

Hebron University  
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Presentation of English Culture in Palestinian High School English Textbooks

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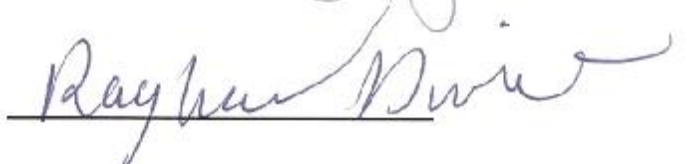
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## **Abstract**

The role of culture in TEFL has become undisputable. Yet, what seems to be a common practice is that foreign language textbooks and classrooms frequently overlook this important role. In order to improve culture teaching, teaching materials should be revised and examined. The purpose of this exploratory study is to describe and investigate how culture is presented in Palestinian high school English textbooks *English for Palestine (EFP)*. The main question that guides this study is: How is English culture presented in the Palestinian high school English textbooks? This question will be answered by investigating the following related questions: Are the ministry's goals of teaching culture reflected in the textbooks? Are teachers aware of these goals and therefore apply culture teaching in their classrooms? And, how do students view the presentation of English culture in their learning of English at high school? Accordingly, three instruments have been used to conduct the study; a questionnaire for teachers, a questionnaire for students, and a textbook evaluation guide to evaluate the cultural content. Results show that although the importance of culture in the EFL class is recognized in the guidelines for *English for Palestine*, this recognition does not seem to be well reflected in the textbooks and teachers' practices which means that there is a gap between the ministry guidelines for the syllabus and reality.

## **Dedication**

To:

- My mother, for her endless support
- My father
- My son, Basel, and
- My beloved husband, Wasef.

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## **Chapter One**

### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **1.1. Background**

Culture is often neglected in EFL (English as a foreign language) teaching and learning, or introduced as no more than a supplement to language instruction. Yet, changes in language theories suggest that culture should be highlighted as an important element in the language classroom.

After the advent of the Communicative Approach to language teaching in the late 1960s, much emphasis has been placed on the communicative competence which, as many theoreticians believe, develops not only through the practice of language skills or the learning of the language use, but also through using language communicatively (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Kramsch comments that culture in language learning is not an "expendable" fifth skill added to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is in the background from the first day "ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them" (1993: 1).

Language and culture connection has also been emphasized from a sociolinguistic perspective. Tseng states that competence in language use is determined not only by the ability to use language with grammatical accuracy, but also to use language appropriately in a particular context. "Successful language learning requires language users to know the culture that underlies language", (2002: 12).

#### **1.2. EFL in Palestine**

A recent paradigm shift has been noticed in the EFL situation in Palestine. Since 2000 English has been adopted to be taught in all governmental schools from the first

grade rather than the fifth grade. This shift has accompanied the recent adoption of the new Palestinian curriculum "*English for Palestine*".

In the statement of general goals for the Palestinian English Language Curriculum (1999), three of these goals are culture related, specifically, it is stated that the new syllabus should help the students achieve the following aims:

1. Develop intercultural understanding and appreciation.
2. Foster understanding and develop cultural sensitivity to the target language culture and other cultural backgrounds, and thereby, strengthen the learners' appreciation of their own culture.
3. Develop students' respect for others, i.e., developing a sense of worth of others, especially those with social, cultural, and family backgrounds different to their own, and encouraging them to reject sexual, racial, and ethnic stereotypes.

Although the preceding goals focus on enhancing cross-cultural understanding, culture does not seem to be primarily emphasized in the Palestinian EFL classroom. English as a school subject represents a source of difficulty for most of the Palestinian students. In a way or another, this reason makes students depend more on rote learning of vocabulary and syntactic structures in order to pass examinations. In other words, when much attention is placed on the linguistic content, the cultural content will fall to a secondary place. As a result, students will not have the chance to activate and develop critical thinking that will help them compare and contrast their native culture with the target culture. The possible result of such practice is failure in achieving the Ministry's goals with regard to culture learning.

Since English is a foreign language in Palestine, the English language textbook is considered as a primary source of exposure to the target culture. Although media has also become an important source of knowing about the cultures of English speaking

countries, the quality, quantity, and intensity of the target culture in the ELT material seem to be of a greater role in shaping students' minds towards the target culture.

*English for Palestine* is the first Palestinian curriculum that has been designed by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). According to MEHE (1999), "English for Palestine" is a communicative curriculum that aims at fostering communicative skills and developing intercultural understanding through EFL education. It would be of great importance to see how the Ministry's goals of fostering communicative skills and developing intercultural understanding are reflected in the textbooks and teachers' practices.

The case of ELT (English language teaching) in Palestine is similar to that of many other Arab countries in that there is scarcity of research on how culture should be presented to students in the English curriculum (Jum'a, 2008). In addition, teachers are likely to marginalize culture treatment in their classrooms because the manuals they use do not offer a clear idea about how culture should be taught. An investigation of the Teacher's Book of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades in the Palestinian series *English for Palestine* shows that there are no specific objectives related to how to handle culture.

Although EFL teachers realize the importance of incorporating culture in their teaching, this realization does not seem to be reflected in their practices (Onalan, 2005; Stapleton, 2005; Castro, et al, 2004; Jum'a, 2008). What is also clearly noticed is that the place of the target culture in textbooks is sometimes very limited (Turkan and Celik, 2007; Oguro, 2008; Stapleton, 2005; Castro, et al, 2004; Aliakbari, 2004).

Talking about the Palestinian context, EFL teaching in Palestine should reflect the goals that are set by the Ministry of Education regarding culture teaching in order to achieve intercultural understanding. This study aims at exploring the cultural element

in "*English for Palestine*" for the grades 11 and 12 in an attempt to find an answer to the question: How is culture presented in Palestinian high-school English textbooks?

### **1.3. Statement of the problem**

The Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) has proposed an English curriculum that aims at enhancing students' understanding of the Palestinian culture with connection to its broader Arab Islamic context. At the same time, this curriculum aims at developing students' communicative competence and enhancing understanding of the target culture. Given the fact that Palestine is an EFL country, one can argue that exposure to the target culture is somewhat limited. In this case, the EFL textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education are considered as a primary medium of exposure to the target culture. This emphasizes the need to describe and analyze culture presentation in these textbooks.

It is assumed that *English for Palestine (EFP)* has been designed to reflect the goals that are set by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education which include improving students' understanding of the target culture. Yet, a thorough look at the Palestinian English class shows that form rather than function is emphasized. To illustrate, vocabulary and syntactic structures receive most of the focus in the English class in order to help students pass the Tawjihi exam, the official exam at the end of high school education. This emphasis has placed content secondary compared to rote learning of vocabulary and syntactic structures.

### **1.4. Purpose of the study**

Taking into consideration that (*EFP*) is a communicative curriculum, this study aims at investigating the cultural content of *English for Palestine* for the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>

grades in an attempt to see if these textbooks have been designed to help students achieve the desired communicative competence, and so reach an understanding of the target culture. In addition, this study aims at investigating students' views as well as teachers' views and practices with regard to the presentation of the target culture..

### **1.5. Significance of the study**

*English for Palestine (EFP)* is a new curriculum which has been adopted by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to be taught in all governmental schools in Palestine since the year 2000. This is the first detailed study that attempts to describe and analyze the presentation of English culture in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades English textbooks. Accordingly, the results are useful since the Palestinian curriculum developers continue to work on the post-design evaluation stage.

### **1.6. Research questions**

This study has been designed to describe and analyze the cultural content of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades English textbooks in the series *English for Palestine (EFP)* to explore the depth of culture presence and its impact on helping students achieve the desired communicative competence.

The main question that guides this study is: How is English culture presented in the Palestinian high school English textbooks? This question will be answered by investigating the following related questions:

1. Are the ministry's goals of teaching culture reflected in the textbooks?
2. Are teachers aware of these goals and therefore apply culture teaching in their classrooms?
3. How do students view the presentation of English culture in their learning of English at high school?

### **1.7. Limitations**

1. This study analyzes culture presentation in the Palestinian secondary English classroom. The textbooks that were analyzed are part of the Palestinian EFL curriculum, so they are used exclusively in Palestine.
2. Teachers who participated in this study are 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers in the second semester of the academic year (2008-2009) and the first semester of the academic year (2009-2010) in Hebron district, south of Palestine.
3. Students who participated in this study are freshman students of the English department at Hebron University in the fall semester of the academic year (2009-2010). In short, generalization is limited to the Palestinian context.

### **1.8. Definition of key terms**

**Linguistic competence:** the ability of a speaker to speak and understand language in a grammatically correct manner.

**Communicative competence:** as defined by Dell Hymes, it is the knowledge of what constitutes the communicative use of language and which enables users to make judgments about how far a particular use is possible, feasible, appropriate, and performed, (Widdowson, 2007).

**Intercultural competence:** the ability of having successful communication with people of other cultures. According to Byram (2000), intercultural competence involves five elements; attitudes, knowledge of social groups and their products, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness and political education.



**English culture:** The way of life of the British and the Americans in their native countries.

**Cultural awareness:** Recognition of the importance of culture in language education.

**The place of the native culture:** Presence of students' native culture (Palestinian culture) in the EFL class.

**The cultural content of the textbook:** Items that stimulates cultural discussion.

## **Chapter Two**

### **2.0. Review of Literature**

In this chapter, literature will be reviewed on culture in language education where it pertains to the following points; definition of culture, culture in language teaching approaches, culture in EFL education, problems of teaching culture, presentation of culture in teaching materials, approaches to teaching culture, and finally, teaching culture in different EFL contexts.

#### **2.1. Definition of culture**

Culture may mean different things to different people, (Cakir, 2006). Lado (1957) cited in Lessard-Clouston, (1997) defines culture as "the way of a people". This perspective includes both "material" manifestations of culture that are easily seen and "non-material" ones that are difficult to observe. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that there are two terms; capital (C) culture and small (c) culture.

Culture with capital (C) refers to the great accomplishments of the target community in arts, music, drama, scientific discoveries, sports, etc while the other meaning of culture, with the small (c), emphasizes the way of life of a certain country, referring to typical behaviors, (Carazzai, 1999; Oguro, 2008; Omaggio-Hadley, 2000).

The American Heritage Dictionary (1996) presents a number of definitions for culture. Among these are; the patterns, traits, and products considered as the expression of a particular period, class, community, or population and, the development of the intellect through training and education.

Lyons (1981: 301-302) presents two definitions of culture which are, in his opinion, important to be mentioned and distinguished. First, culture is "more or less synonymous with civilization ... excellence in art, literature, manners, and social institutions". The second meaning, "has spread from anthropology to the other social

sciences, every society has its own culture; and different subgroups within a society may have their own distinctive subculture".

Two similar definitions are presented by Brooks (1975, cited in Omaggio-Hadley, 1993) and Kramsch (1995). Both refer to the first definition as culture is the best in human life and to the second as culture as everything in human life.

The shift in the definition of culture from being the best in human life to be everything in human life has accompanied the emphasis on the importance of culture in the foreign language classroom despite the fact that no consensus on one definition has been reached. According to Damen (1987: 81), each change of these definitions has been in a sense "an addition rather than a replacement". Damen continues to emphasize the complexity of the relationship between culture and intercultural communication that adds to the difficulty in having a specific definition for culture. She states:

The concept of culture and its relationship to intercultural communication and language learning is so complex that neither its definitions nor any discussion of its role in communication and language learning should be reduced to only a few dimensions. On the contrary, the more inclusive the definitions and descriptions, the more useful they will be, (p: 80).

Despite the fact that we have so many definitions of culture, an agreement seems to appear on some points. Damen (1987: 81) lists three points where she believes there is a "universal agreement" on the definition of culture: First, in studying the human condition, all aspects must be examined; these elements form the whole which he believes to be greater than the sum of its parts. Second, the individual selects what she wants from the cultural choices (the principle of selectivity). Third, Culture is subject to change over time.

Recognition of the place of culture in language education seems to be undisputed. In other words, given the fact that language does not develop in a vacuum, learning a language becomes somewhat incomplete without sufficient knowledge of its culture.

## **2.2. Culture in language teaching approaches**

Some foreign language teachers think that the presence of culture in foreign language education is relatively recent. Yet, a review of language teaching methods shows that this is clearly not the case. Prior to 1960s, people learned a second or foreign language to study its literature and fine arts using the Grammar translation method, (Lessard-Clouston, 1997).

With the advent of the audiolingual method in the 1960s, the "little-c" culture, being the patterns of everyday life, the "do's" and don'ts" of personal behavior, and all the points of interaction between the individual and the society, began to be emphasized over the "big-C" culture, being great music, literature, and art of the country. Seelye (1984) cited in Omaggio-Hadley (1993: 362) states "many foreign language educators felt that knowing the language and the everyday life patterns was a prerequisite to appreciating the fine arts and literature".

After the introduction of the Communicative Approach in the late 1960s, much emphasis has been given to the communicative competence which is determined not only by the ability to use language with grammatical accuracy, but also to use the language appropriate to a particular context, (Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Cakir, 2006; Turkan and Celik, 2007; Tseng, 2002). This emphasis is due to the fact that the communicative language teaching approach starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972)

referred to as "communicative competence" (Richards and Rodgers, 2004; Widdowson, 2007).

### **2.3. Culture in EFL education**

Realization of language and culture connection is not recent. Sapir (1921) states that "language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives". Alptekin emphasizes the integration of language and culture. He states: "learning a foreign language becomes a kind of enculturation, where one acquires new cultural frames of reference and a new world view, reflecting those of the target language culture and its speakers" (2002: 58).

Several researchers have also been interested in highlighting language and culture integration. For example, Cakir (2006), Lessard-Clouston (1997), Thanasoulas (2001), Kramsch (1993), and Hinkel (2001) talk about the automaticity of teaching culture while teaching the language. McLeod (1976: 212) states, "by teaching a language...one is inevitably already teaching culture implicitly". In short, it has become clear that culture has been recognized as an integral part of language education.

### **2.4. Problems of teaching culture**

Language teachers have realized the importance of incorporating culture in their teaching, yet they have always been criticized for their inadequate treatment of culture in their classrooms (Oguro, 2008). There are several reasons that explain the lack of systematic study of culture in many language courses:

- **First**, teaching culture is a time consuming process. (Galloway, 1985 cited in Omaggio-Hadley, 1993; Oguro, 2008; Onalan, 2005). Most language teachers

are always under time restriction that may limit, in a way or another, their treatment of culture in their classes

- **Second**, many language teachers are afraid to teach culture because they don't have enough knowledge about it (Omaggio-Hadley, 1993; Oguro, 2008).
- **Third**, some teachers neglect teaching culture because it deals with students' attitudes "somewhat threatening, hazy, and unquantifiable area" (Galloway, 1985, cited in Omaggio-Hadley, 1993: 358).

Hinkel highlights the complexity of teaching culture and emphasizes the fact that culture is not a "separate domain of L2 instruction". On the contrary, by learning L2 culture, he believes, learners will become better communicators. The teaching of L2 culture can be closely intertwined with the teaching of most linguistic skills since language use reflects the culture of its speakers. Hinkel maintains that teaching L2 culture together with the linguistic skills more adequately represents language and culture connection, (2001: 456).

The previously mentioned points highlight some problems in teaching culture which might explain teachers' reluctance in handling culture. Still, another problems arises which is what aspects of culture to teach and how to present these aspects.

## **2.5. Presentation of culture in teaching materials**

Textbooks are the main materials used in language classes. According to Turkan and Celik (2007), such textbooks are produced for EFL and ESL purposes all over the world and aim to meet the needs of language learners in order to help them function linguistically and culturally well in English. Turkan and Celik maintain that it is important that these textbooks include the target language culture in addition to the fact that they should be appropriate for learners' needs, level, and cultural background.

Yet, what seems to be apparent in these textbooks, as Turkan and Celik believe, is that students' native culture receives most of the focus. They state,

... regrettably, certain aspects of the target culture, such as oral and written history, literature, music, drama, dance, visual arts, celebrations, and the lifestyle of native speakers are not always represented in these resources, nor are the intercultural phenomena. Textbooks produced at a national level for particular countries mirror the students' local cultures, rather than the English-speaking cultures.

In order to achieve the desired goals of EFL teaching, materials should be well revised and evaluated with regard to the presentation of the cultural element. Robotjazi (2008) believes that this is a shared responsibility that engages curriculum designers, teachers, material writers, and learners who have specific needs and interests.

Since language and culture are inseparable, culture should be presented to learners from the early stages of their learning of the foreign language. Yet, the question of what aspects of culture should be taught to which levels of learners appears to be a vital one in this context. Bodric(2004)and Baker(2003)suggest that a gradation should be followed in presenting culture at least to match students' age and interest. In following a gradation in presenting culture, they suggest that simple issues of the people of the target language culture can be included in the early stages while more complex issues can be postponed to later levels where it is discussed in its cultural contexts.

Bodric (2004) believes that the selection and gradation of cultural topics should agree with the students' interests according to their age. Once some mastery of the

foreign language has been achieved, cultural content may be learned through the language "through more demanding and comprehensive tasks".

To conclude, one can infer that simple cultural themes can be introduced to language learners at early stages while more sophisticated ideas can be postponed to later stages.

## **2.6. Approaches to teaching culture**

Since teaching culture is not an easy process, language teachers should be provided with suitable approaches that help them in teaching culture in their classes. Omaggio-Hadley (1993: 360) asserts the need for providing teachers with suitable plans for culture teaching; "language instructors need an organizing scheme that would help them select appropriate cultural content." Without such a scheme", she maintains, "the teaching of culture can become a kind of trivial pursuit of isolated bits of information". Several approaches to teaching culture have been suggested. Among these are the following:

### **2.6.1. The traditional method**

A traditional way of teaching culture was through transmission of facts about the target culture. By doing so, general information about the target culture such as history, geography, institutions, the arts, traditions, and way of life are presented (Tomalin and Stemplesky, 1993 cited in Baker, 2003). Omaggio-Hadley (1993) presents the four common approaches to teaching of culture that are identified by Galloway (1985):

1. The Frankenstein Approach: A taco from here, a flamenco dancer from there, a gaucho from here, a bullfight from there.
2. The 4-F Approach: Folk dances, festivals, fairs, and food.
3. The Tour Guide Approach: The identification of monuments, rivers, and cities.



4. The "By –the-Way" approach: Sporadic lectures or bits of behavior selected indiscriminantly to emphasize sharp differences.

Presenting a variety of cultures often results in brief description of multiple cultures (Oguro, 2008, Saluveer, 2004). In other words, these approaches provide learners with factual information of very limited nature, and so they should not be encouraged.

### **2.6.2. Cultural comparison**

The modern trend of culture teaching which has accompanied the shift in emphasis from facts only to other aspects of life has also led to a different interpretation of culture based on cross-cultural understanding and making comparisons between learners' native culture and the target culture.

When the foreign language learner approaches the target culture from a contrastive point of view, he will view it in a way that is not as the same as his native culture nor the target culture. Kramsch (1993) suggests that foreign language learning takes place in a third place that the foreign language learner makes for himself between (C1) and (C2). In this third place, the language learners are involved in an objective and subjective reflection of (C1) and (C2) where they must choose their own meanings that best reflect their personal perspectives. Therefore, this notion of culture emphasizes the importance of individual interpretations of culture rather than rigid stereotypical notions, (Baker, 2003).

Comparing and contrasting students' native culture and the target culture will help students to become active thinkers. The teacher can enhance students' critical thinking by helping them in making cultural comparison. Doing so will help students gain a double benefit that is understanding the target culture and, at the same time, having more understanding of their native culture. Culture learning is not merely learning the

target culture, but gaining insights into how the culture of the target language interacts with one's own cultural experience, (Liaw, 2006).

### **2.6.3. Teaching culture as a process**

Crawford Lange and Lange (1987: 258-259) propose teaching culture along with language in a process. "Culture is inseparable from language and therefore must be included in language study; culture is in fact of becoming and therefore should be taught as a process". This process incorporates eight stages. The first five are teacher directed, and the last three are student directed. According to them, these stages may overlap and "may or may not all be included in a particular unit of study":

- Stage 1: Identification of a cultural theme. Cultural themes are provocative concerns or issues related to the values of either the native or target culture, or both. The stronger the relationship to the learners' situation, the more powerful the theme will be.
- Stage 2: Presentation of cultural phenomena. Phenomena represent occurrences of the cultural theme. They are presented to students by means of pictures, bulletin board displays, slides, overhead transparencies, and many other devices.
- Stage 3: Dialogue (target/native cultures). Dialogues focus on (a) description of the phenomena presented, (b) analysis of the thematic features, and (c) reaction to it in terms of one's own culture.
- Stage 4: Transition to language learning. As the desire to know more about the culture is developed in stage 3, language needs become evident. This transition may be accomplished by questioning students about language needs they may perceive or by examining the available resource material.

- Stage 5: Language learning. The textbook can serve as a source of the language material to be presented and practiced and it can also suggest opportunities to use language for communication.
- Stage 6: Verification of perceptions (Target/Native Cultures). Students examine resources, using the language they have learned, in order to develop, confirm, or modify their initial perception.
- Stage 7: Cultural awareness. To achieve the goals of the integrative process requires students to be conscious in their understanding of culture. This consciousness will be available for them in later life and transferable to other circumstances.
- Stage 8: Evaluation of language and cultural proficiency. Language and cultural proficiency are examined together and evaluated globally.

Throughout exploring the previous approaches in teaching culture, one can notice that there has been a shift from the presentation of one culture in the language class to the presentation of two cultures. In other words, because teaching culture should not only be facts about the target culture, understanding the native culture of the learner seems to have a great role in promoting understanding of the target culture. In short, comparing and contrasting students' native culture with the target culture will be beneficial since students will have opportunities of understanding both.

## **2.7. Teaching culture in different EFL contexts**

Different studies have been conducted to study and explore the cultural component in the EFL education, for example, Turkan and Celik (2007), Stapleton (2000), Oguro (2008), Aliakbari (2004). These studies are based on the recent changes in language teaching methodology which give culture an important role in language teaching.

In the following section, a number of related studies will be introduced. These studies are chosen from different EFL countries; Turkey, Japan, Spain, China, Estonia, and Iran. Exploring such studies will help to synthesize an understanding of the place of culture in the Palestinian context that is under study because these contexts are similar to the Palestinian one being an EFL context.

It is worth mentioning that these studies can be arranged under the following categories; English culture in teachers' perception and ELT textbooks, multimedia and culture teaching, and the effects of culture-based programs.

### **2.7.1. English culture in teacher's perception and ELT textbooks.**

Onalan (2005) investigated Turkish teachers' opinions and beliefs on the place of target culture in ELT, as well as their related practices and applications in EFL classrooms in Turkish higher education context. The study showed that although teachers thought that culture was necessary for their students, it generally was not their primary concern compared to other subject matters in ELT.

Stapleton (2000) explored the extent to which culture should be part of the TEFL curriculum in Japan. Respondents, who were native English speaking teachers, felt that "while culture should be part of TEFL, they included it in their classes more randomly than other aspects of their teaching". Stapleton also found that there was a tendency for the language teachers to prefer overt over covert culture when cultural elements were discussed. Responses to questions on ELT books revealed that respondents showed some ambivalence about the cultural content in textbooks, mainly with regard to stereotyping, the American bias, and the superficial nature of the content.

Castro, et al (2004) investigated Spanish secondary school EFL teachers focusing on the extent to which they support the culture learning objectives which have been

given more considerable weight in the Spanish National Curriculum for foreign languages. The findings of the study suggested that Spanish foreign language teachers emphasized language teaching objectives more than culture teaching objectives.

Saluveer (2004) examined the situation of teaching and learning culture in the English classrooms in Estonian secondary schools. His study revealed that although teachers recognized the place of culture in the English class, it was not an integral part of their teaching. In addition, student' knowledge of the target culture appeared to be very limited.

In a study of an English textbook used in Turkey, Turkan and Celik (2007) revealed that the Turkish culture was primarily present. According to them, this presence gives an implication that learners are studying English to speak with visitors who come to their country, but they do not expect to visit or travel to English speaking countries, and so there is no need to study the cultures of these countries. The result of this practice is that learners will speak to visitors within their Turkish cultural framework because "they have not encountered cultural alternatives". Miscommunication is likely to occur, they maintain, because "native and non-native speakers use the same language, but communicate on different cultural wavelengths, uninformed about each other's cultural views and values".

Oguro (2008) described how culture was presented in the fourteen high school EFL reading textbooks in Japan that were approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) at the time of the study. The results of this study showed that the reading passages were edited mostly by deleting and altering portions of the originals, and thus the culture was not present as in the original passages, and pre-reading and post-reading activities/exercises were literal and not designed to foster cultural understanding.

Aliakbari (2004) studied the way culture is addressed in ELT in Iran in general and in high school level in particular in an attempt to investigate its contribution to the improvement of students' intercultural competence. The results of the analysis did not confirm such a quality; rather those textbooks were shallow and superficial with regard to culture treatment. In other words, the ELT textbooks in Iran appeared too weak to provide new information or broaden students' worldview or cultural understanding.

### **2.7.2. Multimedia and culture teaching**

Technology has also been utilized to facilitate teaching culture as well as language. A number of researchers have been interested in utilizing technology for teaching L2 culture to make the target culture more accessible to learners.

Given that pragmatics and culture are "neglected areas" in teaching languages, Atawneh (2003) emphasized that new ELT materials should be oriented towards including pragmatics and other cultural aspects of language "to make language learning closer to natural acquisition". Because electronic technology is becoming a powerful means for flexible learning, Atawneh proposed using electronic programs for teaching culture (especially the pragmatic aspects) in an attempt to bridging the cross-cultural gap that is likely to happen as a result of lacking the sufficient knowledge of the target culture.

Kramersch (1999) analyzed the interaction of text and context in a multimedia Quechua language program. She made suggestions for teaching foreign languages through multimedia technology. Kramersch argued that the use of multimedia technology to teach language in its authentic cultural context represents a "double challenge" for language learners and teachers. Learners are thus faced with the double

task: they have to observe and choose culturally relevant features of the context and to put linguistic features in relation to other features to arrive at "some understanding of language in use".

### **2.7.3. Effects of culture-based programs**

Genc and Bada (2005), with the participation of the students of the ELT department of Çukurova University in Turkey, conducted a study to find out what students thought about the effects of the culture class they attended in the fall semester of 2003-2004 academic year. The findings of the study suggest that a culture class is significantly beneficial in terms of language skills, raising cultural awareness, changing attitudes towards native and target societies, and contribution to the teaching profession.

Tsou (2005) conducted a study to persuade EFL teachers in Taiwan to teach the target language culture. The study showed that when culture lessons were integrated into EFL instruction, students' language proficiency was significantly improved. In addition, they had better interests in language learning.

Jum'a (2008) explored the effect of a culture-based instructional program on Palestinian secondary students' achievement in English and attitudes towards its culture. Subjects of the study were male and female students. Results of the study showed that there were significant differences in the students' achievement in English in favor of the male group while the program had no effects on the students' cultural attitudes towards English.

## **2.8. Summary**

It has become clear that language and culture are inexorably interrelated. Language is used to communicate ideas and feelings in a way that reflects the values and norms of the society. Presenting the language away from its cultural context means ignoring

the important communicative nature of the language. In order to achieve the goals of intercultural understanding, culture should be highlighted as an important element in language teaching.

Based on the fact of language and culture inseparability, all the studies presented in this chapter investigated the extent to which EFL educators realize the role of culture in foreign language education. In addition, they investigated how far the goals of cross-cultural understanding were reflected in EFL materials. Results of these studies reveal that although language and culture connection is recognized in language education, culture teaching does not seem to be highly emphasized in the EFL classroom.

Taking into account that these studies represent different EFL contexts, one can notice the increasing awareness of the importance of culture in EFL education. Therefore, this study aims at examining culture treatment in ELT in Palestine, being an EFL context.



## Chapter Three

### 3.0. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to find out how English culture is presented in the Palestinian secondary English classes. The primary research question that guides this study is: **How is culture presented in the Palestinian secondary English classes?**

This question will be answered by looking into the following related-questions:

- 1. Are the Ministry goals of teaching culture reflected in the textbooks?**
- 2. Are teachers aware of these goals and therefore apply them in their teaching?**
- 3. How do students view the presentation of English culture in their learning of English at high school?**

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to explore and investigate English culture as presented in Palestinian high school education.

For the purpose of this study, the following instruments were used:

- 1. Damen's (1987) textbook evaluation guide of the cultural content.**
- 2. A questionnaire for teachers.**
- 3. A questionnaire for students.**

### 3.1. Teachers' questionnaire

Teachers' questionnaire aims to find an answer for the question: Are teachers aware of the goals of culture teaching that are set by the Ministry of Education?

Accordingly, the following hypotheses were designed:

1. There are no statistically significant differences in culture teaching at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) due to gender.
2. There are no statistically significant differences in culture teaching at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) due to the class/es that the teachers teach.
3. There are no statistically significant differences in culture teaching at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) due to attendance of training courses on teaching culture.
4. There are no statistically significant differences in culture teaching at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) due to the different target countries referred to when discussing culture-related issues.

The questionnaire was distributed to teachers at their schools. Items of the questionnaire were chosen mainly according to the goals of teaching culture presented in the manual "English language Curriculum for Public Schools". In addition, many items were selected from different sources of the reviewed literature related to culture in EFL education.

The teachers' questionnaire was reviewed by a number of experts who decided to raise the number of items from (12) to (16) in order to make it more comprehensive.

This questionnaire consists of two major parts. The first contains general information that included the independent variables; gender, the class that the teachers teach, attendance of a training course on teaching culture, and the referent target country. The second part consists of 16 items to measure the degree to which culture is presented in the secondary English classroom. Teachers were asked to indicate the

extent to which they agree or disagree with each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) being strongly disagree to (5) being strongly agree.

The questionnaire was written in English and was pilot-tested in order to ensure the clarity of each item. Accordingly, wording in some items was modified to make the items more understandable.

Three dimensions have been explored in the questionnaire:

1. Cultural awareness. Items 1,2,3,4,5,6,7, and 12.
2. The place of the native culture. Items: 8,9,10, and 11.
3. The cultural content in the textbooks. Items: 13,14,15, and 16.

### **3.1.1. Population of the study**

The population of the study is Palestinian high school EFL teachers in Hebron district.

### **3.1.2. Subjects of the study**

Eighty Palestinian EFL teachers of grades 11 and 12 in the second semester of the academic year (2008-2009) and the first semester of the academic year (2009-2010) participated in this study. These teachers were from the three directorates of education in Hebron district. There are no discrimination measures for appointing teachers in city schools or in village ones. Culture training provided by the Ministry of Education is measured through the questionnaire. Providing training courses for participants does not favor any school over another which means that they are offered equal training and supervision. The following table shows the demographic data of the subjects.

**Table (1): Demographic data of the subjects**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Missing</b>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	41	51.3	-
Female	39	48.7	
<b>The class the teacher teaches</b>			
11th	16	20.0	-
12 <sup>th</sup>	14	17.5	
both	50	62.5	
<b>Participating in a training course on teaching culture</b>			
Yes	28	35.0	2
No	50	62.5	
<b>The referent country when discussing culture-related issues</b>			
The United States of America	32	40.0	-
Britain	40	50.0	
Other English-speaking countries	8	10.0	

**Table (2): (Chi Sq) results for the differences in teaching culture according to gender with numbers and percentages.**

<b>Gender/The referent target country/ies</b>	<b>America</b>	<b>Britain</b>	<b>Other English-speaking countries</b>	<b>Total</b>
Male	14 34.1	25 61.0	2 4.9	41 19.2
Female	18 46.2	15 38.5	6 15.4	39 17.9
Total	32 40.0	40 50.0	8 10.0	78 100

**Chi = 4.953      df = 2      sig = 0.084**

The preceding table shows the different countries referred to when discussing culture-related issues for both genders. 46% of the female teachers teach the American culture while 61% of the male teachers teach the British culture.

**Table (3): (Chi sq) results for the differences in attendance of training courses on teaching culture according to the class that the teachers teach with numbers and percentages.**

<b>The class/ Attendance of training courses on teaching culture</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
11 <sup>th</sup>	4 26.7	11 73.3	15 19.2
12 <sup>th</sup>	7 50.0	7 50.0	14 17.9
both	17 34.7	32 65.3	49 62.8
Total	28 35.9	50 64.1	78 100

**Chi = 4.953      df = 2      sig = 0.084**

The preceding table shows that the 50% of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers have attended training courses on teaching culture while 73% of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade teachers have not attended these training courses.

### **3.1.3. Validity of the questionnaire**

In order to establish the validity of the questionnaire, a number of experts were asked to evaluate and modify it. All their suggestions and modifications were taken into consideration. In addition, the questionnaire validity was ensured by using

Pearson Correlation with total degree for each of the questionnaire items as shown in table (4).

**Table (4): Pearson Correlation results for linkage matrix of the questionnaire items for high school EFL teachers in Hebron district with total degree**

No.	Item	Value of (R)	Significance
1.	It is important for EFL teachers to include aspects of the target culture in their classroom teaching.	0.41	0.000
2.	I incorporate culture teaching in my classes.	0.29	0.000
3.	My cultural instruction is planned.	0.43	0.000
4.	I think that teaching culture will foster my students' respect for self and others.	0.50	0.000
5.	I help students recognize countries where English is spoken as well as their capital cities and other related information.	0.41	0.000
6.	I think that it is important to teach students about traditions, customs, and social relationships of the target culture.	0.56	0.000
7.	I think that it is important to teach students about literature and fine arts of the target culture.	0.48	0.000
8.	I think that learning about the target culture will enhance students'	0.51	0.000

	understanding of the Palestinian culture.		
9.	I encourage my students to have a sense of belonging to our Palestinian cultural backgrounds.	0.57	0.000
10.	I teach cultural aspects where English differs from Arabic (requesting, complimenting ...).	0.48	0.000
11.	I teach the Palestinian culture with connection to the Arab and Islamic culture and heritage.	0.46	0.000
12.	I think that culture teaching will help students contribute to building human civilization.	0.52	0.000
13.	I think that the school textbooks provide enough material for discussing culture-related issues.	0.25	0.013
14.	I think that the cultural elements in the textbooks are visible.	0.41	0.000
15.	I use materials other than the school textbooks to teach target culture-related issues (the Internet, realia ...).	0.43	0.000
16.	I think that the textbooks present a variety of cultures.	0.65	0.000



The preceding table shows that all the values of the linkage matrix items for the presentation of culture in the secondary English classes in Hebron district with the total degree denote significance which asserts that they contribute to assessing the degree of teaching culture for the participants.

#### **3.1.4. Reliability of the questionnaire**

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach Alpha factor was calculated to check the internal coordination. The value of reliability for total degree was (0.79). This indicates the questionnaire is of high value of reliability

#### **3.1.5. Statistical Analysis**

Responses were given numbers on a Likert scale; strongly disagree (1degree), disagree (2 degrees), neutral (3 degrees), agree (4 degrees), and strongly agree (5 degrees). The questionnaire was designed in positive way.

Statistical analysis for the data was conducted by computing numbers, percentages, means, and standard deviation. The hypotheses of the study were checked at the level ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) using the following statistical tests: (T test), (one way analysis of variance), (Tukey Test), (Pearson Correlation), (Chi Sq), and (Cronbach Alpha). The statistical analysis was conducted by the computer using SPSS.

### **3.2. Students' questionnaire**

Students' questionnaire aims to find an answer for the question: How do students view the presentation of English culture in their learning of English at high school?

The questionnaire was developed after being reviewed by a number of experts. In addition, it was pilot-tested to ensure the clarity of each item.

The questionnaire consists of five items and includes a clarification of what is meant by culture in EFL education. Students filled out the answers to the questionnaire at Hebron University. Instructions were given in English and Arabic to ensure that all students understood the questionnaire.

### **3.2.1. Subjects of the study**

Eighty Palestinian freshman male and female students of the English department at Hebron University in the fall semester of the academic year 2009-2010 participated in this questionnaire. Those students were chosen to participate in this questionnaire because they have recently finished their high school.

### **3.2.2. Validity of the questionnaire**

In order to establish the validity of the questionnaire, a number of experts were asked to evaluate and modify it. All their suggestions and modifications were taken into consideration.

### **3.2.3. Statistical analysis**

Statistical analysis for the data was conducted by computing percentages only since the aim of the questionnaire is to get students' general views with regard to culture presentation in their learning experience at high school.

## **3.3. The textbook evaluation guide**

The cultural content of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks in the series 'English for Palestine' (EFP) was examined according to Damen's (1987) textbook evaluation guide of the cultural content. The questions in Damen's evaluation guide were

answered based on the textbooks and the manual "English language Curriculum for Public Schools" which was produced by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in 1999. This manual presents the four meanings of culture that are found in "English for Palestine". These four meanings are:

- a. Palestinian cultural heritage: In this category, topics related directly to Palestine are covered including geography, history, natural resources, social classes, economy, population, demography lifestyles, refugees, aspirations, statehood, and future.
- b. Arab/Islamic cultural heritage: The contents of this category are related to what is not Palestinian but marked as Arab or Islamic.
- c. Target cultural heritage: This category contains cultural information which is neither Palestinian nor Arab but related to English culture.
- d. Global cultural heritage: This category involves cultural information that belongs to human cultural heritage and civilization.

## Chapter Four

### 4.0. Results and discussion

#### 4.1. Teachers' Questionnaire

This section presents and discusses the results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire. It is worth mentioning that these results have been discussed with a number of people in the field; university instructors, supervisors, and senior students of the English department at Hebron University in separate interviews. Responses of the interviewees to these results are included in the discussion.

#### **Question one: What is the degree of teaching culture for high school EFL teachers in Hebron district?**

To answer this question, numbers, means, standard deviations were computed for the degree of teaching culture as shown in table (5).

**Table (5): Number, mean, and standard deviation for the degree of teaching culture for high school EFL teachers in Hebron district**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>
Total degree for teaching culture	80	3.50	0.47
Cultural awareness	80	3.70	0.51
The place of the native culture	80	3.92	0.61
The cultural elements in the textbooks	80	2.75	0.73

Table (5) shows that the degree of teaching culture in general was high. Mean for this degree was 3.50 with a standard deviation 0.47. While the mean for the dimensions of the study ranged between high (native culture 3.92 and cultural

awareness 3.70) and medium for the cultural elements in the textbooks with a mean 2.75. Means and standard deviations were used to know the most important aspects of culture teaching for the subjects.

**Question Two: What are the most important aspects of teaching culture for the subjects?**

To answer this question means and standard deviations were computed for the most important aspects of teaching culture as shown in table (6).

**Table (6): Means and standard deviations for the aspects of teaching culture arranged according to importance (level of agreement from the respondents).**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>
I encourage my students to have a sense of belonging to our Palestinian cultural backgrounds.	4.41	0.77
I think that it is important to teach students about traditions, customs, and social relationships of the target culture.	4.00	0.99
I think that culture teaching will help students contribute to building human civilization.	3.95	0.81
I teach the Palestinian culture with connection to the Arab and Islamic culture and heritage.	3.90	0.90
I teach cultural aspects where English differs from Arabic (requesting, complimenting ...).	3.89	0.88
It is important for EFL teachers to include aspects of the target culture in their classroom teaching.	3.88	0.75

I think that teaching culture will foster my students' respect for self and others.	3.84	0.92
I think that it is important to teach students about literature and fine arts of the target culture.	3.74	0.98
I help students recognize countries where English is spoken as well as their capital cities and other related information.	3.65	0.98
I think that learning about the target culture will enhance students' understanding of the Palestinian culture.	3.60	0.99
My cultural instruction is planned.	3.51	0.94
I incorporate culture teaching in my classes.	3.30	0.97
I use materials other than the school textbooks to teach target culture-related issues (the Internet, realia ...).	3.04	1.07
I think that the textbooks present a variety of cultures.	2.88	1.00
I think that the school textbooks provide enough material for discussing culture-related issues.	2.76	0.97
I think that the cultural elements in the textbooks are visible.	2.71	0.94

Table (6) arranges the questionnaire items according to importance. On the one hand, the most important aspects of teaching culture were: first, item (9) with a mean (4.41): I encourage my students to have a sense of belonging to our Palestinian cultural backgrounds. Second, item (6) with a mean (4.00): I think that it is important to teach students about traditions, customs, and social relationships of the target

culture. Third, item (12) with a mean (3.95): I think that culture teaching will help students contribute to building human civilization.

The above mentioned results reveal teachers' recognition of the importance of connecting students to their native cultural backgrounds and of the importance of culture teaching in helping students contribute to building human civilization which are considered by the Ministry of Education among the important goals of teaching culture. In addition, teachers' recognition of the importance of teaching the aspects of what is called the small (c) culture is very much noticed. This means that teachers in general are aware of the importance of these aspects of culture in shaping peoples views of the world.

On the other hand, there was a clear weakness in some of the aspects of teaching culture for the participants with regard to first, item (14) with a mean (2.71): I think that the cultural elements in the textbooks are visible. Second, item (13) with a mean (2.76): I think that the school textbooks provide enough material for discussing culture-related issues. And finally, item (16) with a mean (2.88): I think that the textbooks present a variety of cultures.

The preceding results reflect teacher' dissatisfaction with the kind of the cultural content presented in the textbooks they use. Teachers indicated that the cultural elements in the textbooks were invisible. An important question arises in this context: How can teachers teach culture if its elements, according to teachers, are invisible?

Teachers also showed their dissatisfaction with the amount of the material that stimulates cultural discussion. This means that cultural discussion is somewhat limited due to the limited material that stimulates it.

Since the Palestinian English curriculum aims at introducing students to Palestinian, Arab, target, and global cultural heritage, this should be reflected in the textbooks, i.e. the textbook should provide a variety of cultures. Yet, teachers find that the textbooks they use do not present a variety of cultures.

It is clearly noticed that teachers' responses regarding the cultural elements in the textbooks (items 13, 14, 15, and 16) are found in the lowest scale of importance compared to other aspects of culture teaching which are presented in table (6) of the preceding chapter. This means that teachers' responses to this dimension of culture teaching were very much close, and so they can raise big questions about teachers' application of culture teaching and target cultural content in the textbooks.

Throughout the previous results, teachers' dissatisfaction with the cultural content in the textbooks they use has become apparent. This result is similar to the results of the study conducted by Stapleton (2000) in Japan which also revealed teachers' dissatisfaction with the cultural content in the ELT textbooks they use.

#### **Discussion of hypotheses:**

**First hypothesis: There are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the degree of teaching culture and its dimensions (cultural awareness, the place of the native culture, and the cultural elements in the textbooks) for high school EFL teachers in Hebron district due to gender.**

To prove the first hypothesis, (T- test) was carried out to investigate the differences in culture teaching and its dimensions due to gender and this is shown in table (7).

**T-test results for the differences in teaching culture and its dimensions due to gender.**



**Table (7): culture teaching**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>	<b>Degree of Freedom</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Male	40	3.59	0.36	77	1.375	0.173
Female	39	3.46	0.47			

Table (7) shows that there are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the degree of teaching culture due to gender. Slight differences are noticed for the interest of male teachers whose degree of teaching culture was higher than that of the female teachers. The mean for teaching culture was (3.59) for the males while it was (3.46) for the females. So the first hypothesis is accepted.

**Table (8): Cultural awareness**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>	<b>Degree of Freedom</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Male	40	3.79	0.30	77	1.093	0.278
Female	39	3.68	0.56			

Table (8) shows that there are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the degree of cultural awareness due to gender. There were slight differences for the interest of the males whose degree of cultural awareness was higher than that of females. Mean of the degree of culture teaching for males was (3.79) while it was (3.68) for the females, so the first sub hypothesis is accepted.

**Table (9): The place of the native culture**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>	<b>Degree of Freedom</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Male	40	4.09	0.45	77	2.349	0.021
Female	39	3.81	0.59			

Table (9) shows that there are significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the place of the native culture due to gender. The differences were for the interest of the males, i.e. the place of the native culture in the performance of the male teachers was higher than that of the females. Mean for culture teaching was (4.09) for the males and (3.81) for the females, so the second sub hypothesis is rejected.

A number of interesting explanations have been provided by the interviewees regarding the previous point. Some interviewees think that male teachers are more traditional, and so they tend to teach what is only required, while female teachers are seen as more flexible and more open to change. Other interviewees think that emphasizing the Palestinian culture more than the target culture tends to be a kind of political attitude. That is, language and culture are important parts of one's identity. Generally speaking, politics seems to be one of the important concerns for Palestinians especially for men; they always connect the English language to the USA which gives a lot of support to our enemies; the Israelis. These explanations do not cancel the possibility that these teachers do not have enough target cultural background that could help them in handling the cultural issues in their teaching.

**Table (10): The cultural elements in the textbooks**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>	<b>Degree of Freedom</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Male	40	2.77	0.81	77	0.115	0.909
Female	39	2.75	0.64			

This table shows that there are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the degree of the cultural elements in the textbooks due to gender. Differences were very slight for the interest of the males. The degree of the cultural elements in the textbooks according to males was a little bit higher than that of the females. Mean for the cultural elements in the textbooks was (2.77) for the males and (2.75) for the females, so the third sub hypothesis is accepted.

**Second hypothesis: There are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the degree of teaching culture and its dimensions (cultural awareness, the place of the native culture , and the cultural element in the textbooks) for high school EFL teachers in Hebron district due to the class that the teachers teach.**

To prove the second hypothesis, one way analysis of variance was carried out to investigate the differences in culture teaching and its dimensions due to the class that the teachers teach. This is shown in table (11).

**Table (11): Results of one way analysis of variance for the degree of teaching culture for teachers in Hebron district.**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Source of Variance</b>	<b>Degree of Freedom</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Culture teaching	Between Groups	2	1.142	0.571	2.627	0.079
	Within Groups	77	16.740	0.217		
	Total	79	17.882			
Cultural awareness	Between Groups	2	1.611	0.806	3.214	0.046
	Within Groups	77	19.302	0.251		
	Total	79	20.914			
The place of the native culture	Between Groups	2	1.222	0.611	1.617	0.205
	Within Groups	77	29.102	0.378		
	Total	79	30.324			
The cultural elements in the textbooks	Between Groups	2	0.533	0.266	0.492	0.613
	Within Groups	75	40.592	0.541		
	Total	77	41.125			

On the one hand, table (11) shows that there are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in total degree and two of the aspects of the study which are the place of the native culture and the cultural elements in the textbooks. On the other hand, it shows that there are significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in cultural awareness. To find the source of these differences (Tukey Test) was carried out for making a comparison between two of the dimensions, i.e. in the degree of cultural awareness for teachers and the class that the teacher teach as shown in table (12).

**Table (12): Tukey test results of the comparison between cultural awareness and the class that the teachers teach**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Comparisons</b>	<b>11th</b>	<b>12th</b>	<b>both</b>
<b>Cultural awareness</b>	11 <sup>th</sup>		0.26116	-0.07313
	12 <sup>th</sup>			-0.33429
	both			

The comparisons between the two dimensions presented in the previous table show that the differences in teaching culture in the aspect of cultural awareness of teachers due to the class that the teacher teaches was between the 12<sup>th</sup> grade teaches and the teachers who teach both grades for the interest of teachers who teach both grades. The cultural awareness was higher for teachers who teach both grades as shown in table (13).

**Table (13): Cultural awareness for teachers according to the class that the teachers teach**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>
<b>Cultural awareness</b>	11 <sup>th</sup>	16	3.64	0.41
	12 <sup>th</sup>	14	3.42	0.77
	Both	50	3.80	0.42

People who were interviewed had a common point of view regarding the previous result, i.e. the cultural awareness of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers is lower than that of the other teachers. They all agreed that most of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers have a single aim in their minds; teaching about the language. They want students to learn some language skills to enable them to score well in the Tawjihi exam. So one can argue that it is not a matter of having little awareness, rather it is a matter of prioritizing what students really need in order to pass the Tawjihi exam.

**Third Hypothesis: There are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the degree of teaching culture and its dimensions (cultural awareness, the place of the native culture, and the cultural elements in the textbooks) for high school EFL teachers in Hebron district due to attending training courses on teaching culture.**

To prove that the third hypothesis, (T-Test) was carried out to investigate the differences in teaching culture and its dimensions due to gender as shown in table (14).

**(T-Tests) results for the differences in the degree of teaching culture and its dimensions due to participating in training courses on teaching culture.**

**Table (14): Culture teaching**

<b>Attendance of training courses on teaching culture</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>	<b>Degree of Freedom</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Yes	28	3.40	0.55	76	-1.354	0.180
No	50	3.56	0.42			

Table (14) shows that there are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the degree of teaching culture due to attendance of training course on teaching culture. The differences were slight for the interest of teachers who did not attend a training course on teaching culture. The degree of teaching culture was higher for the group that did not attend training courses on teaching culture than that attended these courses. Mean for the degree of teaching culture was (3.56) for the group that did not attend training courses on teaching culture while it was (3.40) for the group that attended these courses, so the third hypothesis is accepted.

**Table (15): Cultural Awareness**

<b>Attendance of training courses on teaching culture</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>	<b>Degree of Freedom</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Yes	28	3.57	0.60	76	-1.720	0.090
No	50	3.78	0.45			

Table (15) shows that there are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the degree of cultural awareness due to attendance of training courses on teaching culture. Differences were slight for the interest of teachers who did not attend training course on teaching culture. The degree of cultural awareness was higher for the teachers who did not attend training course on teaching culture with a mean (3.78) and (3.57) for those who attended training courses on teaching culture. This means that the first sub hypothesis is accepted.

**Table (16): The place of the native culture**

<b>Attendance of training courses on teaching culture</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>	<b>Degree of Freedom</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Yes	28	3.83	0.69	76	-0.850	0.398
No	50	3.95	0.57			

Table (16) shows that there are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the degree of the place of the native culture due to attendance of training courses on teaching culture. Differences were slight for the interest of teachers who did not attend training courses on teaching culture, i.e. the place of the native culture for the group who did not attend training courses on teaching culture was higher than that of the group who attended these courses. Mean was (3.95) for teachers who did not attend training courses on teaching culture while it was (3.83) for those who attended the courses, so the second sub hypothesis is accepted.



**Table (17): The cultural elements in the textbooks**

<b>Attendance of training courses on teaching culture</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>	<b>Degree of Freedom</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Yes	27	2.74	0.69	74	-0.167	0.868
No	49	2.77	0.57			

Table (17) shows that there are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the degree of the cultural elements in the textbooks due to attendance of training courses on teaching culture. Differences were very slight for the interest of teachers who did not attend training courses on teaching culture. The degree of the cultural elements in the textbooks, according to them, was higher than what the other group indicated. Mean was (2.77) for teachers who did not attend training courses on teaching culture while it was (2.74) for those who attended these courses, so the third sub hypothesis is accepted.

It would be ironic to mention that the interviews with the supervisors revealed that the training courses that are offered by the Ministry of Education are not about culture teaching, on the contrary, most of these courses and workshops are about methodologies. Cultural discussion might be incidental in the workshops but not planned. This fact can explain why there are no significant differences between the group who indicated that they have attended training courses on teaching culture and the group that indicated that they have not attended these courses.

An important question can be raised concerning the previous point; why is culture neglected in the Ministry's training courses and workshops?

**Fourth Hypothesis: There are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the degree of teaching culture and its dimensions (cultural awareness, the place of the native culture, and the cultural elements in the textbooks) for high school EFL teachers in Hebron district due to the different target countries referred to when discussing culture-related issues.**

To prove that the fourth hypothesis, one way analysis of variance was carried out to investigate the differences in teaching culture and its dimensions due to the difference in the target country referred to when discussing culture-related issues as shown in table (18).

**Table (18): Results of one way analysis of variance for the differences in teaching culture and its dimensions due to the different target country/ies referred to when discussing culture-related issues in Hebron district.**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Source of Variance</b>	<b>Degree of Freedom</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F Value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Culture teaching	Between Groups	2	1.007	0.504	2.298	0.107
	Within Groups	77	16.875	0.214		
	Total	79	17.882			
Cultural awareness	Between Groups	2	2.214	1.107	4.557	0.013
	Within Groups	77	18.700	0.243		
	Total	79	20.914			

The place of the native culture	Between Groups	2	0.971	0.486		0.286
	Within Groups	77	29.353	0.381		
	Total	79	30.324			
The cultural elements in the textbooks	Between Groups	2	0.235	0.118		0.806
	Within Groups	75	40.890	0.545		
	Total	77	41.125			

On the one hand, this table shows that there are no significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the total degree and two of the dimensions of the study which are the place of the native culture and the cultural elements in the textbooks. On the other hand, there are significant differences at ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) in the dimension of cultural awareness. To find the source of this difference, (Tukey Test) was carried out for making a comparison between two of the dimensions, i.e. in the degree of cultural awareness for teachers and the different target country referred to when discussing culture-related issues. This is shown in table (19).

**Table (19): Tukey test results for the comparison between cultural awareness and the different target countries referred to when discussing culture-related issues**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Comparisons</b>	<b>America</b>	<b>Britain</b>	<b>Other English-speaking countries</b>
<b>Cultural awareness</b>	America		0.18672	0.57422
	Britain			0.38750
	Other English-speaking countries			

The comparison between the two dimensions in the previous table reveals that the differences in teaching culture in the aspect of cultural awareness for teachers due to the difference in the target country referred to when discussing target culture related issues was between teachers who chose the American culture and those who chose other English-speaking countries for the interest of teachers who teach the American culture. Cultural awareness was higher for the teachers who chose the American culture than those who chose other English-speaking countries, and this is shown in table (20).

**Table (20): Cultural awareness for teachers according to the target country referred to when discussing culture-related issues.**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>The referent target country</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Deviation</b>
<b>Cultural awareness</b>	America	32	3.85	0.33
	Britain	40	3.66	0.55
	Other English-speaking countries	8	3.28	0.68

When discussing the results of the previous table, it is important to present the fact that while 46% of the female teachers teach the American culture, 61% of the male teachers teach the British culture as shown in the following table.

<b>Gender/ Attendance of training courses on teaching culture</b>	<b>The United States of America</b>	<b>Britain</b>	<b>Other English-speaking countries</b>	<b>Total</b>
Male	14 34.1	25 61.0	2 4.9	41 19.2
Female	18 46.2	15 38.5	6 15.4	39 17.9
Total	32 40.0	40 50.0	8 10.0	78 100

**Chi = 4.953      df = 2      sig = 0.084**

When being introduced to the previous results, the interviewees have associated them to the place of the American culture in the Arab world which is noticed in many aspects of people's daily life, for example, the fast food restaurants, the popular American movies and TV shows added to communication when we come to talk about the internet (U tube and Facebook). In other words, American culture in the Arab world seems to be more dominant. Generally speaking, this explanation can be applied to explain that teachers (of both genders) who teach the American culture have more cultural awareness.

The other question that arises here: Why do most of the male teachers tend to teach the British culture? Some interviewees have connected this fact to the age factor. To illustrate, older generation teachers prefer to teach the British culture because they view it as the original source of the language. Moreover, while the USA seems to have a "multicultural mix", the British culture seems to be "unique". An interesting explanation was provided by one of the interviewees, that is; since the Palestinian society is an eastern society where male chauvinism is clearly noticed, the British culture will be chosen in teaching since males view it as more "manly" and "strict".

The role of the British mandate in the first half of the twentieth century has had very influential effects on the countries that were under this mandate like Jordan and Palestine in many aspects of life. Education was one of the most important aspects that has been affected by this mandate. The Jordanian British English curriculum was used in the Palestinian schools before the advent of the new Palestinian curriculum. Being affected by this curriculum as students, teachers' tendency towards teaching the British culture becomes understandable.

### **Findings about the categories tested in the teachers' questionnaire**

Throughout the interviews that were conducted, a number of core issues have been discussed.

#### **1. The place of the native culture in the English classroom.**

The interviewees emphasized the importance of students' native culture in the English class, that is, the native culture can play an influential role in language use. They believed that when introducing the native culture, something relevant to students will be presented in English. Here, students will be more confident to talk and express themselves and their culture in the

target language. One can add the fact that presenting the native culture along with the target culture in the English class will help in making cultural comparison which has a critical role in enhancing students' understanding for both cultures.

Recognition of the importance of including students' native culture in the English class has also been reflected in teachers' responses to the teachers' questionnaire. The place of the native culture was one of the cores or the dimensions that were investigated in the questionnaire. Results of the questionnaire revealed that the degree of the place of the native culture was the highest compared to the other dimensions of the study with a mean (3.92).

## **2. The attitude toward teaching the American culture.**

It has been clear throughout teachers' responses that the teachers who have the highest cultural awareness are the ones who teach the American culture. Based on the fact that the Palestinian English curriculum is a British English curriculum, this result seems to be somehow surprising. The place of the American culture in the world nowadays is highly recognized in different aspect of the life from fast food meals and famous TV shows to international communications. In this regard, one can argue that the attitude towards teaching the American culture is justified.

## **3. The training courses on teaching culture.**

Reviewing the literature on culture teaching revealed that culture teaching is not an easy process. This means that leaving it for the teacher to choose to teach, to marginalize, or even to neglect the target culture is not beneficial.

Teachers need such help i.e. acquainting teachers with the best ways of how to handle cultural issues will limit the chance of avoiding teaching culture.

#### 4. **The negative wash back effects of the Tawjihi exam.**

An apparent consensus between the interviewees has been noticed regarding the bad effects of the Tawjihi exam on the English teaching process. Ideally speaking, English is taught in schools in order to promote cross-cultural understanding. Yet, unfortunately, because of various types of pressure put on the teacher, teachers' main concern in teaching English in the secondary stage becomes helping students to pass the Tawjihi exam which overemphasizes the linguistic competence over the sociocultural competence. In other words, teachers' tendency toward teaching students how to pass the Tawjihi exam becomes justified since teacher's success is measured by the number of students who pass this exam.

#### **4.2. Students' questionnaire**

This section discusses the findings obtained from the students' questionnaire.

##### **Question one: Have you come across any aspect of life in Britain or in the United States in your study of English?**

Most of the participants (71.25 %) indicated that they came across aspects of British and American life. While (28.75 %) of the participants indicated that they have not come across any of these aspects. This means that throughout students' experience at high school, the target culture was present. Based on the answers of the majority of the participants, the fact that (28.75 %) of the participants indicated that



they did not come across these aspects of culture means that they did not recognize cultural items.

**Question two: When learning English, I prefer reading more about English / Arabic culture.**

While (60 %) of the participants indicated that they preferred reading more about English culture, (40 %) indicated that they preferred reading more about Arabic culture. Most of the participants preferred to read more about the English culture. This result is understandable because students will be introduced to aspects of life of the target culture that they did not know before. It is worth mentioning that introducing the target culture does not marginalize the place of the native culture. The importance of the native culture in the EFL classroom has become undisputed, and this fact has been emphasized in the teachers' questionnaire that has already been presented in the previous section of this chapter. The point to be raised in this context is that presenting aspects of the target culture will create opportunities to make cultural comparison between the native and the target culture which means more understanding of both.

**Question three: Do you think your teachers knew enough about British and American cultures from their teaching?**

(76.25 %) of the participants indicated that their teachers knew much about the British and American cultures while (23.75 %) thought that their teachers did not know much about these cultures. The fact that most of the participants (76.25 %) thought that their teachers knew enough about the target culture has been emphasized throughout the teachers' questionnaire that was presented in the previous section of

this chapter. Teachers' questionnaire revealed that cultural awareness for teachers was high in general.

**Question four: Is the target culture clearly presented in the textbooks?**

(45 %) of the participants indicated that the target culture was clearly presented in the textbooks while (55 %) of them thought that the target culture was not clearly presented. The majority of the students who participated in this study think that the target culture was not clearly presented in the textbooks. This result is similar to the result obtained from the teachers' questionnaire which revealed that teachers were not satisfied with the target cultural content in the textbooks. For example, most of the teachers agreed that the target cultural elements in the textbooks were somehow invisible.

One of the interesting comments that were provided by students regarding textbooks is the following;

- "I think that the English textbook isn't useful as it should be, it does not focus on listening or speaking. It concentrates on grammar and reading. I know it is important to learn grammar and reading, but speaking and listening are more important. We need to practice English not just learn it".

This point has also been raised when discussing the findings obtained from the teachers' questionnaire. Teachers' trend toward teaching what helps students pass the Tawjihi exam largely affect culture teaching since the cultural content of the textbook is neglected in this exam. One can argue that culture presentation is marginalized not because it is not found in the textbooks, rather because teachers do not emphasize it to the degree they emphasize the linguistic content. In short, overemphasizing grammar

teaching (the linguistic content) will naturally result in deemphasizing the cultural content.

**Question five: Do you think English textbooks should be written by local people (Palestinian) / British or Americans? And why?**

(40 %) of the participants indicated that English textbooks should be written by local experts (Palestinians) while the majority (60 %) preferred having British or American authors for these textbooks.

A number of explanations were provided by students for choosing Palestinian or British or American to write the textbooks.

Students who chose Palestinians as textbook writers have some explanations. Among these are the following; (as written by students)

- "Because students are Palestinians so they have the same culture".
- "Palestinians who lived in these countries because they know what is advantageous for us".
- "Palestinians, because they know what we should know".
- "Palestinians, because if we study the textbooks were written by British and Americans, we may study about their life not about ours".

The political dimension appeared clearly in some explanations for choosing Palestinians as textbook writers, for example;

- "Palestinians, because if these textbooks were written by British or Americans, they may support their ideas and promote their culture".

The religious dimension was also apparent in some explanations for choosing Palestinians as textbook writers, for example;

- "We are Muslims and British and American cultures do not fit our culture".

On the other hand, many explanations were provided for choosing British or Americans as textbook writers. Among these are the following;

- "They know more about their culture".
- "It is their language".
- "British and Americans, because in the university we started learning something completely different from what we learned at school".
- "It will be helpful for students to learn original language".

In these responses, one can notice that choosing Palestinian textbook writers was mainly in order to include in the textbooks what suits Palestinian students. While it is clear that students agreed that because English is the language of the British and the Americans, they know more about it.

In short, the results obtained from the students' questionnaire were very close to the results obtained from teachers' questionnaire. In addition, some of the findings were similar to those obtained by Merrouche (2009). Merrouche investigated Middle and secondary school Algerian students' perceptions of the English language learning experience and their attitudes towards English-speaking cultures. Following are some extracts of students answers as presented by Merrouche:

When asked if it is important to know about the culture(s) of English-speaking people, their way(s) of life, their worldview(s), one of the answers provided was;

- "The English language is not our national language. We should rather learn the Arabic language, culture and religion".

When asked if they think that learning about the culture(s) of English-speaking countries will have negative effects on them, among the answers were;

- "Learning about the culture(s) of English-speaking countries makes us neglect our Islamic religion and Arabic language".

- "Life in English-speaking countries is different from ours. They have different religious beliefs. Some of their acts are forbidden in our religion".

From the preceding examples, one can notice that the religious dimension is also present in the answers of the Algerian students. In other words, some students preferred to study more about the Arabic culture because of non-linguistic reasons i.e. religious or political.

### **4.3. The cultural content**

The previous two sections of this chapter presented and discussed the results obtained from both the teachers' questionnaire and the students' questionnaire. This section presents and discusses the results obtained from the textbook evaluation guide.

The cultural content for the Palestinian English textbooks for the grades 11 and 12 will be analyzed with reference to Damen's 1987 textbook evaluation guide. In this evaluation guide, a set of questions are presented under different headings. Some of these questions will have one answer for both of the textbooks because such questions are directly linked to the Palestinian English curriculum in general. It should be noted that some ideas might be repeated in different questions because the topics in some questions are very much interrelated.

It is important to mention here that the manual "English Language Curriculum for Public Schools/ Grades 1-12" is an important reference in answering some questions presented in the textbook evaluation guide especially the section that is concerned with the rationale of the two textbooks.

Following are the questions in Damen's 1987 textbook evaluation guide with their answers about the textbooks that are investigation.

#### **Part I. General descriptive information**

##### **I.A. Rationale: (Grade 11 and 12)**

###### **1. For whom is the textbook intended?**

English for Palestine (EFP) is the first English language curriculum for Palestinian schools. It intended for Palestinian students studying at Palestinian schools.

###### **2. What is the rationale for the textbook?**

The preface of the series *English for Palestine (EFP)* mentions that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) pays great attention to the school textbooks

"since they are the foundation of the curriculum and an indispensable medium of learning". This means that the rationale for teaching English as a foreign language in Palestine, as mentioned in the manual 'English Language Curriculum for Public Schools', should be reflected in "English for Palestine". (EFP) acknowledges the need for studying a second/foreign language for the following reasons:

a. Improving employment opportunities: Because future employment options will be increasingly governed by an international marketplace, one's ability to communicate with people in other countries will qualify him/her to compete for jobs created by the global economy. One will also be able to exchange information and ideas with different cultures easily if he has the basic level of understanding.

b. Valuing and connecting with other cultures: Effective cross-cultural communication is possible only with a good understanding of other cultures. This means that cultural awareness should be emphasized which, in turn, will help in accepting and valuing other cultures.

In addition, students will never truly master the language they study without a basic understanding of its cultural context. Studying other cultures will help students understand their own culture since they will compare and contrast it to the target culture they study.

c. Enhancing mental capacity: "Students who study other cultures and the languages of these cultures will become active thinkers".

d. Enhancing international communication: Since English is recognized as the major international language. Its value in international communication, economy, and global community is also recognized. This functional knowledge of English is very much recognized in 'English for Palestine'. This

knowledge will help school graduates utilize occupational opportunities in Palestine and many regions of the world. In addition, by learning English, "students will be empowered with language skills and literacy necessary to become productive workers". This, in turn, will help Palestine to have a place in the global market and the world of global communication.

The above mentioned rationalization reveals that the importance of English and its status world wide is highly recognized by curriculum designers.

**3. What is the primary goal of the presentation of cultural information? Is this goal secondary to other goals? Is the goal of cultural instruction explicitly stated?**

In the preface to (EFP), the Ministry of Education and Higher Education indicates that it is committed to producing a national curriculum "that meets the needs and aspirations of Palestinian society". It also recognizes that such a curriculum "will foster Palestinian values and traditions".

One of the major domains that the Palestinian English curriculum aims to develop is cultural awareness. According to the manual 'English Language Curriculum for Public Schools', the principles of the first Palestinian curriculum emphasize the need to acquaint students with and enhance their understanding of "the history of the Palestinian people within the broader Arab-Islamic context". In addition, the curriculum aims at "raising students' awareness of the present and the outlook towards the future of mankind". A number of goals have been set which form the "basis" for the domain of cultural awareness for the Palestinian EFL curriculum. Among these are the following:



- a. To strengthen the Palestinian identity of students together with the connection with the Arab and Islamic culture and heritage.
- b. To assist students in developing an integrative and holistic personality; Palestinian, Arab, Islamic, and Global.
- c. To build understanding of, and sensitivity towards, own and other cultural traditions.

While the preceding objectives are among the main curriculum objectives regarding developing cultural awareness, the target culture also has its place in the objectives; "The curriculum also aims to foster in students a positive attitude towards English and the importance of learning it". It has been suggested that students should be acquainted with some aspects of the target language culture. Among these are the following:

- a. Becoming aware of typical behaviors in common everyday situations in the target culture.
- b. Becoming familiar with important holidays and celebrations of the target culture.
- c. Recognizing countries where English is spoken as well as their capital cities and other geographic features.
- d. Recognizing gestures used by people of the target culture.

Two important questions arise in this context:

- Do textbooks include the preceding target cultural elements? And,
- Do teachers recognize these elements and so clarify more about them for their students?

The goal of presenting cultural information, as mentioned in the manual 'English Language Curriculum for Public schools', is among the major domains that the

curriculum aims to develop (like communicative competence and thinking skills). In other word, the goal of presenting cultural information is at the same degree of importance as other goals.

While the goals of cultural instruction are explicitly stated in the manual 'English Language Curriculum for Public Schools', nothing is mentioned in the teacher's books about how to deal with or present cultural information.

#### **4. What type of textbook does this textbook (*EFP*) represent?**

It is difficult to put "English for Palestine" under a specific category. According to Damen's (1987: 263-264) classification of types of student textbooks, *English for Palestine* for the grades 11 and 12 could be classified as a traditional textbook in which linguistic skills training is still primary, but the cultural focus is less implicit in comparison to traditional textbooks which focus primarily on linguistic skills and any cultural information presented is implicit or merely part of the linguistic data used for linguistic practice or to demonstrate linguistic points.

The texts in this type of traditional textbook provide practice of language in use, promote vocabulary development, and may explore semantic ranges. In addition, the cultural information is more apparent, but still the "burden of explanation and instruction is left to the teacher" Damen (1987: 263-264).

In addition, 'English for Palestine' for the grades 11 and 12 could be classified as communicative textbooks which often emphasize the development of oral or reading skills.

#### **I.B. Content:**

##### **1. General subjects covered:**

The general subjects covered in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook include travel, health, education, business, feeling, transportation and vehicles, sports, world mysteries, science, the Internet, environment, and voluntary work.

The general subjects covered in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook include oil, world population, recycling and environment, engineering, money, time organizing, stress, work, Palestinians, culture, communications, and freedom and justice.

The variation in choosing the topics is noticed in the two textbooks which means that the opportunities to appeal to the interest of all students will be high. In other words, there is a communicative appeal throughout variation of topic choice.

## **2. Specific language skills targeted. (Grade 11 and 12)**

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are all emphasized in English for Palestine. The general goal of teaching listening and speaking skills is to enable students to interact successfully with native and non-native users of English in a variety of contexts. The level aimed in teaching speaking is not to produce near native pronunciation; it is one that is comfortably intelligible to an educated speaker of English which is described in the manual as a "pronunciation with a slight mother tongue accent with accurate realization of the major phonemic contrasts".

Regarding the reading and writing skills, the manual mentions that the reading skill is considered the most important skill to be taught in schools and the ability to read accurately and fluently is the most important need for the Palestinian students.

The goal of teaching writing skills is to enable students to present information and ideas in written English in an organized manner in a variety of text types and on a variety of topics.

Although the four skills are presented in the textbooks, listening and speaking are in reality not emphasized in high school because they are not included in the Tawjihi exam. Curriculum designers aim to help students achieve the communicative competence, and so cultural awareness becomes very essential if objectives are to be achieved. Marginalizing the listening and speaking skills will negatively affect cultural discussion since there are good opportunities to handle culture in these two skills.

### **3. Cultural Content:**

**a. Are specific cultural items covered? If so, which ones?**

**b. Are these items the main teaching focus?**

**c. What cultural or social groups are represented? Are members of these groups presented as modal personalities (average) or as individuals?**

After exploring the cultural content for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, it has become clear that the target cultural elements are rarely found. On the contrary, the native culture of the students seems to be emphasized more than the target culture. For example, while one of the exercises in (unit 6 - p: 61) presents much information about Jericho and Nablus, the book does not go farther than mentioning New York or New Jersey in some addresses.

The scarcity of the target cultural elements in this textbook means that the target cultural items are not the main teaching focus. Yet, a reading passage in (unit 6 – p: 62-63) driving in Britain seems to be the main teaching focus. In other words, this lesson presents a target cultural element which can be utilized as stimulus to raise the issue of comparing and contrasting it to its native culture counterpart for discussion.

In his dissertation, Jum'a (2008: 81) states that "the places where the cultural themes take place in (EFP, 11<sup>th</sup> grade) are centered on the Palestinian and neutral contexts". This, in his opinion, is justified since English is not anymore the property of "traditional" native speakers of English, and so it belongs to all of its speakers and therefore has a multicultural mix.

Jum'a's claim is only partially true because, according to the manual 'English Language Curriculum for Public Schools', the Palestinian English language curriculum aims at fostering in students a positive attitudes towards English and the importance of learning it. Students, according to the manual, will achieve this goal by being introduced to different target cultural elements like, for example, typical everyday behavior and important holidays and celebrations. Yet, what is clearly noticed is that this textbook emphasizes Arabic culture more than the target which can raise a big question about the quality of the cultural content in this textbook.

It is known that the communicative competence of the students, which is currently emphasized, has brought culture into the classroom "explicitly and intentionally", Damen (1987: 256). In this regard, Joiner, (1974: 242) comments "with the exception of the teacher ..., perhaps, the single most influential 'culture bearer' in the language classroom is the textbook", cited in Damen (1987: 254).

It is worth mentioning here that it is written on the cover page of the textbooks 'English for Palestine' series that "EFP is a modern communicative course". In addition, the preface to 'English for Palestine' mentions that "the Ministry of Education and Higher Education pays great attention to school textbooks since they are the foundation of the curriculum and indispensable medium of learning".

According to the above mentioned facts, the target cultural content of EFP (grade 11) is limited. Since the aim is to enhance and emphasize students' English

communicative competence, which, in turn, emphasize target culture learning, the textbook must reflect these goals of enhancing the communicative competence by presenting material about the target culture enough for culture-based lesson planning.

A thorough look at the cultural content of EFP for the 12<sup>th</sup> grade shows that a number of target cultural elements are presented in different contexts. Following are some examples:

- Famous constructions like tall and great buildings like the Chrysler Building (319 m) that appeared above Manhattan in 1930 and the square-sided Empire State Building in 1931 (449 m), (mentioned in a reading passage in unit 2 – p:17).
- America: A nation of immigrants. (Mentioned in two exercises: unit 2 – p: 24 and unit 5 – p: 55). These exercises talk about emigration to the USA and that America as a nation of immigrants who come from different parts of the world. In addition, the role of 'English' as a means of unifying people in the USA is also mentioned.
- School system: A number of ideas about the school system in three Boston schools are presented in (unit 3 – p: 100).
- Rubbish reusing and recycling: (unit 3 – p: 27). Here some ideas are presented about what people in Oxford are already doing regarding rubbish recycling and reusing.

While cultural items are sometimes presented as examples like the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building, at other times the target cultural items are the main teaching focus. A good example to be presented in this context is found in (unit 9 – p: 87) where a whole lesson talks about San Francisco being a city that welcomes different cultures and lifestyles and has, for example, large Chinese and Arab-

American communities. Some other facts are found about its location and geographical features and some 'must see' tourist sights like:

- The Golden Gate Bridge which was built in 1937 across the mouth of San Francisco Bay. Tourists can walk across the bridge to watch amazing views.
- Alcatraz, America's top security prison till 1963, which is located in an island in San Francisco Bay.
- Famous cable cars moving up and down the hills which are often used in Hollywood films.
- More information about San Francisco tourist sights are also found in two exercises in the same unit (p: 90-91).

A reading passage in (unit 6 – p: 57) presents the top 10 tips to English-speaking teenagers and, in the same time, asks students about which of these tips they themselves do. This lesson seems to be a good example of lessons that help students compare and contrast their native culture to the target culture.

Two other reading passages in (unit 10 – p: 97 and p: 102-103) are also good examples of lessons that promote cultural discussion. 'Some Do's and Don'ts in America' presents useful cross-cultural tips in an attempt to explain some differences in behavior between Arab and American cultures which will help to create more understanding of some important aspects of the American culture.

'Communicating across cultures' (p: 102-103) presents a number of situations where cross-cultural misunderstanding is likely to occur. These situations include Arab and non-Arab cultures as well. This reading passage also encourages students to be more tolerant and to have more understanding of foreign cultures. It is clear that the social groups represented in the above mentioned reading passages are modal personalities.

From what has already been mentioned, the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook clearly presents a number of target cultural elements. Compared to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook is richer in the target cultural content. This cultural content, though somewhat limited, can provide good opportunities for cultural discussion especially for comparing and contrasting students native culture to the target culture.

The Palestinian English curriculum highly recognizes students' native culture since it aims at enhancing students understanding of their native culture and fostering Palestinian values and traditions. A good way to achieve this goal is by comparing and contrasting students' native culture to the target culture. It is believed that students will not recognize their way of clothing, greeting, eating, and behaving in general until they are introduced to these ways of other people in other cultures.

After being introduced to the previous facts about the cultural content of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, an important question arises in this context; what about the wash-back effects of the Tawjihi exam? A widespread phenomenon in the Palestinian high school is that teaching English in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade is very much exam-oriented. The natural result of this practice is that the cultural discussion will be marginalized due to time limit. To illustrate, time will be utilized to teach vocabulary and syntactic structures that will have a high percentage of the tawjihi exam.

An investigation of the English tawjihi exams since the advent of the new Palestinian curriculum shows that there is an absence of the questions that ask students about any target cultural aspect, or at least to compare a target cultural aspect to its native culture counterpart. In other words, culture seems to be absent in these exams.

One may argue that most of communication in English takes place between non-native English speakers in non-native English contexts, and that most non-native



English speakers will not have the chance to go to native English-speaking countries. Accordingly, there is no need to study the native culture of English. This is apparently true, but going back to the fact that language does not develop in a vacuum might make this argument questionable.

Lado (1957, 77-78) cited in Atawneh (1983: 10) states,

It is quite an illusion to think, as even literate people sometimes do, that meanings are the same in all languages, that languages differ only in the forms used for those meanings. As matter of fact the meanings into which we classify our experience are culturally determined or modified, and they vary considerably from culture to culture. Some meanings found in one culture may not exist in another.

The implication of Lado's argument, as Atawneh also believes, emphasizes the need for teaching the foreign language in its native cultural context.

It is mentioned in the rationale for teaching English as a foreign language in Palestine, as presented in the manual 'English Language Curriculum for Public Schools', that educators should establish goals that emphasize cultural awareness due to the fact that effective cross-cultural communication is possible only with a good understanding of other cultures. Another argument which is also presented is that students who do not understand the cultural contexts in which languages are used will never truly master the languages they study. The manual also mentions the benefits of studying other cultures among which is that examining other cultures will help students better understand their own culture.

In short, the above mentioned arguments indicate that the importance of teaching culture in the Palestinian English language classroom is acknowledged. Yet, this

acknowledgment of language and culture inseparability does not seem to be well reflected in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade English textbooks.

### **I.C. Presentation of the Content:**

- 1. How is the content presented (description, example, problem)?**
- 2. Is the cultural content given a historical dimension?**
- 3. Is the cultural content presented with evaluative comment, either direct or implied? Give any examples you find.**

As it was mentioned earlier, the target cultural elements in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook are very rare. Teachers need to be very careful in order to recognize these elements in order to handle them correctly in their teaching. In general, the historical dimension seems to be neglected. This is simply because not much attention is given for the target cultural elements in this textbook.

Some of the cultural items are presented as examples like what some young people do in Britain as community service (unit 2 – p: 21). At the same time, one can find a lesson about driving in Britain in which the problem of traffic jams and road accidents is presented. The historical dimension in this lesson is noticed in presenting the past and the present situations of driving in Britain. In this lesson, students can compare and contrast what is mentioned about driving in Britain to their native culture. For example, they may ask if improving driving standards (like what the British did) would be beneficial in Palestine especially because in introducing this topic, a positive evaluative comment is noticed, "Cars really can be killing machines, and so we must do everything possible to improve driving standards. It is sensible to look around the world for good ideas, and a useful place to look is Britain."

When talking about the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, one can go back to what was mentioned earlier about this textbook. That is, the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook seems to be somewhat richer in the target cultural content than the 11<sup>th</sup> grade one.

In a lesson about San Francisco (unit 9 – p: 87), a detailed description is provided about this city including its location and geographical features, famous constructions, and some 'must see' tourist sights'. It is mentioned that San Francisco is presented as one of the world's great cities.

Another reading passage in (unit 2 – p: 27) presents 'waste' problem and how people in Oxford/Britain and in other different cultures deal with this problem.

Target cultural elements are sometimes presented as examples. For instance, a reading passage in (unit 2 p - p: 17) talks about the 'beautiful' top of the Chrysler Building that appeared above Manhattan.

Although a number of the target cultural items are presented in this textbook, the historical dimension in general seems to be neglected.

#### **4. Are specific cultural items "explained"? Would additional information or explanation be necessary?**

##### **The 11<sup>th</sup> grade:**

In general, the target cultural items in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook need more explanation. To illustrate, while an exercise in (unit 2- p: 21) explains what community service mean (A lot of people in Britain give time to help others), many cultural items can be presented as examples of the items that need more explanation. Among these are the following:

- An exercise in (unit 8 – p: 80) presents a set of questions that are asked by Canadian students. Students are to answer these questions about their school

system using modal verbs in their answers. Here, no new cultural information will be added. On the contrary, students will provide information about their native culture which they already know. The point here is that more clarification should be provided about the target cultural school system. In other words, how about presenting the cultural topic the other way round (i.e. a Palestinian student asking a Canadian one).

- The 'wonderful dinner' that is mentioned in an exercise in (unit 1 – p: 11) needs more clarification. Do students really know what 'dinner' in the target culture means? Do students know that dinner is sometimes used to mean the evening or midday meal? According to Atawneh (1983), such term has no equivalent in Arabic and it would be very difficult for Arabs to imagine what this term would mean, "when all they know in their L1 culture includes names of three meals a day, i.e. breakfast, lunch and supper, which correspond to names of three meals in Arabic with no alternatives." In short, the teacher should provide more information about this target cultural element especially because it has no equivalent in students' native culture.
- The 'Christmas gift' that is mentioned in a reading passage in (unit 3 – p: 27) needs some explanation. It would be better if students know about this important holiday of the target culture especially because there are a lot of Christian communities living within the Muslim ones and celebrate this holiday in Palestine. In other words, it would be beneficial to know about the customs and traditions, food, and the way this important holiday is celebrated in the target culture.
- A picture in (unit 8 – p: 83) needs some explanation. In exercise (8) students will practice using modal verbs by forming questions and answers

about the picture. It would be better if the teacher helps students recognize that from the surrounding environment like sands and saguaro cactus and people costumes, the picture shows cowboys in Texas. To illustrate, most the people here in Palestine and all around the world wear jeans. The question here is that do students know that wearing jeans is an American culture aspect? It would be good for students to know something about the origin of this aspect that is also very common in their native culture. The teacher can talk a little bit about the cowboys, who are they, where they lived, and why they wore such kind of clothes and hats. Students will be interested to know that cowboys used to herd cattle on large, open grassland in difficult conditions. Cowboys wore this particular kind of clothes to protect themselves from the very hot and the cold weather as well. In addition to being interested in knowing about the cowboys, students will be introduced to an American cultural aspect because cowboys are considered as part of the cultural heritage in Texas. It would be nice to know that in Texas the terms 'cowboys' and 'cowgirls' are frequent; these terms are found on the bathroom doors to mean 'males' and 'females!', personal communication, (Atawneh, Sep, 2009).

- An exercise in (unit 1 – p: 9) asks students to tick and repeat the expression of request and offers they hear. An important question arises in this context; when designing the syllabus, is it taken into consideration that the usage of modals differs a lot between English and Arabic?

Atawneh (1994) analyzed politeness expressions in English and Arabic and found that the percentage of using 'please' by the EFL group that participated in the study was (36 %), and so it was almost as double as that of the Americans (19.7 %). The reason for this usage, Atawneh comments, is that "Arabic has

various politeness expressions that are translated into please seems to be an obvious example of transfer from Arabic into English as a foreign language".

In another study, Atawneh (2003) tested Palestinian Arabs in choices of language appropriateness, in this study, (80) undergraduate students of English at An-Najah University in Palestine and (20) Americans took a test that included four situations with varying levels of distance, power, and risk, which determines the politeness level of the chosen expression. The result showed that except for few cases, none came close to Americans in using appropriate requesting strategies for the appropriate situation. Palestinian students perceived that 'could' and 'would' are more polite than 'can' and 'will' and both present and past forms are more polite than 'should'. In spite of this awareness, Palestinian students failed to use the appropriate modal for the appropriate situation as native speakers.

The above mentioned studies give a clear indication that more attention should be given when presenting such important aspect of the language. Doing so will help to raise students' pragmatic awareness of the target culture since there is a cultural difference in the issue of appropriateness in students' native culture and the target culture. Raising students' pragmatic awareness will help to achieve the pragmatic competence which is considered in the manual 'English Language Curriculum for Public Schools' as part of the communicative competence.

### **The 12<sup>th</sup> grade:**

Most of the target cultural items in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook are explained. Following are some examples:

- 'America: a nation of immigrants', which is mentioned in an exercise in (unit 2 – p: 24) and in another exercise in (unit 5 – p: 55).

- The reading passage 'Some Do's and Don'ts in America' (unit 10 – p: 97) presents some situations where Arab culture differs from the American culture. These situations are provided with some explanation about this difference.
- Another reading passage in the same unit (p: 102-103) presents some other situations about differences in cultures. Each situation is followed by a comment to explain the difference.

**5. Is the content reprinted from original sources without change, reprinted with adaptation, or written for this textbook?**

The cultural content is specially written for both the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks. Yet, in the preface to EFP for the 12<sup>th</sup> grade the authors and publishers mention that they have adapted two extracts from their original sources. Having the cultural content specially designed for these textbooks could be explained in that the Palestinian curriculum aims to meet the needs and aspirations of the Palestinian society.

**6. Are there illustrations? Is so, are they appropriate? Would additional explanation be necessary to explain these illustrations? Do the illustrations supplement the content effectively?**

**7. Would students need additional hints from the teacher to understand the cultural implications of the illustration or content?**

Since the target cultural elements in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook are very few, it becomes natural to find few illustrations for these elements. Yet, two examples of illustrations can be provided in this context.

- Four pictures are presented in (unit 2 – p: 21). These pictures present some clear examples of what some young people in Britain do as community service.
- Another picture is found in (unit 3 – p: 31) which shows two teenagers while they are skiing. The teacher can add that this is a famous sport in cold countries.

Talking about the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, one can find a number of illustrations:

- Good illustrations are provided about San Francisco in (9 – p: 87), for example, one can find a map of San Francisco provided with the most important 'must see' tourist sights. In addition to this map, there are clear pictures for the Golden Gate Bridge, the famous cable cars, China town, and Alcatraz. These pictures can help students create a clear image about these famous places in San Francisco.
- Another exercise found in the same unit (p: 91) presents some pictures of the beautiful sights that people can enjoy in the Golden Gate Park.
- A good example of an illustration that clarifies a target cultural element is found in (unit 10 – p: 97). This illustration shows the distance between speakers in both the Arab and the American cultures. It is important that the teacher clarifies which picture symbolizes which culture, and it will be more beneficial if the teacher explains the suitable distance between speakers in these two cultures by helping students role play it.
- Another good illustration is found in (unit 10 – p: 102-103). This illustration clarifies the idea that the term 'culture' is like an iceberg "with obvious expressions of culture above the surface of the water, and invisible attitudes, beliefs, values, and meanings below its surface". The teacher should



emphasize the importance of the invisible part of the term 'culture' that is called in this context 'the software of the mind'. Edward Hall (1977: 17) warns: "it is the hidden, the most taken-for-granted and therefore the least studied aspects of culture that influence behavior in the deepest and most subtle ways", cited in Damen (1987: 259).

To conclude this section, one can notice that illustrations of the target cultural elements are very few. As it was mentioned earlier, this could be attributed to the fact that target cultural elements are very few in these textbooks (especially in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook) which will be reflected in the number of the illustrations provided.

#### **I. D. Method:**

**1. By what method is the cultural information presented?**

**2. Describe briefly the methods of presentation. Are they appropriate to the subject matter?**

**3. Is the information presented in relation to one culture, or is it presented in a comparative frame of reference?**

Methods of presenting cultural information vary. Damen (1987: 263) presents two general categories of these methods, "those that promote understanding of new cultural themes, patterns, and behavior, and those designed to produce appropriate behavior". While the second category, in Damen's view, employs methods such as "role play, rule presentation, practice of expected behavior, and cultural hypothesizing", the first category employs such categories as "case studies, explanations, discussion, and implication or inference". The methods of presenting the cultural content of the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks appear to fit in the first category.

The methods of presenting the cultural information in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook do not seem to be clear. This is because the target cultural content does not seem to be emphasized. An example of the description method is noticed in a reading passage in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook (unit 6 – p: 62-63). Here, the improved driving standards that are applied in Britain are described. It should be noted that the cultural content in this textbook is mainly presented in relation to one culture which is the native culture of the students. In other words, most of the focus has been put on the Palestinian culture with connection to the Arab and Islamic cultural heritage.

The most common methods of presenting the cultural information in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook are explanation and discussion. To illustrate, some target cultural topics that differ from students' native culture, especially the ones that might lead to cross-cultural misunderstanding, are explained. Here, the target cultural topic is compared to its native culture counterpart followed with a comment that clarifies the point of difference. Two good example of this method are those found in the reading passages of (unit 10 in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook: "Some Do's and Don'ts in America", p: 97 and "Communicating across Cultures", p: 102-103). The cultural information in these two passages is presented in a comparative frame of reference where different situations about communicating across cultures are presented with comments that clarify different behaviors.

As it was mentioned earlier, a description of San Francisco; its location and important tourist sights, is a good example of the "description" method. In this lesson, some detailed information, supplemented with a map and some pictures, are provided. Doing so gives a good description of San Francisco being a target cultural element.

#### **4. Would a teacher using this book need a specialized training in order to use it effectively?**

Throughout exploring both the 11<sup>th</sup> grade and the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks, it seems that there is no need for a specialized training for teachers to use these books effectively. Yet, the teacher should be able to recognize and emphasize the cultural elements especially the target cultural ones. One may ask in this context: does an English teacher need a specialized training to find the cultural elements in the

textbooks? While some may argue that the English teacher has a good knowledge of the target culture through his university study of the English language. It is worth mentioning that a good teacher should keep his cultural information up dated whether about his native culture or about the target culture. It should be noted that special training courses on culture teaching for teachers will be of great value in helping teachers handling cultural issues.

## **Part II. Evaluation of cultural content (personal opinion)**

In this section, questions will be answered briefly since more clarification will be provided in the following section.

### **1. Is the information presented authentic?**

**a. Is it timely?**

**b. Is it fair?**

English for Palestine is a recent curriculum. Although the target cultural content is limited, one can notice that this content describes recent unbiased issues that might meet students' interests. For example, when talking about the current globalization of American culture, one can find reading passages in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook that discuss cross-cultural miscommunication that is likely to occur between Arabs and Americans. This is an important issue that creates opportunities to understand some aspects of the American culture.

### **2. If it is problem-oriented, are solutions provided? If so, are they adequate?**

### **3. Is the descriptive vocabulary appropriate? Unbiased?**

The already mentioned issue of cross-cultural miscommunication in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook is presented in the form of problems that are provided with clarification of the sources of these problems, i.e. misunderstanding. Still, one should not ignore that

the target cultural content is limited in general which means that the variation in presenting this content will naturally be limited. It is important to mention that the descriptive vocabulary used were appropriate and unbiased.

**4. Please list three adjectives which you might use in describing your overall impression of the cultural information presented (adequate, biased, incomplete, boring, limited, comprehensive, mainstream, quaint).**

**5. If you were using this book would you delete, change, or supplement any of the cultural material in the text? Give examples.**

When describing the cultural content of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks incomplete and limited are among the most important adjectives to be used. Supplementing the cultural material with realia would be of great value for students. In addition, enriching these textbooks with more target cultural content will give more opportunities for understanding the target culture.

**6. What changes appear to be expected on the part of the cultural learners (students)? Are these expectations realistic in view of the type of student for whom the book has been written?**

No important changes will be expected on the part of students because of two important reasons: first, the cultural content is limited, and so not much new target cultural information will be provided for students. Second, because teaching English, especially in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade is very much exam-oriented, there is no need for emphasizing the cultural information that is not emphasized in the exams.

**7. Comment on these expectations in view of the multicultural nature of your prospective class. Would you wish to adjust any of the materials, exercises, or methods for the various cultural groups?**

Since in the Palestinian context we are mostly talking about homogeneous students with regard to culture, this question will be overlooked.

**Part III. Summary. Balancing the Cultural Load.**

**Identify the ideal combination of circumstances under which this textbook might be used.**

**Client: sojourner; immigrant; refugee; visitor; other**

**Context: formal; informal; on-the-job; foreign; serendipitous; academic**

**Communicator: native; non-native; representative mainstream culture; representative ethnic minority; age 20-30, 40-50, 60-.**

English for Palestine (EFP) for the grades 11 and 12 is currently used in Palestinian schools by Palestinian students. Teachers (or communicators) are non-native speakers of English. This means that the context of learning and teaching using this textbook is formal.

**Findings about analyzing the cultural content**

After exploring the cultural content of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades of 'English for Palestine' the following notes can be presented;

**1. The target cultural content of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook.**

Throughout exploring the cultural element in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, this content seems to be very limited. Interviewees have indicated that there are a number of explanations regarding this point. The Palestinian committee of designing the syllabuses for English for

Palestine has only put the guidelines for these syllabuses, but the content is prepared by the publisher; Macmillan. Teachers send their feedback about the syllabus annually, but unfortunately, only 18% of the syllabus has been modified throughout three years.

2. **The target cultural content of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook.**

Some interesting cultural topics can be found in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook especially those who raise the issue of cross-cultural misunderstanding for discussion. Here, one can find a good opportunity for enhancing students' critical thinking since they will practice this important aspect of language learning by making a comparison between their native culture and the target culture. This, in turn, helps students to have more understanding of both cultures which is one of the important goals for teaching the target culture in 'English for Palestine'.

3. **The role of university instructors and school teachers in designing syllabuses.**

Interviewers have indicated that school teachers are never invited to participate in syllabus design. Regarding university instructors, only a few of them have been consulted. But what about the experienced teachers that have lived the target culture? Their experience will be a great enrichment of the syllabus.

## Chapter Five

### 5.0. Conclusion, and Recommendations

Cultural awareness is considered among the core curriculum objectives that the Palestinian English curriculum aims to achieve. Basic to this objective is the aim of developing in students a positive attitude towards English and the importance of learning it. Students will be able to achieve this goal by being introduced to important aspects of the target culture.

After exploring the cultural content of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades textbooks it has become clear that the target culture, especially in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, has only a small room. When talking about the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, i.e. the secondary stage, one is really talking about a very important stage of students' education. Here, students will be prepared to join colleges and universities some of which could be in English-speaking countries. Given the fact that one needs the basic levels of cross-cultural understanding in order to communicate, the place of the target culture in the Palestinian high school English textbooks becomes questionable. As it was mentioned earlier, the Ministry of Education has set a number of objectives to be achieved throughout the Palestinian English curriculum. The fact that the English textbooks of an entire stage i.e. the secondary stage do not provide enough target cultural elements means that there is a gap between what the Ministry guide lines for the syllabus and reality. That is, the Ministry guidelines for the syllabus are not well-reflected in the textbooks used.

Teachers' dissatisfaction with the cultural content has become apparent throughout the teachers' questionnaire. Teachers agreed that the cultural elements in the textbooks were somehow invisible. If teachers themselves find it difficult to recognize the cultural elements in the textbooks, then handling the cultural content will naturally

become very limited. This result gives a clear indication about the importance of providing teachers with what helps them in handling culture-related issues like training courses and workshops.

The preceding result was also obtained from students' questionnaire. Most of the students think that the target culture is not clearly presented in the textbooks. Students' questionnaire also revealed that most of the students prefer to read more about the English culture rather than the Arabic culture when learning English.

Although the place of the native culture is highly recognized by teachers as appears throughout the teachers' questionnaire, the target cultural content in the textbooks should also have a suitable place. It is worth mentioning that introducing the target culture does not mean excluding or marginalizing the native culture. On the contrary, by introducing both cultures, students will have good opportunities to improve their critical thinking skills. In other words, by comparing and contrasting the native culture to the target culture objectively, students will gain a double benefit; they will have more understanding of their native culture in addition to understanding and appreciating the target culture.

The results of this study have also revealed the fact that the Tawjih exam has a great influential role in marginalizing the cultural content in the secondary stage. Since this exam overemphasizes the linguistic competence, particularly the reading and writing skills, over the sociocultural competence, then most of the emphasis will be directed to empowering students with the skills that help them pass this exam i.e. the linguistic skills.

In short, the target cultural elements in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook are very rare. Since the target culture is not enough presented for students, one can argue that students will



be mainly introduced to one culture which will negatively affect students' ability to develop cross-cultural understanding.

Exploring the cultural content of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook has revealed that this book is richer in the target cultural content compared to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook. Unfortunately, we have to face the reality of overemphasizing the linguistic content at the expense of the cultural content because the ultimate goal of teaching English in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade is to help students pass the Tawjihi exam where the cultural content of the textbook is neglected.

Based on the above mentioned discussion, the following points are recommended;

1. Enriching the textbooks with target cultural elements. Authentic material, for example, would be of great help in improving students' listening skills.
2. When designing the syllabus, it is important to consult university instructors especially the ones who have lived the target culture. In addition, teachers' feedback about the textbooks should be taken into consideration.
3. Training courses and workshops on how to handle the cultural content are highly recommended.
4. The nature of the Tawjihi exam should be revised; the cultural content should be reflected in this exam.

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## **Appendices**



This questionnaire has been designed for my master thesis. It aims at exploring how culture is treated in the secondary English classroom.

Please read the statements carefully and answer **PART I** and **PART II**.

Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous.

### PART I

Please tick the appropriate answer.

A.	Gender	Male ( )	Female ( )
B.	The classes you teach	11 <sup>th</sup> ( )	12 <sup>th</sup> ( ) Both ( )
C.	Have you ever attended a training course on teaching culture?	Yes ( )	No ( )
D.	When discussing culture-related issues, I refer to	( ) The United States of America ( ) Britain ( ) Other English-speaking countries	

### Part II

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by putting a tick in the appropriate box using the scale given below.

**Strongly Disagree**      **Disagree**      **Neutral**      **Agree**      **Strongly Agree**

		1	2	3	4	5
1	It is important for EFL teachers to include aspects of the target culture in their classroom teaching.					
2	I incorporate culture teaching in my classes.					
3	My cultural instruction is planned.					
4	I think that teaching culture will foster my students' respect for self and others.					
5	I help students recognize countries where English is spoken as well as their capital cities and other related information.					
6	I think that it is important to teach students about traditions, customs, and social relationships of the target culture.					
7	I think that it is important to teach students about literature and fine arts of the target culture.					
8	I think that learning about the target culture will enhance students' understanding of the Palestinian culture.					
9	I encourage my students to have a sense of belonging to our Palestinian cultural backgrounds.					
10	I teach cultural aspects where English differs from Arabic (requesting, complimenting ...).					
11	I teach the Palestinian culture with connection to the Arab and Islamic culture and heritage.					
12	I think that culture teaching will help students contribute to building human civilization.					
13	I think that the school textbooks provide enough material for discussing culture-related issues.					

14	I think that the cultural elements in the textbooks are visible.					
15	I use materials other than the school textbooks to teach target culture-related issues (the Internet, realia ...).					
16	I think that the textbooks present a variety of cultures.					

**Thank you for your time.**

This questionnaire is addressed to freshman students of the English department at Hebron University reflecting on their views of culture presentation in their learning experience at high school.

Dear respondents;

I want your help by giving true responses to the following points regarding culture.

Following is the definition within which I hope you understand my aim to help you out in responses.

**"It is understood that native culture like that of the British and the Americans concerning their way of life in their own countries is a very important element to be introduced in teaching English as a foreign language at high school".**

=====

1. Have you ever come across any aspect of life in Britain or in America in your study of English?

yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

2. In learning English, I prefer reading more about:

English culture	
Arabic culture	

3. Do you think your teachers knew much about British and American cultures in their teaching?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

4. Is the target culture clearly presented in the textbooks?

Yes		No	
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5. I think that English textbooks should be written by:

Local people (Palestinians)	
British or Americans	

Why?

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Add any comments you like:

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**Thank for your time**

TEXTBOOK EVALUATION GUIDE

EVALUATION OF CULTURAL LOAD = SELECTION  
(client, communicator, context, content)

Part I. General Descriptive Information

Name of Textbook \_\_\_\_\_ Author \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Place of Publication \_\_\_\_\_

Rationale

1. For whom is the textbook intended?
  
2. What is the rationale for the textbook?
  
3. What is the primary goal of the presentation of cultural information? Is this goal secondary to other goals? Is the goal of the cultural instruction explicitly stated?
  
4. What type of textbook does this book represent?

Content

1. General subjects covered
  
2. Specific language skills targeted

3. Cultural content

- a) Are specific cultural items covered? If so, which ones?
  
- b) Are these items the main teaching focus?
  
- c) What cultural or social groups are represented? Are members of these groups presented as modal personalities (average) or as individuals?

Presentation of Content

1. How is the content presented (description, example, problem)?
  
2. Are specific cultural items "explained"? Would additional information or explanation be necessary?
  
3. Is the cultural content given a historical dimension?
  
4. Is the cultural content presented with evaluative comment, either direct or implied? Give any examples you find.

5. Is the content reprinted from original sources without change, reprinted with adaptation, or written for this textbook?

6. Are there illustrations? If so, are they appropriate? Would additional explanation be necessary to explain these illustrations?

Do the illustrations supplement the content effectively?

7. Would students need additional hints from the teacher to understand the cultural implications of the illustration or content?

#### Method

1. By what method is the cultural information presented?

2. Is the information presented in relation to one culture, or is it presented in a comparative frame of reference?

3. Describe briefly the methods of presentation. Are they appropriate to the subject matter?

4. Would a teacher using this book need specialized training in order to use it effectively?

#### Part II. Evaluation of Cultural Content (personal opinion)

1. Is the information presented authentic?

a) Is it timely?

b) Is it fair?

2. If it is problem-oriented, are solutions provided? If so, are they adequate?

3. Is the descriptive vocabulary appropriate? Unbiased?

4. Please list three adjectives which you might use in describing your overall impression of the cultural information presented (adequate, biased, incomplete, boring, limited, comprehensive, mainstream, quaint).

5. If you were using this book would you delete, change, or supplement any of the cultural material in the text? Give examples.

6. What changes appear to be expected on the part of the cultural learners (students)? Are these expectations realistic in view of the type of student for whom the book has been written?

7. Comment on these expectations in view of the multicultural nature of your prospective class (see selection procedures). Would you wish to adjust any of the materials, exercises, or methods for the various cultural groups?

## Part III. Summary, Balancing the Cultural Load.

Identify the ideal combination of circumstances under which this textbook might be used.

Client:	sojourner; immigrant; refugee; visitor; other
Context:	formal; informal; on-the-job; foreign; serendipitous; academic
Communicator:	native; non-native; representative mainstream culture; representative ethnic minority; age 20-30, 40-50, 60-
Other Characteristics:	

## FOR FURTHER READING

As David and Celce-Murcia (1979) comment in their chapter on textbook selection and evaluation, "relatively little" has been published on the topic of textbook selection. This author agrees. The following list includes some informative articles. In addition, any reader interested in more in-depth discussions of the complex process of content analysis is referred to the many textbooks on the subject.

*Asia in American Textbooks.* 1975. This report by The Asia Society contains the results of an intensive study of the ways in which Asia is shown in American textbooks. The study was co-sponsored by The Asia Society and the Ford Foundation and was compiled from data gathered in 1974-1975 from 100 scholars and teachers reviewing 306 social studies textbooks in 30 states. The document, available from ERIC (ED 127 232/ 86 009 331), is well worth looking over for those interested in pursuing the processes of textbook selection and assessing their cultural impact. A highly detailed evaluation guide was used for the purpose of listing "the variety of themes and source materials which can contribute to an understanding of Asia, and on the other hand, those which can distort Asian reality [6]." The study contrasted an "Asia-centered approach" (culturally relativistic) with what was called a "progress-centered approach" (change is good, necessary, and historically inevitable) and "a Western-centered approach." The first approach appeared only in 30% of the books studied and predominated in only 12%. In the final analysis of the 261 books evaluated, 63 were deemed "excellent," or "can be used with some problems," 115 were recommended only for use with some cautions, and 80 were rejected as totally inadequate (28). The full report is worth reading for two sections: its discussion of the ethnocentricity of much of the textbook literature about the Far East being used in American schools at the time of the study, and the observations in the evaluation guide elicited.

M. Cowley. 1976. "Textual Materials Evaluation: A Comprehensive Checklist" (200-202). Cowley's article contains a 25-point evaluation checklist soliciting circled responses to set

choices. The checklist calls attention to important elements to be considered in textbook selection, but is only briefly concerned with authors' cultural (item 14). This is useful as a general guide.

A. David and M. Celce-Murcia. 1979. "Selecting and Evaluating a Textbook" (202-207). This chapter in the Celce-Murcia and McIntosh textbook presents a step-by-step approach to the process of textbook selection. The authors do not specifically discuss the cultural implications of content.

S. Foaat (ed.). 1981. "Dynamics of Cross-Cultural Adjustment: From Pre-Arrival to Re-Entry" (7-29). This is an excellent review of sojourner literature with a list of references on the subject.

E. Joiner. 1974. "Evaluating the Cultural Content of Foreign-Language Texts" (240-244). In this article Joiner presents a form for evaluating the cultural content of foreign language texts. Briefer and more general than the form suggested in this chapter, it offers a quick checklist for those involved in textbook selection.

### People who were interviewed

Dr. Raghad Dweik	Assistant Professor	Hebron University
Dr. Hannah Tushyeh	Associate Professor	Hebron University
Dr. Muhammed Farrah	Assistant Professor	Hebron University
Samya Al-Ja'bari	Supervisor	Directorate of Education – Hebron
Hasan Karableyeh	Supervisor	Directorate of Education – Hebron
Muyassar Abu Algilasi	Supervisor	Directorate of Education – South Hebron
Ghosoan Al-Khateeb	Senior Student	English Department – Hebron University
Ola Al-Tamimi	Senior Student	English Department – Hebron University

### **Questions of the interview**

1. What is your opinion regarding using the Palestinian culture as a core for teaching the target culture in the secondary English classroom?
2. How do you explain female teachers' attitude towards teaching the American culture, and on the other hand male teachers' attitude toward teaching the British culture?
3. How do you explain the fact that 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers have attend training courses on teaching culture more than other teachers, yet, their cultural awareness is less than the other teachers?
4. How do you explain the attitude of male teachers toward teaching the native culture more than female teachers?
  - Is it a kind of political attitude?
  - Or, is it a weakness in using or presenting the target culture?
5. What is the aim of teaching English in the secondary stage?
  - Is it a kind of preparation for passing At-tawjihi exam?
  - Or, is it to enhance cross-cultural understanding after school?
6. How do you explain the very limited target cultural content in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?
  - Is it a kind of intentional ignorance?
  - Is a reflection of the weakness in the performance of syllabus designers?
  - Or, is it because of lacking feedback from the teachers?
7. Do you think that the points of view of university instructors and school teachers are neglected when designing syllabuses?