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CULTURAL PRESENTATION IN TURKISH SECONDARY EFL COURSEBOOKS

TÜRKÇE ORTAÖĞRETİM İNGİLİZCE DERS KİTAPLARINDA KÜLTÜREL SUNUM

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Abstract

English is spreading rapidly and also is accepted as a universal language throughout the world. In this sense teaching materials become very important particularly in the inclusion of cultural content. The purpose of this study is to examine the four course books “Cambridge Global English Stage 8”, “Mastermind Stage 8”, “Upswing Stage 8” and “Optimise B1” which are used in secondary education in Turkey. Cultural elements in terms of cultural themes, aspects and categories were analyzed whether they adequately represent local and multicultural elements as well as the target culture. To analyze the data firstly, checklists were prepared and utilized and subsequently content analysis was used. As conclusion the comparison of the coursebooks were evaluated in order to give suggestions for EFL material designers and educators.

Keywords: Cultural representation, English coursebooks, English coursebooks in Turkey.

Özet

İngilizce hızla yayılmakta ve dünya çapında evrensel bir dil olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bu anlamda öğretim materyalleri özellikle kültürel içeriğin yer alması açısından çok önemli hale gelmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye’de ortaöğretimde kullanılan “Cambridge Global English Stage 8”, “Mastermind Stage 8”, “Upswing Stage 8” ve “Optimise B1” adlı dört ders kitabını incelemektir. Kültürel unsurlar, kültürel temalar, yönler ve kategoriler açısından yerel ve çok kültürlü unsurları ve hedef kültürü yeterince temsil edip etmedikleri analiz edilmiştir. Verilerin analizi için öncelikle kontrol listeleri hazırlanarak kullanılmış ve ardından içerik analizi

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uygulanmıştır. Sonuç olarak, EFL materyal tasarımcıları ve eğitimcileri için önerilerde bulunmak üzere ders kitaplarının karşılaştırılması değerlendirildi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel temsil, İngilizce ders kitapları, Türkiye'de İngilizce ders kitapları

1. INTRODUCTION

In language teaching, it is considered extremely important for individuals who learn a foreign language to learn the culture of the countries where this language is spoken (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996: 432, Tseng, 2002:12.). According to the approach of teaching global culture (globalization), the content of the course materials or textbooks can also be culturally global; and it is possible to include elements from all over the world without restricting it to the cultural examples of the countries where English is spoken as a mother tongue (Alptekin, 2002: 60). According to those who oppose this approach, texts in which the culture of the target language is dominant can sometimes negatively affect student autonomy; the language of the texts may seem completely foreign to those who are not natives of that language (Widdowson, 1998:710-711). It is seen that in countries such as Spain and Italy where private courses are created for them, teaching materials are prepared by local authors especially with local knowledge (Gray, 2002:165).

On the other hand, there are also studies that support the idea of localization; but do not fully support localization. In the 1990s, in China, where "standard" English was adopted and books containing American and British cultures were started to be used, it was revealed that students moved away from lessons and did not want to use a book full of cultural values that it was impossible for them to experience (Xu, 2010:176). However, the idea has also been put forward that it is impossible for students to learn a global language with completely local content. Thus, the importance of local as well as intercultural content is emphasized; and publishers act with this point of view in their textbooks and supplementary materials (Block and Cameron, 2002: 10).

Book reviews can be made based on the culture definition of Bousquet and Pessin (2003: 41). Like them, Watson (2010: 478) divides culture into four categories:

- The "Big C": it includes the great artistic and intellectual works and the institutions that protect them.
- The "Small c" refers to the works, beliefs, values and behaviors shared by a social community, in short, everything encountered in daily life (Lee, 2009: 78).
- "Commodity culture" encompasses both the contents of the previous two cultures and the industry products of a society.
- "Hybrid culture" refers to the first three and the structure brought about by globalization (Messekher, 2014:72).

In addition to the context of Cortazzi and Jin (1999), Xiao (2010) added category of "culture free" because certain unique cultural material was not associated with any country. Yuen (2011) added a new category to the current category with the term "persons" and created a structure consisting of "Four Ps"; persons, perspectives, practices, and products.

In order to address the analysis of cultural elements, this study will evaluate the following CB materials in terms of the use of culture:

- Cambridge Global English Coursebook Stage 8,
- Mastermind Middle School and Imam Hatip Middle School Stage 8,
- Upswing Middle School and Imam Hatip Middle School Stage 8,
- Optimise B1 Student's Book.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are some studies in Turkish context about the analysis of course books. For example, Çakır (2010) analyzed three CBs published for elementary school learners at the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. He found out that language presented mostly by dialogues and utterances do not involve culture specific expressions adequately.

Toprak and Aksoyalp (2015) analyzed 17 CBs in different levels used at the English preparatory schools of universities located in Turkey. Majority of the cultural elements belonged to the UK (48%) and the US (42%) while other English-speaking countries were underrepresented.

Kırkgöz and Ağçam (2011) explored 18 locally published English coursebooks used for Turkish primary schools in grades 4 through 8 after two important curriculum innovation were introduced in 1997 and 2005 respectively so as to search out to what extent the CBs represent SC (source cultural) (Turkish culture), TC (target cultural) (British/American culture) and IC (international cultural). Eight of the coursebooks were introduced after 1997 curriculum innovations and the other ten were compatible with the curriculum innovation released after 2005. It was found that while the source and target cultural contents were distributed equally, they surpassed the international cultural contents. Yet, her analysis of the CBs published after 2005 curriculum innovation revealed that the source cultural and the international cultural contents existed less than the target cultural contents.

In her research to find out how the cultural content and intercultural issues are represented in the CB 'New American Inside out' and whether it includes the hidden curriculum, Chao (2011) used two frameworks, Moran's (2001) 'Five Dimensions of Culture', and 'Main Categories of Culture' developed by the researcher. The findings indicated that the CB reflected diverse dimensions of culture especially focusing on popular products /practices and famous persons and perspectives of western countries. However, it had a tendency towards TC. From the findings, the researcher concluded that TC embedded in internationally published ELT CB with respect to cultural dimensions may consciously or unconsciously influence ELF students' values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Hence, underrepresentation of SC may lead local language learners to look down on their own culture and consider TC nations as superior.

Yuen (2011) conducted a case study to analyze representation of foreign cultures in two English language CBs used in Hong Kong secondary schools as to how these CBs displayed the status of ELF. Representation of foreign cultures related to Western, Asian and African countries were evaluated in terms of four aspect: products, practices, perspectives and persons; and according to the findings, products became the most frequently appeared cultural aspect while perspective was the least. On the other hand, representation of English speaking countries, when compared to less frequently depicted Asian and African countries, appeared the most frequently. Consequently, as is inferred from the findings, representations of foreign cultures in CBs are stereotypical.

Demirbaş (2013) carried out a study to reveal how international and target specific elements in conversational and visual items were displayed to young learners in CEFR based CBs which are My English 5, Unique 6, Spring 7 and Four Seasons English 8 approved by MoNE. According to the findings, while Four Seasons English 8 included the most intercultural specific items in conversational analysis, My English had the fewest. On the other hand, My English 5 contains the most target cultural specific items in conversational analysis, yet Four Seasons English 8 has the fewest target specific items. Other books should be richened with both intercultural specific items and target specific items. Shin, Eslami and Chen (2011) analyzed the aspects of culture and levels of cultural

presentation in internationally used EFL CBs in terms of the cultural perspectives of ELF. The CBs they examined consist of seven series of international EFL CBs used in several Asian countries. The findings of the study indicated that inner circle cultural content dominated in all CBs. The cultural contents of outer and expanding circles were undervalued. Çakır (2010) analyzed three CBs published by MoNE for elementary school learners at the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. He investigated the distribution of culture specific expressions such as idioms, proverbs, superstitions, festivals, celebrations etc. It was found out that language presented mostly by dialogues and utterances do not involve culture specific expressions adequately. Furthermore, the distribution of culture specific expressions is quite less and insufficient for learners as they are not exposed to authentic and realistic situations in the target language. China in an attempt to ascertain categories of culture (SC, TC and IC) based on the framework of Cortazzi and Jin (1999), and themes of culture (Big “C” culture and little “c” culture) based on Chen (2004) and Lee (2009). In total, they analyzed 4 books and 400 units in terms of sources of culture and themes of culture. They found out that unidentified sources of culture and TC were emphasized more than SC and IC. On the other hand, more than half (58.08%) of the total themes were little “c” theme of values. It was followed by big “C” theme of science (11.00%). The findings showed that underrepresentation of SC and IC in CBs might not be enough to cultivate learners to be competent in intercultural settings. Moreover, highly emphasized little “c” theme of “values” does not help students develop ICC. Çelik and Erbay (2013) analyzed a series of three ELT CBs published by MoNE and used at public elementary schools in Turkey. They were studied to find out to what extent these CBs represent the cultures of the world, cultural diversity, its contributions to global understanding and dimension of English as a foreign language in terms of cultural aspects based on Yuen’s (2011) framework of ‘products, practices, perspectives, and persons’. According to the findings, cultural elements in CB series are equally distributed in terms of SC, TC and IC. Even though the number of references to TC exceeds the other two categories, there are not remarkable differences in the frequencies. Although cultural representations generally show tendencies in favour of European cultures, Asian countries are also represented to a degree. However African culture is subordinated. In addition, products and persons are the most frequently represented cultural elements while practices and perspectives are the least ones in representation of aspects of culture. Consequently, the study revealed that the series presented different cultures when compared with other studies implemented on Turkish EFL texts in which elements of home culture were dominated. Therefore, it can be inferred that there is an improvement in the representation of culture of diverse nations and the series are in line with the goals of CEFR.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions will be explored in this study to understand the representation degree of the cultural contents in the following course books:

Cambridge Global English Stage 8

Mastermind Stage 8

Upswing Stage 8

Optimise B1 Student’s Book

1. Does the representation of “culture categories” (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999) in the four CBs promote intercultural perspective?

2. Does the representation of “culture aspects” (i.e. persons, perspectives, practices and products) (Yuen, 2011) in the four CBs promote intercultural perspective?

3. Does the representation of “culture themes” (i.e. Big “C” and little “c”) (Xiao, 2010) in the four CBs promote intercultural perspective?

4. METHOD

In order to analyze the cultural contents of the coursebooks of “Cambridge Global English Stage 8”, “Mastermind Stage 8”, “Upswing Stage 8” and “Optimise B1” content analysis method was employed. Content analysis is a research method used to make valid and replicable inferences by coding and interpreting textual materials (Krippendorff, 1980). Content analysis is a research technique which uses “some predefined procedures to be able to get valid inferences from text” (Weber, 1990). Content or document analysis includes the analysis of written materials containing information about the research subject, and it is a technique used to collect data alone in studies where observation or interview is not possible, and when used with other data collection methods, it is used to diversify the data to increase the validity of the study (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005: 188 -189). Written documents to be examined may include books, newspapers and magazines, reports, records, correspondence, instructions, minutes, as well as diaries, memoirs, and private letters, especially within the scope of life history or oral history studies. The content related with cultural categories (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999), cultural themes (Xiao, 2010) and cultural aspects (Yuen, 2011) respectively will be listed according to the category it belongs and then according to the frequencies and percentages of the contents the analysis will be completed.

5. RESULTS

Comparison of Coursebooks with regard to “Categories of Culture Elements

Cambridge Global English has the highest number of cultural elements in total with a frequency of 1056. Mastermind Stage 8 has the lowest frequency (f=453). However, Mastermind Coursebook has the highest representation of SC with 229 occurrences and Cambridge Global has the lowest SC representation with f=3. With regard to IC representation, Cambridge Global has the highest frequency (f=832) and Mastermind has the lowest IC representation with f=101. The order of representation changes completely when TC is considered. Optimise B1 has the highest TC representation with f=709 and Mastermind has the lowest TC representation with f=123 (Figure 1).

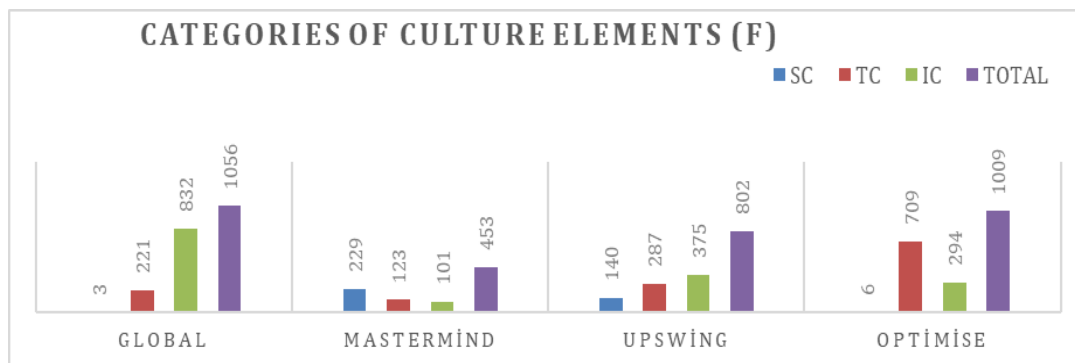


Figure 1: Categories of culture in CBs

Comparison of Coursebooks with regard to Aspects of Culture

In terms of products, practices, perspective, and persons; Cambridge Global English and Optimise B1 have almost the same number of culture-related contents which is 1121 and 1120, respectively. Mastermind has the minimum number of culture related items with 580 contents.

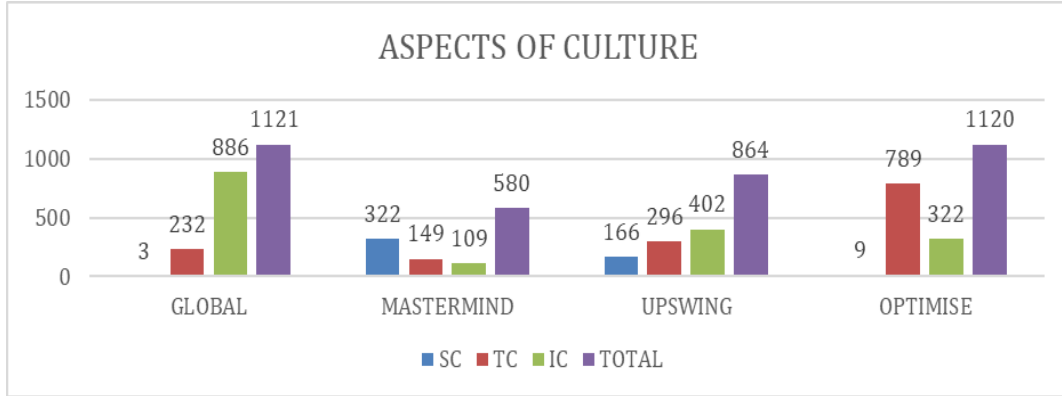


Figure 2: Aspects of Culture in CBs

According to their contents related with aspects of culture, IC contents outnumber in Cambridge Global and Upswing Stage 8 Coursebooks. However, SC outnumber in Mastermind and TC outnumber in Optimise B1. In Cambridge Global and Optimise B1 Coursebooks, there is almost no representation of SC which is 3 and 9, respectively (Figure 2).

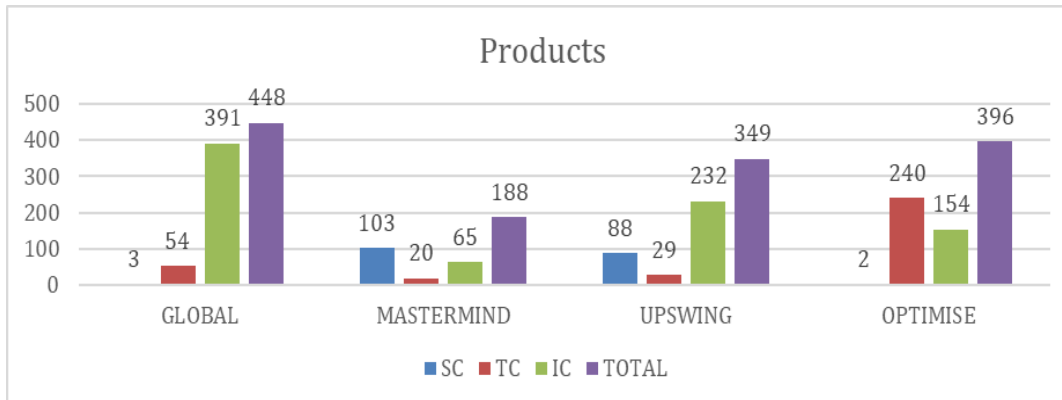


Figure 3: Products in CBs

The maximum number of cultural elements related with “Products” has been found in Cambridge Global English CB (f=448). Mastermind Coursebook has the minimum frequency of cultural elements related with “Products” with 188 occurrences. The maximum number of IC elements related with “Products” is also found in Cambridge Global English (f=391). Mastermind has the minimum number of IC elements related with “Products” with (f=65). Optimise B1 has the maximum number of TC elements related with “Products” (f=240). Mastermind has the maximum number of SC “Products” elements (103) (Figure 3).

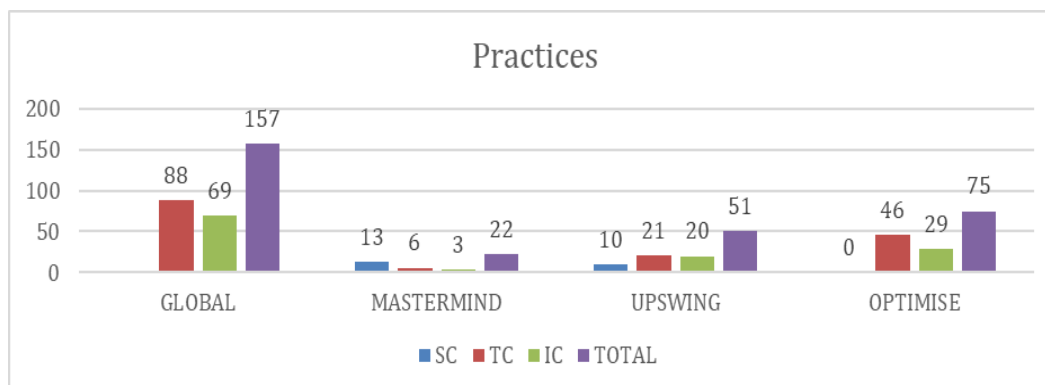


Figure 4: Practices in CBs

The maximum number of cultural elements related with “Practices” have been found in Cambridge Global English CB (f=448). Mastermind has the minimum frequency of cultural elements related with “Practices” (f= 22). The maximum number of IC elements related with “Practices” is also found in Cambridge Global English CB (f= 69). Mastermind has the minimum number of IC elements related with “Practices” (f= 3). Cambridge Global English has the maximum number of TC elements related with “Practices” (f= 88). Mastermind has the maximum number of SC “Practices” elements (13). Cambridge Global English and Optimise B1 CBs have no SC elements related with “Practices” (Figure 4).

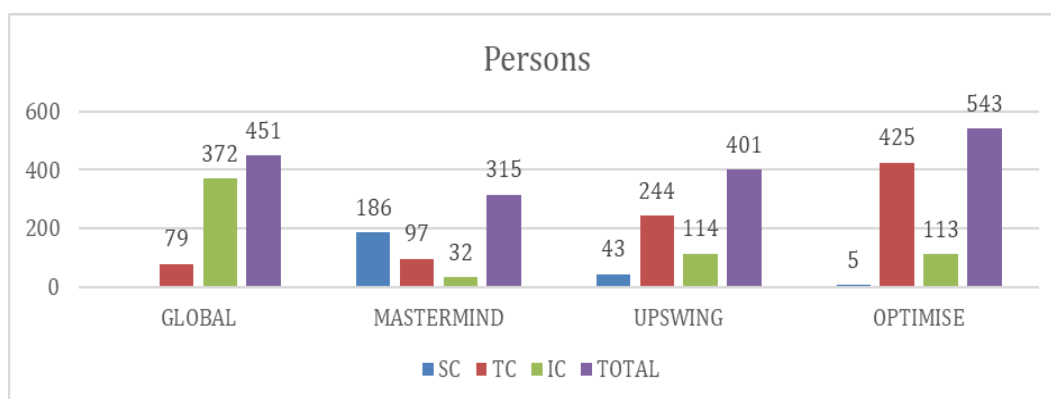


Figure 5: Persons in CBs

The maximum number of cultural elements related with “Persons” have been found in Optimise B1 (f= 543) and Mastermind Coursebook has the minimum frequency (f=315). On the other hand, the maximum number of IC elements related with “Persons” is found in Cambridge Global English CB (f= 372) and Mastermind has the minimum number of IC elements related with “Persons” (f= 32). Optimise B1 has the maximum number of TC elements related with “Persons” (f= 425). Mastermind CB has the maximum number of SC “Persons” elements (186). Cambridge Global English has no SC elements related with “Persons” (Figure 5).

The maximum number of cultural elements related with “Perspectives” have been found in Optimise B1 (f=106) and Mastermind has the minimum frequency with 55 occurrences. On the other hand, the maximum number of IC elements related with “Perspectives” is found in Cambridge Global English (f=54) and Mastermind has the minimum (f= 9). Optimise B1 has the maximum number of TC elements related with “Perspectives” (f=78). Upswing has the maximum number of SC “Perspectives” elements (25) (f=20). Cambridge Global English has no SC elements related with “Perspectives” (Figure 6).

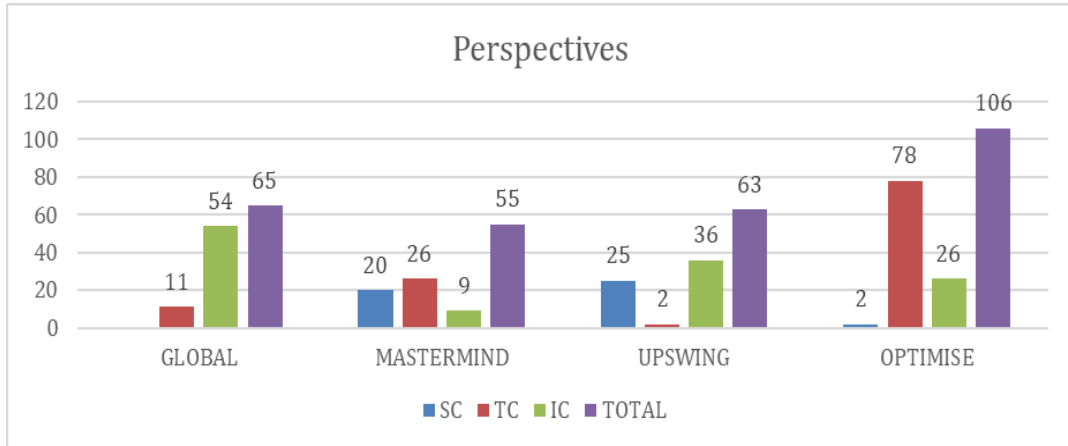


Figure 6: Perspectives in CBs

Comparison of Coursebooks with regard to Themes of Culture

In terms of “Themes of Culture”; Upswing Stage 8 have the highest number of culture-related contents which is 1298. Mastermind Coursebook has the minimum number of “Themes of Culture” related items with 673 contents (Figure 7).

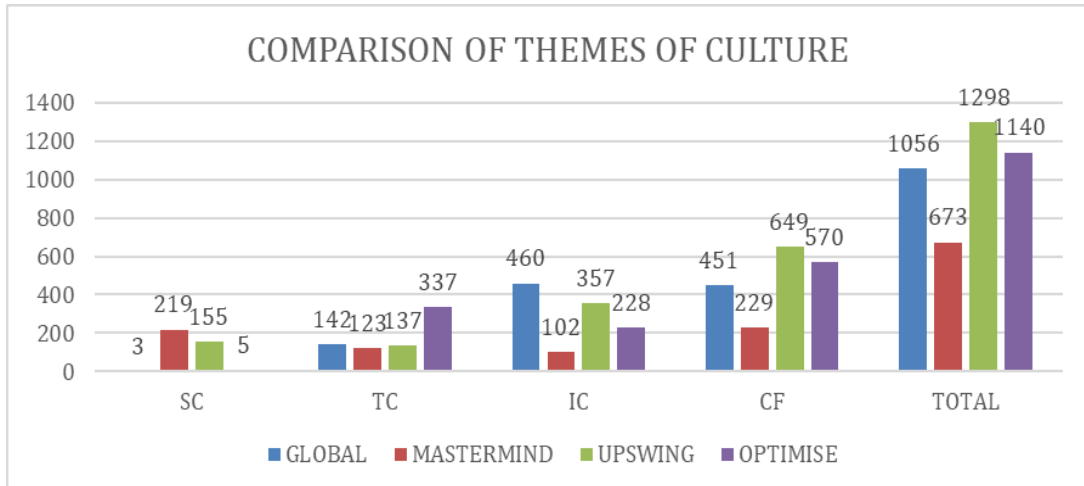


Figure 7: Themes of culture in CBs

CF contents outnumber in all CBs except Cambridge Global English. For Cambridge Global, IC content has the highest frequency. The lowest frequent cultural content is SC for Cambridge Global English and Optimise B1, TC for Upswing Stage 8, and IC for Mastermind Stage 8.

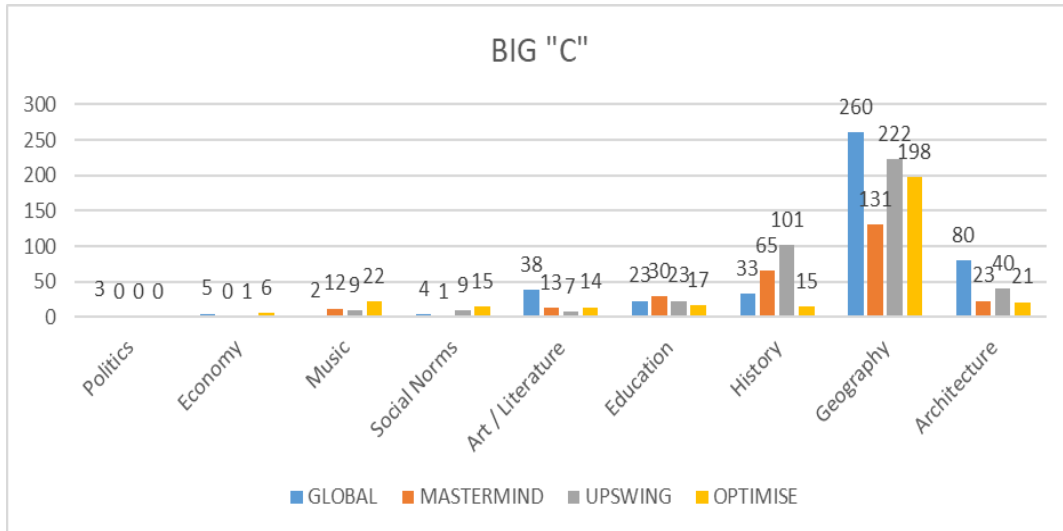


Figure 8: Big C elements in CBs

The maximum number of cultural elements related with “Big C” have been found in “Geography” category in all CBs. “Politics” has the lowest number of occurrences in all CBs (Figure 8).

The category with the maximum number of cultural elements related with “little c” varies for each coursebooks; for the Cambridge Global English it is “Gestures/Languages”, for Mastermind Stage 8 it is “Values”, for Upswing Stage 8 it is “Hobbies”, for Optimise B1 it is “Lifestyles”. The category with the the lowest number of occurrences also varies; it is “Food” for Cambridge Global English and Optimise B1, “Customs” for Mastermind Stage 8, “Holiday” for Upswing Stage 8 (Figure 9).

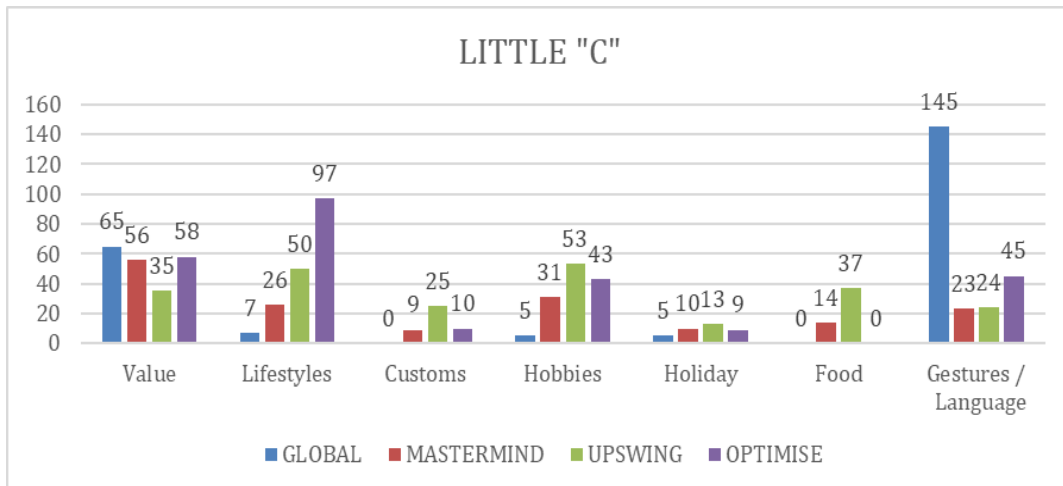


Figure 9: Little c elements in CBs

6. DISCUSSION

In terms of “categories of culture”, Cambridge Global English Stage 8 and Upswing Stage 8 are very similar to the CBs “Teenwise Stage 9” analyzed by Dinçer (2019) and “Enterprise” analyzed by Hamiloğlu & Mendi (2010) with respect to IC

representation. The most frequently represented elements of both “Teenwise Stage 9” and “Enterprise” were also IC related. On the other hand, the findings of Kırkgöz & Ağcam (2011), and Çelik & Erbay (2013) do not comply with this study. Despite a small inclination to TC items, all cultural elements were represented with similar/close ratios in “Spot on” CBs (Çelik & Erbay, 2013). Cultural elements found in the CB were skewed toward TC in one study (Kırkgöz & Ağcam, 2011).

In terms of “cultural aspects”, the findings from Optimise B1 has been found in compliance with Çelik & Erbay’s (2013) and Yuen’s (2011) studies since they also found that TC related content outnumbered the other cultural aspects. However, this result did not comply with the results of the other three coursebooks in this study. With regard to the representation of persons and products, these findings comply with Yuen’s (2011) and Çelik & Erbay’s (2013) results. In addition, the results of this study are not in line with the result of Avci (2015) in terms of representation of “perspective” in TC elements since in his study the most frequent cultural aspect was the “Perspective” whereas in this study, “Perspective” related contents placed either third or last in the ranking of representation.

In terms of “cultural themes” of Big “C and little “c”, all the studies have similar scores with regard to the ratio of CF elements in all cultural elements. Only in Liu & Laohawiryanon (2013)’s study, TC related content dominated the others.

With regard to representation of Big “C” and little “c”, this study shows similar results with Xiao’s (2010) and Lee (2009)’s studies. They also observed that Big “C” occurrences are higher than that of little “c”. But it is emphasized that little “c” elements are important in improving communicative skills of students (Xiao, 2010).

7. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study reveal that SC is hardly ever represented in the Cambridge Global English and Optimise B1. Similarly in Upswing Coursebook, SC elements are the least represented cultural contents. Only in Mastermind Coursebook, the representation of SC is higher than the others. But indeed, SC should also be included into English language teaching to enable students to understand their own culture in a deeper way (McKay, 2003).

When choosing a coursebook for teaching a foreign language, the book with a well-balanced representation of IC, SC and TC should be preferred. Because it has been shown that CBs that include only IC elements don’t improve learners’ level of knowledge although this is recommended for promoting students’ awareness of other cultures (Çelik and Erbay, 2013). Thus, many studies suggest that ELT materials should include SC elements along with IC and TC in order to provide the students to develop their perspective and notion, and communicate with people from other cultures with tolerance and in sympathy (Byram, 1994; Alptekin, 2002; McKay, 2003).

Similar to the balance of IC, SC and TC representation, the CBs of foreign language should have a balance of Big C, little c and culture free items representation in order for students to gain intercultural communication and intercultural knowledge. The three CBs of this study are not good examples in this regard (Byram, 1994; Alptekin, 2002; McKay, 2003).

In order to arouse curiosity and attention of students regarding the other cultures, it is important to have the representation of persons and products in the CBs. Nevertheless, to teach how the people of other cultures behave, think and communicate, it is recommended to represent the perspectives and practices of them in a balanced approach in the coursebooks. Thus, the students will improve their cultural understanding skills. Otherwise, they may learn the other cultures roughly and gain a “tourist perspective” which will not help in their learning a foreign language.

Mastermind Stage 8 is devoid of TC elements but has numerous elements from SC and IC which can be seen as an example of SC dominant with enough IC elements, giving the diversity of cultures and the chance of learning via cross-cultures. Upswing Stage 8 is the most balanced one in reflecting SC, TC and IC among these four CBs.

In this study, the cultural elements are analyzed with regard to their concurrences. Even though the number of cultural contents gives some clues about cultural representation, it is also meaningful to understand whether they are given in a correct and attractive or incorrect and repulsive way. Thus, the CBs should be evaluated according to the way of culture representation.

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