EFL Textbooks at the University Level in KSA: An Investigation of Culture Presentation in Interactions/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition

Hussein Ali Habtoor[1]

Abstract

This paper reports a study conducted to evaluate the cultural content of illustrations and texts incorporated in *Interactions/ Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* series of teaching English to Saudi EFL learners from an instructor perspective at Najran University (NU). Fifty-eight teachers took part in filling up a questionnaire developed for this purpose. Seven of them are Native Speakers of English (NSE) and fifty-one are Non-Native Speakers of English (NNSE), while thirty-eight of them are male and twenty are female teachers. These teachers are working at the English major programme in the Department of English at the College of Arts and Education and the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) of NU. Measures like percentages, frequencies, means, standard deviations and Mann-Whitney U test are utilised to achieve the statistical analysis of the survey. The results revealed that there is a balanced representation of target, source and intercultural elements of culture has been achieved in the design of the content of the textbooks series reflected in the illustrations and texts as well. This supports the claim of the appropriateness of the textbooks to the learners' needs, communicative competence and cultural background in this particular teaching/learning situation.

Keywords: Interactions/Mosaic, Saudi EFL Learners, Target Culture, Source Culture

[1]Aden University, College of Education at Ataq, Shabwah, Department of English, Yemen, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5146-0774, Email:haahabtoor@yahoo.co.uk

Introduction

Culture in second/foreign language teaching and learning is not a recent trend rather it has been of a broader practice as Allen (1985) has elucidated it: "...prior to the 1960s, the lines between language and culture were carefully drawn. The primary reason for second language study in the earlier part of this century was access to the great literary masterpieces of civilization" (p. 138). This means that the culture has been in the heart of the practice of teaching and learning for a very long period of time. Although there are some views regarding the teaching of a foreign or second language without the inclusion of its culture, but still the involvement of culture in second/ foreign language curriculum is strongly preferable. Recently, culture is considered as an integral part in the domain of ESL/ EFL practice. Alptekin (2002) puts it, "learning a foreign language becomes a kind of enculturation, where one acquires new cultural frames of reference and a new world view, reflecting those of the target language culture and its speakers" (p. 58).

Textbooks of English language learning in the Arab world are mostly ready-made ones that can be adopted for teaching English both in government and private institutions at a wider scope. Rarely to find some of these textbooks pre-evaluated for its linguistic content, in general, and for its cultural content, in particular, before implementing in teaching. The incorporation of the target culture is inseparable in any English teaching programme worldwide, but this sort of incorporation should consider the source culture of the learners as well. There should be some limits for such incorporation.

Culture in ready-made EFL textbooks is of a wide concern in conservative societies such as those in Islamic and Arab countries in the middle east, in particular. There are so many textbooks that have been loaded with target culture elements that might constitute, to some extent, offensive aspects to the source culture learners of English. It is very rare in the Arab world, particularly in the gulf states, to find locally-made and designed materials to learn English. As a result of this scenario, this article is going to investigate the incorporation of target culture in *Interaction/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* series which has been developed for teaching English as a foreign/second language in the middle east by McGraw-Hill. It has been widely spread over the gulf states and since then it has been used as a full programme package for teaching and learning the basic skills and grammar in different universities and institutions. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for instance, it has been chosen for teaching in departments of English and university preparatory year programmes in many universities among which NU, the focus of the study, is one that has been using it predominantly for a long time since 2009. In addition to NU we may find that it has been used by other universities and institutions such as Prince Sultan University, Women's Colleges, Teacher's Colleges: Riyadh, Arar, Hail, Tabuk, Beeshah, etc. King Saud University, King Abdul-Aziz University, Institute of Public Administration in Dammam, University of Jubail, Community Colleges of King Saud University, University of Qasim, Taibah University and University of Taif among many more. In the UAE it is used by American University of Dubai (AUD), American University of Sharjah (AUS), Canadian University of Dubai (CUD), University of Sharjah (UOS), Institute of Applied Technology (IAT), Institute of Nursing and Health Care sand other institutions. While in Oman it is also used by Modern College of Business & Science-Muscat, Bureimi College, Sohar University, Oman Medical College. Finally, in Qatar it is used by College of North Atlantic. (I. Moutaweh, personal communication, No Date)

Purpose of the study The study aims at investigating the incorporation of aspects of the target culture in *Interactions/ Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* series. The series included all the four basic language skills textbooks in addition to grammar books. These books are widely spread and used among the teachers of the Department of English (major) and English programme at the PYP of NU. This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent the target culture aspects are represented in *Interactions/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* in both illustrations and texts of the series?

2. Are there any statistically significant differences among NSE teachers and NNSE teachers in evaluating cultural elements in Interactions*/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* series?

3. Are there any statistically significant differences among male and female teachers of English in evaluating cultural elements in *Interactions/ Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* series?

Review of literature

The notion of culture is intensely debatable in language learning and it is commonly one of the challenging terms that has been confronting scholars to define and explicate for a very long period of time. Since the end of the 1980s till now, a great attention has been directed to the target culture perpetual connection with L2 teaching. These works include, for instance, Byram (1989; 1994a; 1994b; 1997a; 1997b) and Kramsch (1993a; 2001).

As for the definition of culture that may be used as a point of departure in this article, it is found that one of the well-known and oldest definitions of culture is Goodenough's (1957) in which he argues that "…a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves" (p. 167). Another but more recent view on culture is that of Vallette (1986) who tried to broadly tackle the term in pointing out two important components of culture:

> One is the anthropological or social culture. The attitudes, customs, and daily activities of people, their way of thinking, their values their forms of reference. Since language is a direct manifestation of this phase of culture, a society cannot be totally understood or appreciated without a knowledge of its language. The other component of culture is the history of civilization. Traditionally representing the "culture" element in foreign language teaching, it includes geography, history and achievements in the sciences, the social sciences and the arts (p.179)

There are some other important views and definitions for the term 'culture' that deserve a keen look to perceive the whole scenario. In his definition, Byram (1989) asserts that culture is "the whole way of life of the foreign country, included but not limited to its production in the arts, philosophy and "high culture" in general" (p. 15). This general account of culture by Byram is not far from that presented in Kramsch (1993a), who views culture in such a way that it "is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them" (p.1).

Furthermore, the relatedness of culture and language is stressed by Brown (2007) in pointing out the close tie of these two fundamental elements:

> Language is a part of a culture, and culture is a part of the language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. The acquisition of a second language, except for specialized, instrumental acquisition (as may be the case, say, in acquisition of reading knowledge of a language for examining scientific texts), is also the acquisition of a second culture (pp. 189-190).

The role of culture in EFL textbooks and language learning

Integration of cultural elements in textbooks and teaching materials constitutes a fundamental matter on which syllabus designers and language teaching policy makers hardly agree. It remains a controversial issue as to which culture textbooks must adhere to. Source culture or target culture that may prevail in foreign or second language textbooks, remain a matter of debating among these experts, which is none of this research interest. Apparently, it is indispensable that the foreign language textbook presents the target culture accurately. Kramsch (1988) suggests that we should conceive of foreign language textbooks as a "culturally coded educational construct, representing a complex nexus of various forces, requiring the collaboration of a variety of people: linguists and educators, authors, reviewers, publishers, school boards, teachers and students"(p.65).

For the importance of textbooks in ESL/EFL situations Young and Riegeluth (1988) assert that textbooks constitute 75 percent to 90 percent of the material learners can acquire on a specific subject. So, they have an essential part in instruction. There is a common agreement among instructors that

textbooks "exert a powerful influence on what is taught and how it is taught"(Rogers, 1989, p.25). What makes text books more essential is what has been expressed by Bada (2000: 101), that "the need for cultural literacy in ELT arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers." Therefore, the textbooks must compensate such lack of exposure with suitable cultural content of the target language that takes into consideration the special cultural background of the learners.

As for teaching culture in general and based on (Adaskou et al.,1990, as cited in Sárdi, 2002, p. 101), it is possible to divide 'culture' into three different subcategories for the purposes of language teaching. These are the following:

- Culture in the aesthetic sense involves literature, music, films and the fine arts.

- Culture in the sociological sense refers to the way of life in the target community. This category includes the structure of different institutions from the national health system to the family, and the interpersonal relations at home, at work, and during free time activities.

- Culture in the pragmatic sense is the third category. It refers to the social skills, which make it possible for learners to communicate successfully with other members of the target language community according to setting, audience, purpose and genre.

According to the above subcategorization of culture and its utilization in language teaching by (Adaskou et al., 1990) many elements mentioned above can be incorporated in texts that accurately reflect the target culture and make some exposure to the learners through a comprehensive material at their hands to acquire the foreign language. Likewise, Peterson (2004) presented a more inclusive classification that represent the types of culture which intersect with each other, as in table 1 below. He presented what he called big 'C' culture which intersects with both 'invisible' culture and 'visible' culture as well, and likewise does the small 'c' culture. This sort of classification helps to incorporate essential components of the target culture when designing teaching materials to EFL learners.

Table 1. represents the intersection between Big "C," Little "c"/ "invisible" and "visible" cultures.

	Big "C" Culture *Classic or grand themes*	**Little "c" Culture** *Minor or common themes*
Invisible Culture *"Bottom of the iceberg"*	**Examples**: Core values, attitudes or beliefs, society's norms, legal foundations, assumptions, history, cognitive processes	**Examples**: Popular issues, opinions, viewpoints, preferences or tastes, certain knowledge (trivia, facts)
Visible Culture *"Tip of the iceberg"*	**Examples**: Architecture, geography, classic literature, presidents or political figures, classical music	**Examples**: Gestures, body posture, use of space, clothing style, food, hobbies, music, artwork

Source: Peterson (2004), *cultural intelligence*, p. 25.

In line with what has been discussed above, Wandel (2003) argued that if the role of English is considered a world language, two main shifts regarding the cultural dimension of educational work seem unavoidable:

(1) EFL- teaching must enhance its cultural and geographical scope and include other English-speaking cultures apart from the UK and the USA. Thus areas/countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Australia, Canada, India and their cultural background must be taken into consideration and will start playing an increasingly more relevant role in the EFL-classroom.

(2) On the other hand, educating students to make use of English as a lingua franca also means developing their intercultural sensitivity. Students should be allowed to get to know a number of different outlooks and perspectives. They ought to be provided with tools to analyse fundamental aspects of cultures (p. 73).

The discussion of these two points of view by Wandel exhibits the essential role of culture in a wider scope rather than to confine it to target or source culture in what is well-known practice of teaching English to the world as an international language. More precisely, with another cultural perspective that accounts for more inclusive and diverse nature of cultures across the globe. It is not only the textbook that matters in teaching and learning culture rather the teacher must be aware of the nature of dealing with two interrelated aspects in their practice of teaching, viz., language and culture. Over two decades ago, Lafayette (1988) wrote:

> ...it is hoped that universities will produce foreign language teachers who are better trained to focus on culture, and that publishers will begin to insist on a more systematic treatment of culture in textbooks. It is most important, however, that teachers begin to view themselves not simply as teachers of language but rather as teachers of both language and culture (p. 61).

Textbooks cultural content evaluation in Saudi Arabia

In Saudi EFL context there are several studies that have been conducted to investigate the cultural content of several textbooks in different parts of the Kingdom. These studies include (Allehyani, Burnapp and Wilson, 2017; Farouk, 2015; Alsaif, 2016; Aldera, 2017) among others. Allehyani, et al. (2017) focused on secondary school English textbooks in Saudi Arabia and how the inner-circle culture was integrated in such textbooks and they found that *English for Saudi Arabia* textbook is particularly focusing on the local and Islamic culture, whereas *Traveller 5* is focusing on multicultural aspects in covering several communicative topics. In an earlier but a similar and more inclusive study, Farouk (2015) analysed three of the English textbooks that have been utilised over a 33 year-period of EFL practice in KSA for the third grade secondary school students. He argued that the first book published in 1982, focused on cultural elements from outside Saudi Arabia as subsidiary to the Saudi local culture. The same cultural pattern is maintained in the second book published in 1998, but in the third book published in 2013, a huge number of western and multicultural elements are incorporated. Alsaif (2016) conducted a critical study on the domination of the western culture in the content of English Language textbooks. He argued that "Surprisingly, this study revealed that the Western culture portrayed in these textbooks was mainly from inner-circle countries such as the USA, the UK, and Canada; while other countries from outer- or expanding-circle countries seemed to be marginalised". (p 242). In a limited but similar to the current study, Aldera (2017) conducted an investigation of the cultural content of two textbooks of the *Interaction* series, viz. *Access* and *Interaction 1*. It focused on assessing the learners' attitudes towards the target culture in these two books. The outcomes of the study revealed that the respondents have a negative attitude towards the omnipotence of the target culture over their native culture in such textbooks. In a corpus based approach, Almujaiwel (2018) investigated the cultural aspects of Saudi EFL textbooks. He examined the recently published textbooks (2016 onwards) using corpus search software tools to analyse twenty cultural topics integrated in those textbooks. The study revealed the immense frequency of Arabic cultural words over target culture ones and then come the target and intercultural words, respectively.

Research Methodology

Participants

Fifty-eight teachers of English in the Department of English (Major) and English programme in the PYP at NU took part in this study. Seven of them are NSE teachers and fifty-one are NNSE teachers and thirty-eight male teachers and twenty female teachers. They were asked to fill a 5 points Likert-scale questionnaire of 55 items dealing with the cultural content of the texts and illustrations of *Interaction/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition*. The survey was conducted in distributing the paper forms that have been handed over to each teacher in person and collected after completion.

Research tool

A survey questionnaire of eight dimensions with a total of 55 items of 5 points Likert-scale was developed to collect the data. The responses were graded from strongly disagree to strongly agree (that's they are coded from 1 to 5, 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree). It focused on the cultural content incorporated in both texts and illustrations of the *Interaction/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* series. The participants were asked to fill that questionnaire regarding this series textbooks cultural content. The dimensions of the questionnaire include: Personal data, aims and goals of the textbook, types of illustrations, segments of society presented in the illustrations of the textbook, overall impression of the target culture created by the illustrations, types of texts, segments of society represented in the texts of the series and the overall impression of the target language culture created by texts.

Textbooks under investigation

The *Interaction/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* textbooks are published by McGraw-Hill and they are authored by several ESL/EFL material experts. The authors of reading series are: *Reading / writing Access* by Pamela Hartmann, James Mental and Ahmed Motala (2007), *Reading one* by Elaine Kirn, Pamela Hartmann (2007), *Reading two* by Eline Kirn, Pamela Hartmann (2007), and *Mosaic one* by Brenda Wegmann and Miki Kenzevic (2007). The authors of listening/speaking series are: *Listening/speaking Access* by Emily Austen Thrush, Robert Baldwin and Lawrie Blass (2007), *Listening/speaking one* by Judith Tanka and Paul Most (2007), *Listening/speaking two* by Judith Tanka and Lida R. Baker (2007) and *Mosaic one* by Jami Hanreddy and Elizabeth Whalley (2007). While the authors of writing series are: *Writing one* by Cheryl Pavlik and Margaret Keenan Segal (2007), *writing two* are also by Cheryl Pavlik and Margaret Keenan Segal (2007), while Mosaic one by Laurie Blass and Meredith Pike-Baky (2007). As for Grammar series, *Access* was authored by Milada Broukal (2007), *Grammar one* by Elaine Kirn and Darcy Jack (2007), *Grammar two* by Patricia K. Werner and John P. Nelson (2007) and finally *Mosaic one* by Patricia K. Werner (2007). All of these books are used in the Department of English of the Arts Faculty and the English Programme of the PYP of NU for several years and still it is effective till today in the Departments of English and Translation at the College of Languages and with some slight deviation in using the Diamond Edition by the PYP programme at NU. In the publishers' blurb description, it is written: "*Interactions/ Mosaic* is widely revised, comprehensive programme designed to prepare students for academic success. The programme integrates chapter themes across the four skills strands and articulates the books up and down the proficiency levels."

Results and Discussion

In this part, the findings of the survey are reported to divulge the perceptions of EFL instructors about the concept of 'target culture' incorporated in *Interactions/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* series. Specifically, the percentages, means, standard deviations and Mann-Whitney U test results are offered to show the outcomes of the investigation and to discuss these outcomes thoroughly.

Aims and goals of the textbooks

Descriptive statistics regarding the teachers' evaluation of the *Interaction/Mosaic* aims and goals showed that the textbooks were geared to the conceptual framework of the students as determined by their age, social class, and cultural background with more than 47% of the respondents agreed on this item (M = 3.1207 and SD = 1.04424), whereas the series coverage of variation in topics suitable to the interests of the students, as determined by their age is found to be much higher and with 68% agreed to this item, (M = 3.1897 and SD = 1.35668). On the other hand, the textbooks cover a diversity of topics suitable to the interests of the students, as determined by their age with 55.3 %, (M = 3.1897 and SD = 1.35668). It is also found that the textbooks according to the teachers' evaluation cover a multiplicity of topics suitable to the interests of the students, as determined by their sex with a low score, that is, 37 % (M = 2.8448 and SD = 1.21109). As for the interests of the students, as determined by their environment, a variety of topics were presented by the textbooks only with 32 % (M = 2.8966 and SD = 1.13462), which is also a very low score. The textbook covers a variety of topics suitable to the interests of the students, as determined by their social setting with a lower score, that is, 32 % (M = 2.9655 and SD = 1.16928). The goal of

the cultural instruction is stated at 31.5 % of the teachers agreed to the statement (M = 3.0690 and SD = .81353).

According to the above stated statistics, it is believed that the aims and goals of the series under study are not clearly stated, but still are to some extent analogous with the aspects related to the level, age, gender, environment, social setting and social background of the Saudi learners of English at the university level. Although the scores did not reveal a high consensus among respondents, still they indicate the reasonability and acceptability of the series among the teachers at NU. Since its adaptation, the series has never been thoroughly evaluated for such a purpose and in particular to investigate the aims and goals underlying them. To sum up, the weighted means of the statements of the survey revealed some sort of agreement among the respondents that the series goals are to some extent appropriate for such a situation of learning English. The highest mean recorded here is 3.1897, whereas the lowest mean recorded is 2.8448. This gives inclination of the figures towards a 'neutral' attitude of the respondents.

Types of illustrations

It is found that about 61% of the teachers agreed that the photographs in the textbook are attractive and generally in colours (M=3.3448 and SD=1.08501), whereas a less score of the teachers, that is, 47 % agreed that the photographs reflect the target culture (M=3.0345, SD=1.28371). On the other hand, 58 % of them think that the maps are always about the foreign geographical content (M=3.4655, SD=1.06319). The facsimiles of tickets, coins, letters, etc. according to the teachers' opinion reflect the target culture with 47 % of them only agreed to this idea with M=3.40, SD=1.16889. The cartoons and comics, presented throughout the textbook, reflect the target culture with 53 % of the teachers agreed to this item with M= 3.1552 and SD= 1.32190. The teachers thought that the line drawings are used in the textbook to illustrate the target culture with 58 % (M=3.2931 SD=1.21408).

By and large, the illustrations of the series including photos, maps, cartoons, and line drawings are well-designed in a colourful style reflecting the target culture, but not entirely and exclusively doing so, as the figures above show. This means that other cultural elements like the source culture elements and intercultural elements are incorporated in the series too. This gives the impression that a multicultural approach has been espoused widely in designing the *Interaction/Mosaic* series with slight modifications to fit the concerned situation in the Arab world. The series wider scope of its contents makes it more internationally rather than locally confined to a particular culture.

Segments of society presented in the illustrations

Statistics indicated that 50 % of the teachers agreed that the characters in the textbook are representative of the target language society with regard to their age with M=3.1552 and SD=1.22549. Whereas only 46 % of them thought that the characters in the textbook are representative of the target language society with regard to their sex (M=3.2414 and SD=1.08110). About 42 % of the teachers also thought that the characters in the textbook are representative of the target language society with regard to their environment (M=3.1552 and SD=1.12080). While more than 36 % were of the opinion that the characters in the textbook are representative of the target language society with regard to their social setting (M=3.1552 and SD=1.12080). The life style is represented in the textbooks illustrations in all its forms (urban, rural, small towns, highly materialistic, purposefully non-materialistic, noticeably conservative) with 41 % of the teachers agreed to this item (M=3.1897 SD=.90722). Finally, only 34 % of the teacher thought that the jobs are sexually stereotyped without balanced representation (M= 3.0690 and SD=.97084).

The segments of society representation in the series under study reveal that there is a common view among the respondents. The figures are nearly of moderate rank or better with neutral attitude towards this element of culture in particular. A closer look at the weighted means (3.1552, 3.2414, 3.1897and 3.0690) reveal that a general consensus has been held in viewing the elements represented in the illustration of *Interaction/Mosaic*. Although a wide array of investigation is covered in this regard, still the results statistically are almost indistinguishable. The textbooks have a wide range of illustrations that covers different cultures rather than the target culture in many sections of the chapters of the series discussing several topics. These topics extending from education to sport, from food to life style with several characters from different parts of the world irrespective of the age, sex, social setting,

environment, urban life, rural life, small towns, highly materialistic situations, purposefully non-materialistic ones, and noticeably conservative. For these reasons, the results are moderate in the sense that the respondents feel that not only the target culture dominating the representation of society segments in the illustrations of the series rather there are worldwide several cultures included in the textbooks.

Overall impression of the target culture created by the illustrations

The teachers agreed on illustrations as being generally authentic in 71 % (M=3.2931, SD=.95529), while only about 37% of them think that the illustrations are contemporary and have nothing to do with historical elements (M=3.1724 and SD=.84059). More than 57% of them believed that the illustrations reflect an active state (M=3.3448, SD=.88954), whereas more than 73% of the respondents agreed that the illustrations are realistic (M=3.5000, SD=1.04713). Only 26% of them thought that the illustrations reflect an offensive content to the learners of the target language culture (M=3.0172, SD=1.23532). About 37% of them agreed that the illustrations are representative of the target culture only and not selectively prepared (M=3.0000 and SD=1.00873). More than 65 % of the respondents agreed that the illustrations are multi-cultural rather than mono-cultural (M=3.5172 and SD =.92227). About 63% of the respondents agreed that the illustrations are multi-ethnic rather than mono-ethnic (M=3.3448 and SD=.90905). While more than 71 % of them believed that the illustrations are formal in their content (M=3.2586 and SD=.86977). About 58% also agreed that the illustrations are attractive in their appearance (M=3.3276 and SD=1.17560). More than 42 % of the respondents felt that the illustrations are positive to the learners' native culture (M= 2.8448 and SD=1.12080). Only 39 % of them assumed that the illustrations are appropriate to the learners' native culture (M=2.8793 and SD=1.07732).

As an overall assessment regarding the cultural content exhibited in the series, one can observe the respondents non-biased views stated in the figures above. They are mostly with the opinion of general authenticity utilised in the textbooks to present the illustrations with contemporary content shown in the photos, maps, line drawings, etc. They also think that the textbooks are realistic and do not reflect that sort of offensive content to the Arab learners of English in this specific situation. Figure also showed the positive assessment of the respondents regarding the formality of the illustrations and the vast spectrum of the illustrations in showing no bias to any ethnicity or culture in precise, which reflects the general appropriateness of the series to the Middle East learners of English and Saudi EFL learners in particular. The cultural content reflected in the illustrations is apparently positive to these learners' culture as well.

Types of texts

Less than 35 % of the respondents considered the dialogues as being seeded with cultural information and based on situations of the student's native culture (M=2.7586 and SD=1.11309), while well-over 58% of them thought that special cultural narratives are included in different situations in the textbook (M= 3.2414 and SD= 1.08110). More than 79% of the teachers under study believed that there are explanatory cultural notes given in some situation in the texts presented in *Interaction/Mosaic* series (M=3.1897 and SD= .92636). Only about 29% of them thought that the textbooks contain some songs of the target language culture (M=2.5690 and SD=1.07788), whereas less than 6% of them only confirmed that there are some poems of the target language culture included in the textbook (M=2.5690 and SD=1.06148). About 58% thought that there are some essays of the target language culture presented in the textbook (M=3.2069 and SD=1.07211). 53 % of the respondents agreed that there are some newspapers extracts of the target language culture presented in the textbook (M=3.2931 and SD=1.07620), while less than 37% of them thought that some jokes and anecdotes of the target language culture are presented in the textbook (M=3.2241 and SD=1.02672). More than 43 % of the respondents agreed that the folk tales and proverbs of the target language culture are available in the textbook (M=3.0517 and SD= 1.08292).

As assessed by the subjects of the study, the cultural content of the texts of the series, especially in the communicative aspects of language, is believed to be focusing more on the target and the intercultural elements rather than the source cultural ones. The teaching material in these texts is provided with some advisory cultural notes, where necessary, to make instruction more effective. As for the aesthetic

side of the language the respondents seem to agree that this aspect is kept to its minimum with the rarity of poetry and songs incorporation in these texts. Neither the target nor the source culture is prevailing regarding such aspects integration in the *Interaction/Mosaic* series. Essays and newspapers extracts are found to be in a moderate representation unlike the poems, songs, anecdotes and jokes along with folk tales that are obviously partially absent.

Segments of society represented in the texts

Only 42 % of the respondents agreed that the texts of the series represent all of the segments of the target language culture society (upper, middle, and lower classes) (M =3.1207 and SD =1.06091), while there are more than 55 % of them believed that the texts represent all of the age groups of the target language culture society (youth, middle-aged, and elderly) (M = 3.1724 and SD =.97581). Half of the respondents, (50%), thought that the texts presented the life style of the target language culture in all of its forms (rural, urban, small towns, highly materialistic, purposefully non-materialistic, and noticeably conservative) (M=3.4310 and SD=.93868). Less than 32 % of the respondents thought that the texts present the jobs as sexually stereotyped (M=3.0000 and SD=.99119).

The segments of the society classes, according to the respondents, are seemingly in a low representation in the texts, which is even less than the representation of age groups of the society of the target culture, as the figures above display. This entails that other cultures like the source or the international cultures may be widely shared in the incorporation of cultural elements representation in the texts of the series. Figures show that there is some sort of similarity between the assessment of illustrations and texts by the teachers regarding the society segments represented in the series.

Overall impression of the target language culture created by texts

More than 52% of the respondents think that the texts are presented in a lively rather than dull manner (M = 3.1552, SD =1.13635), whereas more than 55 % of them agreed that the texts are generally moderate and do not show antiquated life (M = 3.2414, SD =.92358). Less than 35% of them thought that the texts are positive to the students' native culture (M =2.8103, SD =1.08348), while even less than that, i.e., 24 % of them believed that the texts are false and do not reflect genuine nature (M =2.8621, SD =1.13088). Less than 24% of the respondents were of the view that the texts are biased and do not show any type of balance between the native and target culture (M =2.8966, SD =1.03770), however more than 63 % of the respondents agreed that the texts are generally interesting (M =3.4310, SD =1.04482). About 58 % of them thought that the texts are fresh and do not contain old stuff (M =3.1724, SD =1.04526), whereas only 34 % of them realised that the texts are serious in general and give no light stuff (M =3.1207, SD = .95656). Finally, about 45 % of the respondents thought that the texts are insightful and never contain superficial material (M =3.2241, SD =.87946).

The figures above reflect the general consensus among the respondents regarding the aspects of target culture in the texts and how lively these texts are constructed and presented in the series. They think that these texts are not an old-fashioned rather they are of the contemporary life of the people of the target culture. Their apprehension towards the cultural aspects being positive or not to the students' native culture is shown through the figures displayed. They overwhelmingly believe that the texts are of a genuine nature presented here to reflect the target culture in *Interaction/Mosaic* series. No bias is noticed according to their evaluation in harmonising the target and source cultures in the texts. The texts are also stimulating and boosting up the learners' zeal for learning English in this particular situation. They further consider the texts as perceptive and never contain dissembling material.

General assessment of the cultural content

According to the figures in table 2, which shows the results of Mann Whitney U test, there is no statistically significant differences among the NSE and NNSE teachers of English regarding the overall impression of the target culture created by illustrations of *Interaction/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* with the significant value as .466 (p<0.5). Likewise, there is no statistically significant differences among the NSE and NNSE teachers of English regarding the overall impression of the target culture created by texts of *Interaction/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* with the significant value as .069 (p<0.5). This leads us to reject the assumption that there is a difference between these two groups and gives a negative answer to the research question number two.

Table 2. Mann-Whitney Test for mother tongue of instructors' effect on evaluating cultural aspects of illustrations and texts of Interactions/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition

Ranks

	Mother Tongue	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Overall Impression of the Target Culture Created by the Illustrations	NSE	7	25.14	176.00
	NNSE	51	30.10	1535.00
	Total	58		
Overall Impression of the Target Language Culture Created by Texts	NSE	7	18.64	130.50
	NNSE	51	30.99	1580.50
	Total	58		

Test Statistics

	Overall impression of the target culture created by the illustrations	Overall impression of the target language culture created by texts
Mann-Whitney U	148.000	102.500
Wilcoxon W	176.000	130.500
Z	-.729	-1.818
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.466	.069

According to table 3, which also shows the results of Mann Whitney U test, there is no statistically significant differences among the male and female teachers of English regarding the overall impression of the target culture created by illustrations of *Interaction/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* with the significant value as 1.000 ($p<0.5$). Likewise, there is no statistically significant differences among the male and female teachers of English regarding the overall impression of the target culture created by texts of *Interaction/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* with the significant value as .948 ($p<0.5$). This leads us to reject the assumption that there is a statistically significant difference between these two groups and gives a negative answer to the research question number three.

Table 3. Mann-Whitney Test for the gender of instructors' effect on evaluating cultural aspects of illustrations and texts of *Interactions/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition*

Ranks

	Sex	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Overall Impression of the Target Culture Created by the Illustrations	Male	38	29.50	1121.00
	Female	20	29.50	590.00
	Total	58		
Overall Impression of the Target Language Culture Created by Texts	Male	38	29.61	1125.00
	Female	20	29.30	586.00
	Total	58		

Test Statistics

	Overall impression of the target culture created by the illustrations	Overall impression of the target language culture created by texts
Mann-Whitney U	380.000	376.000
Wilcoxon W	590.000	586.000
Z	.000	-.066
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	.948

Descriptive statistics (table 4) for the seven dimensions of this study reveal that the common attitude in all of these dimensions is 'neutral'. This gives an impression that the evaluation of the teachers for the cultural content of the *Interaction/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* does not strongly support the idea of the predominance of the target culture. As a result, it is inferred that the teachers are neither in favour of total inclusion of the target culture nor in favour of its exclusion. A balance between all the three cultures is an appropriate option, which will lead to a fair and wide exposure to a variety of cultures that can ensure an accurate learning situation to develop English proficiency and cultural awareness by Saudi EFL learners.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of each dimension of the questionnaire

No	Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Attitude	Rank
1	Aims and goals of the textbooks	3.0369	.86775	Neutral	6
2	Types of illustrations presented in the textbooks	3.2816	.95115	Neutral	1
3	Segments of society presented in the illustrations of the textbooks	3.1609	.80747	Neutral	4
4	Overall impression of the target culture created by the illustration	3.2083	.59055	Neutral	2
5	Text types presented in the textbooks	3.0115	.63801	Neutral	7
6	Segments of society represented in the texts of the textbook	3.1810	.80540	Neutral	3
7	Overall impression of the target language culture created by texts	3.1015	.62310	Neutral	5

Conclusion

This research paper tackled an important issue in teaching English language teaching materials in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in particular and in the Middle East in general. It is the evaluation of cultural content of the *Interactions/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* textbooks series used in many Saudi and Gulf universities and institutions. To be more precise, this study was limited to the evaluation of teachers of English language in both English major programme and the PYP programme at NU. The results obtained from the questionnaire revealed that target culture was perceived as an essential element of language teaching materials by the instructors teaching at the English language major programme and the PYP offered at NU. Absolutely, they believed that language and culture are intertwined and that they cannot be separated. Although the target culture is not highly recognised as the single culture incorporated, it could be perceived that the multicultural approach has been adopted in designing the textbooks series under investigation. Generally speaking, the outcomes of this investigation show that a common consensus among the respondents, as shown in the statistics a general attitude tendency inclined to 'neutral' degree in the scale regarding the assessment of the target culture in all the seven dimensions. Ultimately, this reflects the presence of other cultures in the textbooks including the source culture of the learners, i.e., Arabic culture. These results, in particular, provide a clear and comprehensive answer to the research question regarding the extent to which the target culture is represented in these textbooks. The two other research questions are also answered unambiguously through the rejection of the assumption that the target culture presence has been assessed equally by male and female teachers, on the one hand, and NNSE teachers and NSE teachers, on the other.

To sum up, there is no negative side effect or drawback for the incorporation of the target culture in the series of *Interaction/Mosaic Middle East Gold Edition* in all of its four language skills and grammar books. As obviously perceived from this investigation, the continuation of its use in these levels at NU, and most probably in other institutions in the kingdom and other Gulf States in general, may be appreciated. It appears that a balanced representation of both target and source cultures has been achieved in the design of the series cultural content in both illustrations and texts. Furthermore, an intercultural approach also has been taken care in the preparation of the series that serve a wider communicative purpose to the targeted learners in this particular learning context of the world.

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