

Journal of Teaching Language Skills (JTLS)
36(3), Fall 2017, pp. 85-117- ISSN: 2008-8191
DOI: 10.22099/jtls.2018.26115.2307

Cultural Components and Subcomponents in Two
Persian and English Language Teaching Textbooks:
A Comparative Study

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Abstract

The present qualitative research, for the first time, aimed at comparing and contrasting the extent cultural components and subcomponents are represented in the elementary levels of *A Course in General Persian* and *Top Notch Series* as foreign language teaching textbooks. The adapted checklist of Lee's Big 'C' and little 'c' cultural components (2009) was used for the current study. After content analysis, Big 'C' cultural components with the highest, lowest, and no frequency in each textbook were identified, and the possible reasons behind the occurrence of each one were addressed. Based on the findings, it was revealed that although the two textbooks enjoyed approximately similar functions concerning non-/presenting Big 'C' cultural components, the Persian textbook was richer in introducing cultural capsules. And while the cultural capsules in the Persian textbook were associated more with people's common life styles and their daily interactions, those in the English textbook were concerned more with entertaining life style. Concerning little 'c,' no cultural component was observed in the two textbooks. It is implied that the embedded cultural components and subcomponents in FL/SL textbooks should be the ones which a) are in harmony with learners' language proficiency levels and b) are used (most) frequently in the daily lives of their native speakers.

Keywords: cultural components, big 'C,' little 'c,' Persian language teaching, EFL/ESL

Received: 05/08/2017
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Accepted: 03/01/2018

There is a bilateral relationship between language and culture. On the one hand, learning a language without its cultural norms would be very difficult if not impossible. According to Chastain (1988), behaving appropriately in a community requires commanding both the language and culture of that community.

That is, the individuals need to master how to use the language in special contexts of the target society regarding the cultural values if they are to eschew miscommunications. On the other hand, language as Duranti (1997) holds, is the 'carrier' of culture or is a vehicle which helps culture gets to its destination. According to Berger and Luckmann (1985), a daily conversation is a primary tool through which we associate with others and acquire the cultural capsules of a given community. Or as Fowler (1996) indicates, language is a means through which we share the conventional norms and values of a society.

According to Peck (1998), one way of presenting culture to L2 learners is to raise their cultural consciousness through incorporating cultural components, cultural asides, cultural islands, cultural capsules, etc. in language textbooks. Since textbooks are integral parts of successful language teaching, any cultural component embedded in them can carry a robust effect on boosting learners' achievement and behavior. Cleeve (2008) mentions that textbooks' potential, as a powerful source in providing learners with valuable pieces of cultural components, is not deniable. Ekawati and Hamdani (2012), in this respect state, that "it is essential to include culture in the textbooks to raise students' awareness of the target culture" (p.54). Moreover, textbooks have a significant role in students' discovering of the differences between their own and target cultures. Accordingly, this study attempted to illustrate comparatively what and how cultural components and subcomponents are represented in two textbooks coming from varying cultures.

Given the importance of inserting cultural items in Foreign/Second Language (FL/SL) textbooks, the present study, for the first time, aimed at determining the degree to which these items are presented in two textbooks of teaching Persian to speakers of Non-Persian languages and Teaching English to speakers of Non-English Languages. Therefore, the research questions are:

1. What cultural components and to what extent are they ingrained comparatively in the two Persian and English language teaching textbooks?
2. What are the possible reasons behind varying frequencies of cultural components in the two textbooks?
3. How are cultural subcomponents reflected comparatively in the two textbooks?

Concerning the significance of the study, it is hoped that the findings might help the textbook writers identify the strong and weak points regarding inclusion/exclusion of cultural components in the textbooks. This identification may enable them to benefit the strengths of one book and apply them in another one in future editions. It is also hoped that, by examining the most frequent cultural components embodied in the textbooks, the curriculum planners provide learners with relevant/appropriate cultural capsules. And finally, the findings may assist the learners in having a clearer understanding of their own/target culture, avoid misunderstandings, and respect cross-cultural differences manifested through cultural components and subcomponents.

Literature review

In the age of globalization, teaching culture through textbooks has become an important issue and analyzing cultural contents is a significant concern to be investigated. In this respect, Alimorad (2016) determined the status of the hidden curriculum in First Certificate Masterclass (FCM) that is taught at Navid institute in Iran. To this end, FCM was analyzed to identify Western cultural norms and their

influences on Iranian EFL learners' beliefs and viewpoints. To this end, she used Peterson's theoretical framework on the distinction between Big 'C' and little 'c' culture. All passages, texts, exercises, and even listening excerpts were closely studied by the researcher. Results indicated that among little 'c' cultural components, tastes, food, hobbies, popular music, and popular issues were observed in the book. Moreover, the majority of the cultural norms were incompatible with Iranian Muslim people's ideologies which are considered as taboo or Haram. Implications for material developers and textbook writers and English teachers are also discussed.

Bayrak (2010), following Hofstede (2001) and Rogoff (2003) who hold that students from elementary school should get to know their own cultures and other cultures to be able to communicate constructively with others, studied cultural components of 4th grade Turkish and German language textbooks through document review. Descriptive analyses showed that a) while Turkish textbook is theme-based and provides more information on national cultural values, German textbook is grammar-based and has more information on phonology, syntax, and morphology b) German textbook embraces more examples of cultural differences than Turkish textbook and c) both textbooks are alike regarding introducing technological and cultural values.

Focusing on Big 'C' and little 'c' cultural components, Xiao (2010) attempted to identify cultural contents in a listening textbook, entitled Contemporary College English for Listening 3 (Book 3) in China. The study found a preference for Big 'C' culture learning with special reference to literature and arts, economy, politics, and history. A low percentage of little 'c' cultural contents was observed. Close correspondence of top 5 themes was found between textbook contents and additional cultural knowledge provided in the teacher's manual. Except for lifestyles and values which were two themes under little 'c' culture, the rest of the themes which were in the top 5 all belonged to Big 'C' cultures, such as politics, education, history, music, and economy.

In this study, Lee (2009) identified how cultural themes in 11 EFL high-school conversation textbooks used in Korea are treated utilizing 22 Big 'C' and 26 little 'c' components. The content analysis was based on the models conceptualized by Paige, Jousted, Saia, Klein, and Colby (1999) and Hinkel (2001) who posit that culture learning/teaching are important for contemporary L2 culture acquisition. The findings showed that not only teaching general aspects of culture but also learning little 'c' target-culture were ignored in all the textbooks. Moreover, the researcher indicated a strong sense of a hierarchical representation of the Anglophone world in which the U.S. culture served as the supreme source. In the end, some guidelines are suggested for cultural content in contemporary ELT instructional materials.

A series of English textbooks entitled Learning English used for Chinese secondary school students were analyzed concerning cultural elements by Zu and Kong (2009). For identifying cultural components, the researchers found that the majority of the components are concerned with target cultures, or at least a reflection of a target culture. Furthermore, the book provides learners with both target, home, and foreign culture materials. In this paper, topics related to target cultures such as everyday life, leisure, family relationships, social customs, and holidays were presented as well.

Ashikaga, Fujita, and Ikuta (2001) investigated how and to what extent seventeen English language textbooks for Japanese students are laden with cultural points based on Allen and Valette's (1972) Big 'C' and small 'c' cultural components. From this perspective, culture has two concrete and abstract layers. Concrete culture refers to tangible manifestations of culture such as products, and abstract refers to intangible ones like thinking patterns. The findings illustrated that practical culture content is more emphasized than abstract culture content. Content and abstract culture cover 76% and 24% of the books, respectively. Moreover, the cultural content of the seventeen textbooks varied from textbook to textbook.

The above studies all indicate what and to what extent cultural components

are treated in different L1 and L2 textbooks using various Big 'C' and little 'c' checklists. Unlike little 'c,' the majority of cultural components observed belong to Big 'C' and are tangible such as food, music, etc. However, although several studies are conducted on the status of cultural contents in FL/SL teaching textbooks, no comparative research is carried out on the representation of cultural subcomponents (besides components) in two Persian and English language teaching textbooks based on Lee's checklist (2009). Hence, the present study attempts to show the similarities and differences among the offered themes and to provide likely justifications as to their occurrences concerning type and frequency.

Method

Design

The design of the study is qualitative, employing content analysis to describe what and how cultural components and subcomponents are represented in the textbooks.

Materials

The materials were a) A Course in General Persian/Fundamental level (CGP from now on) and b) Top Notch/Elementary level (TN after this). It should be noted that by fundamental/elementary it is meant proficiency, not the age level. These two sources are used as class materials for non-Iranian learners of Persian as a Foreign Language (PFL) and Iranian learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) respectively. CGP is published by an Iranian domestic publisher: Iran Language Institute (Kanoon-chap Press, 2010) and is being taught in Dehkoda Institute in Tehran, Iran. The reason for selecting such a corpus was that comparing with other language teaching Persian textbooks, and there was a closer similarity between this book and TN concerning level, content, activity, and teaching method. TN was selected because it is relatively newer than other EFL textbooks and is being practiced in the majority of the English

language institutes in Iran. The basis for focusing on the elementary level of TN was that only one volume of CGP, labeled Fundamental, is published for beginners only.

Data Collection Procedure

To identify the cultural components, the list of Big 'C' (see the list of components in Table 1) and small 'c' cultural themes by Lee (2009) was utilized. According to Chastain (1988), Big 'C' cultural elements are most overt and apparent to everyone, discovered first, memorized by learners, and are employed by language teachers to teach a target culture. However, due to the absence of many elements in the Big 'C' list, six items, extracted from Scott and Schwartz (2000), Razi (2012), and Chastain (1988), were added to the list. The items were nationality, occupation, intercultural relations, greeting, religion, and Taarof (known as Persian art of etiquette; excessive politeness and humility; handling social relations with decorative behavior; opposite of calling a spade a spade; and interpreted as 'Don't mean what you say!') (Crystal, 1987; Davis, 2008). The first four items were added since they usually converse in dialogs in SL/FL teaching textbooks, and it was predicted that they might have been raised in conversation sections of the two textbooks. The last two ones were included for Iran is officially an Islamic country wherein religion is marked as a cultural indicator, and Taarof is counted as an integral part of Iranian culture that is nearly mingled with every act and ritual (Motaghi-Tabari and de Beuzeville, 2012).

Little 'c' cultural components, in contrast, are invisible and associated with underlying beliefs, norms, ways of thinking common in a region or related to a group of people. They are interwoven with myths and legends, communication styles,

Verbal and non-verbal language symbols which determine proper and improper social interactions. Unlike Big 'C' cultural components, small 'c' components are abstract and conceptual and are more complex concerning meaning (Chastain, 1988). For small 'c', Lee (2009)

suggested the following themes: freedom, privacy/individualism, equality/egalitarianism, fairness, competition, materialism, hard work, confrontation, novelty-oriented, self-improvement, nurture, personal control over environment, control over time, action (work)-oriented, informality, directness/openness/honesty, high involvement, liberal, experimental, future-oriented, rules/regulations-oriented, male-dominated, self-interest oriented, self-reliance, weak-face consciousness, and result-oriented.

Based on Lee's checklist (2009), through content analysis, the cultural components presented in all units of the two textbooks were identified, and then the frequency of each one was counted. It should be reminded that every cultural component was introduced via several sub-components (e.g., food as a cultural component was mirrored through several subcomponents such as rice, stew, bread, etc.) but the criterion of frequency was component and not subcomponent. The dependability (the counterpart of reliability in quantitative studies) of the data gathering was obtained by coding agreement. The cultural themes of all units were cross-validated by the two present trained researchers of the current study and the inter-coder reliability, using Pearson correlation coefficient, was 0.93. It should be noted that all content areas (including conversations, reading passages, and activities) were analyzed.

Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, the number of cultural components was obtained through frequencies. The type of cultural elements and the way they are presented were qualitatively identified through content analysis. Finally, the results of the study were descriptively reported.

Result and Discussion

Addressing the first research question, the following table comparatively reports the different occurrences of Big 'C' cultural components in the two textbooks.

Table 1.

Comparison of Big 'C' cultural components in CGP and TN

Big 'C' Components	Textbooks	
	CGP	TN
Race	1	0
Geography	2	1
Historical sites	9	0
Art	5	21
Craft	4	0
National treasure	1	0
Agriculture	0	0
Literature	3	0
Medicine	5	0
Science	3	3
Currency	2	0
Shopping	0	0
Market	0	0
Industry	0	4
Business	0	0
Infrastructure	0	0
Metropolitan	2	0
Education	0	0
Dress	1	5
Style	0	7
Food	24	4
Housing	3	0
Festival	0	0
Party	0	2
Ceremonies & traditional customs	21	1
Holidays	3	0
Postal system	1	0
Mass communication	5	0
Region	23	3
Regional varieties	0	0
Sport	7	15
Leisure	4	13
Music	0	12
Recreation	5	0
Traffic	0	0
Transportation	3	3
Family	5	5
Meaning of touch	0	0

Big 'C' Components	Textbooks	
	CGP	TN
Meaning of space	0	0
Meaning of artifact	0	0
Nonverbal behavior	0	0
Space communication	0	0
Government	0	0
Politics	0	0
Nationality	19	15
Occupation	11	7
Intercultural relations	5	0
Religion	1	0
Greeting	6	9
Taarof	23	0
Expression/idiom	7	0
Habit	4	0
Instruments (the most frequent use)	4	0
Total	208	135

Based on the table, the results can be classified into three groups: components with highest, lowest, and no frequency. The components with no frequency can be treated in two ways: Those whose appearance seems to be reasonable and those whose non-appearance seems not to be defensible. Concerning explaining and talking about cultural components while teaching culture in the class, Rivers (1981) states:

Teaching cultural series begins at the elementary stage with the discussion of the daily life...the family, the living conditions, the school, the relations with friends, the leisure time activities, the festivals, the ceremonies, the dating and marriage customs. At intermediate and advanced levels, attention may be drawn to geographical factors, significant historical periods, how the society is organized, production, transport, buying and selling, workers' conditions, significant institutions (education, the law, government, and religion), art, music, dance, film, great men and women, science and exploration, and the roots of prevailing philosophy (pp. 324-325).

Accordingly, given the elementary level of the two textbooks, in CGP components containing agriculture, shopping, market, industry, business, infrastructure, education, music, traffic, space communication, government, politics; and in TN elements including historical sites, craft, agriculture, literature, medicine, education, currency, shopping, market, business, infrastructure, traffic, space communication, government, politics, religion were not appropriate for this level to be explained and discussed at great length and they are rightly not. This point can be considered as an advantage for the two textbooks. In contrast, several components in CGP like style, festival, party, meaning of touch and space, nonverbal behavior; and in TN elements like festival, holiday, recreation, meaning of touch and space, nonverbal behavior could/should have been mentioned as the subjects to be conversed in dialogs and reading passages but erroneously have not. This point can be taken as a disadvantage for the textbooks. From this perspective, it seems that the two textbooks have had a similar function.

Five (10%) from the highest and five (10%) from the lowest components listed in Table 1 were selected and hierarchically represented in the following table. However, because of the same frequency of the last three lowest components in TN, six components were reported in the related column.

Table 2.

The Highest and Lowest Frequencies of Big ‘C’ Cultural Components in CGP and TN

The highest frequencies				The lowest frequencies			
CGP	f	TN	f	CGP	f	TN	f
Food	24	Art	21	Race	1	Geography	1
Taarof	23	Nationality	15	National treasure	1	Ceremonies	1
Region	23	Sport	15	Dress	1	Party	2
Ceremonies & traditional customs	21	Leisure	13	Postal system	1	Transportation	3
Nationality	19	Music	12	Religion	1	Science	3
						Region	3

Concerning the second research question, food as the most frequently cited component is important in Persian culture for there are numerous local foods in Iran. Harbottle (1995) mentions that foods are interwoven with Iranian friendship, acceptance, generosity, hospitality, and revering guests masked as compliments. Daniel and Mahdi (2006) state that in Iran “sharing food is an important mechanism of socialization and social bonding ...and food is not an end itself but a means of family solidarity and social exchange” (p.150). In some Iranian cities, it is observed that the more a table is laid with various foods, the more the host's respect for the guest is proved. Providing a good meal for guests is considered as a prestigious and face-saving act. In addition to the quality of food which is important not only on special occasions but also in families, its quantity is of importance as well. According to Harbottle (2004), Iranian cuisine is complex, colorful, and rich. Nearly in most national and religious ceremonies (plenty of) food is offered. Hence, as food is the amalgamation of customs and complimentary behavior, its highest frequency is entirely expected, and since the textbook is designed for elementary level, such an overrated emphasis is quite anticipated.

Taarof in Iranian culture is a form of politeness. For example, two people want to enter somewhere, and one says to another: ‘You first please.’ Another says: ‘I don't go. You first please.’ Another example is that a customer wants to pay and the seller says: ‘Be my guest.’ The customer while taking money says: ‘Not a big deal. I don't get money from you.’ Many studies have already been done on this component (Crystal, 1987; Davis, 2008; Hillmann, 1981; Holmes & Brown, 1987; Moosavi, 1986; Sharifian, 2005, 2008, 2011; Sharifian & Palmer, 2007; Wolfson, 1981). Motaghi-Tabari and de Beuzeville (2012) indicate that Taarof is an inescapable ritual in Iran. Inescapable in a sense that any violation of that will be considered as a rude and impolite act. Tyler, Taylor, Woolstenhulme, and Wilkins (1978, as cited in Assadi, 1980) claim that without Taarof any communication seems uncivil. And according to Koutlaki (1997), any

analysis on Iranian politeness system without considering Taarof is imperfect. All the above points may indicate why such a high frequency is dedicated to this item.

Concerning the recurrence of the region, it can be reasoned that compared with some countries, Iran is not still fully known. Therefore, it seems that for further introduction of this country, it is highly endeavored in CGP to embed instances of this component within dialogs and activities.

There are numerous ceremonies and traditional customs in Iran. Nearly every act in Iran is tied with a custom or tradition. Cultural customs take multiple forms in different regional, ethnic, and religious rituals (Daniel & Mahdi, 2006). There is a tradition on how to handle a compliment, how to accept food offered to you as a guest, how to get married, how to buy a house, what to do in Nowrooz holidays (new year) and in the night of Yalda (the longest night of the year), when to burn Isfand (a dry grassy herb which emits nice smell when burned) to ward off or revert the evil eye, what to do in religious ceremonies for the Islamic Imams martyrdoms, etc. Speaking of customs and traditions, PFL learners may be eager to become familiar with Persian customs and how they are mirrored in CGP. That is probably why this item carries such a considerable frequency.

Regarding the high occurrence of nationality, it was observed both in CGP and TN that people with different nationalities and names are introduced. This implies that to the authors of these textbooks 'intercultural communication' does matter. In the increasingly multicultural world of today, it is highly needed to prepare language learners to have 'an ability to interact effectively with people of other cultures...and in this way transcend the limitations of their world view' (Camilleri Grima, 2002, p.31). Moreover, remarking various nationalities in such textbooks helps learners to compare and contrast their cultural values with those of the target language which in turn safeguard them to be culturally shocked (Edgerton, 1971, as cited in Hassan, 2008).

About art as the most ingrained element in TN, one might dig out two reasons. First, several researchers have demonstrated that either engaging in or watching some artistic event seems to increase physical health and relieve tension and stress (Angus, 1999; Baklien, 2000; Bygren, Konlaan & Johansson, 1996; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). Also, arts engagement broadens and consolidates social bonds (Baklien, 2000). Arts improve psychological well-being as well (Fiske, 1999; Jackson, 1979; Randall, Magie & Miller, 1997; Seham, 1997; Weitz, 1996; Williams, 1995). Based on this, it can be inferred that exposing learners to different pieces of art can attract them to English language learning and bring about serenity and peace of heart in the learning process which might be accompanied with a tension of mental and cultural adaptations. Second, America's novelty and dynamism in cinema industry are well explored in Hollywood where the most famous directors and movie stars are born, and the most prestigious film festivals like Oscar are held and celebrated. America, by providing facilities, is the land which makes any promising artist's dreams come to reality. As such, movie-bound subjects are often exciting to students, especially to those who are film buffs or players of adapted games. As the various manifestations of art are dealing with hobbies, they are mostly injected to contents to make students motivated to talk about their feelings and thus start to use the second language more naturally. Accordingly, it might be inferred that the designers of such EFL textbooks follow efficient learning strategies when they select subjects as such. Therefore, for such a book like TN, it is not unexpected to see the abundance of artistic cases (film, theater, dance, opera, painting, etc.) as proofs for novelty and sometimes pioneering showcases to other societies. So why such a high frequency would be surprising?

As to the manifestation of various nationalities in TN, it should be remembered that there is no doubt that America accommodates the most diverse population in the world. America is likened to a melting pot or a fruit salad comprising people from different religions, ethnicities, and

cultures. Therefore, it seems that the more affluent a country is in this respect, the more it is willing to offer the corresponding component. It is apparent that, by repeated mention of such a component, the author has attempted to increase the learners' intercultural competence.

Concerning sport, Jarvie (2006) holds that a thorough understanding of culture without sport is impossible. In the world of today, the sport has become an inseparable part of social, cultural, and political agencies. He adds that sport is tied to the values, ceremonies, and way of life of a group of people. Blanchard (1974), for example, mentions that basketball is a means for socialization rather than merely being a game. According to what is reported by Discovery Education (2011), more than three-fifths of adults in America are involved in sport and more than 11 hours per week is devoted to playing sports. The American vivacity and dynamism inherent in the daily activities whet their appetite for entanglement in sports. That is probably why the daily conversations put in TN, have allocated some parts to hobbies and leisure activities. Likewise, since the books for elementary levels are highly required to encourage learners to keep up the learning, the subjects must be appealing enough and focused on less complicated concepts. So the high frequency of sport is naturally expected.

Heron (1989) views leisure and culture as two elements which cannot be parted and Peiper (1963) holds that entertainment is considered as a cultural phenomenon. As to the importance of leisure in America, it suffices to say that Cheska (1979) claims that recreational activities are regarded as the basic foundations preserving Americans. Roberts (2004) believes that leisure role in American people's lives is not only economic but also social, psychological, and cultural. Back to the history of leisure in America, in the first half of the 19th century, large theaters were built to accommodate audiences of as many as 4,000 people, and the majority of American men used to go to taverns. Horse racing attracted about 100,000 viewers. In 1876, Horace Greeley, a leading American journalist, observed that although there were teachers

for every profession, there was no one teaching leisure and raised this question: 'Who will teach us how to achieve leisure and enjoy it?' (McLean & Hurd, 2012). So, incorporating this component, to a considerable extent, in TN cannot be surprising.

Concerning music, Fiske (1996) points out that music is the language of emotions. Some studies suggest that music creates smiles and tears (Sloboda, 1991; Panksepp, 1995). Knight and Rickard (2001) explored the effect of sedative music on participants' physiological stress. Stratton and Zalanowski (1984) reported a significant correlation between relaxation and music. One study revealed that American adolescents listen to music to meet social and emotional needs (Tarrant, North, & Hargreaves, 2000). Also, songs provide resources that improve students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Saricoban, & Metin, 2000). In the same line, Jedynak (2000) states that songs in the language classrooms relax the learners and reduce their stress. Hence, given the significant role of music and considering the contemporary learners' interest and familiarity with the Western music, the attention of the learners is drawn to different types of music and musical instruments in America which in turn has resulted in the density of such an item.

Unlike the highest frequencies of the above-mentioned components, the lowest frequencies in CGP and TN can be justified in a way that was imagining both Iran and the U.S. with differing races, numerous national treasures, and various costumes; there could be more occurrence of such components as race, a national treasure, and dress. For example, where national treasures are not propagated in such textbooks as cultural ambassadors, no stir is created in users to use them to accelerate the national tourist outcome. And where the frequency of tourism is truncated, there would be a lower rate of intercultural relations.

The effort of CGP author to draw the learners' attention to Iranian postal order (as a subcomponent of postal system) for rescue delivery is

appreciated. It implies that the writer has considered this cultural element at least for once.

What can be expressed about religion (with 1 case) in CGP is that although Rivers (1981) holds that such an item should be treated in intermediate and advanced levels, it depends on the context. Since Iran is claimed to be a religious country, it was expected to have more depiction of this component (and at least a few religious names of people and places could be introduced).

Since America is the world's third largest country with the most advanced science technology in general, and transportation industry, in particular, and given the fact that ceremonies and parties are held for many occasions and in honor of specific people, days or events, more components could be dedicated to these issues in TN.

A general comparison of the components brings into light that the highest frequencies in each textbook do not belong to the same components. Food, Taarof, the region in CGP, and art, nationality, sport in TN are the first three components. Such a difference implies that each textbook attempts to make language learners acculturate with its cultural items. The main policy of both textbooks is to propagate their culture and to provide the learners with contextualized showcases on the road to language internalization. Though several Big 'C' cultural components are not embodied in the textbooks, the advent of a couple of others suggests that getting familiarized with them can escalate learning process through providing mental contextualization. Besides, the number of components in CGP is 208 while in TN are 135 which indicate that the former puts more emphasis on the presentation of its cultural capsules.

It was also observed that the majority of components are deployed and explained in a separate section at the end of each unit in the form of short descriptions in CGP. In TN, however, such components are enclosed within the main text. This probably implies that Iranians may feel more urge to introduce their culture directly. It can also be related to

teaching methods as well: integrating culture in language tasks or de-contextualizing it in separate sections titled 'cultural capsules'.

With respect to little 'c' components, it should be remembered that the elementary level of the two textbooks calls for simplicity which is not attainable unless the materials are chosen with great caution and adroitness. Like several Big 'C' components with no frequency, those related to small 'c' require complicated vocabularies and concepts to be elaborated. Based on the definition of little 'c' components, it is expected that they are presented in upper-elementary levels which ask for advanced vocabulary and language proficiency. They are, typically, anticipated to be put forward in levels where speakers can discuss, interpret, and analyze tacit and complicated cultural issues. Suppose, for instance, how materialism can be discussed among the learners with a limited range of grammar and vocabulary?

While lexical appropriateness is the utmost priority in evaluating an FL/SL teaching textbook (Ur, 1996), the frequency of some cultural components should be taken for granted. If, for instance, a conversation occurs in a context where women are not allowed to drive, it is highly unlikely that an intermediate student starts vituperating on the 'male-dominated' (a small 'c' component) society. Not because of one's being unaware of the patriarchal sovereignty and female degradation, but because of one's lack of language proficiency as a beginner. Consider another example in which a dialog takes place between two classmates talking about their final exam grades. One of the speakers did not have a good performance and is worried about her failure. The other tries to alleviate her tension by giving some hopes that her class activity grades are satisfactory, but the worried student remarks that as her teacher expects, only final grades count for passing. Regarding the example, an elementary learner mostly tries first to grab the whole plot and secondly read the conversation over or conduct a role play. What matters is whether it is necessary or even helpful to ask her opinion about the teacher's specific method of evaluation. Or can a teacher take one step

more to introduce a 'result-oriented phrase' (a small 'c' component) in explaining or assessing the method of student evaluation? To sum up, in a level where language proficiency is not well developed yet, and the pupils' mental skills in using more advanced ideas depend on the underlying language proficiency, components with no frequency are not far from expectation.

As to the third research question, a sample of Big 'C' cultural subcomponents in CGP and TN are presented in Tables 3 and 4 (See Appendix).

Since in the studies performed on the presentation of cultural components in FL textbooks no attention was paid to the illustration of cultural subcomponents, this study, as the first endeavor, attempted as well to throw some light on how these subcomponents are reflected. As it is depicted in the above tables, both textbooks have presented a general picture of the cultural subcomponents currently used by their native speakers in their corresponding contexts and equipped their learners to become familiar with them.

With respect to similarities, the two textbooks, with some exceptions, were alike in showing their (most) typical subcomponents frequently used in the daily life of their people, like those of food in the two contexts. It is noteworthy, however, that although a number of subcomponents of high frequency (like date, Saadi, Muharram and Ramadan in CGP, and hamburger, Shakespeare in TN) could be mentioned, several others (like Baslogh, AzarAab Complex, Mazandaran street, The Inverted Tulips Plain in CGP) could not be mentioned due to their lack of popularity and low use frequency. As to nationality, it was found that both textbooks considered similarly intercultural communications via exemplifying people from various nationalities.

With regard to differences, one can find that while CGP mostly underlined national cultural subcomponents like national dishes and national literary/artistic figures, TN highlighted international ones like pizza (Italian), noodles (the Chinese cuisine), Gabriel Garcia Marquez

(the Latin-American writer), Pace de Lucia (the Spanish musician), Andrea Borelli (the Italian singer) and Jackie Chan (the Hong Kong actor).

One of the most challenging cultural components which may require cross-cultural adaptations in the process of learning is greeting norms. If Iranian culture has been marked with the usage of complimentary phrases in greetings, American context is abundant with facial gestures, body languages, and touching of some kind when greeting. One can observe in the conversations put in TN how the speakers shake hands, give hugs, and kiss one another. It does not mean that such greeting physical behavior is entirely exclusive to American life, but the focus is on the fact that where in CGP the opposite sexes are never seen or quoted to shake hands or hug, such religious confinements are never seen in TN. Probably that is the reason Iranian people try to give lip services to show their appreciation. Note that contextual exposition, namely when a learner is exposed culturally to another language with all its subcomponents, may sometimes bring about adaptation challenges. To clarify, a student from a Muslim society with all its obligatory prohibitions exposed to such different American community might start to solidly internalize some culturally unique aspects, so that s/he forgets about her/his codes of ethics and principles. This kind of self-absorption or split character in the form of cultural shock is both dangerous and to some extent necessary for language learning. The danger arises when the students find loose from the religious prohibitions, get solved in the foreign culture, and thus a double character is produced after a while. The society does not accept the deformed or reformed character ideologically, and the person is dragged between his previously established norms and the newly discovered illusion of freedom from bonds. Such an outcast should be already guided and saved at once before entering the phase of borderline loose or principle dislocation. Hence, textbook developers and teachers are constantly warned to explain the differences and be cautious of cultural gaps while sticking to

the actual norms of the society of learners. This is why embedding cultural components and subcomponents in SL/FL textbooks matter critically.

Given the idiosyncratic subcomponents of each textbook, CGP correctly unveiled those with local colors, like Nowrooz -the most famous and lasting ceremonial feast-, and offered real examples on Taarof, greeting, complimentary phrases which may require cross-cultural adaptations in the process of learning. Given the instruments' subcomponents introduced in CGP, unlike door-mat which is not of very high frequency and seems not to be that much fruitful for Persian language learners at the elementary level to learn this word, one finds that in addition to the above-mentioned instruments related to eating, fork, glass, plate, and the like which are used in everyday life and are suitable for Persian language learners to learn at this level could be mentioned. Concerning art, on the one hand, all its subcomponents rightly pertain to handicrafts since Iran is one of the top countries in the world to produce qualified handicrafts but, on the other hand, unfortunately, no subcomponent, like those in TN, was dedicated to musicians, actors, singers, etc. With respect to medicine, World Health Organization reports that Iran hosts more than 7500 herbal plants of which around 1800 are used in medicine, and many of them are found nowhere else in the world. Hence, there is no wonder why nearly all subcomponents mentioned belong to traditional herbal medicine. Regrettably, no subcomponent like tablet, syrup, syringe needle which is of heavy use is mentioned in CGP.

As concerns with TN, there have been some questions concerning the opening day of the week which reveal how differences in weekdays, busy and off days, might cause some students to get confused. For instance, an Iranian student who has been accustomed to consider Fridays as the weekend, when exposed to American off-day equivalents as Saturday and Sunday, concludes "so Saturday for us in Iran is Monday for them in America! And if we travel to America, we should call their

Monday our Saturday!" Putting such information which brings to light the differences is very necessary for language acquisition, and textbook writers must be cautious in explaining the differences and providing examples.

The other components introduced in TN are clothes and dresses. One major characteristic of American and European (and some Asian countries) dressing is using ties and wearing dresses for women. So it is vital to use the tie as a new vocabulary since some students might be from countries in which ties are not standard though seen in wedding parties. Another point is the way women wear dresses, and the significance of putting it in TN is highlighted if it is taught in Muslim countries. Islamic students are not used to seeing women with dresses in the streets when Hijab is an Islamic norm. Based on the religious clashes, it might seem hard and confusing for a Muslim student to imagine herself walking in the street wearing a dress. But since leaving the status quo is sometimes interesting, the students are seen to be willing in playing conversation roles when cultural and religious bonds are removed. They are apt to leave their preserved skin to try something new and thrilling based on what they had already seen in movies.

Exposing students to such contexts (even if it brings about some cultural shock) and making them use new vocabularies such as dressing modes can boost their learning more optimally.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that a) the two textbooks approximately enjoyed similar functions in terms of non-/presenting Big 'C' cultural components in elementary level though their attached subcomponents would differ b) the highest frequencies in both textbooks were allotted to the components inextricably intertwined with their cultures c) considering Iran as an ancient country, the historical sites and traditional customs were well illustrated in CGP d) intercultural communication was depicted in both textbooks e) Unlike TN, CGP had a weak performance in introducing

cultural components such as music, movie, and sport f) in contrast to TN, CGP showed a good performance in presenting its regions and occupations and g) both textbooks rightly showed no small 'c' cultural components.

Furthermore, while CGP was more associated with people's ordinary life styles and their daily interactions, TN was more concerned with entertaining life style. It was also displayed that

While CGP was more productive in introducing cultural components, TN was limited in this respect. A point which is worth mentioning is that if a textbook is richer in presenting a variety of cultural elements, it does not mean that those components do not exist in another context but that it might be attributed to particular tastes, techniques, and styles of the writers. Besides, the differences found in the two textbooks can be viewed as a matter of inevitability for the two contexts differ.

Therefore, language learners should be told that differences and cultural chasms are inevitable and for a language to be learned, it is necessary to know the differences and accept them.

Based on the findings the following implications and limitations are in order: For textbook developers to make FL/SL textbooks more adequate resources for acquiring cultural items the following implications are suggested: First, Big 'C' and little 'c' cultural components should be presented in FL/SL textbooks in harmony with learners' language proficiency levels. Second, much care should be exercised to the embodiment of cultural components and subcomponents which are (most) frequently used in the daily lives of their native speakers. Third, attention should be paid to the presentation of cultural components and subcomponents related to intercultural communication, particularly in elementary levels, to prevent cultural shock. Fourth, presentation of components, like Taarof, whose violation may create miscommunication should be of priority for Persian learning textbooks. Sixth, attention should be paid to inserting cultural components, like art, sport, music, etc., which bring solidarity, social bonding, tranquility, and

peace of heart. Seventh, small 'c' components (Lee, 2009) should not be embedded in elementary FL/SL textbooks due to their complexities. A penultimate point is that cultural components and subcomponents, as cultural ambassadors, should be injected in FL/SL textbooks in a way to intrigue language learners to learn L2 more efficiently and appropriately. Lastly, the study was limited in its focus on the elementary level of the textbooks which led to the truncation of the rate of frequency on Big 'C' components and the absence of little 'c' ones.

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Appendix

Table 3.

A Sample of Big 'C' Cultural Subcomponents Presented in CGP

Big 'C' cultural components	Cultural subcomponents
Food	Ghormeh Sabzi stew, Fesenjan stew, rice with barberry, Ghaimeh stew, celery stew, vermicelli porridge, barley porridge, Taftoon bread, Lavash bread, Barbari bread, Sangak bread, cutlet, rice and beans, rice and vegetable with fish, porridge, Kebab with rice, broth, rice with lentil, barley porridge, Ghotab, Baslogh, Gaz
Literature	Mohamad Ali Jamal Zadeh, Mohamad Hossain Shahriar, Bozorg Alavi, Ali Akbar Dekhoda, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Sadegh Hedayat, Nima Youshij, Simin Daneshvar, Parvin Eetesami, Hafiz
Traditional customs	Norouz ceremony, Haft Sin (seven items starting with 'S' in Persian) ceremonial decoration (Samano [kind of dish with juice of germinating wheat], Serkeh [pottage made with vinegar], Sib [apple], Senjed [the kind of tree and its fruit which resembles the mountain-ash], Sabzeh [decorated grown lentil or wheat], Sir [garlic], Somagh [sumac or mountain-ash]), celebration held on the last Wednesday of the year, going on picnic on the 13 th of Farvardin [equivalent to March], New Year Eve, paying visit to relatives and friends, painting eggs, cleaning up the house, giving New-Year gift
Historical sites/figures	Azadi square, Persepolis, Zigorat fort, the contemporary art museum, AzarAab complex, the national garden gate, Golestan palace
Taarof/ Compliments	<p>May God bless you with health and happiness. I hope you remain healthy enough to look after your family. Please come on in; it's not hospitable to me to keep you out!</p> <p>When the table is set, the lady (mother/housewife) says: "Come to the table please, the food may become cold."</p>

	<p>The guest answers: "Thank you very much, we bothered you." The hostess replies: "please! Not at all, it is not worthy of you."</p> <p>If someone knows that his acquaintances are staying in a hotel, s/he invites them over.</p> <p>The host/hostess insists and says: "Do not leave tonight, don't count tonight like ten nights!" while the guest replies: "I don't like to bother you." The host/hostess says: "make yourself at home, God the Almighty endears guests."</p> <p>When a visitor goes to see a patient, s/he says: "May God always keep you aloof from such places."</p> <p>The Patient answers: "I hope you remain healthy and far from hospitals."</p> <p>When Iranians like to express the depth of their sorrow, they say "I am extremely embarrassed and ashamed". "Forgive me for Excellency and grace."</p>
Habits	<p>It is seen that in order to verify their claims, Iranians, sometimes, swear to the sacred and holy books like "swearing to Quran or swearing to Abu-al-Fazl (son of Imam Ali, the first Shi'a Imam).</p> <p>It is also normal that people are seen to be swearing to their own lives or family members: "To my life, to my children's lives, to my mom's life (I swear)." And some taking oaths to their lost ones' souls such as "I swear to my mom's soul."</p>
Instruments	saucer, cup, door-mat, vase, tea-pot, bowl, spoon
Expressions/idioms	Everything remained calm and quiet; it's rotten to the core, it's never too late to mend, no use crying over spilled milk.
Greetings	Shaking hands when saying hello, putting one's hand on the chest, asking about spouse, parents or children while greeting, congratulation on the new arrival, help yourself with the pastry, please.
Region	Anzali lagoon, Tajrish square, Tehran, Mazandaran sea, Khuzestan, Damavand peak, Dena peak, Alborz peak, Mehrabad airport, Mazandaran street, Shiraz, Isfahan, The Inverted Tulips Plain
Medicine	Herbal medicines, four-seeds, rocket-seeds, herbal distillation, rose-water, decoction

Table 4.

A sample of Big 'C' Cultural Subcomponents Presented in TN

Big 'C' cultural components	Cultural subcomponents
Foods	Green bean salad, pizza, pasta, soda, coffee, Hungarian cabbage, noodles, tomato potato soup, stuffed peppers, fruit salad, potato pancakes, green bean salad
Literature	Gabriel Garcia Marques, Ernest Heming way.
Holidays	Saturday, Sunday
Arts	Tina liberated (singer), Andrea Bocelli (singer), Jackie Chan (actor), Abigail Breslin (actress), Julia Robert (actress), Mark Antonio (singer), Matt Damon (actor), Carlos Valves (singer), Hee-Younglee (musician), Denzel Washington (actor), Vans-Mae (violinist), William Bradley Pitt (actor), Harry, Houdini (magician), Paco de Lucia (musician), GoelGacia Bernal (actor)
Leisure	Go to the beach; go for a walk, swimming, go bike riding, go running go to the concert, go to the park, go to a game, go fishing, go camping, go ice skating, go wind surfing, go sailing, go dancing
Dresses	Tie, Skirt
Transportations	Taxi, train, bus, subway, car, moped, motorcycle, bicycle
sports	Play golf, ice skate, swimming, bike riding- climbing a mountain, go bowling, go fishing
Greetings	Kisses, hug, Shake hand, pat on the back.
Nationality	Germany, Turkish, Korean, Italian, Mexican, French, American, Chinese, Brazilian
Regions	Seymour Movie Theater, Cadillac Cafe Restaurant, Compton beach
Postal systems	Postal code → Alley → street → city → country
Occupations	Musician, singer, dancer, athlete, actor, artist, chef, architect, banker, teacher
Industries	The I Robot-Roomba vacuum, The Scuba washes the floor, The ASIMO carries a tray, The L200 moves Lawns.