
THE EVALUATION OF THE CULTURAL TRANSMISSION THROUGH
COURSE BOOKS TEACHING TURKISH & PERSIAN AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE

YABANCI DİL OLARAK TÜRKÇE VE FARŞA ÖĞRETEN DERS
KİTAPLARININ KÜLTÜREL AKTARIM AÇISINDAN
DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

С ТОЧКИ ЗРЕНИЯ КУЛЬТУРНОГО ТРАНСФЕРА ОЦЕНКА КНИГ
ОБУЧЕНИЯ ТУРЕЦКОГО И ПЕРСИДСКОГО ЯЗЫКА КАК
ИННОСТРАННОГО

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays communication in foreign language learning gain prominence. Moreover, it is revealed that learning the grammatical structures and vocabularies are not sufficient to obtain proficiency in the language. Foreign language learning is a complex process involving not only the linguistic content but also the cultural norms of the target language. The inseparable relationship between culture and language divulges that mastering a language is impossible without learning the culture of that language. Consequently, the course books used for teaching a foreign language should promote communication abilities of learners via increasing the students' cultural awareness.

This study aimed to evaluate "cultural transmission through teaching Turkish as a foreign language course books" versus teaching Persian as a foreign language. The evaluation of the "Learning Persian" book series and "Hitit course book 2" from the viewpoint of the cultural transmission divulged that both consist of factors that present Turkish and Persian cultures and succeed in transmitting their culture to learners. The subjects of course books represent the reality about the target culture. They are chosen from the authentic texts and basic real-life experience areas. Literature has considered very important in Persian learning book while environmental issues are emphasized in "Hitit" course book.

Key Words: Cultural Transmission, Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language, Teaching Persian as a Foreign Language

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ÖZ

Günümüzde yabancı dil öğreniminde iletişim önem kazanmaktadır. Ayrıca dilde yeterlilik elde etmek için sadece dilbilgisi yapılarını ve kelime dağarcığını öğrenmenin yeterli olmadığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Yabancı dil öğrenimi yalnızca dilsel içeriği değil, aynı zamanda hedef dilin kültürel normlarını da içeren karmaşık bir süreçtir. Kültür ve dil arasındaki ayrılmaz ilişki, bir dilin kültürünü öğrenmeden, o dile hakim olmanın imkansız olduğunu ortaya koyar. Bu yüzden yabancı dil öğretiminde kullanılan ders kitapları öğrencilerin kültürel farkındalıklarını çoğaltarak, onların iletişim becerilerini geliştirmelidir.

Bu çalışma yabancı bir dil olarak Türkçeyi ve Farsçayı öğreten ders kitapları aracılığıyla kültürel aktarımının değerlendirilmesini amaçlamaktadır. *Hitit Yabancılar için Türkçe 2* ve *Farsi Language Learning 2 for Turkish* ders kitaplarının kültürel aktarım açısından değerlendirilmesi, her ikisinin de kendi kültürlerini temsil eden unsurları içerdiğini ve ilgili kültürleri öğrencilere aktarmayı başardığını ortaya koymuştur. Ders kitaplarında mevcut olan konular özgün metinlerden ve gerçek yaşam alanlarından seçilerek hedef dilin kültürü hakkında gerçekleri yansıtmaktadır. Farsça öğrenim ders kitabında edebiyat konularına daha çok önem verilirken, Hitit ders kitabında çevre sorunlarının ön plana çıktığı gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel Aktarım, Yabancı Dil Olarak Türkçe Öğretimi, Yabancı Dil Olarak Farsça Öğretimi

АННОТАЦИЯ

Сегодня коммуникация приобретает все большее значение в изучении иностранных языков. Кроме того, выяснилось, что недостаточно изучать только грамматические структуры и словарный запас, чтобы овладеть языком. Изучение иностранного языка - это сложный процесс, включающий не только лингвистическое содержание, но и культурные нормы изучаемого языка. Неразрывная связь между культурой и языком показывает, что невозможно овладеть языком без изучения его культуры. Поэтому учебники, используемые при обучении иностранным языкам, должны повышать культурную осведомленность учащихся и улучшать их коммуникативные навыки. Это исследование направлено на оценку культурного переноса с помощью учебников, изучающих турецкий и персидский языки как иностранные.

Оценка серии книг «Изучение персидского языка» и «Учебного пособия Hitit 2» с точки зрения культурной передачи раскрыла, что оба они состоят из факторов, которые представляют турецкую и персидскую культуры и способствуют передаче их культуры учащимся. Темы, доступные в учебниках, отражают факты о культуре изучаемого языка, отобранные из оригинальных текстов и реальных жизненных пространств. В учебнике по персидскому языку больше внимания уделялось литературным предметам, в учебнике Hitit было отмечено, что экологические проблемы выдвинулись на первый план.

Ключевые слова: Культурный Трансфер, Обучение Турецкому Языку как Иностранному, Обучение Персидскому Языку как Иностранному

1. INTRODUCTION

In foreign language learning and teaching field the concept of culture has lately drawn considerable attention. Many anthropologists tend to treat language “as one element among others such as beliefs, within the definition of culture as socially acquired knowledge”. “Given the process of cultural transmission by which languages are required, it makes a lot of sense to emphasize the fact that

linguistic variation is tied very much to the existence of different cultures” (Yule, 1996, p. 246). As Wei (2005, p. 56) states languages have a dual character, one as a means of communication and the other as a transfer of culture. Moreover Kransner (1999) states that for successful communication, linguistic competence is not sufficient. Culture is integrated in any communicative activity (Krasner, 1999, p. 81). With regards to the fact that language reflects culture, the observation and existence of different world views should not be neglected in studying the language. It has become clear of world’s culture studies’ results that different groups have different languages, additionally have distinct world views which are reflected in their languages.

There are many definitions of the term culture in literature. As Brown (1994) asserts, culture shows the lifestyle of the target community. Additionally, culture is defined by Hall (1997) as a set of shared meanings that enable people to understand and communicate with one another. According to Kramsch (1998), culture is “a membership in a discourse community that shares common social space and history, and a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting” (Kramsch, 1998, p. 127). It is also suggested that “a society’s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves”. Such socially acquired knowledge is necessary behaviors that “are learned and do not come from any kind of genetic endowment” (Goodenough cited in Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p.10).

The connection between culture and language is extremely crucial (Durbilmez, 2019, p. 99-101). Teaching languages without their cultures cause to remain students unfamiliar with the target languages. As Ellis (1985) indicates learners who are interested in the cultural and social aspects of the target country can learn a foreign language better than other learners.

The cultural factors of the target language in language teaching process should be taught carefully. According to Jiang (2000) teaching the target language without teaching the culture of that target language is impossible. If the students did not learn the target countries cultural aspects, they would be exposed to “an empty frame of language”. Teaching culture has a significant role in teaching foreign languages. It is also a well-known fact that language teaching and culture are bound and cultural awareness is necessary for international communications. As Chastain (1988) indicates “language is used to convey meaning but the meaning is determined by the culture”. Also, Damen (1987) mentions that “to be meaningful, language must be culture-bound and culture-specific” (Chastain, 1988, p. 298).

Generally, it can be stated that researchers highlight the fact that the existence of language without culture and vice versa is impossible. As Wardhaugh (2006) mentions “language and culture are interrelated and they go hand in hand”. Moreover, Wei (2005, p. 56) indicates that “a particular language is a mirror of a particular culture”. Additionally, Gao (2006, p. 59) mentions that the interdependency of language and culture learning is clear. To deduce from that

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“language learning is culture learning” and consequently, “language teaching is culture teaching”.

Consequently, it is clear that teaching culture as a part of language has extensively increased in recent years. The inseparable relationship between culture and language reveals that “it is impossible to master a language without learning its culture”. Accordingly, “the course books used for teaching a foreign language must improve students’ communication skills by raising their cultural awareness” (Yılmaz, 2012).

Culture in language teaching materials has been subject to discussion for many years. Some teachers and learners pay attention to the cultural content and wish to obtain the cultural knowledge, which enables them to engage authentically with the language use of a particular native-speaking community. As Gao (2006) asserts “foreign language teachers should be aware of the place of cultural studies within foreign language teaching” and attempt to improve learners’ cultural awareness and enhance their communication competence.

There are many mediums of cultural transmission in foreign language teaching such as, television, teachers, internet, newspapers and other resources. However, it can be stated that cultural transmission in foreign language teaching, most commonly occurs through course books. According to Cunningsworth (1995) most of the cultural information comes from course books that are designed for a specific language. Course books will directly or indirectly communicate sets of cultural values. As well Haley and Austin (2004) indicate that in foreign language teaching the course books must contain the target languages’ culture in an appropriate manner. These course books must be “unbiased towards the culture and provide original texts regarding the culture”.

In this study, a content analysis through two-course books is conducted. The selected course books are examined to see whether they involve cross-cultural topics or not. In this study, “culture transfer” through course books is evaluated and analyzed within the context of teaching Turkish to foreigners. The “*Hitit Yabancılar için Türkçe 2*” and “*Teaching Persian as a foreign language*” course books are evaluated according to the “cultural transfer” criteria.

2. THE EVALUATION OF CULTURAL TRANSMISSION IN THE LEARNING PERSIAN BOOK SERIES

2.1. Subject Area

The subjects in the *Teaching Persian course book (elementary)* are generally about cultural events, customs, traditional important days, religious ceremonies, modern culture, Iranian architecture, ancient and traditional houses and museums and the most important of all poetry and Persian literature. The texts use the words Iranian and Persian interchangeably, sometimes referring to the language and speakers and some other times referring to the ancient name of this country. Some other subjects such as daily life, shopping, jobs, foods, everyday conversations and even reading and business are also focused.

Nowruz is Persian New Year celebration. It is a combination of two Persian words; “*No*” means “new” and “*Ruz*” means “day”. It is celebrated on the first day of spring and it has been celebrated for thousands of years. Holidays like this bring together families and communities. Children have a 14-day holiday, so friends and families get together in each other’s houses for meals and conversations. *Nowruz* festival starts a few weeks before the New Year with traditional spring cleaning the house, cooking cookies and shopping Iranian spread a cloth on the table, it is called *Haft-sin*, and the table is set with seven “S” items such as *Sumac* (*sumac*), *Serkeh* (*vinegar*), *Samanoo*, *Sabzeh* (*grass*), *Sir* (*garlic*), *Sib* (*apple*), *Senjed* (*oleaster/elaegnus*) and *colored eggs*, which symbolize happiness, love, new life, etc. The family sit around the table and wait for *Tahvil* (exact time of starting the new year). Then they kiss each other and congratulate on the new year. Elders give money and gift to children. After *Tahvil* families go to visit elder members of their relatives. The thirteenth day is called *Sizdeh-bedar* which is nature day in Iran. There is an old belief that considers 13 a number which brings bad luck and bad omen. People try to leave their houses and go to nature to get rid of bad luck.

Units are named with phrases, questions, expressions and idioms or sentences. The grammatical structures of these unit titles are related to the grammar subject that covers the unit sometimes. For example:

- Where were you yesterday? (Page 56) Simple past tense
- You should see a doctor. (Page 150) Using should for advice
- Have you ever been to the theatre? (Page 182) Present perfect tense.
- What were you doing? (Page 166) Past continuous tense
- I have been to the National Museum. (Page 196) Present Perfect tense

Throughout the book, in all texts and conversations, a trace of Iranian culture and traditional events is perceived. Thus, the titles of the units are named with famous and popular traditional events. For example:

- Happy *Nowruz*. (Iranian new year) (page 100)
- What is “*Haft-sin*”? (Page 108)
- What did you get as a gift for New Year? (Page 124)
- Where do you go on “*Sizdeh be dar*”? (Nature day)
- Familiarity with “*Eide Nowruz*” and comparing it with Christmas (page 116)
- Familiarity with Iranian dances (page 138)
- Familiarity with ancient Iranian dramas (page 244)

This book in comparison with *Hitit* book, has tried to have a focus on the literary aspect of Persian literature. So, in all the units we have an introduction to a

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well-known Persian poet or author and his literary works, and sometimes their works versus some other world-famous litterateurs. For example, in unit 7 page 67, we have a comparison of Ferdowsi and Homer.

- Familiarity with *Gheyser amin pour* (page 16) Introduction to Poetry of lyrics (*Sher-e-now*)
- Familiarity with *Parvin Etesami* (page 174) Social poetry
- Familiarity with *Nima Yushij* (page 256) White Lyrics
- An introductory to *Mohammad Hossein Shahriar, a well-known Bilingual poet (Persian and Turkish)* and his poems (page 223)
- Familiarity with a famous play writer and director “*Abbas Kiarostami*” and introducing Tehran’s City theatre (page 38)

In most of the units some of the most important historical cities are discussed. For example:

- Familiarity with Shiraz and its historical places (page 12)
- A brief familiarity with *Kashan* (unit 23)
- An introductory to *Hamedan* city and its historical and recreational places (unit 27)
- Familiarity with cities in Iran illustrated with pictures
- A comparison with the city and the country from different aspects (page 32) illustrated with pictures

Iran’s geography and its geographical location in the world are focused in this book. For example:

- An introductory to Iran’s geographical location in the world (unit 4)
- A comparison of Iran and Turkey in terms of geographical features (page 43)

One of the subject areas which reflect Iranian culture is the dialect and street slangs and conversations in different situations, for example:

- Common conversations in barbers shops and hair dresser’s (page 216)
- Common conversations in supermarkets (page 232)
- A conversation about clothes at a store, laundry shop and dressmaking place page 250
- Conversations on the phone page
- The common expression on *Newruz* (page 102)

2.1.1. Persian Cuisine

Cuisine in Iran is considered to be one of the most ancient forms of cuisine around the world. In this book a unit is specified for Iranian foods, drinks and desserts (Page 74).

- Names of foods such as *Chelo kabab*, *Sabzi polo*, *Juje Kabab*
- Drinks such as *Dough*, *tea*, *Sharbate Albaloo*
- Pickles such as *Zeytoon Parvardeh* (special for north of Iran)

2.1.2. Persian names

Naming conversations are strongly influenced by culture. First names, family names, given names and middle names. In this book learners get familiar with Iranian names in passages and conversations. For example:

- First names such as: Sohrab, Ali, Leila, Mehrdad, Nima, Simin, Sina.
- Family names such as: Ebtekar, Torabi, Dindar, Farhadi.
- Pen names: *Shahriar* (*Mohammad Hossein Behjat's* pen name) (page 223), *Sayeh* (*Hooshang Ebtehaj's* pen name) (page 106).

2.1.3. Iranian arts and artists

Persian art is one of richest art heritages in the world history and it corresponds the culture of this country as well. In this book we study the biography of some outstanding artists; also we get familiar with some unique arts such as Khatam-kari in Iran.

- Familiarity with *Khatam-kari* (incrustation work) (page 118)
- Familiarity with *Kamaleddin Behzad*, Iranian master painter (page 171)
- Architecture in Iranian traditional houses in *Kashan* and *Isfahan* (page 196, 192)
- Architecture in Takhte Jamahid (Page 210)
- An introduction to *miniature* (Ancient Iranian art work) (page 171)
- Iranian dances (page 138)
- Carpet weaving (page 126)

3. THE EVALUATION OF CULTURAL TRANSMISSION IN THE HITIT COURSE BOOK2

The subjects in “*Hitit 2*” are generally about the daily life of Turkish people, tourism, the industry in Turkey, media and its effects, environment and preserving it. Only some units are specified to culture and religious events.

Through the book, the units are named with nouns, phrases, questions, exclamatory sentences, if clause, etc. The grammatical structures of these unit titles match up with the grammar subject covered in the unit. For example:

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- Eđer (if clauses) (unit 6)
- Neler öğrendik? (past tense) (unit 8)

In some units of *Hitit 2*, cultural aspects are focused such as eating culture, marriage traditions, hospitality in Turkey and invitation. There is a significant similarity in both books about eating culture, hospitality and traditional events. But Persian teaching book has elaborated with more examples and pictures. For example:

- Misafirlik (page 1)
- Berna ile Can evleniyor (marriage culture) (page 59)
- Davet (invitation) (unit 9, page 94)

In some units Turkey and its historical places are introduced to the world. There is a significant similarity between Persian teaching book and Turkish learning book in introducing the historical places. For example:

- Türkiye'ye hoş geldiniz (welcome to Turkey) (page 14)
- Tourism in Turkey (page 3)
- Anıtkabir (page 146)
- Dolmabahçe Sarayı, İstanbul
- Etnografya Müzesi
- Meryem Ana , Efes
- Gökova, Muğla
- Semazenler, Konya
- Aphrodisias, Aydın
- Şehri Tanıyorum (page 166)
- Urfa'nın Etrafı (page 89)

Throughout the book historical stories and sometimes myths are named. For example:

- Truva (Troia) (page 97)
- Ferhat ile Şirin (page 101)
- Leyla ile Mecnun (page 102)
- Minare Doğruldu (page 9)

In comparison with Persian teaching book more emphasize is upon environmental aspects and the culture of keeping environment clean In Turkey. For example:

- Dünyamız çöl olmasın (page 63)
- Denizleri Kirletmeyin! (page 73)
- Ses Kirliliği (page 165)

People real life and family relations are discussed, for example:

- Aileler Yarışmasında en kuvvetli Türkiye (page 131)
- Ailemizin hayalleri (page 53)
- Bernaile Can Evleniyor (page 59)

Cultural and historical events are introduced:

- Gençlik Bayramı (page 84)

A little attention is paid to fine arts and handicrafts and jobs in Turkey, but most of the historical places are illustrated with pictures:

- Lületaş (page 150)

4. CONCLUSION

According to literature, it can be stated that discussion on advocating the integration of culture in foreign language teaching course books is unavoidable. The course books play a significant role in facilitating foreign language teaching and learning. Accordingly, the course book can be an essential source of cultural factors that reflect the world views of particular groups in the context of a foreign language. Generally, it can be asserted that languages are embedded in particular cultures. So when we learn languages we inevitably learn about their underlying cultures.

In this study, the evaluation of the teaching Persian as a foreign language course book for elementary level *فارسی بیاموزیم (دوره مقدماتی)* and “*Hitit Yabancılar için Türkçe 2*” course books from the viewpoint of the cultural transmission divulged that they consist of factors that present Turkish and Persian cultures to learners with their different aspects and succeed in transmitting their culture to learners for whom they are intended.

Subjects in the coursebooks are chosen from the authentic texts and basic real-life experience areas. They represent the reality of the target culture.

In Persian course book, more importance is given to cultural aspects; throughout the book, learners get familiar with ancient and modern culture, arts, real life, etc. literary texts are abundant and the book is very successful in introducing famous authors and poets. Different types and terms of poetry are introduced as well as well-known innovative poets. Dialect culture in Iran is introduced. Focus is intentionally on Persian names to introduce Persian culture, but in *Hitit* book some foreign names are witnessed. One unit is specified to Iranian cuisine and ethnic food and drinks. Iranian arts and handicrafts are vividly emphasized and well-illustrated with pictures. Subjects of the units and contents are meaningfully correlated, but in *Hitit* book it is difficult to relate the topic with

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the contents. In the Learning Persian book, Iranian New Year and traditional events are elaborated, but in *Hitit* book less emphasis is on cultural and traditional events. Literature has considered very important in Persian learning books and cultural events are implicitly conveyed. In Turkish teaching book more emphasis is upon environmental aspects and the culture of keeping the environment clean in Turkey.

The similarities and significant correlation of cultural aspects between the two books can't be denied as well. Both books have tried to introduce two countries, Iran and Turkey on the very first subjects. In both books, historical places are introduced. In both books, family relations and the real life of people are described implicitly. In both books, cultural events and traditions are illustrated with pictures. Some subjects in both books have put the similarities and differences of customs and cultures versus each other in Turkey and Iran.

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