

A Content Analysis of the Cultural Content of Reading Texts and Dialogues in Action Pack Eight, Considering the Inclusion Criterion

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the reading texts and dialogues in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight to determine the extent to which they incorporate cultural content. Frequencies and percentages were used to present the results related to the study's questions. The findings revealed that the reading texts in Action Pack Eight include all types of cultural content: target cultural content, intercultural content, Arab-Islamic cultural content, and national (Jordanian) cultural content. On the other hand, the dialogues in the Student's Book include all types of cultural content except for the Arab-Islamic content. Overall, the presence of Arab-Islamic content in Action Pack Eight is not sufficient, although the general guidelines emphasize the importance of understanding, appreciating, and interacting with people from different countries, as well as highlighting Jordanian identity.

Keywords: Education, Discourse Analysis, Dialogue, Culture.

1. Introduction

Integrating culture in teaching EFL and making learners aware of the target culture and other cultures as well as their own culture have become an important requirement to learn language for communicative purposes. Omaggio (2001) emphasizes in her fifth hypothesis promoting cultural understanding to help learners live in harmony with the community of the target language.

Brown (2001) sees that language is a part of culture and culture is a part of language, so that they should be taught together. Schulz (2007) also states that language and culture are best acquired together.

McKay (2000) identifies three types of cultural content: target culture, learners' own culture and international target culture. She prefers international target language content because it covers a variety of knowledge from various cultures all over the world using the target language which may increase the learners' interest rather than imposing only one culture all the time and prevent learners from having the fear of assimilation into a specific culture. This also helps them respect other people's cultures. In addition to these three types of cultural content, the Jordanian Ministry of Education states that "the EFL curriculum should help the learners to internalize the Islamic and Arabic culture which should be used as a spring board to understand, appreciate, and interact with

people of different countries, as well as Jordanian identity English is an international language and fundamental to learning and communicating in all cultures" (General Guidelines and General and Specific Outcomes for the English Language Curriculum, 2006).

Cakir (2006) states that learners should be familiarized with the cultural components in order to achieve several progresses such as developing the communicative skills, understanding the linguistic and behavioral patterns both of the target and the native culture at a more conscious level, developing intercultural and international understand, adopting a wider perception of the reality and developing an awareness of the potential mistakes that might come up in comprehension, interpretation and translation and communication. Therefore, Hamiloğlu and Mendi (2010) state that cultural content should take place in textbooks to help learners be familiarized with cultural components and acquire intercultural communicative competence.

1.1 Background of the Study and Review of Related Studies

A-Content analysis

Content analysis has been defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Krippendorff, 1980). Holsti (1969) provides a broad definition of content analysis as, "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages".

Content analysis is a flexible research method, which is widely used in different fields, such as media, sociology, management, anthropology, and curriculum evaluation. The obvious aim of using content analysis is to dig deeply into the entire intended material and build a model to describe specific data. (Elo & Kyngas, 2007).

Content analysis is a systematic method of analyzing written, verbal, or visual materials, it could be applied in a quantitative, qualitative or a mixed method. The quantitative method is a highly selective and structured method, which is based on the principles of social science of based on measuring and counting. The qualitative content analysis has been defined as: "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). To achieve its ultimate purpose, content analysis employs a wide variety of analytical techniques to specify findings, describe and put them in context.

B- Action Pack Series

Action Pack is the last series of several series that were taught at public schools in Jordan during the successive stages of studying from the first to the twelfth grades such as PETRA, AMRA and Jordan Opportunities. It is a twelve-level series accompanying and leading students from the basic to the secondary stage. Its materials are based on the General Guidelines and General and Specific Outcomes for the English Language in Jordan, where this language is regarded as a foreign.

Each level of Action Pack consists of a Student's Book, an Activity Book, a comprehensive Teacher's Book, audio cassette, flash cards, wall charts and a website. Moreover, it also covers different language components and skills with a variety of activities and exercises that help students to improve their knowledge and competencies.

In fact, the Jordanian EFL textbooks were changed several times to respond to the contemporary trends which reflect learners' needs. One of the students' needs is acquiring language and culture together.

1.1.1 Related Studies Review

In this related studies review, the researcher presents a few examples of studies which have used content analysis as a research tool.

Shatnawi (2005) analyzed Cutting Edge series by analyzing the content to determine the extent to which culture is represented and to find out the cultural aspects in these textbooks. The findings of this study revealed that the series represent the culture content which includes these aspects: historical, economical, geographical, literary, political, religious, social, man-woman relationship, habits, customs, and tradition.

Jafar (2006) investigated the foreign cultural aspects compared to the Arabic aspects in English textbooks for the basic stage in Jordan. The study followed textbook content analysis for cultural aspect at the level of theme and picture for names, Pets, women, celebrations, and social events, addressing people, social concepts, and values. The data analysis of Action Pack Series for grades 1- 6 at public schools showed that the basic stage pupil is exposed more to foreign culture that might cause cultural bias.

Ababneh (2007) conducted a study on Jordan Opportunities for the tenth grade analyzing the entire content and investigating the teachers' and supervisors' perspectives concerning that content. The findings of this study indicated that the distribution of outcomes and vocabulary in modules were not fair. The teacher's book was very helpful for teachers. The respondents suggested deleting some grammar exercises. In general, they agreed on the suitability of modules of Jordan Opportunities.

Abbas (2009) aimed at investigating the cultural elements in the new English syllabus by using content survey and analysis. Therefore, a detailed analytical survey for the contents of EFP textbooks for grades 10, 11&12 was made to describe the content of these textbooks in terms of the topics they cover and the way they are covered. For this purpose, these topics were analyzed to see what international (global) and Palestinian (including Arab & Islamic) issues and dimensions they deal with. The analysis revealed that each unit contains a reading passage followed by various activities involving all language skills based on the thematic, lexical, and structural content of the reading material. The workbook gives extra activities and homework exercises which reinforce what has been introduced.

Lee (2009) examined how 11 high-school EFL conversation textbooks used in Korea represent and teach culture. Findings showed that all the textbooks neglect both the teaching of the culture-general aspect of culture learning and the small “c” target-culture learning. Remarkably, scant use of authentic materials along with interactive technologies like the Internet for teaching culture was used. The findings also revealed that the 11 textbooks did not encourage the culture-general aspect of culture learning. The use of authentic materials such as print, audio and video, along with interactive technologies such as the Internet was scarce throughout the textbooks which deprived students of the opportunity to be aware of both mainstream socio-cultural values and norms and sociocultural variables of a target culture.

Fitzpatrick and McPherson (2010) conducted a content analysis on 56 contemporary coloring books published in the United States as cultural objects. They discussed results in terms of gender schema theory. They found that male characters were more prevalent in coloring books than female characters.

Hamiloğlu and Mendi (2010) analyzed many course books of English as a foreign language to see whether they involve any cross-cultural terms belonging to diverse cultures from different countries in the world. Five course books were evaluated, the course books analyzed in the study were published in the years 1998, 1999, 1999, 2000, and 2006. The results showed that the types of exercises which deal with cross-cultural and inter-cultural issues were generally the same and the cross-cultural topics were generally presented in reading texts and listening exercises. They also revealed that the distribution and the frequency of intercultural elements were not related to or balanced with the publication dates of the selected course books.

Juan (2010) conducted a content analysis in College English (New Edition) combining both a quantitative and qualitative research and focusing on the evaluation of preface of the textbook, evaluation of texts including Text A, Text B and the footnotes, evaluation of pre-reading and evaluation of exercises to examine cultural content in the college EFL textbooks. He collected the data of the cultural content in CE (New) by analyzing the theme of the whole unit including the gist of the pre-reading, text A and text B and by analyzing the cultural information in detail embodied in the pre-reading, text A, text B, footnotes, and exercises. She also utilized Microsoft Excel to make tables to show the concrete information. The content analysis revealed that the cultural content input has not received due attention in designing and organizing the CE (New) and the texts cover the cultural information implicitly.

A few evolutionary studies and content analyses were carried out on the currently taught series in Jordan. "Action Pack" is the new one which is taught from the first grade to the twelfth, the previous series were "PETRA" for the basic stage, and "AMRA" for the secondary stage. The content analyses have been devoted to various aspects of these textbooks, such as vocabulary items, grammar, exercises, reading passages and different strategies.

Zwahrh (2012) analyzed the vocabulary items in the six modules of the students' book of Action Pack Seven in Jordan examining the grammar activities of the student's book to find out to what extent these vocabulary items meet the criteria proposed by Al-Momani (1998) which is a ten-item scale. They found that most of the new vocabulary items obtained in the six modules of Action pack seven met the criteria of the analysis with a percentage ranged between 100% and 82%. Additionally, they found out that there was no balance in the distribution of the new vocabulary items between the six modules and no balance in the distribution of the parts of speech within the module.

Al-Ghazo & Smadi (2013) conducted a content analysis on Action Pack Eleven to determine to what extent the reading texts are authentic. They used frequencies and percentages to present the results of the question of the study. Their analysis revealed that the reading texts of the student's book in Action Pack 11 have a high degree of authenticity. There is a strong match between reading specific outcomes and the reading text's authenticity in Action Pack Eleven.

Reviewing studies related to analyzing the cultural content, the researcher can realize the need to investigate culture and its teaching into Action Pack series since the researcher could not find any local analysis that conducted on the

cultural content of Action Pack series published in or after 2012 which is the publishing date of the new Action Pack series.

The current study analyzes the presentation and the inclusion of cultural content in the Students' Book of Action Pack series for the Eighth grade. It deals with cultural content as a crucial element while teaching and learning. The researcher analyzes the presentation of culture content choosing the reading texts and the dialogues.

2. Problem of the Study and Its Questions

The study aims at analyzing the reading texts and the dialogues of the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight to determine to what extent the reading texts and the dialogues include cultural content.

2.1 Study of the Questions

This is illustrated by answering the following questions:

1. To what extent do the reading texts of Action Pack Eight include the cultural content?
2. To what extent do the dialogues of Action Pack Eight include the cultural content?
3. What are the forms of the cultural content included in Action Pack Eight?

3. Study Terms

Reading text

the written words together presented in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight and intended for reading comprehension.

Dialogue

A conversation between two or more people presented in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight to exchange ideas and opinions.

Target cultural content

any content that reflects any cultural aspect of English native people like the British or the American.

Intercultural content

any content that reflects any cultural aspect of other countries around the world except the United of States, and the United Kingdom.

Arab-Islamic cultural content

any content that represents or refers to any Arab- Islamic aspects such as crafts, Ramadan, mosques, Islamic characters.

National cultural content

any content provides the students with information about Jordan such as cities, traditions, and famous Jordanian characters.

4. Methodology

4.1 Criterion of the Study

The criterion of the study is the inclusion of the cultural content in the reading texts and the dialogues of Action Pack Eight.

4.2 Sample of the Study

The researcher analyzed all the reading texts and dialogues in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight.

4.3 Units of Analysis

The units of analysis are the reading text and the dialogue in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight.

4.5 Categories of analysis:

The categories of analysis are:

- Target cultural content
- Intercultural content
- Islamic cultural content
- National cultural content

Inter-Rater Reliability of Content Analysis

To ensure the reliability of content analysis, the researcher analyzed the reading texts and the dialogues in the Student's Book. She repeated the analysis after four days from the first analysis using the same definitions, criterion, categories, and units of analysis. It was found that the consistency was (0.96%) which indicates a high coincidence between the two analyses.

5. Study and discussion

To answer the first question, the researcher analyzed all the reading texts that respond to the types of cultural content in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight. These results are presented in Table (1).

Table (1) presents the frequencies and percentages of the reading texts that respond to the types of the cultural content in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight.

Table (1): Frequencies and Percentages of the Reading Texts that Respond to the Types of the Cultural Content in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight

No.	Types of the Cultural Content	Frequencies	Percentages
1	Target Cultural Content	3	33.4%
2	Intercultural Content	3	33.4%
3	Arab-Islamic Cultural Content	2	22.2%
4	National (Jordanian) Cultural Content	1	11 %
Total		9	100%

Table (1) shows that the target cultural content and intercultural content have the highest and the same frequencies and percentages. On the other hand, the national cultural content has the lowest frequency and percentage.

The target cultural content is presented through three texts on the pages number 12, 24 and 30 and the intercultural content is presented through the reading texts on pages number 12, 16 and 54. It is clear that the reading text on page number 12 presents the target cultural and intercultural content together since it presents the target culture through the explorer William Savage who is British and is living in Ethiopia to make a TV program. The text also presents intercultural content through presenting the Ethiopian culture and describing the Nyangatom ethnic group's lifestyle which is very tough because the people of this ethnic group do not have hospitals, and they only have herbal medicine to help them deal with pain. The researcher, depending on the last paragraph in the text, thinks that the aim of this combination between the cultures is to help learners understand the necessity of living in harmony with diverse cultures.

The reading texts on pages number 24 and 30 present the target cultural content through an authentic informational newspaper article. The first newspaper article which is on page number 24 is accompanied with a picture in which Charles, the boy, wears an American police helmet to express his bravery since he has saved his family from attackers. The second newspaper article on page number 30 also expresses the target cultural content through the names of characters such as Charles Robbins and Robert Smith. The analyst notices that both articles present the target cultural content in qualities or actions describe their main characters as rescuers and heroes. She thinks that this may be a kind of cultural bias since the author of the textbook is American.

An example of intercultural content is presented in the reading text on page number 16. This reading text presents the African culture through talking about African's fame in telling stories and poems. The last paragraph in the text states the importance of reading stories from diverse cultures to promote the appreciations of the variety that exists between cultures. Another example of including intercultural content is in the reading text on page number 54. This reading text provides the students with a background knowledge about the importance of the Olympic Games as a tradition from ancient Greece and as a prominent part of the culture that the Greeks created.

Obviously, the reading texts of the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight gives prominent importance to the target and intercultural content. The analyst sees that this may be due to the importance of exposing students to the foreign cultures to help them learn English better as a means of communication.

The Arab-Islamic culture is represented in two texts on pages number 8 and 28. The first text describes, through the character of Um Issam, the traditional Arabian crafts such as designing clothes, accessories, small bags for mobile phones small carpets and furniture. Some traditional Arabian objects are shown in the picture which accompanies the text. The second text is about Rufaidah Al Aslamiya who is Islam's first female nurse. In fact, this text reflects the Islamic culture explaining the role of Islamic women during times of war and peace. It also shows the support by Prophet Mohammad, Peace Be Upon Him for women.

The national (Jordanian) cultural content is presented in the reading text on page number 66. This text describes the ancient and modern Jerash, which is one of the most popular tourists' sites in Jordan, comparing the ancient and modern parts of the city and presenting all cultural

aspects in Jerash such as its buildings which include a forum, theatres, baths and a chariot racing track and the Jerash Festival every year.

To answer the second question, the researcher analyzed all the dialogues in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight that respond to the types of cultural content. These results are presented in Table (2).

Table (2)presents the frequencies and percentages of the dialogues in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight that respond to the types of the cultural content.

Table (2): Frequencies and Percentages of the Dialogues in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight that Respond to the Types of the Cultural Content

No.	Types of the Cultural Content	Frequencies	Percentages
1	Target Cultural Content	1	16.7%
2	Intercultural Content	3	50%
3	Arab-Islamic Cultural Content	0	0%
4	National (Jordanian) Cultural Content	2	33.3%
Total		6	100%

Table (2)shows that the dialogues in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight include the following cultural content: target cultural content, intercultural content and national (Jordanian) cultural content. It also shows that the intercultural content has the highest frequency and percentage. On the other hand, the Arab-Islamic cultural content is not met at all.

Depending on Table (2), the intercultural content comes in the first rank. It is represented in three dialogues on pages number 62, 64, 69 in module 6. The dialogue on page 62 presents facts about Machu Picchu in Peru as a one of the New Seven Wonders of the World which represents World Heritage Sites. This dialogue may aim at promoting the students' awareness of tourism and heritage which are very important parts of any culture. The dialogue on page 64 presents the Turkish culture through talking about its wonderful places as archaeological sites. The dialogues on pages 69 presents the German culture through talking about Gobekli Tepe temple by a German archaeologist. This dialogue may aim at promoting the students' respect of other's religions.

Table (2)shows that the national cultural content occupies the second rank. It is represented in the dialogues on pages number 9 and 14 in modules one and two. The first dialogue represents the Jordanian handcraft in Petra and Madaba. The second dialogue represents the famous herbs used as medicine by the Jordanian. These herbs are sage and theyme (al- maryamia and Zaatar).

Table (2)also shows that the target culture comes in the third rank. It is represented in the dialogue on page 26 in module three through presenting two characters whose names are Mrs Jones and Jack. These two characters talk about their lifestyle such as the way of spending the weekend and sharing experiences. Unfortunately, the Arabic- Islamic cultural content is not represented in any dialogue.

To answer the third question, the researcher combined Table (1)with Table (2)in Table (3).

Table (3)presents the frequencies and percentages of the reading texts and dialogues that respond to the types of the cultural content in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight.

Table (3): Frequencies and Percentages of the Reading Texts and the Dialogues in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight together that Respond to the Types of the Cultural Content

No.	Types of the Cultural Content	Frequencies	Percentages
1	Target Cultural Content	4	26.7%
2	Intercultural Content	6	40%
3	Arab-Islamic Cultural Content	2	13.3%
4	National (Jordanian) Cultural Content	3	20%
Total		15	100%

Table (3) shows that the intercultural content has the highest frequency and percentage. On the other hand, Arab Islamic cultural content has the lowest frequency and percentage.

In general, the researcher thinks that the presentation of Arab- Islamic and national cultural content is not sufficient although the General Guidelines tend to focus on the Arab- Islamic culture to understand, appreciate and interact with people of different countries as well as Jordanian identity.

6. Inference

The findings of the analysis revealed that the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight include all the types of cultural content: the target cultural content, the intercultural content, the national (Jordanian) cultural content and the Arab-Islamic cultural content. The inclusion of the Arab-Islamic cultural content is not enough since it has the lowest percentage. As this content analysis study is limited to the reading texts and the dialogues in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight, the researcher thinks that the Arab-Islamic cultural content may be presented in the listening activities or illustrations.

7. Recommendations

Considering the findings of the current analysis, the researcher recommends the following:

1. The author of "Action Pack" series is recommended to take into consideration the fair and sufficient inclusion of Arabic-Islamic cultural content in the reading texts and the dialogues in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight.
2. Other research studies should be carried out to analyze the illustrations and listening activities in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight considering the inclusion of Arabic-Islamic cultural content.
3. Other research studies should be carried out to analyze the cultural content in the Student's Book of Action Pack Eight considering the balance and appropriateness criteria.
4. Teachers' ought to be more aware of introducing the target culture through the Arab-Islamic culture to prevent the students from adopting the target culture unconsciously.

Conflicts of interest statements

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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