values. The survey found multicultural concepts, including tolerance for ethnic and religious variety, indigenous cultural heritage, conflict resolution and harmony with all living things and the environment, and admiration of inventive cultural inventions. ELT textbooks should include multicultural topics from many cultures as English becomes a global language. Teachers are urged to use multimodal technologies to create culturally rich language-learning experiences and creatively include multicultural components in their lessons.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach to examine ELT teachers' views on cultural integration in 9th-grade EFL instruction and analyze the textbook "Uplift" on cultural integration. Qualitative research is ideal for studying complicated, context-dependent phenomena and participant perspectives. To acquire varied ideas and

experiences, 16 English teachers were interviewed semi-structured, and the "Uplift" textbook was analyzed using a checklist based on Bayram's (1993) criteria.

The study conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 English teachers from Istanbul, Izmir and Nevşehir about cultural integration in the 9th-grade English textbook. These interviews provided valuable data, and the research questions shaped the interview guide. Rich qualitative data were obtained by allowing the interviewees to express their perspectives openly. Individual interviews encouraged free discourse and in-depth exploration of each participant's perspective. A structured guide with a section of open-ended questions guided the interviews. The guide provided uniformity throughout the interviews, allowing participants to explain their views. Recording the interviews with permission preserved subtle insights for analysis and ensured accuracy. Field notes helped to explain interview dynamics and participant interactions by collecting non-verbal signals, contextual information and other insights that audio recordings neglect. The semi-structured interviews, interview guide, audio recordings and field notes explored the 9th-grade English teachers' perspectives, experiences and recommendations on cultural integration. These methods helped to collect rich qualitative data for analysis and interpretation in line with the study's objectives.

Teachers teaching English in grade 9 in İstanbul, İzmir and Nevşehir were carefully interviewed about their experiences, attitudes and opinions. The initial and background questions allowed the participants to discuss their personal and professional experiences. They were asked questions about the adequacy of EFL textbooks, their objectives and areas for improvement to determine how effectively they promote cultural integration. These questions led to discussions on the strengths and weaknesses of EFL textbook cultural integration and suggestions for improvement. Teachers discussed issues of cultural content integration and suggested innovative solutions.

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, the researchers also evaluated the cultural integration of the Grade 9 textbook using a checklist. The cultural material in the textbook was collected, analyzed, and evaluated using Byram's (1993) criteria for capturing the essence and physical elements of culture. Table 1 shows the eight main categories of the checklist and their definitions. This organized methodology allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the textbook's cultural integration and compliance with cultural integration standards.

Table 1. The checklist

Cultural element	Description
Cultural Identity and Social Groups	Social class, regional connections, and ethnic minority origins are groups within a nation or state that establish identities beyond national affiliation.
Social Interaction	Internal and external social and behavioural standards throughout formality levels in social groupings.
Beliefs and Behaviours	Combining societal norms, rituals, and religious beliefs.
Social and Political Institutions	State agencies, including healthcare, police enforcement, social security, and municipal governments.
Socialisation and Life Cycle	Family, education, employment, media and societal conditions.
National History	Spotlighting historical and contemporary national identity and cultural events.
National Geography	Emphasising culturally significant geographical features.
Stereotypes and National Identity: Using symbols to convey the culture and identity.	

The reliability and validity of the data-gathering tools of this study determine its credibility and robustness. Data collection reliability and validity were crucial in this 9th-grade EFL research on cultural integration; thus, to maintain communication and dependability, firstly, the semi-structured interview guide was carefully crafted. This method standardized subject data gathering to reduce interviewer bias. Byram's (1 the dependability of the 993) checklist was used in the textbook to verify the dependability of data collecting tools. Before conducting interviews, interviewers were trained in standardized interviewing, questioning, and note-taking. Consistent data collection stressed the need for rigorous training. Audio interview transcription was also prioritized to preserve participant replies. This thorough process ensured data analysis used accurate interview transcripts, improving reliability.

The close alignment of the interview guide with the research questions and objectives proved its content validity. To ensure statistical coverage, the interview questions included all cultural integration topics important for 9th-grade EFL education. EFL and cultural integration experts reviewed the interview guide before data collection. The interview was pilot-tested, and the interview questions were clear and relevant and elicited meaningful responses. Furthermore, through member checking,

participants were allowed to evaluate the preliminary analysis and help refine their statements to ensure the accuracy of analysis, and thus iterative validation with participants' perspectives and experiences confirmed data interpretations. These methodological techniques strengthened the data collection instrument's reliability, credibility, and methodological rigour and prepared it for analysis and interpretation consistent with the study objectives. 16 Istanbul, İzmir and Nevşehir 9th grade EFL teachers participated in this study. Selection sought varied viewpoints on cultural integration in schooling. Table 2 provides participant demographics.

Table 2. The participants

Participant	City	Age	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience
Te1	Istanbul	37	Male	12
Te2	Izmir	31	Female	7
Te3	Nevşehir	26	Female	2
Te4	Nevşehir	40	Female	15
Te5	Istanbul	30	Female	8
Te6	Nevşehir	35	Female	10
Te7	Izmir	39	Male	6
Te8	Istanbul	30	Male	4
Te9	Izmir	45	Female	20
Te10	Istanbul	36	Female	9
Te11	Nevşehir	51	Female	28
Te12	Izmir	52	Male	29
Te13	Istanbul	28	Female	5
Te14	Izmir	55	Male	31
Te15	Nevşehir	46	Female	20
Te16	Istanbul	42	Male	15

The ELT teachers whose demographic information was showcased in Table 2 were carefully selected to participate in this survey on cultural integration. Before the interviews, potential participants received informed permission forms explaining the study's objectives, interview process, and data confidentiality. Participants signed consent after reading, understanding, and agreeing to the papers. Additionally, a well-designed semi-structured interview guide with open-ended research questions ensured uniformity while allowing for individual expression. Each participant was questioned independently, encouraging honest and complete replies. Audio recording during interviews was requested to ensure data quality and capture nuanced replies. Field notes on non-verbal clues, contextual facts, and observations enhanced the interviews. Transcribing interviews verbatim and securing them

maintained data integrity. Thematic analysis's research questions, interview codes, themes, and insights to answer the study's research questions. Member verification and sharing of the researchers' interpretations of participants' responses boosted credibility. Data collection followed ethical guidelines for informed permission, confidentiality, and privacy.

The interviews provided a lot of qualitative data; hence, semi-structured interview data analysis was necessary. Systematic qualitative data analysis using thematic analysis ensured correctness and integrity by carefully reviewing transcribed interviews. Transcription anonymization protected participants. The interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to find themes, patterns, and insights to answer the research questions. This technique allows a detailed investigation of teachers' views on the 9th-grade EFL textbook's cultural integration function, effectiveness, strengths, flaws, ideas for improvement and teachers' cultural integration issues and methods. This study focused on thematic analysis, detecting, classifying, and categorizing interview themes, patterns, and insights. Data-driven and inductive topics were carefully designed to reveal teachers' cultural integration viewpoints, experiences, and suggestions. With care and organization, data was coded into hierarchies to identify significant ideas pertinent to the research questions and aims of the study. After coding and categorizing, data were examined for study purposes.

The cultural integration checklist was used to evaluate reading passages and exercises in the textbook after the interview analysis. Cultural integration theme frequencies were listed in the findings. A parallel textbook analysis by another ELT teacher using the same checklist improved the reliability and validity of the research. Data from the textbook was analyzed using descriptive techniques and content analysis. Working with another ELT teacher, in addition to the researchers of this study, improved textbook analysis reliability. Data were meticulously classified and grouped using checklist criteria to determine cultural integration activity frequency and distribution. A qualitative evaluation assessed the ability of the textbook to meet the educational needs of cultural integration.

Moreover, the triangulation of interview and textbook data revealed important insights. The investigation uncovered many EFL textbook and cultural integration data, revealing obstacles and potential for ELT teachers. It also suggested 9th-grade EFL classroom enrichment. A rigorous data analysis based on theme analysis revealed the study's key findings. These findings greatly affect the discussion and conclusions of this study.

Findings

The analysis of semi-structured teacher interviews and the 9th-grade textbook cultural integration research revealed some major issues. According to the findings of semi-structured interviews, teachers handled cultural integration difficulties similarly, although there were subtle variances. Table 3 shows thematic analysis topics from semi-structured teacher interviews.

Table 3. Themes

Theme	Description
Effectiveness	Assessment criteria for determining the effectiveness of EFL textbooks in fostering cultural integration in the classroom.
Learning Outcomes	Examination of the impact of cultural integration on the learning outcomes of 9th-grade EFL students.
Student Response	Analysis of EFL students' reactions to cultural components within textbooks.
Ideal Role	Goals and expectations regarding the role of EFL textbooks in promoting cultural integration.
Strengths/Weaknesses	Assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of EFL materials in terms of cultural integration.
Challenges	Identification of challenges related to integrating cultural content into teaching materials.
Recommendations	Suggestions for enhancing the cultural integration aspect of 9th-grade EFL textbooks.

1. Effectiveness of 9th-grade EFL textbook in Fostering Cultural Integration

English teachers commented on the effectiveness of the 9th-grade EFL textbook on cultural integration:

Te1: "Cultural integration fosters critical thinking about diverse cultures in our children. I think the book promotes cultural integration."

Te4: "The book has lots of cultural reading and exercises. I think it integrates culture well."

Te6: "Language and culture coexist. Students must understand their own and others' cultures. Our textbook this year addresses culture well."

Teachers evaluate students' cultural awareness and understanding. They want the textbook to promote cross-cultural understanding and critical thinking about cultural norms. They like the textbook's cultural blending approach.

1.1. Learning outcomes

EFL teacher interviews examined how cultural integration affects 9th-grade EFL students, revealing how textbooks shape teaching.

Te3: "Textbooks encourage critical thinking about culture, helping students comprehend and challenge preconceptions."

Te4: "Multimedia assets like audio snippets make cultural integration more engaging for kids."

Te8: Texts that spark students' curiosity and desire to investigate other civilizations are better for cultural integration."

Teachers stressed the importance of cultural integration in student learning. They stressed critical thinking as a core ability and claimed that textbook cultural portrayal affects student education. Students are encouraged to challenge cultural prejudices, increasing intellectual complexity and cultural awareness. Multimedia features like audio samples make cultural learning more engaging and memorable. Multisensory learning promotes comprehension and retention. Teachers also underlined the importance of letting students autonomously investigate diverse cultures. Culture-focused textbooks encourage curiosity, excitement, and lifelong learning via cultural inquiry. These EFL teachers stressed how critical thinking, interactive technology, and independent cultural inquiry enhance student learning and cultural comprehension.

1.2. Student response

English teachers were asked about students' reactions to textbook cultural elements to learn how they integrate culturally.

Te7: "Children respond well to cultural subjects they like. Language learning becomes more meaningful and relevant with this alignment."

Te9: "Students accept cultural diversity. They show their passion by asking questions, sharing stories, and improving their language skills."

Te7 promotes student-centred cultural inquiry that engages students when issues are relevant. This link makes Language learning meaningful and encourages active involvement in culturally oriented conversations and activities. Te9 stresses student acceptance of ethnic variety. Students improve their language skills by asking questions, sharing experiences, and enjoying cultural discovery. Immersion in many cultures improves students' language skills and worldview.

1.3. Ideal role

Teachers discussed their ideal EFL textbook function in cultural integration:

Te2: "We should not miss out on the cultural competence in EFL texts and the significance of going beyond surface knowledge. Textbooks should encourage students to explore cultural differences and similarities for a more nuanced understanding."

Te6: "I agree that EFL texts must mix Language and culture. Textbooks can help students naturally incorporate cultural themes by showing how Language and culture are intertwined."

These debates emphasize that EFL textbooks should go beyond providing cultural facts. Instead, they should actively promote cultural competence in students. Besides teaching language skills, a dynamic textbook should also integrate Language and culture, providing an environment where cultural variety is organically absorbed and understood, improving the educational experience.

2. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Textbook in Fostering Cultural Integration

2.1. Strengths

According to the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews, teachers like the EFL textbook's coverage of cultural diversity. Students also appreciate the textbook's real-world examples, situations, and cultural materials, which educate students on global and cultural differences.

Te2: "The actual cultural elements of the textbook, which help students understand cultural differences via real-world examples, is quite adequate."

Te4: "Multimedia assets like films and audio snippets are crucial for cultural integration, and this book has enough of them.

Teachers like using audio recordings to promote cultural integration because multimedia helps students remember culturally relevant information. The textbook's emphasis on cultural understanding, respect, and ethics helps students appreciate cultural variety and challenge misconceptions. Because of the textbook's cultural flexibility, teachers can modify information to students' backgrounds and interests. Flexibility in teaching methods makes cultural information more engaging for students.

2.2. Weaknesses

Teachers have raised concerns about cultural integration in EFL textbooks, including simplicity and the need for more diversity.

Te3: " I have noticed that textbooks may not adequately cover cultural disputes and sensitive themes in the classroom."

Te4: "Some parts of the textbook lack participatory cultural exchange tasks. I think more cultural debates would be good."

Te2: "The textbook sometimes lacks marginalized cultural viewpoints. Some different cultural material would be better."

Teachers notice that certain textbook exercises focus on dominant or well-known civilizations and ignore minority cultures. They stress the need to show multiple cultures for cultural integration. Teachers also want more help with cultural differences and delicate themes. They recommend texts with teaching tools for culturally relevant conversations. Teachers want textbooks with interactive exercises to engage students and promote cultural interchange. Culturally rich resources frequently need more student-led debates and engagement. Teachers think more engaging activities and cultural exchanges improve classroom cultural integration.

2.3. Challenges

The participants explore the problems of including cultural education in EFL lessons:

Te5: "I found standard cultural awareness examinations challenging, and they may need to measure students' cultural knowledge and abilities accurately.

Te9: "It is necessary to make cultural assessment accessible and interesting for students because some cultural issues may not interest them."

Te12: "It is a must, making cultural knowledge engaging and accessible for beginners and experts by adjusting it to different competency levels."

These statements highlight EFL teachers' opinions on the textbook's cultural education gap. Teacher 5's comment shows how typical assessments fail to measure cultural awareness. Teachers 9 and 12 emphasize relatability, engagement, and adaptation while teaching cultural subjects to students with various interests and language learning levels. Cultural integration in education requires innovative classroom immersion methods that allow students to connect with and comprehend cultural themes actively.

3. Recommendations of EFL Teachers

9th-grade EFL teachers share wisdom on using EFL texts to promote cultural awareness in the classroom.

Te4: " I prefer EFL textbooks that blend Language and culture effortlessly and represent global variety. This method integrates culture with language training, improving cultural understanding."

Te8: " We should not forget the value of role-plays, conversations, and multimedia in cultural integration. These interactive strategies make cultural learning memorable and encourage active involvement and cultural immersion."

Te11: " Textbooks are important for providing students with cultural awareness and practical skills. Textbooks may help students connect effectively and politely with other cultures by providing real-world cultural exchanges."

Te2 proposes supplementing textbooks with varied materials to broaden students' cultural perspectives and awareness of global cultures. Te7 promotes tolerance and empathy in the classroom by encouraging open talks about complex issues. Te10 stresses that cultural material should be given specific time in the curriculum to ensure complete covering and meaningful involvement. Adding these recommendations to the curriculum helps improve EFL textbook cultural integration, allowing students to build cultural competency and respect.

4. 9th Grade EFL Textbook Evaluation in Terms of Cultural Integration

The 9th-grade textbook "Uplift" was examined for cultural integration, starting with its table of contents (Figure 1). The wide range of themes in the table of contents of the EFL textbook suggests cultural integration. "Studying Abroad," "Bridging Cultures," "My Environment," "World Heritage," "Movies," "Emergency and Health Problems," "Human in Nature," "Invitations and Celebrations," "Inspirational People," and "Television and Social Media" cover many cultural topics. A comprehensive approach to cultural representation covers international and local viewpoints, heritage, entertainment, health, nature, social interactions, and media. This textbook seeks to improve students' English language abilities and cultural awareness by integrating Language and culture. The varied theme range reflects an intentional attempt to expose students to a variety of cultural situations to promote cultural diversity and linguistic ability.

Figure 1. Content of the book "Uplift"

The textbook includes culture-specific listening, speaking, reading, and writing assignments to aid language learning. Figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 show examples for each ability. Students learn cultural subtleties and speech patterns by listening to cultural debates and topics. Cultural conversation exercises let students share their thoughts and experiences regarding different cultures. Reading about culture and customs illuminates history and traditions. Students write cultural paragraphs or reflections to develop critical thinking and expression abilities. These exercises improve students' Language, cultural knowledge, and involvement. These assignments help students appreciate diverse cultures and improve their language skills in a culturally rich environment.
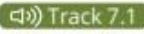
b **Listen to the audio and circle the correct option.** ◁))) Track 7.1

1 Homer Taylor is an ____.
   A anthropologist
   B archaeologist

2 Chichen-Itza is famous for ____.
   A its aesthetic beauty
   B the monuments there

3 ____ is an ancient caravan city.
   A Petra
   B Chichen-Itza

4 Sansa has ____.
   A multipurpose religious facilities
   B excellent tombs and temples

Figure 2. Listening exercise

Figure 3. Reading exercise

d **Work in pairs. Talk about the following questions and use at least three of the highlighted words in the text.**

1 Which table manners listed in the text seem strange to you? Why?

2 Why do you think countries have table manners? What table manners are unique to your country?

Figure 4. Speaking exercise

d **Read Jan's paragraph about the city she would like to visit and underline the sentences expressing reason.**

I really want to visit İstanbul one day because I believe that it is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. I would love to see the Bosporus and the Princes' Islands. I love seeing historical places, so Hagia Sofia Grand Mosque and the Blue Mosque are at the top of my list. I also want to try Turkish cuisine, especially Ottoman food. I'm also planning to shop in the Grand Bazaar because I want to buy some souvenirs.
I hope I can visit İstanbul very soon.

e **Write a similar paragraph as in *Exercise d*. Express your reasons.**

Figure 5. Writing Exercise

Table 4 reviews 18 Cultural Integration reading books in detail. Each book has been tested for cultural integration into language instruction. This systematic research and assessment examines how reading materials include cultural information to increase student cultural awareness and knowledge.

Table 4. The frequency of reading texts as a measure of cultural integration

Cultural element	f
Cultural Identity and Social Groups	3
Social Interaction	9
Beliefs and Behaviors	9
Social and Political Institutions	3
Socialization and Life Cycle	13
National History	7
National Geography	7
Stereotypes and National Identity	11

Table 4 shows the prevalence of cultural elements in 18 reading texts studied for their cultural effects on language development. This table shows how cultural aspects appear in writings about socialization, the life cycle, stereotypes and national identity, social interaction, and beliefs and actions. 7 reading works feature national history and geography, highlighting their importance. In contrast, cultural identity, social groupings, and social and political institutions are rare in reading passages. This comprehensive study emphasizes the need for cultural components in language learning aids to improve students' cultural awareness and knowledge.

The textbook has 328 listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities. A detailed checklist was used to evaluate each activity's cultural integration potential. The cultural content of these events was carefully examined. Table 5 methodically breaks out the frequency of cultural integration in various activities.

Table 5. Frequencies of activities in the textbook in terms of cultural integration

Cultural element	f
Cultural Identity and Social Groups	13
Social Interaction	158
Beliefs and Behaviours	174
Social and Political Institutions	7
Socialization and Life Cycle	229
National History	121
National Geography	120
Stereotypes and National Identity	183

Table 5 details the textbook's culturally diversified exercises. The research shows that Cultural Identity and Social Groups (13) expose students to different social groups, whereas Social Interaction (158) and Beliefs and Behaviours (174) include

interpersonal communication and cultural values. Social and Political Institution's (7) actions occasionally illuminate social structures. Socialization and the Life Cycle (229) weave a complex tapestry of cultural subtleties around family relationships and human development. Historical narratives and geographical situations in National History (121) and National Geography (120) effectively show varied cultural beginnings. Students critically evaluate cultural views in Stereotypes and National Identity (183). Some exercises are rare, but all support the textbook's instructional goals of cultural sensitivity and comprehending varied cultural settings.

Conclusion and Discussion

This research explores Istanbul, İzmir and Nevşehir 9th-grade EFL teachers' views on cultural integration in high school EFL textbooks. It also analyses the textbook to learn how these teachers evaluate its effectiveness in promoting cultural integration, identify strengths and weaknesses, and understand their ideal role for the textbook in promoting cultural awareness. The report also includes teachers' suggestions for improving the textbook's cultural integration and increasing students' learning experience. According to the study, the 9th-grade English textbook "Uplift" promotes cultural integration. "Study Abroad," "Bridging Cultures," "Man in Nature," and "World Heritage" address many cultural topics. The textbook's reading and activity frequency analysis shows a conscious attempt to familiarise students with other cultures. In addition to multimedia and authentic cultural elements, the textbook discusses tough cultural problems and underrepresented cultures. Cultural integration promoted by the "Uplift" textbook improves students' linguistic and cultural understanding.

The study shows that the textbook helps high school students comprehend culture. Teachers like the textbook's cultural knowledge and multimedia elements but want to do more to cover sensitive cultural matters and underrepresented cultures. The textbook study supports these insights, stressing EFL textbooks' complex significance as cultural bridges, windows, and catalysts. Teachers advise cultural integration strategies to strengthen education and foster global citizenship, including interactive exercises and varied opinions. Studies show that cultural integration improves EFL students' language acquisition and cultural competence.

A literature study shows that Language transmits culture and is heavily impacted by social norms (Brown, 2000; Risager, 2006). Teachers' evaluations show that the EFL textbook's merits come from using authentic cultural elements and real-world examples, highlighting the inseparability of Language and Culture (Kramsch, 2014). Language and culture cannot be separated without degrading both, according to literature (Brown, 2000). ELT must include cultural material to promote literacy and communication (Bada, 2000). Including underrepresented cultures in interviews provides a complete perspective of global cultures (Çetin, 2019). Research highlights the significance of cultural integration in ELT since EFL textbooks can promote intercultural awareness (Bennett, 1997; Çetin, 2019). According to literature, teachers

want textbooks to encourage cultural exploration and authenticity (Bada, 2000; Syahri & Susanti, 2016). Literature suggests promoting cultural integration through interactive activities, multimedia tools, field visits, and joint projects (Çetin, 2019; Kramsch, 2014), aligning with teachers' ideas in the research. EFL instruction must incorporate culture, as seen by this alignment.

Most findings match the literature, with few exceptions. Teachers' attitudes toward culture in language education range from minimal to aggressive integration (Çamlıbel, 1998; Önalan, 2004; Işık, 2002). The survey's teachers praise the EFL textbook's cultural sensitivity, authenticity, and inclusion, which may be affected by their selection and setting. Teachers interviewed feel cultural integration in the classroom is possible, even if second language learners may fail to understand a culture without immersion (Lantolf, 1999).

The study and literary convergence affect EFL education. The paper highlights the possibility of cultural integration in EFL textbooks and the importance of teachers in promoting cultural understanding, authenticity, and tolerance (Çetin, 2019). The evidence suggests that EFL materials should reflect global diversity by including dominant and marginalized foreign cultures (Çetin, 2019). The study investigated a Grade 9 English textbook with foreign and Turkish cultural elements. According to the research, cultural integration should be realistic, participative, and hands-on. This follows EFL textbook guidelines to involve students' and global cultures and use multimodal approaches for culturally rich language instruction (Setyono & Widodo, 2019). Finally, interviewees emphasize teachers' crucial role in enhancing cultural knowledge in language education through cultural integration methods (Çamlıbel, 1998; Önalan, 2004).

This study aims to shed light on cultural integration in 9th-grade EFL textbooks and language education. However, it has several limitations that may need to be revised in its scope and generalizability. First, the study's small sample size of sixteen English teachers may limit its application. Their experiences and perspectives may not reflect those of all regional teachers or the general population. A larger, more diversified sample may provide a fuller picture. Second, using teachers' self-reported data may bring social desirability bias or individual biases, affecting data accuracy and impartiality. To address this, data was collected in a non-judgmental, open setting to foster participant expression. Thirdly, the research only covers the "Uplift" textbook; thus, researchers may see activities and cultural integration differently, and this study does not account for teacher training, classroom dynamics, school resources, or student viewpoints. These limitations must be acknowledged to properly evaluate the study's findings and place them in perspective for future research. Despite these limits, the findings establish the framework for future studies to improve local education methods and inspire future research.

The EFL curriculum should embrace cultural richness by carefully selecting real-world cultural resources that accurately represent a variety of global cultures to promote cultural integration. This requires textbooks with culturally integrated texts and exercises from students' home cultures and other civilizations globally.

Additionally, minority culture must be included in English textbooks. Digital technologies and instructional methods can improve the curriculum's cultural adaptability and language acquisition. Exploring how cultural integration affects language abilities and fostering parent and community engagement in schooling are also important. Novel assessment methods can also measure cultural awareness and competency. By studying and creating EFL programs for culturally diverse learners, we may better prepare them for the problems and possibilities of globalization. This complete EFL curriculum cultural integration strategy ensures inclusive and successful language teaching.

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