Analysing Students' Reactions to English Course Books in Terms of Cultural Elements

Emrah Ekmekçi[i]

Öğrencilerin İngilizce Ders Kitaplarına Yönelik Tepkilerinin Kültürel Öğeler Bakımından İncelenmesi

Özet: *Bu çalışmanın amacı öğrencilerin ders kitaplarındaki hedef dil kültür öğelerine ilişkin tepkilerini belirlemek, öğrencilerin bölümlerinin kültürel öğeleri algılamalarında etkisinin olup olmadığını saptamak ve milli kültür öğelerinin de yabancı dil ders kitaplarında bulunup bulunmaması sorusuna cevap aramaktır. Bu bağlamda, 2011-2012 akademik yılında Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İlahiyat ve Mühendislik Fakültelerinde 1. Sınıfta öğrenim gören toplam 100 öğrenciye, birinci sınıflarda zorunlu olarak okutulan Yabancı Dil 1 (İngilizce) dersinde kullanılan ders kitabına yönelik tepkilerini ölçen bir anket uygulanmak suretiyle veri toplanmıştır. Verilerin çözümlenmesinde t-testi analizi uygulanmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda, iki grup arasında toplam 5 maddede anlamlı fark olduğu tespit edilmiştir. İki grup arasında, ders kitabındaki kültürel öğelerin dünya görüşleriyle uyuşması, hedef dile ait özel gün ve isimlerin dil gelişimlerine katkısı, bu öğelerin hedef kültürle olan etkileşimlerinde yararlı olması, kültürel öğelerin ilginç ve motive edici olması ve ders kitabının sadece dilbilgisi kurallarını içermesi gerektiği konularında anlamlı farklılıklar olduğu bulunmuştur. Araştırmadan elde dilen sonuçlara göre, yabancı dil ders kitaplarındaki kültürel öğeler hem hedef dili hem de ana dili kapsayacak şekilde dengeli bir şekilde düzenlenmeli, kültürel öğeler daha gerçekçi, ilginç ve öğrencileri daha motive edici özellikte olmalıdır.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kültürel Öğeler, Dil ve Kültür, Yabancı Dil Ders Kitapları, Hedef Dil*

1. INTRODUCTION

Culture-specific elements present in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course books have been analyzed by several researchers so far. Most of the studies examine culture-specific items in the course books in their own countries. Findings from the studies generally focus on the lack of cultural points which help the learners develop their intercultural competence. However, some researchers claim that course book writers should keep in mind that they have to make transitions from native cultural elements to target cultural elements while presenting the language in the textbooks (Alptekin, 1993). Peterson and Coltrane (2003) state that cultural elements should be presented in a non-judgemental fashion, in a way which does not place value or judgment on distinctions between students' native culture and the culture exposed in the classroom. Kramsch (1993) also points out that culture in a language classroom can be described as a 'third culture' which is a neutral space which learners can create and use to explore and reflect on their own and the target culture and language.

The other ongoing discussion is on whether to teach culture as content or treat it as context for teaching the language. Curricula involving cultures as content have often been criticized for undue engagement with cultural difference (Byram and Feng, 2004). Language programs including culture as context have been accused of overusing the socio-political and socio-

[i] Okt.Dr., Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, emrah.ekmekci@omu.edu.tr

economic role of the English teaching industry (Kachru, 1991). No matter it is taught as content or context, culture teaching is considered as a must in foreign language learning. Even though learners may know the language very well with its linguistic and lexical features, they may have difficulty in communicating successfully because of the lack in cultural knowledge. Bennett (1993) describes this kind of language user as a 'fluent fool' which means being unaware of the social and philosophical content of the language. At this point, the discussion is not on whether to teach culture or not, but on to what extent the target culture should be included in the language programs and EFL materials. There are some different ideas about this issue. Some researchers claim that teaching the target culture on its own may cause a form of assimilation imposed by the domination of its culture. Some believe that target culture should be presented naturally with no limits for a better communication. The recent research dwells on the integration of both target and native culture in the programs and EFL materials. It is suggested that both cultures be presented from known to unknown in order to draw the maximum attention of language learners. However, it is the language learner who is in the centre of all these discussions. Some students are highly motivated to learn the target culture while some of them resist learning it. They show serious reactions to cultural elements in the course books used in the classroom. These reactions to culture-specific elements in the course books should be taken into consideration while deciding on a particular course book in foreign language learning classrooms.

1.1. Culture in English Language Teaching (ELT)

Teaching foreign language culture has gained more attention than ever before (Brooks, 1968). Researchers and teachers are aware of the fact that language learning is also a part of culture learning and that cultural competence is an integral part of communicative competence. Byram (1991) states that there are four main areas about teaching culture in ELT. These key areas are as follows:

1. The value of cultural studies within language teaching and the contribution it makes to learners' whole education. It is suggested that culture teaching develops learners' tolerance and understanding of other peoples and cultures.

2. The development of an adequate didactic for the teaching of culture; the need to identify an appropriate approach to cultural analysis for pedagogical purposes, the development of a theory of cultural learning in the circumstances of foreign language teaching, and the relationship of a curriculum of language and culture learning to general curriculum theory and development.

3. The relationship of a language and cultural studies curriculum to the whole curriculum. A methodology should ideally take into account learning theory and the decisions as to what is to be taught and how it relates to other areas of the curriculum.

4. Assessment and evaluation of cultural skills.

Byram (1991) also points out that language teaching involves culture teaching whether teachers wish it or not. The same issue has been emphasized by several other researches. Stapleton (2000), in a study about teachers' attitudes towards the role of culture in foreign language classroom, states that teachers think culture has an important role to play in their classes. In the study, most of the teachers included cultural information as part of their language teaching, while the rest of the teachers regarded culture playing as a supportive role in their classes. Stepleton (2000) also focuses on teachers' ambivalence about cultural content in course books. He states that they have negative comments with concerns about stereotyping, American bias, and the superficial nature of the content. Önalan (2005), similarly, mentions teachers' beliefs about culture in foreign language classes. He states that most of the teachers have different

points of view in terms of culture. They generally define culture in a sociological sense and they think that inclusion of too much cultural information in the classes might create a boring atmosphere or could lead to linguistic/cultural imperialism. Önalan (2005) states that teachers express concerns about students' possibility of being overly sympathetic to US/UK culture.

Genç and Bada (2005), in their study about culture in language learning and teaching, point out that explicit teaching of culture is not an arbitrary but necessary activity in foreign language classes. They state that teaching culture is significant in terms of language skills, raising cultural awareness, changing attitudes towards native and target societies, and contribution to teaching profession. Likewise, Ren (2009) makes a relation between culture and foreign language teaching with a special focus on teaching culture in ELT in China. Ren (2009) believes that there are some approaches to be adopted in teaching culture in foreign language classes such as introducing cultural background, creating cultural environments, comparing different cultures, and some other advanced techniques.

1.2. Cultural Elements in EFL Materials

Cortazzi and Jin (1999) point out that the EFL course books perform different functions. According to them, a course book is potentially a teacher, a map, a trainer, an authority, a resource, a restrictor and an ideology. It is a teacher because it contains materials which are intended to instruct students directly about English speaking cultures. It is a map as it gives an overview of a program of linguistic and cultural elements. A course book is also a trainer for language teachers as it presents the topics step by step just like a guidebook. It is regarded as an authority because it is valid, reliable and written by experts. It is also a resource as it covers a set of materials and activities from which the most appropriate or useful items can be selected. A course book sometimes functions as a restrictor because teachers and learners cannot use more creative and interpretative approach while dealing with the requirements of the tasks and activities in the course book. Cortazzi and Jin also state that ideology can be seen as another function of the course books as they reflect a worldview of a cultural system and a social construction to learners and teachers, which consciously or subconsciously constructs their view of culture.

There are some EFL course books focusing on the native culture rather than the target culture (Aliakbari, 2004). Kuwait, Chinese, Venezuelan, Indian, Yemen, Saudi Arabian and some Turkish course books, which were published by the Ministry of Education and the ones written for only Turkey, include cultural content which reinforce these countries' norms, values, heroes and tradition. The topics presented in these course books are usually familiar to the students. Alptekin (1993) states that there should be smooth transitions from familiar to unfamiliar schemas in EFL materials. He points out that in native language learning, the child's schematic and systemic knowledge are said to develop concurrently. However, foreign language learning experience is different in that when learners come up with the uses of the foreign language they are acquiring, they tend to interpret them in reference to their schematic knowledge, which is socially acquired. He maintains that a learner of English who has never experienced in the target language culture will probably confront problems in learning English if the topics are presented through unfamiliar context such as Halloween or English pubs. Confining English to one of its native settings and presenting that setting in a stereotypical manner is both unrealistic and misleading. Learners who are exposed to that kind of setting have to cope with unfamiliar information unnecessarily and linguistic matters as well (Alptekin, 1993). On the other hand, Çakır (2010), in his study about frequency of culture-specific elements in EFL course books, states that some course books used in state schools in Turkey do not have enough target culture-specific elements. Having analyzed three EFL books in terms of culture-specific elements, he concludes that course books should be designed in such a way that foreign

language learners should be offered different aspects of the target language from linguistics to culture. It is clear from recent research that quantity as well as quality of culture-specific elements in course books is highly important.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In an attempt to determine the students' reactions to target cultural elements present in the course books, the current study aims to find the possible answers to the following research questions:

1. Should native cultural elements be integrated into the course books?
2. Are the students motivated enough to learn target cultural elements?
3. Do target cultural elements have a demotivating effect on students?
4. Do students' majors and faculties have an effect on their perception of cultural elements in the course books?

3. METHOD

This study is a mixed methods research which employs both quantitative and qualitative data. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through a questionnaire.

3.1. Participants

Totally 100 students participated in the study. 50 students from the Faculty of Theology and 50 from the Faculty of Engineering took part in the present study. The students were freshman students following English I course at Ondokuz Mayıs University in 2011-2012 academic year.

Students were randomly selected from both faculties. From the Faculty of Engineering, randomly selected 50 students were attending different departments such as Chemical, Computer, Environmental, and Industrial Engineering. Both Theology and Engineering students' language levels were determined as A2 (in accordance with the criteria of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) with a placement exam given at the beginning of the semester by School of Foreign Languages.

3.2. Data Collection and Instrument

Data were collected through Likert-type questionnaire consisting of 18 items. The first 6 items were inspired and adapted from the study of Çetinkaya (2008). The rest were developed by the researcher. The adapted and developed items were in Turkish. Therefore, the questionnaire was applied in Turkish (See Appendix 2). English version of the questionnaire was attached in the study after two experts, who are specialized in translation, were consulted (See Appendix 1). Three open ended questions were included in the questionnaire in order to get information about students' perception of cultural elements in course books.

A pilot study was administered to randomly selected 50 students in order to calculate the reliability score. Data were entered into SPSS program to calculate Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which was found as ,591 for 18 items.

The course content and material were the same in both faculties. The course book they followed was 'English for Life Elementary' by Oxford Publishing. The same Instructor of English taught in both faculties.

4. RESULTS

Findings from the independent samples t-test indicate that there exists statistically significant difference in the responses of students in two faculties especially for five items. The first item which indicates the difference between two groups is presented in the following table:

Table 1: Independent Samples T-Test Results for Item 2

The contents and subjects in the course book are consistent with my world-view.

Item	Mean Dif.	t	p
Item 2	-1, 240	-6,450	,000

*p<,05

Table 1 indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in students' responses to item 2 in two faculties. Mean difference score shows that Engineering and Theology students have responded the item in opposite ways. As illustrated in Table 2, Engineering students agreed that the contents of the course book were consistent with their world-view (M= 2,48). However, theology students did not agree with the item. They thought that their world-view was different from the one presented in the course book (M= 3,72).

Table 2: Group Statistics for Item 2

The contents and subjects in the course book are consistent with my world-view.

Faculties	N	Mean	St. Deviation
Engineering	50	2,48	,886
Theology	50	3,72	1,031

The other item which shows the difference between the groups is about reactions of the students to special days and names in the target culture. Table 3 indicates that there exists statistically significant difference in the responses of students in two faculties.

Table 3: Independent Samples T-Test Results for Item 3

Special days and names belonging to the target culture in the course book contribute to my language development.

Item	Mean Dif.	t	p
Item 3	-,800	-3,370	,001

*p<,05

Table 4 presents the difference between the Mean scores of the two faculties. As the table indicates, Engineering students agreed on the contribution of special days and names to their language development (M = 2,46). On the other hand, Theology students were not so sure about whether target culture-specific days and names helped them learn the language better or improve language development (M = 3,26).

Table 4: Group Statistics for Item 3

Special days and names belonging to the target culture in the course book contribute to my language development.

Faculties	N	Mean	St. Deviation
Engineering	50	2,46	1,073
Theology	50	3,26	1,291

According to the results, item 4, which is about interaction with the target culture, reveals a significant difference between two groups. Table 5 below indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the responses of the students in two faculties:

Table 5: Independent Samples T-Test Results for Item 4

Culture-specific elements in the course book help me to interact with the target culture.

Item	Mean Dif.	t	p
Item 4	-,700	-3,296	,001

*p<,05

Table 6 below presents mean and standard deviation scores between the groups. The students at the Faculty of Engineering believed in the interaction with target culture thanks to culture-

specific elements in the course book. However, Theology students remained undecided about this interaction.

Table 6: Group Statistics for Item 4

Culture-specific elements in the course book help me to interact with the target culture.

Faculties	N	Mean	St. Deviation
Engineering	50	2,50	,141
Theology	50	3,20	,159

As an another result, independent samples t-test reveals the existence of significant difference between the two groups in terms of evaluating culture-specific elements as interesting and motivating. The following table shows the significance level with the mean difference:

Table 7: Independent Samples T-Test Results for Item 8

Culture-specific elements in the course book are interesting and motivating.

Item	Mean Dif.	t	p
Item 8	-,740	-3,491	,001

*p<,05

As it is clear from Table 7, there is a statistically significant difference between the responses of the students in two faculties in relation with evaluating culture-specific elements as interesting and motivating. Group statistics, presented in Table 8 below, for Item 8 indicate that Engineering students tended to agree with the item in that they were motivated and interested in culture-specific elements in the course book (M= 2,74). On the other hand, Theology students did not find the culture-specific elements interesting or motivated enough.

Table 8: Group Statistics for Item 8

Culture-specific elements in the course book are interesting and motivating.

Faculties	N	Mean	St. Deviation
Engineering	50	2,74	,148
Theology	50	3,48	,152

The last item which indicates difference between the responses of two groups is about whether the course book should include culture-specific elements or not. As it is seen in the following

table, there is a statistically significant difference in the responses of the students between two groups.

Table 9: Independent Samples T-Test Results for Item 17

The course book must not include culture-specific elements but just linguistic explanations.

Item	Mean Dif.	t	p
Item 17	-,800	-3,483	,001

*p<,05

According to the group statistics for item 17, the students' points of view differed in deciding the content of the course book. Engineering students did not agree that the course book must not include culture-specific elements but just linguistic explanations (M= 4,14). They were in favor of course books including culture-specific elements. However, Theology students remained undecided about course books consisting of culture-specific elements or just linguistic explanations (M= 3,34).

Table 10: Group Statistics for Item 17

The course book must not include culture-specific elements but just linguistic explanations.

Faculties	N	Mean	St. Deviation
Engineering	50	4,14	,904
Theology	50	3,34	1,349

Since the course book, the instructor, and the course hours were the same for both groups, it was quite natural that there was no statistical difference between the groups for the other 13 items. As for the results of the other items in which there was no statistical difference between the groups, the first item revealed that 76 % of the students of both faculties agreed that there were expressions they could use in daily life in the part called 'English for Everyday Life' in the course book. 74 % of the students thought that culture specific parts did not hinder their language learning process. 40 % of the students of both faculties stated that culture-specific elements were enough for their needs while 34 % regarded them as inadequate for their needs.

According to 52 % of the students, cultural elements were realistic. 36 % of the whole students were undecided about the realism of culture-specific elements, which indicated the students' being unaware of what culture-specific element was and what was not. 44 % of the students disagreed that culture-specific elements helped them reconsider their prejudices against the target culture. This result shows that students' prejudices against the target culture cannot be overcome at all with culture-specific elements in the course book. These elements should be more selective and to the point.

85 % of the students declared that culture-specific elements in the course book enabled them to observe, analyze, compare and contrast the target culture and their own culture, which indicated that great majority of the students were aware of the fact that while learning a foreign

language, they learned the culture of that language as well and this helped them evaluate the differences between two cultures. This result answers our research question about whether the students are motivated enough to learn target cultural elements. A great majority of the students seemed to be motivated to learn target culture specific element. Almost 85 % of the students agreed that reading, listening and dialogue parts in the course book did not include both the native and target culture-specific elements. This result indicates that the course book does not contain enough native culture specific-elements or there is no a balanced presentation of both culture-specific elements. With regard to the item about which culture –specific elements should be dominant in the course book, 64 % of Engineering students declared that the course book should not only include Turkish culture-specific elements, however 36 % Theology students thought it should only include Turkish-culture specific elements.

In this study, in order to answer the research question four (Do students' majors and faculties have an effect on their perception of cultural elements in the course books?), some open ended questions were posed to the students. Results from open ended questions in the questionnaire indicate that all of the students in the Faculty of Theology and a great number of students in the Faculty of Engineering would like to see some Turkish culture-specific elements in the course book such as Turkish life style, national days, Turkish cuisine, family relations, feasts, Turkish coffee, historical places, etc. Students' majors affect their perception of culture-specific elements. Theology students especially insisted on including aforementioned subjects in the course books. With regard to the first research question (Should native cultural elements be integrated into the course books?), results indicate that culture-specific elements should be integrated into the course books to some extend as most of the students declared that they would like to see Turkish culture-specific elements in the course books.

Results of two open ended questions about whether students want to learn English - culture specific elements in the course book were striking. All of the Engineering students stated that target cultural elements must definitely be included in the course book as language and culture are inseparable. However, 22 out of 50 Theology students were strongly against target cultural specific elements stating that they would not contribute to their language development but hinder language learning process. The research question about whether target cultural elements have a demotivating effect on students can be answered on the basis of aforementioned open ended questions. Almost 50 % of Theology students declared that target cultural elements had a demotivating effect on their language learning process but it is obvious that this result is an outcome of these students' background education.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to explore the reactions of freshman students at the Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Theology to culture – specific elements in a specific course book. The results indicate that some parts of the book are adequate for a foreign language learner in terms of culture-specific elements. However, subjects and contents of the course book are especially criticized by Theology students by accusing the course book of not containing Turkish culture-specific elements and emphasizing only British or American culture-specific elements. It is obvious that this comment can be the result of students' educational background and their present field of study. Because Engineering students do not criticize the contents and subjects of the course book as Theology students do. Most of the Theology students state that their world-views are inconsistent with the cultural content of the course book. On the other hand, they declare that learning a foreign language necessitates learning its culture as well. Although they believe that language and culture cannot be separated, they state that target culture-specific elements should not be dominant in the course book. Their harsh reaction is

particularly on special days and names belonging to the target culture. This issue should be explicated clearly in order to overcome the problem.

Interaction with the course book is another important issue. Students need to interact with the course book to get the maximum benefit from it. However, the results indicate that Theology students especially are reluctant to interact with the course book as they think it contains too many target-culture specific elements. On the other hand, there are some students who do not think in the same way as their friends in the same faculty. These students are in the opinion of the lack of culture-specific elements in the course book. This contradictory result is because of the fact that most of the students are not aware of what is culture-specific and what is not at all.

The other common reaction to the course book is about the quality of culture-specific elements. Most of the students from both faculties declare that target culture-specific elements are not interesting and motivating. This problem can be overcome by being selective while writing these parts of the course book. Therefore, course book writers should be more selective in terms of culture-specific elements if students are expected not to have negative reactions to the course book.

6. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

It is quite obvious from the results that culture-specific elements in EFL materials used at aforementioned Faculties should be more realistic, interesting and motivating. This will help learners be involved in the learning process and interact with the course book. Culture-specific elements should be presented in such a way that they do not cause emotional barriers against the target culture. Otherwise, language learners will have to cope with both culture-related and linguistic difficulties and they will have a tendency to react negatively when they come across culture-specific elements.

Target and native culture–specific elements should be presented in a balanced way in EFL materials. Learners will be inevitably exposed to target-culture specific elements during foreign language learning process, but they should be given a chance to interact with their own cultural values as well. It can be inferred from the present study that students at Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Theology are willing to learn culture-specific elements while learning a foreign language. However, their own cultural values, beliefs, traditions and world-views should not be ignored while preparing course books. A balanced cultural content should be provided while presenting language skills in the course books.

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Appendix 1

The Questionnaire (English Version)

Faculty:

Department:

Gender:

Age:

Type of Graduated High School:

Place of Birth:

A) Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by putting a check mark in the appropriate box.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The expressions in 'English for Everyday Life' parts are the ones I can use in my daily life.					
2	The contents and subjects in the course book are consistent with my world-view.					
3	Special days and names belonging to the target culture in the course book contribute to my language development.					
4	Culture-specific elements in the course book help me to interact with the target culture.					
5	The parts reflecting the target cultural elements in the course book affect my language learning process in a negative way.					
6	Culture-specific elements in the course book are enough for my needs as a foreign language learner.					
7	Culture-specific elements in the course book are usually realistic.					
8	Culture-specific elements in the course book are interesting and motivating.					
9	Culture-specific elements in the course book help me reconsider my prejudices against the target culture.					
10	Culture-specific elements in the course book enable me to observe, analyze, compare and contrast the target culture and my own culture.					
11	Reading passages in the course book include both target cultural elements and my own cultural elements.					
12	Listening parts in the course book include both target cultural elements and my own cultural elements.					
13	Dialogues in the course book include both target cultural elements and my own cultural elements.					
14	There is a great difference between the target and local cultural elements in terms of the expressions					

	used in the dialogues.					
15	The course book must only include Turkish culture-specific elements.					
16	The course book must only include English culture-specific elements.					
17	The course book must not include culture-specific elements but just linguistic explanations.					
18	The cultural expressions used in the dialogues are used in my own culture in the same way.					

B) Please write your opinions for the following questions

1) As Turkish culture-specific elements, the course book should include

....

....

2) I want to / do not want to learn English-culture specific elements because

....

....

Appendix 2

The Questionnaire (Turkish Version)

Fakülte/Bölüm:

Cinsiyet:

Yaş:

Mezun Olduğu Lise Türü:

Doğum Yeri:

A) Aşağıdaki cümlelere ne ölçüde katılıp katılmadığınızı kutulara işaret koyarak belirtiniz.

SORU		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
1	"English for Everyday Life" bölümlerindeki ifadeler günlük hayatta kullanabileceğimiz ifadelerdir.					
2	Kitaptaki konular ve içerikler dünya görüşümle uyumlu.					
3	Kitapta İngiliz kültürüne ait özel günler ve isimler dil gelişimime katkı sağlıyor.					

4	Kitapta İngiliz kültürüne ait öğeler kültürel kaynaşmalara neden oluyor.					
5	Kitapta İngiliz kültürünü yansıtan bölümler dil öğrenimimde olumsuz sonuçlar yaratıyor.					
6	Kitaptaki kültürel öğeler yabancı dil öğrenen bir birey olarak gereksinimlerimi karşılıyor.					
7	Kitaptaki kültürel öğeler genellikle gerçekci.					
8	Kitaptaki kültürel öğeler ilginç ve motive edici.					
9	Kitaptaki kültürel öğeler hedef kültürle ilgili önyargılarımı yeniden düşünmemi sağlıyor.					
10	Kitaptaki kültürel öğeler kendi kültürümle hedef kültür arasında gözlem, analiz, karşılaştırma ve değerlendirme yapmamı sağlıyor.					
11	Kitaptaki okuma parçaları hem Türk kültürünü hem de İngiliz kültürünü yansıtıyor.					
12	Kitaptaki dinleme bölümleri hem Türk kültürünü hem de İngiliz kültürünü yansıtıyor.					
13	Kitaptaki diyaloglar hem Türk kültürünü hem de İngiliz kültürünü yansıtıyor.					
14	Kitaptaki diyalog bölümlerinde Türk kültürü ve İngiliz kültürü arasında büyük fark var.					
15	Kitapta sadece Türk kültürüne ait öğeler kullanılmalı.					
16	Kitapta sadece İngiliz kültürüne ait öğeler kullanılmalı.					
17	Kitapta kültüre ait öğeler bulunmamalı, sadece dilbilgisi bölümleri bulunmalı.					
18	Kitaptaki diyaloglarda geçen ifadeler Türk kültüründe de aynen kullanılıyor.					

B) Aşağıdaki sorularla ilgili olarak düşüncelerinizi yazınız.

1) Kitapta Türk kültürüne ait öğeler bulunmalı. Örneğin,

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....

2) İngiliz kültürüne ait öğeleri öğrenmek istiyorum/ istemiyorum çünkü

....
....

Analysing Students' Reactions to English Course Books in Terms of Cultural Elements

Emrah Ekmekçi[ii]

Extended Abstract: There is a growing consensus among researchers that foreign language learning and teaching implies some degree of learning and teaching a foreign culture. If language learning is considered as a process, culture learning is one of the components of this process. Pursuing Hyme's communicative competence theory, contemporary foreign language teaching methods have a special focus on sociolinguistic competence which is the knowledge of sociocultural rules of language. This aspect of language is conveyed to language students through teachers as a core-source or the materials employed in classrooms. Language teachers, implicitly or explicitly, relay cultural information to their students. However, in countries like Turkey where English is a foreign language, the core-source of cultural issues is course books rather than teachers who themselves may not be competent enough in target cultural issues. Therefore, course books are of great importance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings like Turkey.

There have been lots of debates recently on whether or not to include target cultural elements in foreign language course books, and on to what extent they should be presented. There are different views about presenting culture in course books in the literature. Some scholars claim target culture-specific elements should be presented in a systematic way, as from familiar to unfamiliar. A number of researchers put the emphasis on the functions of course books and specifically on cultural elements as being one of the functions. Some researchers complain about course books focusing on merely target cultural elements while some think that EFL course books should only consist of native cultural elements. Results of some comparative studies indicate that the quantity of target culture-specific elements is not enough for learners to make them culturally competent language learners. There is no doubt that it is the language learner who is at the centre of the discussions. For this reason, students' reactions to culture specific elements in the course books and the impact of these reactions to their language learning development are extremely important.

The present study, therefore, aims (a) to analyse the reactions of the students to target cultural elements, (b) to determine whether their majors have an impact on their perceptions of culture, and (c) to get an idea about whether to include native culture-specific elements in the course books as well. In order to reach some conclusions about these topics, the following research questions have been posed. 1. Should native cultural elements be integrated into the course books? 2. Are the students motivated enough to learn target cultural elements? 3. Do target cultural elements have a demotivating effect on students? 4. Do students' majors and faculties have an effect on their perception of cultural elements in the course books?

Within these questions in mind, data were collected from 100 freshman students studying in the Faculties of Theology and Engineering in Ondokuz Mayis University in 2011-2012 academic year. As a data collection tool, a Likert-type questionnaire was employed to get the reactions of students to culture specific elements available in Foreign Language 1 (English) course book. The course book students were following was chosen by a committee in School of Foreign Languages at the beginning of the academic year. T-test was employed to analyse the data. According to the results of the study, there existed statistically significant difference in the responses of students in two faculties especially for five items. The first issue, which revealed a significant difference, was about the relationship between the two groups' worldviews and the

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[ii] Okt.Dr., Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, emrah.ekmekci@omu.edu.tr

content of the course book. Theology students' reactions to the item related to the consistency of their worldviews with the cultural elements in the course book were different from the ones in the Faculty of Engineering. The other significantly different issue was about contribution of special days and names of the target culture to students' language development, and advantage of these elements in interacting with the target culture. In addition, results revealed that target cultural elements were not motivating and interesting enough from students' points of view. Some open-ended questions were also addressed to the students to get an idea of what they would like to see in foreign language course books. Results from open-ended questions indicated that most of the students were eager to learn culture specific elements and they had some suggestions on native cultural elements to be added in the course books. Another striking result obtained from open-ended questions was that almost half of the Theology students declared that target culture-specific elements had demotivating effect on their language learning process.

Key Words: Cultural Elements, Language and Culture, Foreign Language Course Books, Target Language Culture.