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AN AUDIAL SKILLS-BASED INVESTIGATION OF THE ELT COURSEBOOK FROM AN ELF PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The current status of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) not only has changed the dynamics of communication in international business, cultural and economic arenas but also has led some implications for English language teaching (ELT). With the emergence of ELF and the widespread ELF interactions among the people from a different linguistic L1 background in various contexts, ELT materials need to be reconceptualized, reassessed and modified (McGrath 2013, Siqueira 2015). In order to find out whether the audial skills-based tasks in the ELT coursebook cover the view of English as a lingua franca or not, the following research questions were addressed throughout the study: (1) To what extent do the listening and video tasks in the selected coursebook expose learners to interactions among non-native/non-native and non-native/native speakers of English? (2) To what extent do the listening and video tasks in the selected coursebook expose learners to the non-native role models of English? And lastly, (3) How do the listening and video tasks in the selected coursebook approach culture? This current study applied a descriptive content analysis and all data were driven from the coursebook 'English File' upper-intermediate students' book, third edition by Oxford University Press. The results of the research reveal that the coursebook represents only one non-native role model in audial skills-based tasks, and there are just a few tentative attempts to refer to native/non-native interactions. Additionally, it seems that the coursebook adopts an essentialist view in terms of representing the cultural elements. In the light of the results, the study suggests some pedagogical considerations for language teachers and material designers in the sense that materials should be modified carefully in order to create an intercultural awareness among the L2 students.

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Introduction

Errors have been considered as substantial in language classrooms since they provide information about the students' learning process. Shahin (2011) implies that for foreign language learning, considering the significance of the errors, producing language without errors is not regarded as essential anymore. In agreement with this opinion, Chastain (1971) states that “more important than error-free speech is the creation of an atmosphere in which the students want to talk” (p. 249).

It is an undeniable fact that non-native speakers have outnumbered the native speakers of English today, which means the spread, use and teaching of English are mostly provided by its non-native speakers in different parts of the world (Kachru, 1996). English has gained this worldwide spread and the world's primary lingua franca status as a consequence of the various reasons suggested by Crystal (2003b) such as historical, internal political, external economic, practical, intellectual, and entertainment. This spread of English is discussed within the framework of three groups of speakers by Kachru (1985), namely the ones who speak English as a native language (ENL), the group who speaks it as a second language (ESL), and lastly the ones speaking English as a foreign language (EFL). In this context, Jenkins (2015) suggests a fourth group of English users. Known as the ELF community, this group is the world's largest English-using group. There exist two widespread definitions of ELF, and they differ in the sense of whether the native speakers of English are excluded (e.g. Firth, 1996) or accepted as a part of the communication (e.g. Jenkins, 2007; Mauranen, 2012). The definition of ELF within the framework of this study is ‘any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option’ (Seidlhofer, 2011: 7).

The current status of English as a lingua franca not only has changed the dynamics of communication in international business, cultural and economic arenas but also has led some implications for English language teaching. These implications are explained by Marlina and Xu (2018) as follows. Firstly, the legitimate users of English are not limited only to the NESs. Secondly, English has gained a new pluralistic aspect with its diverse use in grammar, vocabulary and pragmatic. Third, communication mainly takes place among the interlocutors whose cultural and linguistic background are unknown and diverse, which leads them to use some strategies to negotiate meaning. Lastly, the accuracy-based approach has replaced by the communication-based approach with the changing status of English worldwide. However, as Dewey (2012:143) states, "it is not enough to simply say that ELF has implications for pedagogy". Whether the ELT materials have been modified in accordance with the real needs

of learners is still questionable because of the fact that ‘The prevailing orientations in English language teaching and testing, and ELT materials remain undoubtedly towards ENL, with correctness and appropriateness still widely driven by NES use regardless of learners’ current or potential communication context’ (Jenkins, 2012: 487). The developments in English as a lingua franca especially in the last decade have come with an awareness of English language practitioners in terms of teaching it not just as a foreign language but as a global language (Sifakis et al. 2018). On this ground, Galloway (2018) mentions a need to reconsider the ELT materials ignoring the real status of English today, and he suggests that ELF can hold a new perspective on this growing issue. However, there is a limited number of studies addressing to the analysis of English coursebooks from an ELF perspective in the context of Turkey (e.g. Çelik & Erbay, 2013; Guerra et al., 2022;). The study aims to contribute to fill this gap in the field by analyzing a course book widely used in different educational levels in Turkey from ELF perspective. Through a detailed content analysis, it mainly attempts to investigate to what extend an ELF perspective is integrated into the audial skills-based tasks in the coursebook.

Literature Review

ELF as a New Perspective in ELT Materials

As Galloway (2018) states, ELT materials are one of the main pedagogical tools to foster teaching and learning process. On this ground, coursebooks, accepted as the best resource in terms of meeting the needs of learners, are supposed to have multiple roles in ELT. For example, they function mainly as a source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction, as a resource for presenting material, and as a reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. (Cunningsworth, 1995). With the ESP movement in 1960s and the moves towards CLT in the 1990s, most English coursebooks have adopted a more communicative approach rather than a behaviorist one (Galloway, 2018). However, it is still debatable whether these coursebooks can actually meet the real needs of learners because of ‘the mismatch between the kinds of English that are thought to NNEs at all educational levels, and the kinds of English they need and use in their lives outside the classroom’ (Jenkins, 2015: 155). This gap between the content of the ELT coursebooks and the real English outside also stems from the fact that "they promote native notions of correctness, where authenticity appears to be synonymous with native English" (Galloway, 2018: 470). As Seidlhofer (2011: 201) states, ‘the only English represented in textbooks, grammars, and dictionaries generally is ENL, and no real alternatives are on offer’. Jenkins (2012) criticizes these typical ‘global’ ELT coursebooks like Headway and Oxford English Grammar for grounding their classroom models on ENL to a great extent with a very limited

number of recordings on non-native Englishes. She suggests that New English File, Real Lives and Real Listening series adopt a slightly more NESS-oriented approach when compared to them.

With the emergence of English as a lingua franca and the widespread ELF interactions among the people from a different linguistic L1 background in various contexts, ELT materials need to be reconceptualized, reassessed and modified (McGrath, 2013; Siqueira, 2015). Firstly, exposure to real-life ELF exchanges in teaching materials is likely to enable learners to raise an awareness that successful communication does not necessarily depend on native English speakers' norms (Galloway, 2018). In other words, it may not be reasonable to depend entirely on the native speakers' norms and culture in the contexts where most of the interactions take place among non-native English speakers (McGrath, 2013). Instead, Dewey (2012) suggests a more poststructuralist teaching approach including the communicative strategies through which the learners should not be penalized because of their innovative but intelligible forms. Very similarly, Tomlinson (2010: 83) proposes that 'materials should provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes'. In this context, it is also crucial for ELT coursebooks not to 'represent non-native English speakers as being incompetent' (Galloway, 2018). In this sense, ELT materials and coursebooks are of high importance from the perspective of promoting the use of accommodation strategies which are very common in most ELF contexts (Cogo, 2009). As it is nicely and clearly stated by Baker (2012: 46), "we need to ensure that ELT materials expose learners to the communicative practices of multilingual and multicultural speakers to understand ELF communication".

Alongside with a shift from the native-based correctness and norms towards the non-native varieties, we also need a move away from the fixed native English culture to fluid, multi-cultural and trans-cultural negotiations (Galloway & Rose, 2015). As Baker (2012) points out, ELF communication is not just bound to the cultures of English-speaking countries in the inner circle. Beyond it, the interplay between language and culture is a speaker, setting, and context bound phenomena. Concerning to the evaluation of ELT textbooks with respect to their approach to the multiculturalism, Yu (2018) came up with a conclusion and suggestion that most NS-based ELT textbooks are not adequate enough to represent the lingua-cultural diversity and plurality of communication in various global contexts; however, ELF-aware classroom practices can also be implemented by means of some strategies to use the textbooks differently and to exploit some other resources. With regard to the lack of teaching materials awakening an ELF-awareness, Sifakis et al. (2018) suggest course-book designers and ELF-aware practitioners to find their own way of linking ELF to their ELT context.

As being discrete from the findings of the study carried by Yu (2018) in terms of the dominance of native speaker lingua-cultural aspect of the EFL textbooks, Çelik and Erbay's study (2013) on the analysis of the cultural diversity in a series of coursebook (Spot on 6, Spot on 7 and Spot on 8) suggests that the coursebook presents the cultural elements of the home, target and international countries in a balanced way.

ELT Textbooks Analysis in Different Contexts

The studies addressing the evaluation of ELT textbooks from the ELF perspective generally touch upon the issues including the representation of users and use of English in the listening and speaking tasks in the coursebooks, the contexts in which English is utilized, cultural diversity, communication and accommodation strategies and ELF awareness raising activities by generally adopting a descriptive content analysis.

In the Japanese context where English is taught as a foreign language, some studies have been conducted to evaluate to what extent the ELT materials demonstrates the status of English in today's world. Among the outstanding ones, Matsuda (2002) conducted an analysis in Japanese EFL textbooks for seventh graders by focusing on what kinds of people are represented as English users and what kinds of English uses are represented. The results indicate that the coursebooks include a very limited number of English users and uses from the Outer circle and Expanding circle, which is not enough to change the perceptions of students in a way that English is a lingua franca today. Another coursebook analysis was conducted by Takahashi (2014) to see to what extent the English coursebooks in the secondary schools in Japan adopt the ELF perspective. Within the scope of this study, six ELT coursebooks for 7th graders and ten coursebooks for 11th graders were evaluated, and the results of the study are mostly in line with the ones of Matsuda (2002). Despite embracing some international use of English between NNSs to a certain degree, it is not sufficient to put forward that there is a shift from EFL to ELF.

With their study conducted with a corpus of ten coursebooks employed in the Italian secondary schools, Vettorel and Lopriore (2013) attempted to focus on the WE and/or ELF-oriented activities, promotion of English outside the classroom, and communication and intercultural strategies among the non-native speakers of English in these English coursebooks. The results revealed that apart from the non-inclusion of WE and ELF-awareness activities, the suggested communication strategies are not among the communications of NNs in ELF settings. Vettorel (2018) made another investigation of textbooks published by Italian and international publishers from 1990s and 2005 on ELF and communication strategies, and the

results are very similar to that of the previous one because there has not been consistent attention to this area.

In the context of Brazil, Siqueire generated two studies one of which was an exploratory analysis of three communicative English textbooks (2015), and the other one (2019) was a linguistic, methodological and ideological oriented study of a three series of a local ELT textbook approved by the National Textbook program. While the previous one suggests that most of the English oral models and the places in the world are from the inner-circle countries, the results of the latter study present a discrete perspective regarding the inclusion of representations from different countries. Siqueire (2019) additionally suggests some activities which can facilitate English integration into the learners' local contexts.

An ELT coursebook evaluation in Iranian context by Asakereh et al. (2019) shows identical results with the studies conducted in various contexts mentioned above concerning to the integration of the ELF perspective to the ELT materials. With the analysis of listening and speaking activities in ELT coursebooks adopted in junior and high schools, Asakereh et al. (2019) stress the unrealistic and unauthentic representations of English in these series.

Lastly, with reference to Turkey which is among the Expanding Circle countries according to the classification of Kachru (1985) and where English is taught as a foreign language, the most outstanding study was carried out by Guerra et al. (2022) by analyzing ELF-aware activities in Portuguese and Turkish Coursebooks. This comparative study was materialized with the analysis of a locally and an internationally published coursebook of the secondary education from each country. Its results were similar to the ones highlighted above in the sense that the coursebooks overlook the ELF-aware activities by ignoring its lingua franca status despite some activities including references to different cultures and some international subject matters.

Method

In order to discover whether the audial skills-based tasks in the ELT coursebook cover the view of English as a lingua franca or not, the following research questions were addressed throughout the study:

1. To what extent do the listening and video tasks in the selected coursebook expose learners to interactions among nonnative-nonnative / nonnative-native speakers of English?
2. To what extent do the listening and video tasks in the selected coursebook expose learners to the non-native role models of English?
3. How do the listening and video tasks in the selected coursebook approach culture?

The present study applied a descriptive content analysis which ‘is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from the texts (or meaningful matter) to the context of their use’ (Krippendorff, 2019: 18). Data collection procedure was in the form of written document (Patton, 2001). All data was driven from the coursebook ‘English File’ upper-intermediate students’ book third edition by Oxford University Press. Within the framework of this study, purposive selection guided the process of data collection, which refers to ‘select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under the study’ (Patton, 1990: 169). On this ground, the audial (listening and videos) tasks in the selected coursebook were analyzed from an ELF perspective. The primary reason why this book was preferred to analyze is that it is one of the most commonly used ELT coursebooks in the tertiary level in various state and private universities’ prep classes in Turkey, which means that the results of the study can also give us an idea about the ELF-awareness among the practitioners although it is beyond the scope of this study.

In accordance with the data analysis part, the compatibility of the listening and video tasks with ELF was scrutinized in terms of three aspects. Initially, the study focused on to what extent these tasks in the selected coursebook expose learners to the interactions among nonnative-nonnative/ native-nonnative speakers of English. Secondly, the related tasks were discussed in terms of their exposure to the non-native role models of English. Additionally, how they approach to culture was the last point addressed in the study. For the first research question, the data were quantified in terms of occurrences of the interactions among native-nonnative, nonnative-nonnative and native-native in the listening and video scripts in the form of dialogues. With regard to the second research question, the same quantification was done in terms of the occurrences of the native and non-native role models in the listening and video scripts written in the form of monologues or lectures. In connection with the last research question and the approach of the activities to the cultural issues, the study followed the data analysis framework of Yuen (2011), in which the cultural elements are suggested to be divided into four categories as products, persons, practices and perspectives. In this framework, products refer to any mentioning of a location, place, food or religion etc. belonging to a specific culture while persons include a famous or a fictional character from a particular society. Any ritual, custom or a way of celebrating special days can be reflected as an example of the practices as a third category. For example, ‘Fatoş began to look at very carefully at the coffee ground and tell him what she could see’ (from English File upper- intermediate students’ book, third edition: p.8) was counted as a Turkish coffee cup reading practice while Fatoş was included in the persons category. Lastly, perspectives encapsulate the issues such as world

views, beliefs or values of a particular nation. The number of the mentions or the depictions of these products, persons, practices and perspectives were counted and categorized as native cultural patterns (including the Inner circle countries in Kachru's model) and non-native cultural patterns (referring to the cultures of the countries except from the Inner circle). To verify the credibility of the results, the frequencies for each case were reviewed through a peer debriefing (Creswell and Miller, 2000), and then the results were presented in the tabular form.

Findings

In accordance with the first and the second research questions, a total of 70 scripts of listening and video task were analyzed. While 35 of these scripts were in the form of a dialogue, 35 of them were in the form of a monologue or lecture. In the dialogues, there were totally 37 interactions which were grouped as native/native interactions, native/nonnative interactions and nonnative/ nonnative interactions. The rest 35 scripts incorporated 49 speakers categorized as native or non-native role models in the study.

The frequencies of the cases where the interactions among natives or non-natives found in the listening and video task scripts are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1.

Representation of Interactions in Video and Listening Tasks				
Up-int. English file	Native/native Interactions	Native/non-native Interactions	Non-native/non-native Interactions	Total
Listening & Video	34 (%91,9)	3(%8,1)	0 (%0)	37

As presented in Table 1, while 34 (%91,9) interactions occur among the native speakers of English (mostly either American or British and a few Scottish), only 3(%8,1) of the interactions are among a native and a non-native speaker of English. One of them is between a native and a South-African speaker of English. With this single example, the coursebook refers to the presence of English in an Outer Circle country. Through the dialogues between a native and a Dutch speaker of English, and a native and a Spanish speaker of English, there are only two references to the countries in the Expanding Circle. Lastly, from 37 interactions tallied in the listening and video tasks, none of them constitutes an example of a non-native and non-native dialogue. Based upon the numbers stated above, it can be stated that there is a clear emphasis on the native speakers of English. Tentative references to the non-native speaker in the Expanding and Inner circle countries are too limited in the coursebook.

Table 2.

Representation of Role Models in Video and Listening Tasks			
Up-int. English file	Native Role models	Non-native Roles models	Total
Listening & Video	48 (%98)	1 (%2)	49

Concerning the second research question, which attempts to find to what extent the listening and video tasks in the selected coursebook expose learners to the non-native role models of English speakers, a total number of 49 scripts in monologue or lecture were scrutinized. Results were in parallel with those relating to the first research question. The book represents only one non-native role model to the students with the speech of Nelson Mandela who was the first black president of South Africa. On the other hand, the target students are exposed to various native role models, mostly British and American experts, journalists, professors or prime ministers.

Table 3

Representation of Cultural Patterns in Video and Listening Tasks			
Up-int. English file	Native culture Patterns	Non-native culture Patterns	Total
Products	112 (%70,4)	47 (%29,6)	159
Persons	131 (%89,1)	16 (%10,9)	147
Practices	7 (%77,7)	2 (%22,3)	9
Perspectives	2 (%100)	–	2

Table 3 represents the native and non-native culture patterns in terms of how many times there is a reference to the products, persons, practices and perspectives belonging to a particular society. In terms of this frequency-based calculation, all the video and listening scripts totally 70 were analyzed. As it was explained in a detailed way in methodology part of the study, Yuen's (2011) framework was used to determine the cultural patterns in the selected tasks. As it is presented in the table, out of 159 products, 112 (%70,8) of them are the representatives of native culture while 47 (%29,6) of these products belong to non-native cultures. Nearly all these products ranging from the historical places such as the Old Vic

Theatre, locations like Yorkshire, books such as *Warrior Scarlet*, to social media items such as Facebook or Twitter belong to either American or British society with a few exceptions of references to Australia or Canada in the Inner circle. There was also a stress on some English words or expressions in this category such as ‘as blind as a bat’. When it is compared to the products of native culture, there is a limited frequency of products from non-native nations, and all these cultural items refer to the countries in the Expanding Circle such as Istanbul, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong etc.

The second category, persons, presents similar results with those of the first category, products. The table designates that the number of persons belonging to the native culture exceeds the number of persons those from the non-native nations. Mostly famous actors, actress and playwrights constitute this group. Additionally, the frequencies of cultures in terms of products and persons demonstrate that the coursebook does not follow a balanced way concerning to the representations of the non-native and native countries.

As for the category, practices, it can be denoted that the items in this category are limited compared to the first two categories. Based upon the table, it can be noticed that out of 9 practices, 7 (77,7) belong to native culture while 2 (22,3) of them represent non-native cultures. Non-native cultural elements embrace coffee cup reading from Turkey and a recycling practice particular to Germany. On the other hand, a way of organizing a festival in England, celebrating Thanksgiving and New Year’s Eve or practicing of a belief belonging to Purists can be shown as an example for the cultural practices of England and America.

As can be seen in the table, perspectives are the least representative elements among the four categories. The listening and video tasks comprise merely 2 (%100) perspectives which are particular to the British society and American society. To exemplify, a passage about ‘the weather and The British people’ makes a reference to how British people love to talk about the weather. Additionally, with a well-known quotation from Neil Armstrong ‘That’s one small step for man, one giant step leap for mankind’, the book refers to an American perspective.

The overall analysis demonstrates that non-native cultural patterns in each category fall behind the cultural patterns belonging to native countries. Furthermore, it can be put forward that the book does not have a concern of following a well-balanced approach in terms of neither the representation of non-native role models nor the occurrences of nonnative-native or nonnative-nonnative interactions in the audial skills-based activities.

Discussion

Findings generally revealed that English File upper intermediate level textbook does not provide a realistic picture of how English is being utilized in discrete parts of the world today. There is nearly no inclusion of ELF interactions which allow students to experience some communicational breakdowns and commutation strategies that they need to become an effective English user in the future. As Sifakis (2004) states, students should be exposed to authentic ELF settings where mutual intelligibility plays a substantial role in diverse discourses. The analysis demonstrates that the textbook presents a monolithic approach to English language teaching with the lack of awareness-raising activities and references to ELF features. Findings are generally parallel with those of previous studies (Asakereh et al., 2019; Caleffi, 2016) which were conducted in diverse educational contexts. Additionally, it seems that the textbook has a clear orientation towards native role models from inner circle countries predominantly from England and America, which is in line with Si's study (2020) which investigates the non-native role models in business English coursebooks. As suggested by Davies (1991), such a clear distinction between native and non-native speakers of English is power-driven and identity-laden. However, 'the very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it' (Widdowson, 1994: 265).

Lastly, in relation to the third research question, which attempts to investigate how the listening and video tasks in the coursebook approach culture, it seems that the coursebook adopts an essentialist view in terms of representing the cultural elements. In other words, there is a clear focus on the native cultural patterns rather than a well-balanced view of diverse cultures. A serious problem arising here is that such a tendency in one of the well-known and common ELT coursebooks in Turkey can create a misperception for learners in a sense that the culture of Outer Circle or Expanding Circle countries do not play a crucial role in learning English. Additionally, such an essentialist approach implies that native culture is superior to the other cultures. Although there are some references to the cultural patterns of non-native countries, these tentative and weak references in terms of number are not satisfactory to increase an intercultural awareness among the learners. This result is in line with the comparative study conducted in Turkey and Portugal by Guerra et al. (2022) with the findings demonstrating the dominance of native culture elements among the non-native cultural items.

Conclusion

Since the English coursebooks are one of the essential pedagogical tools in the process of teaching English and providing competent English users in the future, it is considerably vital to employ effective and global textbooks in terms of representing cultural and accent-based varieties of English. Not only teachers but also students should have an awareness of the modified reality of English today via these coursebooks. However, it seems that the coursebook analyzed within the framework of this study is not inclusive enough to reflect this new but unstoppable perspective.

In the light of the results presented above, the present study suggests some pedagogical considerations that policymakers, teacher trainer programs and English teachers should take into account. Firstly, policymakers, and material developers should update their content knowledge in relation to the research conducted on ELF and World Englishes so that they can redesign ELT materials with an ELF perspective. Additionally, teacher trainer programs should also help pre-service and in-service teachers to gain a better understanding of the real status of English today. As Bayyurt et al. (2018:252) suggest, “teacher education should include moments devoted to a critical reflection upon and analysis of existing materials within a World Englishes (WE)- and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)- ELF-aware perspective”. And finally, language teachers should be knowledgeable about how to integrate some supplementary ELF-oriented materials into their teaching practices in order to increase language learners’ intercultural awareness.

The study has some limitations. Primarily, only one level of English File, Upper-Intermediate, was scrutinized in terms of ELF-awareness within the content of this research. For further studies, all series of the book can be evaluated to come up with more general conclusions. Lastly, audial skills-based investigation was carried out including listening and video tasks. In the future, a more comprehensive study can cover the speaking, writing and grammar-based activities in the coursebook as well.

The Research and Publication Ethics Statement

The Ethics Committee/Board approval for this study was obtained from Gebze Technical University Ethical Committee in 10/06/2022 by No E-43633178-199-61583. No ethical considerations were violated in this study.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

In line with the statement of Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), I hereby declare that I had no conflicting interests regarding any parties of this study.

Contributions of author(s)

The author holds the authorship of all the stages of the current study.

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