



## Investigating Big “C” And Small “C” Culture Point in Touch Stone and Four Corners Series with Considering Teacher’s Attitudes

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### Abstract

In any teaching situation, the selection of a textbook is a highly debated issue. A good and suitable textbook is crucial for the success of the curriculum. In this research, two textbook series, Touch Stone and Four Corners, were examined. The evaluation focused on cultural elements, both Big "C" and small "c". The collected data was then shared with a group of teachers to understand their attitudes towards the textbooks. The researchers used the framework previously employed by Sadeghi et al. (2017) to assess the cultural aspects. The Sadeghi et al. (2017)'s framework considers Big "C" and Small "c" cultures according to the different elements and criteria. The results indicated that the Four Corners series scored higher in cultural aspects than the Touch Stone series. Lastly, the feedback from the teachers' focus group revealed that the Four Corners series excelled in cultural points and fostered better cultural awareness among students. The teachers believed that the book series with more cultural elements prepare students more and better for possible future communication.

*Keywords:* big "c" culture; small "c" culture; teacher's attitude; textbook evaluation

### 1. Introduction

English language education is increasingly important in modern society due to its role in communication among diverse individuals. Each year, millions of textbooks are published, and numerous programs are established to develop and distribute educational materials. The integration of cultural knowledge into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education is crucial for fostering intercultural competence among learners. This literature review synthesizes recent research findings on the representation of Big-C and small-c culture in EFL textbooks, highlighting the distinctions between these cultural forms and their implications for language education (Banaruee et al., 2023).

Students' familiarity with cultural points is one of the main factors that can help them use language effectively in real situations. Students who have greater familiarity with cultural points are better able to express themselves. Therefore, it is important that textbooks provide a comprehensive overview of cultural points (Markus et al., 2022).

Big "C" culture refers to significant cultural achievements like art, literature, and historical events, while small-c culture encompasses everyday practices, beliefs, and social norms that shape individuals' daily interactions. Culture plays a significant role in teaching and learning language, with the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) placing greater emphasis on cultural education. There has been a shift from approaches focusing solely on form and structure to recognizing and integrating culture into the EFL teaching and learning process. (Sadeghi et al., 2018)

In this study, the researchers investigate Big-C and small-c culture according to the framework established by Sadeghi et al. (2018). This framework considers cultural elements from various perspectives, including values and beliefs, daily life, food, customs, and norms in small-c culture, as well as music, history, geography, economy, art, and government/politics in Big-C culture.

The relationship between second language teaching and the teaching of the target culture has gained significant attention in recent years. Scholars like Byram (1997) and Kramsch (2001) emphasize the importance of cultural literacy in ELT, as many language learners are not exposed to the culture of the target language and its society. Consequently, second language culture has become an interdisciplinary component of many second language curricula and textbooks.

English textbooks in Iran play a crucial role in the education system, saving teachers' time and providing access to a diverse selection of professionally crafted materials. As cross-cultural communication increases, improving students' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and fostering a positive worldview have become important goals of EFL instruction. These textbooks not only facilitate language learning but also contribute to the development of students' intercultural understanding and communication skills. The significance of culture in language education cannot be overstated, and incorporating cultural instruction is fundamental in language teaching. Research emphasizes the necessity of including both local and international cultures within EFL textbooks (Morady Moghaddam, 2023).

The representation of culture in textbooks has evolved over the past two decades. Previously, cultural content often had its own dedicated section; however, it is now more frequently integrated into texts and activities. This shift carries ideological implications, as textbooks may inadvertently reinforce stereotypes and biases. Liu and Laohawiriyanon (2012) argue that dominant cultural narratives are often overlooked, leading to a narrow understanding of culture among learners and limiting their ability to engage in meaningful intercultural dialogue. Therefore, it is crucial to critically evaluate cultural representation in textbooks (McConachy, 2018).

This study aims to investigate and compare the cultural elements presented in two series of EFL textbooks, contributing to a broader understanding of how culture is represented in language education. By examining these cultural points, the research seeks to illuminate the implications for learners and educators alike, fostering a more comprehensive appreciation of the intricate relationship between language and culture in the context of English language education (Derakhshan, 2021).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Textbook Evaluation

Aliakbari (2004) found that current ELT textbooks in Iran are superficial in addressing culture, failing to impart deeper cultural traits and cross-cultural skills. There are three types of textbooks: those that mirror the source culture, those based on the target culture, and those aimed at international target

cultures. In Iranian high school textbooks, culture is not represented, and the national curriculum emphasizes reading and grammar.

Azizifar et al. (2010) evaluated two series of ELT textbooks used in Iranian high schools, focusing on the best quality textbooks. Moreover, Thein (2006) used a survey questionnaire to evaluate the series, revealing that while most teachers were satisfied with the Top Notch series, there were many weaknesses that teachers needed to be aware of.

Additionally, Rahimpour et al. (2011) evaluated three English language textbooks used in Iranian high schools from the perspective of English teachers. A 46-item questionnaire was prepared, and fifty high school language teachers with over five years of teaching experience completed the questionnaire. The results indicated that textbooks are not acceptable from the teachers' point of view.

Further, Jamalvandi's (2014) study assessed the stability of Iranian English textbooks for pre-university students using a modified version of the World Language Standards Book Evaluation Form. The questionnaire was distributed to 30 English teachers at the Preparatory Center. Results showed moderate teacher satisfaction with the textbook, but its biggest flaw was its poor portrayal of culture. Gender did not significantly influence attitudes, and the study concluded with suggestions for improving the textbook.

Besides, Ayça Berna Böcü, et al. (2016) evaluated the "Life" textbook series, published by National Geographic Learning, Inc., in terms of cultural components. The study focused on "Intercultural Communication Skills" in the A1 and A2 level textbooks, which contain a lot of photographic content. Four skill- and image-based activities were analyzed using checklists focused on sources, destinations, international cultural factors, and major and minor C traits. The study found that the textbooks cover a wide variety of cultures, except for Turkish origin. The Big C and Small C themes were well balanced, but over-representation of geography due to National Geographic content was noted.

## 2.2. Big “C” and Small “c” Culture

The integration of Big Culture in EFL textbooks is crucial for enhancing cultural awareness and understanding among learners. Big Culture encompasses large-scale cultural constructs like national identity, historical events, and global issues, providing students with a broader perspective of the world. By integrating themes like democracy, human rights, and environmental sustainability, EFL textbooks equip students with the knowledge to engage in global conversations and cultivate a sense of belonging within a larger community. This exposure encourages critical thinking regarding cultural identities and promotes appreciation for diverse perspectives.

Teaching about small culture can help students navigate real-life interactions more effectively, as they are better equipped to understand the subtleties of everyday communication in various contexts. Emphasizing small culture is key to fostering meaningful language acquisition and effective communication within educational frameworks.

Derakhshan (2024) examined the cultural representation in EFL textbooks from the perspectives of Iranian EFL students, teachers, and teachers' educators. The study revealed three themes: co-instantiation of image and text was indexical (relating to or denoting a word or expression whose meaning is dependent on the context in which it is used), cultural awareness and connotations were almost untouched, textual and visual components driving intercultural meaning were not in accordance

with tasks, and some alternatives and more culturally engaging images were provided by the interviewees.

Brody (2003) divided culture into two concepts: "Big C" culture, which shows the formal culture (a set of facts and statistics relating to arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals, and customs), and "little C" culture, which refers to the routine aspects of life and encompasses everything as a total way of life. Integrating Big "C" culture into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks is crucial for providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic and cultural contexts in which the language operates.

Teaching about small culture helps students navigate real-life interactions more effectively, as they are better equipped to understand the subtleties of everyday communication in various contexts. Teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of Big "C" culture can significantly influence curriculum design and classroom practices, highlighting the necessity for teachers to recognize the importance of cultural components in language education. EFL (English as a Foreign Language) textbooks often reflect a dichotomy between Big "C" culture, which encompasses arts, history, and literature, and Small "c" culture, which pertains to everyday customs and societal behaviors. This imbalance affects the representation of diverse cultural dimensions and shapes teachers' attitudes towards the material, potentially favoring an elitist perspective on culture that neglects the nuances of local traditions and values. This can lead to a disconnection between learners and the profound complexities of cultural identity in language learning environments.

Incorporating small "c" culture into EFL materials fosters a more engaging and contextually relevant learning experience, allowing students to grasp not just language forms but also the intricate social cues and practices that underlie effective communication. This enables learners to navigate real-life interactions more successfully, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical language use. EFL textbooks that emphasize small "c" culture can better equip students for authentic communication, underscoring the importance of cultural fluency as an integral aspect of language competence. Language learning materials often reflect the everyday practices and social norms of the cultures they represent, serving as a nexus between linguistic competence and cultural awareness. Common themes and scenarios present in EFL textbooks often embed cultural narratives that reinforce or challenge existing social norms. The selection and framing of these everyday practices can either perpetuate stereotypes or foster a more nuanced understanding of cultural diversity. Therefore, it is imperative for educators and curriculum developers to critically evaluate the cultural representations within language materials to ensure they promote inclusivity and reflect a comprehensive view of the target culture. (Peterson et al., 2003).

Chen (2010) and Yuen (2011) conducted semiotic analyses (Semiotics is the study of signs). This type of analysis investigates how a text produces meaning through signs and how this meaning connects with other "broader systems of meaning". It is argued that these signs often uphold ideological codes within our society) of images in English as a Setyono and Widodo's (2019) analysis of Indonesian EFL textbooks emphasized the importance of multicultural values and representation of diverse cultures. Furthermore, Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) found that the sociological sense of culture was the most common, followed by the aesthetic sense. Also, Jennifer Matić (2015) investigated the cultural content of EFL materials used with second-year students majoring in English at the university level in Belgrade. Statistical analysis revealed that small "c" cultural themes were more common than large "C" themes, with literature, education, and institutions being the most common specific topics related to

culture with a capital "C". The most common topics related to cultures with a small "c" include values, beliefs, attitudes, everyday life, and interpersonal relationships.

Additionally, Sadeghi et al. (2018) and Ashrafi et al. (2018) conducted studies on the cultural content of EFL textbooks. Sadeghi's study found that small "C" cultural topics, such as daily life, food, customs/norms, and geography, were the most common, while values and beliefs were the most common minor "C" cultural themes in *Summit* and *Passages*. The study also explored the relationship between EFL teachers' and learners' cultural preferences and the correspondence between their preferences and the cultural content of the book.

Besides, Ashrafi's (2018) study examined the Iran Language Institute's Advanced Series to identify differences in big and small "C" cultural aspects, distribution of references to different cultural categories, and the most prevalent themes. The analysis revealed that source culture received the least attention, making target culture the dominant cultural category. There was a significant disparity between two advanced textbooks, with themes from the "little C" cultural dimension appearing slightly more frequently than those from the "large C" dimension.

Also, the recurrence of themes throughout all textbooks was inconsistent, with common little "C" themes like "living condition," "social convention," and "body language" being the key lacking topics. This may hinder Iranian learners' intercultural communication competency (ICC) development due to the absence of source knowledge and uneven portrayal of cultural topics, making it challenging for them to develop intercultural communication skills.

Labtic et al. (2019) also examined the cultural content in English textbooks, focusing on Thai English textbooks. They used Lee's (2009) work and the Common European Approach to Reference for Languages (2001) to examine the cultural content in these textbooks. The results showed that Big "C" Culture was slightly more prevalent than Small "C" Culture, and both were more frequently present in receptive skills like reading and listening than in productive abilities like speaking and writing. This study aims to help students learn about culture as a component of intercultural communicative competency and better prepare EFL students for international communication contexts.

Besides, Espinar et al. (2019) investigated the development of culture in English foreign language textbooks using English File. They analyzed the contents of two editions of the same book using a unique list of cultural factors to determine changes in the types of cultural content or subject categories covered. Mesekher (2014) also explored cultural representation in Algerian English textbooks, where teachers rely heavily on textbooks as a source of both language and culture in education.

Derakhshan's (2024) study on the representation of culture in language textbooks revealed a significant gap in the adoption of a semiotic approach, despite its potential for effectively conveying and constructing cultural meanings. The researcher used a qualitative analysis grounded in Peircean semiotic theory to address these shortcomings. The study focused on the Iranian national EFL textbook titled *Vision 1*, analyzing the perspectives of Iranian EFL students, teachers, and teacher educators.

The analysis revealed that the co-instantiation of images and texts was predominantly indexical, but cultural awareness and associated connotations were largely overlooked. The findings also highlighted a misalignment between textual and visual components, suggesting that tasks designed to facilitate understanding did not effectively correspond with the presented content.

Several interviewees proposed alternative images that were more culturally engaging, indicating a desire for more relevant and relatable representations in educational materials. These suggestions suggest a need for textbooks that not only incorporate cultural aspects but also resonate with students' lived experiences. This study reveals that the discourse within an Iranian localized EFL textbook offers limited opportunities for enhancing cultural awareness among its users. The study proposes a dynamic model to evaluate cultural representations in language textbooks, aiming to illustrate how EFL textbooks can be designed, implemented, and received more effectively for teaching and learning in diverse instructional settings. The approach seeks to enrich the educational experience by fostering a deeper understanding of cultural contexts through language learning.

In 2010, Juan conducted a comprehensive analysis of the cultural content present in EFL textbooks. These resources significantly enhance students' understanding of different cultural practices, beliefs, and values, which are essential for developing intercultural communication skills in today's interconnected world. The present article aims to conduct a detailed content analysis of the College English (New) textbook, CE (New), to reveal the extent to which the textbook fosters a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity and prepares students for effective communication across cultural boundaries. The study emphasizes the importance of cultural content in language education and its role in equipping students with the necessary skills to navigate an increasingly globalized society.

The article analyzes the cultural content in the College English (New) textbook, focusing on its ability to foster appreciation for cultural diversity and prepare students for effective communication across cultural boundaries. The study highlights the importance of cultural content in language education and its role in equipping students with the necessary skills to navigate an increasingly globalized society. In 2011, Yuen conducted a case study on English language textbooks in Hong Kong, revealing a preference for cultural representations from English-speaking countries, while cultures from Africa were absent. Yuen's study categorized cultural references into four areas: products, practices, perspectives, and persons, emphasizing the need for a balanced and fair representation of various cultures in language education materials.

Setyono and Widodo's (2019) analysis on EFL textbooks in Indonesia also highlighted the need to incorporate multicultural values and diverse cultural representations in educational resources. They argue that as English becomes a global lingua franca, it becomes crucial to integrate both significant cultural elements (big "C") and everyday cultural aspects (small "c") in language education. By including a rich variety of cultural elements, students can improve their language skills and gain valuable insights into different ways of life, fostering a greater appreciation for diversity in our interconnected world.

Moreover, Tajeddin and Teimournezhad's (2014) study on the cultural content in EFL textbooks in Iran revealed that the sociological interpretation of culture was the predominant component, primarily addressing social structures, relationships, and community dynamics. The aesthetic sense of culture was the second most represented category, but the researchers noted a lack of detailed exploration regarding the specific elements that constitute the aesthetic sense within the textbooks.

A similar study by Jelena Matić (2015) investigated the representation of both Big "C" and small "c" culture in EFL materials for university students in Belgrade. The analysis revealed that small "c" cultural themes, which encompass values, beliefs, and everyday social practices, were more common than the Big "C" culture, which included literature, educational systems, and major cultural institutions. On the other hand, the themes associated with small "c" culture primarily encompassed values, beliefs,

and attitudes, illustrating the everyday aspects of life. This distinction between the two types of cultural representation underscores the importance of both sociological and aesthetic dimensions in the context of EFL education.

Sadeghi et al. (2018) and Labtic et al. (2019) conducted studies on the representation of cultural information in ELT textbooks. Sadeghi et al.'s (2018) study analyzed three EFL textbooks and focused on major and minor "C" cultural themes, categorizing them into history, traditions, and everyday practices and beliefs. Labtic et al.'s (2019) study focused on the representation of cultural information in Thai English textbooks, specifically examining how different types of culture are exhibited across the four essential language learning skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

The study used foundational principles established by Lee (2009) and guidelines set forth by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001). The cultural content was categorized into Big "C" Culture and Small "C" Culture, with Big "C" Culture encompassing formal aspects of culture like art, literature, and historical events, and Small "C" Culture referring to everyday practices and social norms. The findings revealed that Big "C" Culture was slightly more prevalent than Small "C" Culture in the textbooks examined, and both types of cultural content were more commonly found in receptive language skills (reading and listening) rather than productive language skills (speaking and writing).

The study by Spinar et al. (2019) explores the evolution of cultural representation in EFL textbooks, focusing on the English File series. The research provides an overview of the trends in how culture is integrated into English teaching, particularly in foreign language education. The authors explore various methodologies for conducting cultural analysis of textbooks, providing insights into how these materials reflect and transmit cultural knowledge. The study then examines the cultural content found within two distinct editions of the same Intermediate (B1) English as a Foreign Language textbook in the English File series. The researchers use a specific and carefully curated list of cultural factors to facilitate this comparison. The study aims to uncover any notable shifts or transformations in the types of cultural representations and subject categories presented within the textbooks. This comparative analysis is vital for understanding the evolution of cultural teaching strategies in language education and provides valuable insights into how educational materials adapt to reflect broader societal changes and current trends in cultural awareness. The findings can contribute significantly to the ongoing dialogue on the role of culture in language teaching and the effectiveness of instructional materials in fostering cultural understanding among learners.

Baleghizadeh et al. (2020) investigated the cultural representations of three ESL grammar textbooks. Contrary to expectations, practical aspects of culture, including social behavioral patterns and important customs, were found in most of the textbooks analyzed. The range of foreign cultures revealed in these textbooks lacked balance, possibly because English-speaking culture occupies a larger space in textbooks than international culture. By using English as an international language, learners are encouraged to develop cross-cultural skills and facilitate effective communication with people from different backgrounds. Their findings reveal an unexpected outcome concerning the anticipated cultural neutrality typically associated with grammar textbooks. Instead of presenting a purely objective approach to language, these textbooks incorporate practical aspects of culture that reflect specific social behavior patterns. This includes notable insights into daily life and significant customs that are prevalent in the societies from which the language originates. Upon analyzing the content of these textbooks, it

became evident that the portrayal of foreign cultures is not only present but also unevenly represented. English-speaking cultures tend to dominate the narratives within these educational resources, overshadowing the diverse international cultures that are essential for a well-rounded understanding of the language.

Consequently, learners encounter a limited exposure to the rich variety of global cultures, which could hinder their ability to engage effectively with people from different backgrounds. By adopting English as an international language, learners stand to gain valuable support in developing cross-cultural skills that enhance communication and understanding across cultural divides. However, this potential can only be realized if textbook authors prioritize and incorporate a broader representation of international cultures in their materials, thus fostering a more inclusive and comprehensive language learning environment.

Extensive research conducted in the field of education has highlighted the significant emphasis placed on cultural aspects within various types of textbooks. A number of studies, both by Iranian scholars and researchers from other countries, have specifically examined the presence of cultural elements within these educational resources. These investigations have sought to quantify and analyze the extent of cultural representation found in textbooks. Additionally, some researchers have endeavored to create a systematic framework aimed at evaluating the cultural content present in these educational materials. As it is showed in the previous research all confirmed the importance of the cultural code in EFL textbooks and EFL class.

Zhang and Liu's (2021) study found that small "c" culture is often represented through dialogues and everyday scenarios in EFL textbooks, while big "c" culture is primarily represented through literature and historical texts. They emphasized the need for a balanced approach to ensure learners gain a holistic understanding of culture. Alptekin's research showed that integrating small "c" culture in textbooks can enhance communicative competence, making learners more adept at real-life interactions in English-speaking contexts.

Banaruee et al. (2023) assessed whether the textbooks meet standardized principles regarding Communication and Culture and examined the implementation of cultural knowledge and technology in the Vision Series. The evaluation revealed that Vision 3 was more preferable than Vision 1 and 2, but all Vision textbooks had low standards for enhancing language learners' cultural competence. This research emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness in English language learning within the expanding circle of World English.

Also, Syarif et al. (2023) in their study analyzed the representation of culture and gender in visual and oral texts of English textbooks using EFL high school students. A content analysis of three EFL textbooks for junior high school students was carried out using Xiao's (2010) framework Small-C guides the analysis of the representation of culture. Also, a study by Bourgale and Cromer (2009) explores sexual characterization based on the roles listed in the book. The results showed that the most visual illustrations were presented primarily in lifestyle aspects, followed by habits, values, holidays, leisure and food. Also, gender representation was equally represented in the verbal text, but it is disproportionately represented in visual media. The results showed that Culture and gender awareness among students can be improved if the manuals have provided more balance representation of various cultures covering the source culture, target culture and international target culture and pay more attention to the treatment of floors.

Rouaghe, et al. (2023) reported the results of the textbook analysis in order to determine what type of cultural content is represented in the English as a foreign language textbook "My Book of English", designed for first-year classes in Algerian middle school.

Two main research questions were selected to be addressed: 1) To what extent are cultures represented in the first-year middle school English as a foreign language textbook? And 2) which type is the culture dominated by the research manual? In this study, document analysis was used for data collection. This included studying the textbooks themselves as primary sources. The analysis of the manuals included the use of content and cultural analysis, using existing frameworks to identify different elements and explore the cultural content that represents different cultural perspectives. Respectively, the findings revealed that the majority of the culture content is source (local), followed by a non-specific source of culture that has no reference to any particular culture, whereas target/international cultures are barely represented and an unequal representation of Big 'C' and small 'c' culture types is very noticeable. The research findings aimed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by informing curriculum design and development and providing insights for other researchers to build upon this research by expanding the scope. Moreover, the results provided valuable information and guidance to help EFL teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices, which in turn encourages textbook developers to find remedies and ensure equal representation of original and non-original cultural expressions. Goals to help students successfully develop intercultural communication skills/international culture avoid communication breakdowns and culture shocks.

Zhang et al. (2024) examined the representation of cultures through three sets of national English manuals currently used in China by performing a synchronic content analysis to explore what cultures are represented in manuals. The analysis of the data was carried out on the basis of a newly constructed framework focused on content (countries and categories) and forms of cultural representation. Our results mainly indicate that American and British cultures dominate in the culture of inner circle countries and international culture is the least represented in all three textbooks, while Chinese culture is more represented than the cultures of inner circle countries in two sets of textbooks. Regarding cultural categories, the representation of cultural products is the highest, and cultural perspectives and cultural communities are the least represented in all three sets of textbooks. With regard to forms of cultural expression, cultural expression in implicit forms was more important than cultural expression in explicit forms, albeit to a varying extent. Based on the results, suggestions are provided for EFL textbook authors, EFL teachers, and textbook researchers.

Hoa et al. (2024) stated that many English manuals designed locally designed as EFL with cultural content integrated in preparation for the multiple cultural goals of the new EFL program in General Education in Vietnam. Purpose: The purpose of this research was to study cultural ideas in the EFL manual implemented in the last 10 years. This study followed a qualitative descriptive approach, emphasizing a structured but in-depth analysis of cultural content and intercultural interactions. The results of the content analysis revealed that (1) The manual includes a variety of international, local and target cultural content to ensure diversity and interculturality in the objectives of EFL education, and (2) the Presence of intercultural interactions falls below expectations in terms of quantity and quality. Textbook authors were also encouraged to contextualize cultural content and design tasks to allow learners to personalize their knowledge, experiences, and cultural perspectives. If simplicity and accessibility are the values pursued in textbooks, EFL teachers should be the ones to modify lessons to

enrich cultural content and deepen intercultural debates, aiming to promote learners' intercultural communicative competence as an objective of EFL teaching.

### 3. Research Questions

The main purpose of this study was to investigate big “C” and small “c” Culture Point in Touch Stone and Four Corners Series as well as collecting teachers' attitudes in this regard. Specifically, this research focused on the following research questions:

1. How big “C” and small "c" culture are represented in Touch Stone and Four Corners Series?
2. What are teacher's attitudes towards the cultural elements including big “C” and small "c" culture in textbooks i.e., Touch Stone and Four Corners Series?

### 4. Method

As previously mentioned, students' familiarity with cultural points is one of the most important issues in every EFL class. To do so, selecting a suitable textbook is a challenging process for most EFL teachers. This study aims to evaluate the two-textbook series Four Corners and Touchstone in terms of the representation of IC. The rationale for selecting these textbook series was that they are used in a number of well-known Iranian language institutes, such as Safir, Iran, Cambridge, Iran, Europe, and Eksir. Touch Stone Series contains four textbooks at different levels and the Four Corners Series contains four books at different levels. As we all know, one of the aims of an EFL learner is to be able to communicate. Of course, second-language learners communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. Cultural literacy is an important part of language teaching and is an integrated part of language teaching. Regarding design, the study used a quantitative method.

To conduct the research in the case of cultural points in the two series, researchers used a framework developed by Sadeghi et al. (2018). This framework contains different criteria in the big and small "c" cultures. In Tables 1 and 2, the criteria are mentioned and explained for each category. In the case of interviews with the focus group of teachers, some sessions were scheduled. The researchers provided some explanation of the research procedure and asked teachers to share their ideas and attitudes about each textbook series.

#### 4.1. Corpus of the Study

The corpus of the current study includes two textbooks, namely, the Four Corners and Touchstone series. These textbooks are published by Oxford University Press in England. Both of them use a British accent. Both textbooks cover different levels, including beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Both textbooks contain different activities related to all four skills needed for practicing English. It must be mentioned that textbooks contain workbooks for extra practice and audio files related to the tasks and activities in the book. The textbooks are prepared in a way that helps students foster all language skills. The Touchstone series contains four books, which range from levels 1 (elementary) to 4 (upper intermediate). This series helps learners learn normal conversation skills and daily conversation. It contains different parts for group discussion and conversation that motivate students to learn. This series also provides a CD for listening practice and a workbook for extra practice.

The Four Corners series contains seven books. These books range in level from beginner to advanced. These series also, by using different topics and tasks, motivate students to learn languages. It

helps the teacher make the class time more dynamic by using video listening. They also provide learners with online practice. Like the Touchstone series, Four Corners also contains a workbook for extra practice and a CD for listening practice that would be a good teaching and learning tool both for learners and teachers.

This research analyzed two textbook series: Touch Stone and Four Corners. The researchers selected these textbooks because they are the textbooks which is used by teachers in the institute for teaching English to the students. The researchers analyzed these textbook series from big "C" and small "c" culture. In order to do so researchers used frame work developed by Sadeghi et al. (2018). By using this framework, the authors investigated different cultural points according to each category in the two textbook series.

#### **4.2. Data Analysis Procedure**

The paper examines the relationship between two cultural concepts: the "Big C" and the "small c" culture. In accordance with the tenets of Big "C" Culture, a country's literature (encompassing literary works, poems, and poets, among other elements), art, and music are collectively referred to as its cultural output. In contrast, the term Small "c" Culture is used to describe the cultural aspects of people's everyday lives, including their beliefs, customs, behaviors, and values. In their study, Sadeghi et al. (2018) employed coding procedures to identify the themes present within the cultural data. They utilized the checklist developed by Chen (2004) and Lee (2009) for cultural themes, as well as a checklist specifically designed for their study. The comprehensive definition of the coding system is presented in Tables 1 and 2. The data was analyzed as follows:

1. To analyze cultural literacy in textbooks, this research will utilize Sadeghi et al. (2018) framework. The framework outlines cultural values, and the research will investigate the extent to which these values are depicted and taught to EFL learners alongside the language. The researchers investigated different cultural elements according to the Sadeghi et al. (2018) in the two textbook series and summarized the related results in Figures 1-2. In Figures 1-4 the data for each textbook series summarized according to the themes. Also, the frequency for each code according to Big "C" and Small "c" culture is available. In order to code the data, the concept and vocabularies that are related to each code selected and sometimes the picture and photos that are in book presented the cultural code.

2. The data will be shared with a focus group of EFL teachers to investigate their perspectives on cultural literacy and the effect of cultural point on classroom tasks management.

The analyst again evaluated these textbooks from a various outlook, allowing for possibility the "C" and "C" sophistications. In this study, the framework secondhand by Sadeghi and Sepahi (2018) in their item was established the foundation developed by Chen (2004) and Lee (2009). Chen and Lee picked tests to resolve the cultural ideas bestowed in the textbooks. The study classification these ideas into four themes under limited "c" idea (often growth, values and ideas, duties/standards, and food) and six ideas under grown "c" civilization (experiences, music, skill, commerce, geopolitics, and management/politics). In order to promote the process, this study secondhand the systematize system working by Sadeghi and Sepahi (2018). Tables 1 and 2 support particularized definitions of the picked themes, in addition to few models.

**Table 1***Coding Guidelines for Small “C” Themes of Culture (Sadeghi & Sepahi 2018, p. 8)*

Theme	Definition	Examples
Value and belief	Beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is important in life.	Superstitions, the things people believe, how honest are you?
Daily life	The way a person or a group of people lives and works. Things happening, done or produced every day.	Life styles in transition, day and night activities, occupations
Food	Things that people or animals eat. A particular type of food.	Types of food, food and health
Customs/norms	Norm: The accepted standards of behavior and communication within a society or a group, including appropriate etiquette for speech, language, topics of discussion, attire, and situational context. Custom: An accepted way of behaving or of doing things in a society or a community.	Clothing customs, family traditions, wedding traditions around the world

It concedes possibility be noted that the definitions determined in Tables 1 and 2 are established the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (7th version).

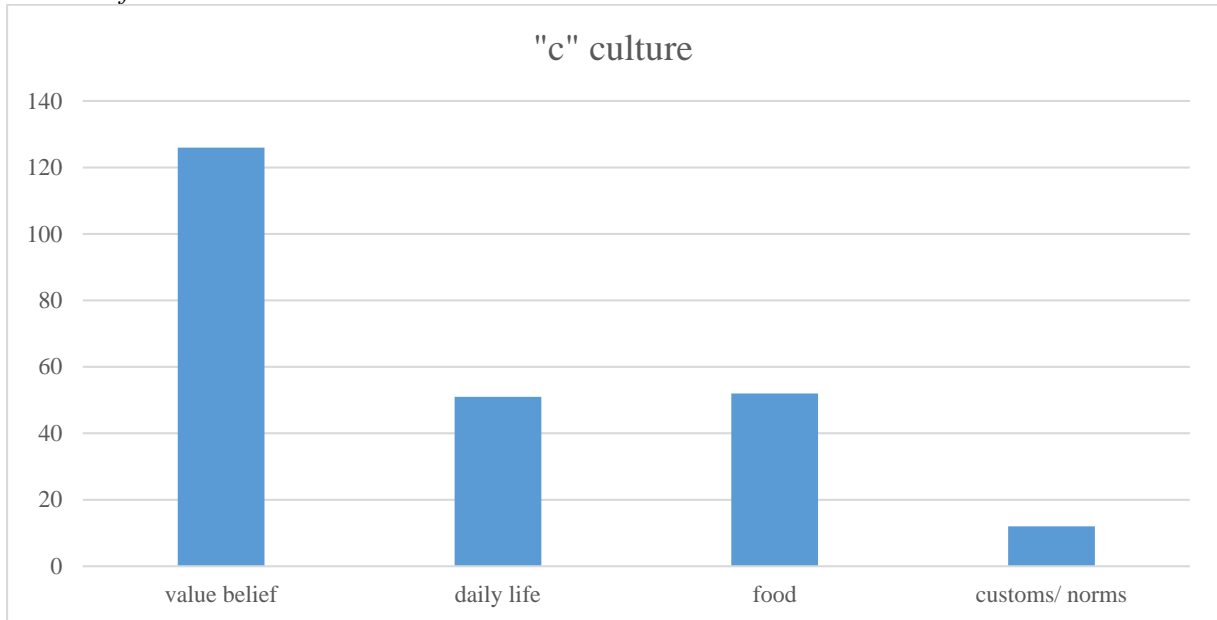
**Table 2***Coding Guidelines for Big “C” Themes of Culture (Sadeghi & Sepahi, 2018, p. 8)*

Theme	Definition	Examples
Music	Music refers to sounds organized in an appealing or thrilling manner that brings pleasure to the listener. It encompasses the act of singing or playing musical instruments.	Pop music, opera, The Beatles, country and western, . . .
History	All the events that occurred in the past, which were related to the progress and growth of a specific location or subject matter.	History's mysteries natural disasters of 20th century
Geography	The way in which physical features of a place are arranged	Geographic description of your country
Economy	Connected to the commerce, business, and economic growth of a nation, region, or community.	Cultural impact of foreign Imports economic globalization
Art	The act of utilizing creativity to convey thoughts or emotions, specifically in the mediums of painting, drawing, or sculpture.	Paintings, sculpture, surrealism, abstract art
Government/Politics	Government refers to the collective body of individuals entrusted with the responsibility of managing and governing a country. It encompasses the activities and methods involved in exerting control over a nation. Politics, on the other hand, relates to the affairs pertaining to the acquisition and utilization of power within a specific group or organization.	A self-test of politic literacy

The textbook series were evaluated according to the cultural criteria listed in Tables 1 and 2. The cultural point extracted from these two textbooks and the result summarized in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

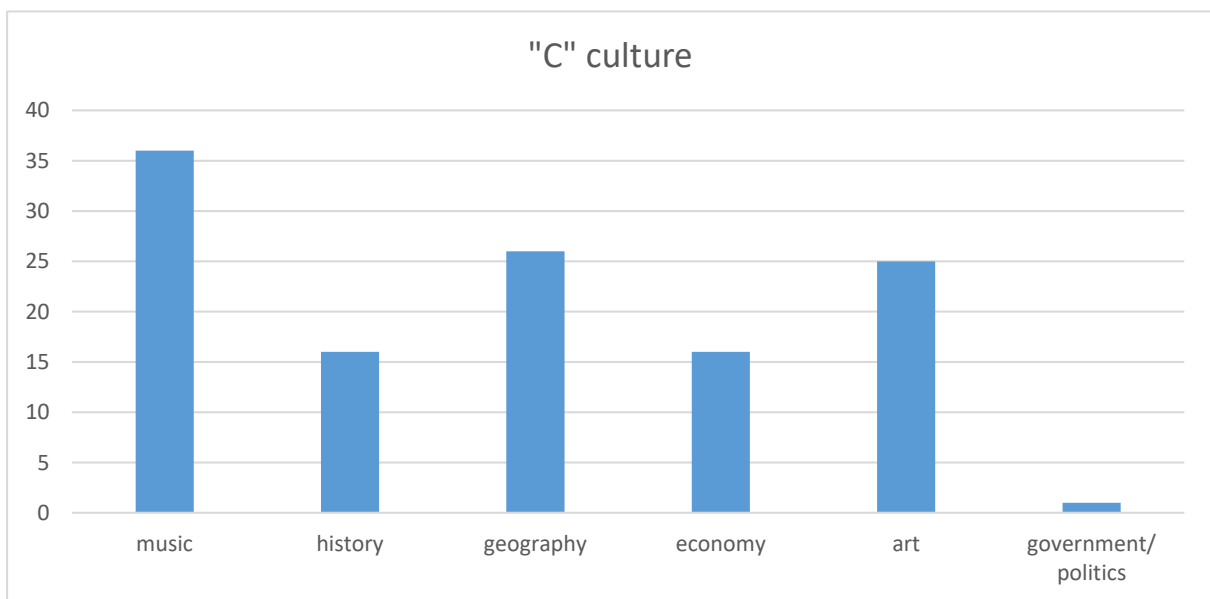
*Number of "C" Culture Elements in Touch Stone Series*



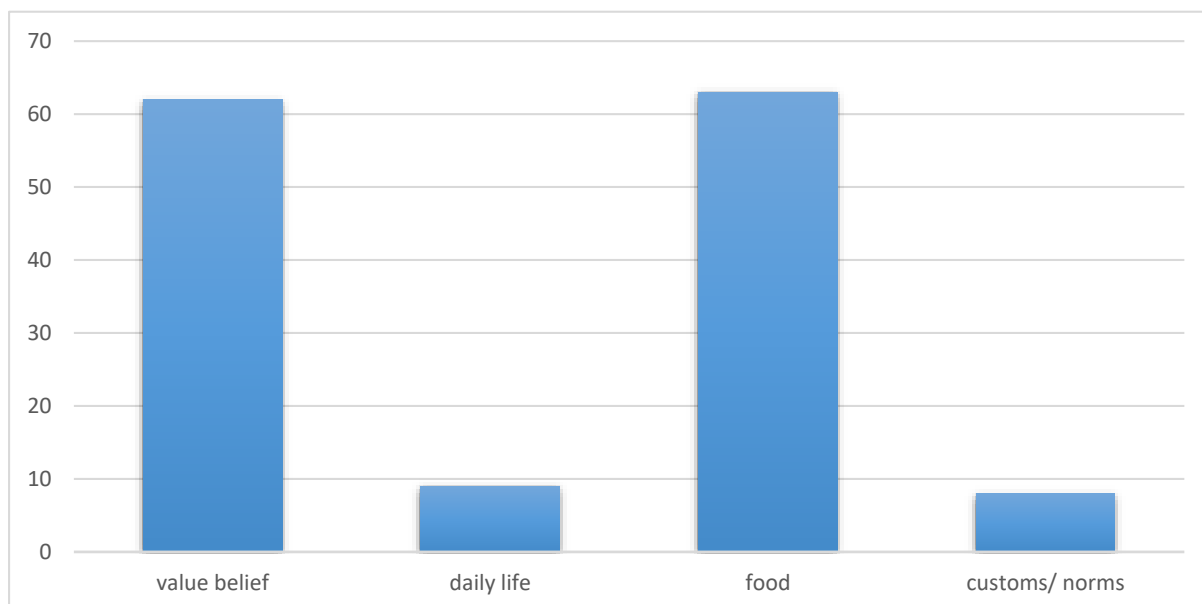
As evident from Figures 1 and 2, "C" culture in the Touchstone textbook series exhibits a higher number of cultural elements compared to "C" culture.

**Figure 2**

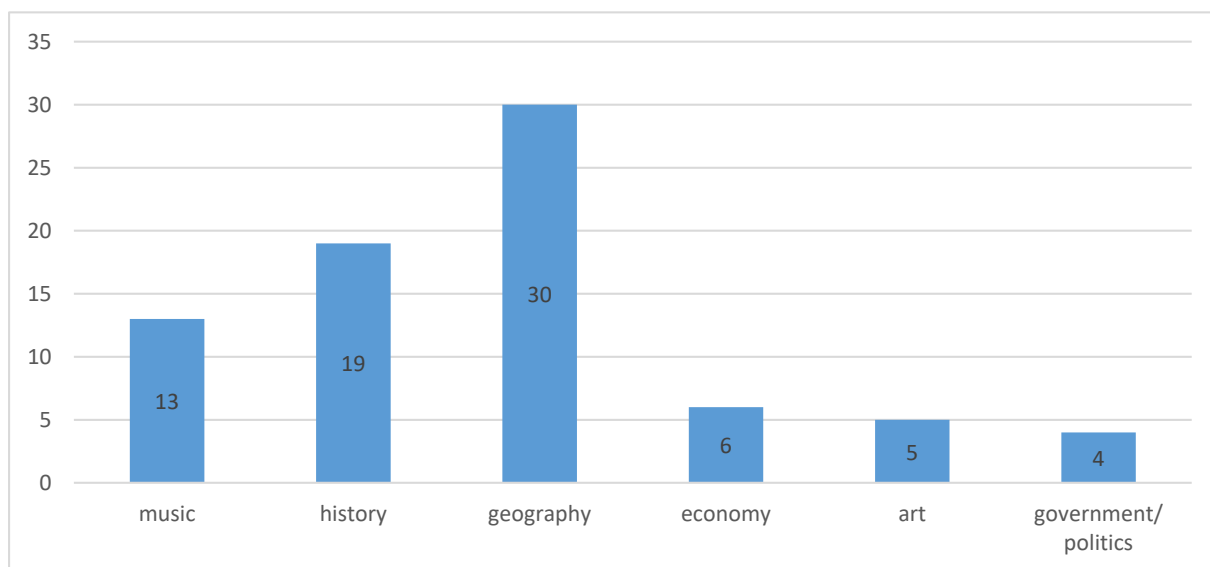
*Number of "C" Culture Elements in Touch Stone Series*



Similarly, the cultural evaluation process was conducted for the Four Corners textbooks, and the number of distinct cultural elements can be observed in Figures 3 and 4.

**Figure 3***Number of "c" Culture Elements in Four Corners Series*

As shown in Figure 3 above and Figure 4 below, the number of "c" culture elements in the Four Corners series are also more than "C" culture elements.

**Figure 4***Number of "C" Culture Elements in Four Corners Series*

#### 4.3. Interview with Teachers

To assess the effectiveness and reliability of the gathered data, a specific group of teachers was chosen from the relevant dataset. These teachers were randomly selected and comprised 8 female English teachers who had previous experience teaching these textbooks. Within this group, 5 possessed

a Master's degree while 3 held a Bachelor's degree. In terms of experience, the most experienced teacher had over 18 years of teaching experience, while the least experienced teacher had 3 years of teaching experience. They had worked with students of different levels and were familiar with both textbook series. An online interview was conducted with these teachers and the entire session was recorded to examine the relevant issues.

## 5. Results

In the current study, the authors focused their attention on two specific series of textbooks that serve as fundamental teaching resources for students. The primary objective was to assess and compare the richness and diversity of cultural points embedded within these textbook series. Furthermore, as part of the research methodology, the authors engaged a targeted group of teachers to share the data they gathered. This interaction facilitated a comprehensive discussion regarding the teachers' perspectives on both the positive and negative attributes that these textbook series possess, considering their impact on both educators and learners. Through this dialogue, insights were gained regarding how the cultural content in these textbooks influences the teaching and learning experience.

The interconnectedness of language acquisition and cultural learning presents significant challenges in educational research. Understanding this relationship necessitates a thorough examination of the cultural dimensions embedded within language teaching materials. In this context, the researchers aimed to investigate the cultural elements present in two distinct series of textbooks. This analysis is particularly important, as the cultural contexts within which language is learned can greatly influence the effectiveness of language instruction.

To carry out this initiative, the researchers relied on a methodological framework previously established by Sadeghi et al. (2018). This framework is instrumental in systematically gathering and analyzing data related to both "c" cultures, which refer to the specific cultural practices and beliefs of a community, and "C" cultures, which encompass the broader societal and historical contexts.

In the exploration of Big "C" culture, both textbooks under consideration provided a comprehensive array of information encompassing essential domains such as history, geography, music, art, economy, and politics. However, a notable distinction lies in the emphasis each textbook places on different aspects of this broad cultural landscape. Touch Stone Series, for instance, placed a pronounced focus on geography and history, highlighting these subjects in greater detail. Also, Four Corners Series offered a greater number of cultural topics that also included music, geography, art, and economy. This diversity indicates that four Corners not only covered a broader spectrum of cultural elements but also contained a larger quantity of Big "C" culture components compared to Touch Stone. This difference suggests that learners using Four Corners may be exposed to a richer and more varied understanding of culture on a larger scale.

When examining small "c" culture, Four Corners presented topics that reflect everyday life and social behaviors. Specific areas of focus included values and beliefs, food customs, daily routines, and social norms. The textbook particularly highlighted the importance of value systems and food culture, showcasing how these elements shape everyday interactions and lifestyles. On the other hand, Touch Stone mirrored these cultural themes, addressing values and beliefs, food, daily life, and customs or norms in its curriculum. However, it is significant to note that Four Corners contained a greater number of cultural elements related to small "c" culture than Touch Stone did. This abundance of small "c"

culture topics in Four Corners suggests a more extensive exploration of the everyday aspects of life, allowing learners to gain insights into the subtleties of culture that define human experiences on a more personal level.

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The cultural points and themes in the textbook will help both learner and teacher. It will help teachers to be able to engage students more in speaking task. As the topic and themes in Big and Small "c" culture are related to the daily life of the learners. Learners also can be more active in speaking tasks because they have more idea and experience about the themes and they can talk more effectively.

**Table 3**

*Focused Group Teachers' Information*

No.	Gender	Degree	Years of Experience
1	Male	CELTA	11 years
2	Male	BA in Translation	14 years
3	Male	MA in Teaching	12 years
4	Female	MA in Teaching	7 years
5	Female	MA in Teaching	5 years
6	Female	BA in Literature	2 years
7	Female	CELTA	23 Years
8	Female	MA in Teaching	15 years

### 5.1. Four Corners and Touch Stone Series Cultural Points

The interconnectedness of language acquisition and cultural learning presents significant challenges in educational research. Understanding this relationship necessitates a thorough examination of the cultural dimensions embedded within language teaching materials. In this context, the researcher

aims to investigate the cultural elements present in two distinct series of textbooks. This analysis is particularly important, as the cultural contexts within which language is learned can greatly influence the effectiveness of language instruction.

As mentioned before, the researchers utilized a methodological framework earlier designed by Sadeghi et al. (2018). The data collected using this model has been organized and presented in a clear manner, allowing for easy comparison and analysis. The summarized findings regarding the cultural content of the two textbook series are displayed in Table 4, which serves to condense the extensive information obtained and highlights the critical cultural aspects relevant to language education. This comprehensive approach not only reinforces the importance of integrating culture into language teaching but also provides valuable insights for educators and curriculum developers.

**Table 4**

*"c" and "C" Culture in Text Books Series*

Source	"C" culture	"c" culture	Total
Touch stone Series	241	133	374
Four Corners Series	427	307	734

The information presented in Table 4 clearly indicates a significant difference between the cultural aspects found in the Four Corners Series compared to those in the Touchstone Series. Specifically, the Four Corners Series includes a greater number of cultural points, which suggests that it provides a richer and more diverse exploration of cultural themes. In contrast, the Touchstone Series appears to contain fewer cultural elements. This discrepancy highlights the extent to which the Four Corners Series may offer a more comprehensive perspective on various cultures, engaging learners with a broader array of cultural insights and experiences. Such a difference can influence the overall educational value of each series, particularly for those interested in understanding and appreciating cultural diversity.

## 5.2. Teachers' Attitudes in Culture

This research focused on the viewpoints of educators regarding the cultural elements presented in textbooks used for teaching. The analysis of the data gathered from these educators led to several significant conclusions.

One of the primary findings is that the Four Corners series is more effective in preparing students to understand and engage with various cultural topics. This textbook series covers an array of cultural subjects, presenting them at different complexity levels. The intent is to help students become acquainted with diverse cultural aspects, which is crucial in today's interconnected world. A specific example highlighted in the research is the discussion surrounding the reasons for immigration. One educator noted that the Four Corners series plays a vital role in helping students cultivate cultural awareness, enabling them to grasp complex cultural issues with greater ease and depth.

In contrast, the Touch Stone series also contains cultural elements and aims to enhance students' cultural awareness. However, many educators expressed the view that it does not achieve the same level of effectiveness as the Four Corners series. Teachers indicated that the design of the Touch Stone series appears to cater primarily to a certain age group, which may account for its comparatively limited coverage of cultural points. This limitation suggests that while the Touch Stone series encompasses

some cultural content, it may not provide the same comprehensive exposure to cultural education as its Four Corners counterpart.

## 6. Discussion

The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between the "Big C" and "Small c" cultures as they are represented in two textbook series. Cultural considerations are integral to any educational context, and all scholars concur that language instruction cannot be effectively undertaken without a cultural lens. Accordingly, the present study considers the cultural themes present in the textbook series, with the results presented in this section.

This finding resonates with Juan (2010) who highlighted the essential role of cultural content in language education, emphasizing its importance in preparing students for intercultural communication in today's globalized society. The current study follows in Juan's footsteps, conducting a detailed content analysis of the "College English (New)" textbook (CE (New)) to assess the degree to which it promotes cultural understanding and prepares students for successful communication across cultural divides. This study further underscores the significance of incorporating cultural content in EFL textbooks, as it provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in cross-cultural interactions and succeed in a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected.

Additionally, Tajeddin and Teimournezhad's (2014) study shed light on the representation of culture in EFL textbooks and materials which is in line with the current study. Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) found that sociological interpretation, which emphasized societal structures and relationships, was the dominant aspect of culture in Iranian EFL textbooks.

Further, the results of the existing study correlate with the study undertaken by Zhang et al. (2024), Syarif et al. (2023), Baleghizadeh et al. (2020) and Spinar et al. (2019). All studies emphasized on the importance of the cultural elements in the process of teaching and learning in EFL classes. Similarly, the findings are in line with Setyono and Widodo's (2019) in which they discovered that indeed, in light of English's global status as a lingua franca, it is important to ensure that language education includes both major cultural elements ("Big C") and everyday cultural aspects ("Small c"). This holistic approach to language teaching is crucial for fostering understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, promoting cross-cultural communication and respect. By incorporating diverse cultural representations in educational resources, learners can develop not only language skills but also intercultural competence, a critical skill in today's interconnected world.

Moreover, this finding of the present study are compatible with that of Derakhshan (2024) who recognized a critical absence of semiotic approaches in previous research on cultural representations in language textbooks, despite the significant potential of semiotics in conveying and constructing cultural meanings. To fill this gap, the researcher applied a qualitative analysis anchored in Peirce's semiotic theory to address these limitations. The study investigated the Iranian national EFL textbook titled "Vision 1", examining the views of Iranian EFL students, teachers, and teacher educators.

## 7. Conclusion and Implications

In summary, the research conducted in this study focused on the assessment of the Touch Stone and Four Corners series, both of which serve as instructional materials for teaching English at the English Language Institute. The researchers undertook a thorough examination of these series following

a structured approach that consisted of three distinct phases. This methodological framework was informed by the model established in the earlier work of Sadeghi et al. (2018), which provided a basis for analyzing cultural elements present within the materials.

The framework utilized by the researchers distinguishes between two categories of culture, known as Big "C" and small "c" culture, and evaluates various components associated with each. The results of the study indicated that the Touch Stone series encompasses a total of approximately 241 cultural elements classified within the small "c" culture category. In contrast, the Four Corners series contained a significantly higher number, totaling around 427 cultural elements in the same category. Additionally, when looking specifically at the small "c" culture aspects, the Touch Stone series featured about 133 cultural elements, while the Four Corners series had a much larger count of approximately 307 elements.

When the textbook utilized as the primary pedagogical resource incorporates cultural elements and themes, educators can assign speaking tasks to students who possess a foundation of knowledge and experience in these areas. Consequently, the instructor is better positioned to engage students in a more active manner, facilitating their active participation in the language-learning process.

After gathering this data, the researchers shared their findings with a targeted group of English teachers in order to gain insights regarding the teachers' attitudes and experiences with the two series. The feedback received from the teachers indicated that they perceive the Four Corners series as presenting greater challenges for both educators and their students. This perception may stem from the inclusion of a diverse array of cultural points within the series, which can complicate the teaching process. In particular, teachers expressed that imparting these cultural nuances to students can be demanding, as students may struggle to fully understand and appreciate the material.

The implications of these findings are significant, particularly for English teachers and instructors who are responsible for selecting educational materials. It is essential for these educators to approach their material choices with increased sensitivity to the cultural backgrounds of their students. By carefully considering the cultural relevance of the materials they choose, teachers can enhance the language learning experience.

The research indicates that materials that encompass a broader range of cultural perspectives are more effective in encouraging student participation, particularly in speaking activities. When students encounter content that reflects their own cultural experiences or exposes them to diverse cultural viewpoints, they are more likely to engage actively in discussions and speaking exercises. This engagement is crucial for language acquisition, as it allows students to practice their speaking skills in a meaningful context.

Thus, teachers should prioritize selecting instructional materials that not only align with the curriculum but also resonate culturally with their students. By doing so, they can foster a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment that promotes greater interaction and communication among students. Ultimately, this strategic selection of culturally relevant materials can lead to improved language proficiency and a more enriching educational experience overall.

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### Authors' Contributions

All authors have conducted the study, collected data, analyzed and interpreted the data, and written up the manuscript.

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### Competing Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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