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Research Article

Beyond Grammar and Vocabulary: Examining the Representation of English Language Cultural Communicative Practices in 'English for Libya' Textbook

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Abstract
English language textbooks play a significant role in developing learners' linguistic, pragmatic, and intercultural communicative competence by introducing them to the cultural norms and communicative practices of the target language. As textbooks are often the primary source of language input in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, examining how they represent communicative culture is essential for evaluating their effectiveness in preparing learners for authentic intercultural communication. This study investigates the representation of English language cultural communicative practices in the *English for Libya* textbook through qualitative content analysis. The textbook was examined to identify how communicative cultural elements are embedded in dialogues, role plays, listening activities, reading passages, and other instructional materials. The analysis was guided by theories of intercultural communicative competence and pragmatics, particularly the works of Byram (1997), Brown and Levinson (1987), and Kasper and Rose (2002). Data were collected through systematic reading and coded using thematic content analysis. Five major themes emerged: respect and politeness, gratitude and appreciation, apologising, requests and clarification strategies, and friendship and social relationships. Findings indicate that the textbook provides learners with substantial exposure to common English communicative practices and supports the development of pragmatic competence. However, cultural content is presented largely implicitly, with limited attention to intercultural reflection, cultural diversity, and deeper sociocultural meanings. Overall, the textbook offers a useful but simplified representation of communicative culture. The findings suggest that incorporating more explicit cultural explanations, intercultural comparison activities, and opportunities for critical reflection would further strengthen the textbook's contribution to learners' pragmatic and intercultural communicative competence and better prepare them for communication in diverse English-speaking contexts.

Keywords: Culture, Portrayal, Explicitness, Representation, Stereotype

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language and culture are closely interconnected, and successful communication requires more than grammatical accuracy and vocabulary knowledge. Language learners must also understand the cultural norms and communicative practices that govern how language is used in different social contexts. As a result, English language education has increasingly recognised the importance of teaching cultural communicative practices alongside linguistic forms. Early models of communicative competence highlighted the need for learners to acquire sociocultural knowledge in addition to linguistic competence. According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence involves knowing not only what is grammatically correct but also what is appropriate to say in a particular situation. This perspective challenged traditional language teaching approaches that focused primarily on grammar and vocabulary and ignored the importance of social and cultural appropriateness in communication. Building on Hymes' work, Canale and

Swain (1980) identified sociolinguistic competence as a central component of communicative competence. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately according to the social context, including factors such as status, age, familiarity, and cultural expectations. Learners who possess linguistic knowledge but lack sociolinguistic competence may produce grammatically correct utterances that are perceived as rude, inappropriate, or unnatural by native speakers.

Research in pragmatics further demonstrates the importance of learning communicative cultural practices. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to understand and perform language functions appropriately in social interaction (Kasper & Rose, 2002). This includes speech acts such as requesting, apologising, thanking, complimenting, refusing, and expressing gratitude. These communicative acts are often governed by cultural norms that vary across languages and societies. Consequently, learners who are unfamiliar with the target language's pragmatic conventions may experience communication difficulties despite having a strong command of grammar. One area that has received considerable attention is politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that speakers employ politeness strategies to maintain social harmony and protect social identity. In English-speaking contexts, requests are frequently expressed indirectly through forms such as *"*Could you help me?*"* or *"*Would you mind...?*"* rather than direct commands. Learners who transfer politeness conventions from their first language may unintentionally appear impolite or overly direct when communicating in English. Therefore, exposure to target language politeness strategies is essential for developing effective communication skills. Similarly, speech acts such as thanking and apologising play an important role in maintaining positive interpersonal relationships. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) notes that pragmatic failure often occurs when language learners do not understand the social expectations associated with these speech acts. For example, expressions of gratitude are frequently used in English-speaking societies to acknowledge assistance, cooperation, or kindness, while apologies are expected when an individual causes inconvenience or disruption to others. Learning these communicative routines helps learners participate more effectively in social interaction and avoid misunderstandings. Textbooks play a particularly important role in developing this competence in EFL contexts where opportunities for authentic interaction with English speakers may be limited. Many learners encounter English primarily through classroom materials, making textbooks a significant source of cultural knowledge (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Through dialogues, role plays, listening activities, and communicative tasks, textbooks can introduce learners to patterns of interaction that reflect target language norms. However, previous textbook research has also suggested that such representations are often pedagogically simplified, selective, or idealised in order to facilitate language learning (Gray, 2010; Tomlinson, 2013). Consequently, examining how communicative practices are presented is important for understanding not only what learners are taught but also the extent to which textbooks represent the complexity and diversity of authentic communication.

In summary, learning cultural communicative practices is a crucial aspect of English language education. It enables learners to develop pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence, communicate appropriately in diverse social situations, and interact effectively across cultures. As EFL textbooks often serve as learners' primary source of cultural input, examining how communicative cultural practices are represented in these materials is essential for understanding their contribution to language learning and intercultural development. Such examination is also important because previous research has shown that textbook representations of culture may vary considerably in their depth and authenticity. While some materials provide learners with meaningful opportunities to engage with cultural diversity and intercultural communication, others have been criticised for presenting culture in simplified, selective, or idealised ways (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Gray, 2010; Risager, 2018). Consequently, analysing how communicative cultural practices are represented in *English for Libya* allows the present study to examine the extent to which the textbook promotes intercultural understanding and whether its cultural representations reflect broader patterns identified in previous EFL textbook research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, culture is widely acknowledged as an essential component of language learning, yet it is rarely presented as a formal, dictionary-style definition within textbooks. Instead, culture is embedded throughout EFL learning materials such as texts, dialogues, images, exercises, etc., to serve as vehicles for exposing learners to the social practices, values, customs, and norms

of the target language community (Byram, 1997; Weninger & Kiss, 2013). EFL textbooks typically address two dimensions of culture, often referred to as 'Big C' and 'small c' culture (Kramsch, 1993). The 'Big C' culture refers to visible, concrete cultural products and events such as festivals, historical monuments, literature, and cuisine. These are accessible and often the easiest for learners to identify. Conversely, the 'small c' culture involves the deeper, less tangible aspects like beliefs, social values, attitudes, communication styles, and unspoken social norms that influence behavior and interaction but are harder to capture in textbook content.

Research on EFL textbooks frequently reveals a bias toward superficial cultural content, emphasizing the 'four Fs': food, fairs, folklore, and factual information (Kramsch, 1993). This approach, while useful for initial cultural familiarization, risks reducing culture to stereotypes and missing opportunities to foster critical intercultural competence. Scholars such as Alptekin (2002) and Cortazzi & Jin (1999) have criticized this tendency for underrepresenting the sociocultural complexity of the target communities. Despite these challenges, textbooks remain crucial in shaping learners' intercultural awareness. They can encourage students to engage critically with cultural differences and to appreciate the diversity within and across cultures. This intercultural competence goes beyond mere factual knowledge. It involves attitudes of openness, empathy, and the ability to negotiate meaning and navigate cultural differences effectively.

In terms of content delivery, culture in EFL textbooks is often presented as a system of social practices, and meanings conveyed multimodally through language, images, gestures, and activities rather than through explicit explanation. This aligns with the notion that culture is experienced and interpreted, not simply memorized (Weninger & Kiss, 2013; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Language and culture are intertwined; learning a language inherently involves engaging with the cultural context that gives the language its meaning (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993). Although previous studies have examined cultural representation, intercultural competence, and communicative practices in EFL textbooks across different educational contexts, relatively few have focused specifically on how communicative culture is represented through everyday language use in Libyan school textbooks. Much of the existing literature has concentrated on the representation of cultural topics, cultural products, or intercultural content, whereas less attention has been given to the ways textbooks develop learners' pragmatic competence through speech acts, interactional norms, and routine communicative practices. The present study addresses this gap by analysing how *English for Libya* represents communicative culture from the combined perspectives of intercultural communicative competence and pragmatics. In doing so, the study extends previous textbook evaluation research by examining not only the presence of communicative cultural practices but also the extent to which these practices support learners' pragmatic awareness and intercultural communicative competence within the Libyan EFL context.

2.1. The Influence of School Textbooks

Textbooks remain a central, enduring resource in English Language Teaching (ELT), often functioning as the primary medium through which learners encounter the target language and its cultural components. Early research characterizes textbooks as the basic medium of education whose authority is frequently taken for granted. In ELT contexts, this authority is reinforced by assumptions that textbooks provide accurate cultural and linguistic representations. This can be a particularly powerful role when the target language culture is distant from learners' local context (Kubota, 2003). Traditionally, textbooks help structure the curriculum, guide instruction, and frame assessment, especially in EFL settings where alternative input sources may be limited. Across educational systems, ELT textbooks operate at multiple levels. Public school systems often rely on nationally developed materials, whereas private schools tend to adopt internationally published series for their perceived quality and prestige. These materials function both as sources of language input and as cultural symbols that help construct learners' understandings of English and the societies in which it is spoken.

2.2. Cultural Communicative Practices in EFL Textbooks

The relationship between language and culture has long been recognised as a fundamental principle in language education. Scholars such as Byram (1997) and Kramsch (1993) argue that language cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts in which it is used. Consequently, effective language learning

requires more than the acquisition of vocabulary and grammatical structures; it also requires an understanding of how language functions within particular cultural communities. This understanding includes knowledge of appropriate communicative behaviour, interactional norms, and culturally influenced expectations that guide communication. Such knowledge is often referred to as communicative culture or pragmatic competence, and is considered an essential component of communicative competence. Within EFL contexts, textbooks serve as one of the primary sources of linguistic and cultural input. As many learners have limited opportunities to interact with native or proficient speakers of English, textbooks frequently become the main medium through which learners encounter target language communicative practices. Through dialogues, role plays, listening activities, classroom interactions, and reading passages, textbooks introduce learners to patterns of communication that reflect social relationships, politeness conventions, and interactional expectations (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). These communicative practices help learners understand not only what to say but also when, how, and why particular expressions are used.

Recent research has increasingly emphasised the importance of integrating intercultural communicative competence into language materials. Studies examining EFL textbooks in various contexts have found that communicative and intercultural elements are often included but are not always presented systematically. Analyses of EFL textbooks in diverse contexts have shown that although cultural content is commonly included, it often emphasizes factual information about cultural products and practices rather than opportunities for interactional communication and intercultural engagement. For example, studies of Indonesian and Palestinian English textbooks, among others, found that cultural representations tend to focus on descriptive knowledge of target cultures while providing limited support for the development of intercultural communicative competence (Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Abu Alyan & Alakkad, 2022). Similarly, recent scholarship on communicative competence has highlighted the increasing importance of intercultural awareness and multimodal communication in a globalized world. Contemporary frameworks argue that language learners need not only linguistic proficiency but also the ability to negotiate meaning across diverse social and cultural contexts, interpret multiple modes of communication, and interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997; Council of Europe, 2020; North et al., 2022). As a result, contemporary textbook evaluation increasingly examines how communicative cultural practices are represented and whether learners are provided with opportunities to develop pragmatic and intercultural competence. This shift reflects a broader understanding of language learning as participation in socially situated communication rather than the mastery of linguistic structures alone.

2.3. Types of Cultural Communicative Practices

Cultural communicative practices refer to the socially and culturally accepted ways in which language is used to accomplish interpersonal goals and maintain social relationships. These practices form a central component of pragmatic competence, which involves the ability to use language appropriately according to context, social roles, and cultural expectations (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Unlike grammatical competence, which focuses on linguistic accuracy, pragmatic competence concerns the social meanings and functions of language in communication. Consequently, EFL learners need exposure not only to language forms but also to the cultural conventions that guide their use. One of the most widely discussed categories of communicative practices is politeness and respect. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory suggests that speakers employ various linguistic strategies to maintain harmonious social relationships and protect the social dignity of others. Expressions such as *"*please,*"* *"*excuse me,*"* and indirect requests represent common examples of politeness conventions in English. These forms help speakers demonstrate consideration, respect, and social appropriateness. Another important category involves expressions of gratitude and appreciation. Thanking serves not only to acknowledge assistance or kindness but also to reinforce positive interpersonal relationships. Research has shown that expressions of gratitude vary across cultures in terms of frequency, formality, and situational appropriateness, making them important elements of intercultural communication (Taguchi, 2015). Similarly, apologising constitutes a significant communicative practice used to repair social relationships after mistakes, misunderstandings, or inconveniences. Effective apologies often involve multiple strategies, including expressions of regret, explanations, acknowledgements of responsibility, and offers of compensation.

Requests and clarification strategies are equally important components of communicative culture. Requests require speakers to balance communicative goals with politeness considerations, while clarification

strategies help interlocutors negotiate meaning and maintain mutual understanding. Such practices are particularly important in second language communication, where misunderstandings may arise due to linguistic or cultural differences (Canale & Swain, 1980). A further category includes friendship maintenance, suggestions, invitations, compliments, and other practices that maintain relationships. These communicative acts promote social solidarity and cooperation and reflect cultural expectations regarding interpersonal relationships. Recent research on intercultural communicative competence highlights the importance of exposing learners to a broad range of such interactional practices, enabling them to participate effectively in diverse social contexts and communicative situations.

2.4. The Portrayal of Target Culture

Despite growing recognition of the importance of communicative culture in language education, numerous studies have highlighted limitations in the representation of cultural communicative practices in EFL textbooks. One of the most common concerns is the emphasis on linguistic forms rather than the sociocultural meanings that shape language use. Although textbooks often provide grammatical structures and vocabulary associated with speech acts such as requests, apologies, greetings, and compliments, they frequently offer limited explanation of the cultural norms and contextual factors governing their appropriate use (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper & Rose, 2002). As a result, learners may develop grammatical competence without acquiring the pragmatic competence necessary for effective communication. Furthermore, communicative practices are often presented through simplified and decontextualised dialogues that fail to reflect the complexity of authentic interactions. Such representations rarely demonstrate how factors such as social distance, power relations, age, and cultural expectations influence language choices (Boxer & Pickering, 1995). Research has also shown that cultural content in many textbooks tends to focus on visible aspects of culture, such as food, festivals, and traditions, while neglecting deeper cultural dimensions, including values, beliefs, and interactional norms (Kramsch, 1993; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Consequently, learners may develop a superficial understanding of the target culture, limiting their ability to engage in meaningful intercultural communication and to develop intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997).

Another recurring issue is the imbalance between cultural information and communicative culture. Many textbooks include substantial information about cultural products, traditions, landmarks, and historical facts while providing relatively little attention to everyday interactional practices (Yuen, 2011). This approach may increase learners' cultural knowledge but does not necessarily help them develop the pragmatic competence needed for real-life communication. Scholars have therefore argued that textbooks should focus more explicitly on how language functions in authentic social contexts. Researchers have also criticised the idealised nature of many textbook dialogues and communicative activities. Gray (2010) notes that textbook conversations frequently portray communication as smooth, successful, and free from misunderstanding. Such representations often omit disagreement, communication breakdowns, negotiation of meaning, and other interactional challenges that characterise authentic communication. Consequently, learners may develop unrealistic expectations about language use and intercultural encounters.

Another concern relates to cultural bias and the dominance of particular cultural perspectives. Studies have found that many EFL textbooks continue to privilege Anglo-American communicative norms and cultural values while providing limited representation of other English-speaking communities or local cultural practices (Matsuda, 2012). This imbalance may contribute to the perception that English communication is associated primarily with specific cultural groups rather than functioning as a global means of communication. Recent textbook evaluations have also reported insufficient attention to intercultural communication and global Englishes. As English increasingly serves as a lingua franca among speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds, scholars argue that textbooks should expose learners to multiple communicative styles, varieties of English, and interactional practices. Failure to do so may limit learners' preparedness for communication in international and multicultural settings.

2.5. Explicitness of Cultural Communicative Practices

An important issue in research on cultural representation concerns the degree to which communicative cultural practices are presented (i.e., explicitly or implicitly) in language learning content.

Explicit presentation occurs when textbooks directly explain cultural norms, pragmatic conventions, or appropriate communicative behaviours. Such instruction may be provided through cultural notes, awareness-raising activities, teacher explanations, reflective tasks, or discussions that draw learners' attention to sociocultural meanings embedded in language use. According to Kasper and Rose (2002), explicit instruction can facilitate pragmatic development by helping learners notice features of communication that might otherwise remain unnoticed. Research in second language pragmatics generally supports the effectiveness of explicit instruction. Meta-analyses and classroom studies have consistently shown that learners who receive direct explanations of speech acts, politeness conventions, and interactional norms tend to demonstrate greater gains in pragmatic competence than those relying solely on exposure (Taguchi, 2015). Explicit instruction is particularly important in EFL contexts where learners have limited opportunities to engage in authentic interactions outside the classroom. In such situations, textbooks play a crucial role in providing guidance about culturally appropriate language use.

In contrast, implicit presentation occurs when cultural communicative practices are embedded within dialogues, reading passages, listening texts, or classroom activities without direct explanation. Learners are expected to infer meanings, norms, and communicative expectations from contextual clues. This approach reflects naturalistic language learning processes and may encourage learners to develop interpretive skills through observation and exposure. However, scholars caution that implicit exposure alone may not be sufficient for developing pragmatic awareness, especially when learners lack prior knowledge of the target culture. Recent research suggests that many EFL textbooks rely heavily on implicit presentation. Communicative practices are often embedded within dialogues and activities, but little attention is given to explaining why particular expressions are used or how social variables influence communication. Consequently, learners may recognise linguistic forms without understanding their pragmatic significance. Studies of textbook pragmatics have therefore called for greater integration of explicit cultural guidance alongside authentic communicative examples. Many scholars now advocate a balanced approach that combines explicit and implicit methods. In this view, learners should encounter communicative practices through meaningful interactions while also receiving opportunities to reflect on cultural meanings, compare cultural norms, and discuss appropriate language use. Such an approach supports both pragmatic competence and intercultural communicative competence, enabling learners to become more effective and culturally aware users of English in diverse communicative settings.

3. METHODOLOGY

The analysis was informed by theories of communicative competence and intercultural communicative competence. In particular, Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence provided a useful foundation because it emphasises the relationship between language and social interaction. Byram argues that language learning involves not only linguistic knowledge but also an understanding of how language functions within social and cultural contexts. In addition, insights from pragmatics research guided the analysis of communicative behaviour. Studies by Brown and Levinson (1987), Kasper and Rose (2002), Bardovi-Harlig (2001), and Olshtain and Cohen (1983) were used to identify language forms associated with politeness, gratitude, requests, apologies, and other speech acts. These studies were selected because they provide widely recognised frameworks for examining how speakers use language appropriately in social situations. The combination of intercultural and pragmatic perspectives was considered particularly suitable because the study focused on communicative culture rather than broader cultural topics such as history, geography, or literature. The framework therefore enabled the researcher to investigate how cultural norms are reflected through everyday language use. While previous textbook evaluation studies have examined cultural representation, intercultural competence, and communicative practices in various EFL contexts, relatively little attention has been given to how English language communicative culture is represented in Libyan school textbooks through the combined perspectives of intercultural communicative competence and pragmatics. Rather than examining culture as factual knowledge or cultural products, the present study focuses specifically on communicative practices embedded in everyday language use, including speech acts, interactional norms, and pragmatic routines. In doing so, the study extends previous textbook research by providing a context-specific analysis of how communicative culture is represented in *English for Libya* and by evaluating the extent to which these representations support learners' pragmatic and intercultural communicative competence.

This study employed a qualitative content analysis design to investigate the representation of English language communicative culture practices in a public school textbook. Qualitative content analysis was selected because it enables researchers to examine both explicit and implicit meanings within texts and educational materials. Since cultural content is often embedded in language use rather than presented directly, a qualitative approach was considered particularly appropriate for identifying how communicative cultural elements are represented through dialogues, activities, listening tasks, reading passages, and other instructional strategies. The study focused on exploring the extent to which the textbook exposes learners to cultural aspects of English communication, including politeness, respect, gratitude, apologising, requesting, clarification strategies, and social interaction. These aspects were examined not merely as linguistic forms but as indicators of communicative practices associated with English language use and pragmatic competence.

The primary source of data for the study was the '*English for Libya*' textbook used with third-year students in Libyan preparatory schools. The textbook was selected because it represents an important stage in English language learning where students move beyond basic vocabulary and grammar and engage more frequently in communicative tasks, social interactions, and functional language use. Furthermore, this level serves as a transitional stage between preparatory and secondary education, making it particularly significant for the development of learners' communicative competence and intercultural awareness. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the cultural content presented throughout the textbook, all units were examined rather than selected sections. Particular attention was given to dialogues, role-play activities, listening exercises, reading passages, classroom interactions, and language functions because these components provide the richest examples of authentic communication and social practices. Data collection involved a systematic reading of the entire textbook. During the initial reading, all sections containing interpersonal communication were identified and highlighted. These included conversations between students and teachers, interactions among friends and family members, interviews, classroom discussions, requests for information, and other forms of social exchange. During subsequent readings, examples related to communicative cultural practices were extracted and organised according to recurring patterns. Notes were recorded regarding the context of each example, its communicative purpose, and the type of social interaction represented. Page numbers and relevant extracts were documented to ensure accurate referencing and facilitate comparison across different units.

The analysis was conducted through several iterative stages. During the first cycle of coding, every example illustrating communicative behaviour was assigned a descriptive code based on its communicative function. Examples included codes such as polite greeting, request, expression of gratitude, apology, accepting an apology, asking for clarification, making a suggestion, giving directions, invitation, and expressing preference. These initial codes remained close to the language used in the textbook and reflected the observable communicative behaviour rather than broader interpretations. During the second stage, conceptually related codes were grouped into broader categories. For example, codes relating to greetings, respectful forms of address, indirect requests, and politeness markers were combined under a broader category of respect, politeness, and appropriate social behaviour. Likewise, codes relating to expressions of gratitude and responses to thanks formed the category thanking and expressing appreciation, while apology expressions and apology responses formed apologising and maintaining social harmony. In the final stage, the broader categories were reviewed repeatedly across the dataset to ensure that they accurately represented recurring patterns throughout the textbook. This iterative process resulted in five overarching themes representing the principal dimensions of communicative culture identified in the analysis.

The collected data were analysed using thematic content analysis, a method that enables researchers to identify recurring patterns and themes while remaining sensitive to contextual meaning. The analysis involved coding communicative acts, expressions, and interactional behaviours that reflected cultural norms and expectations associated with English language communication. Related codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories representing major aspects of communicative culture. This process resulted in five principal themes: respect, politeness, and appropriate social behaviour; thanking and expressing appreciation; apologising and maintaining social harmony; requests, clarification, and interactional norms; and friendship, suggestions, and social relationships. The identified themes were subsequently interpreted in relation to existing scholarship on pragmatics, communicative competence, and intercultural communication to evaluate the extent to which the textbook promotes awareness of target language communicative practices and supports the development of pragmatic competence. Several measures were

adopted to enhance the validity of the analysis. First, the entire textbook was examined rather than selected units, reducing the possibility of overlooking relevant examples and providing a comprehensive representation of the cultural content. Second, the coding and thematic analysis were informed by established concepts from pragmatics and intercultural communication, ensuring that the findings were grounded in recognised theoretical frameworks rather than subjective impressions. In addition, repeated readings of the textbook were conducted throughout the analysis to ensure consistency in identifying, categorising, and interpreting cultural content. This iterative process helped refine the thematic categories and minimise potential researcher bias. As the study was based solely on the analysis of a publicly available educational textbook and did not involve human participants, ethical concerns relating to informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were not applicable. Nevertheless, academic integrity was maintained by accurately reporting textbook examples and appropriately acknowledging all scholarly sources used to support the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

4. RESULTS

The analysis of the '*English for Libya*' textbook revealed that it incorporates several aspects of target language communicative culture, particularly those related to everyday interaction and language habits. Rather than teaching culture through explicit descriptions of English-speaking societies, the textbook embeds cultural content within dialogues, listening activities, role plays, and communicative tasks. The analysis showed that learners are regularly exposed to language associated with respect, politeness, gratitude, appreciation, apologising, requesting assistance, asking for clarification, and interacting appropriately in formal and informal situations. However, these cultural elements are generally presented implicitly through language use rather than explicitly discussed as cultural practices. The following sections examine how the textbook represents these aspects of communicative culture and discuss their contribution to learners' intercultural development. The findings are discussed in relation to previous studies of EFL textbooks to determine whether the representation of communicative culture observed in *English for Libya* reflects broader trends in international ELT materials or demonstrates characteristics specific to the Libyan educational context.

Before presenting the thematic analysis, a descriptive frequency analysis was conducted to provide an overview of the distribution of communicative cultural practices identified in the textbook. Each coded example representing a communicative practice was assigned to one of the five thematic categories developed during the analysis. The frequencies presented in Table 1 indicate the number of occurrences of each category across the textbook and provide an indication of the relative emphasis placed on different aspects of communicative culture. These descriptive counts are intended to complement the qualitative findings by illustrating the prominence of each communicative category rather than to provide statistical generalisations.

Table 1. Frequency

Communicative Category	Approximate Frequency	Percentage
Politeness/respect	43	23.9%
Requests	51	28.3%
Thanking/appreciation	17	9.4%
Apologies	11	6.1%
Friendship/social relationships	58	32.2%

The content analysis identified approximately 180 instances of communicative cultural practices across *English for Libya*. The most frequently represented theme was Friendship and Social Relationships (58 occurrences, 32.2%), followed by Requests (51 occurrences, 28.3%) and Politeness and Respect (43 occurrences, 23.9%). Thanking and Appreciation appeared 17 times (9.4%), whereas Apologies were the least represented communicative practice, occurring only 11 times (6.1%). These descriptive frequencies reveal a clear imbalance in the representation of communicative practices. The textbook gives considerable attention to cooperative and socially harmonious interactions, particularly friendship, requests, and politeness, whereas communicative acts associated with conflict management, such as apologies, are comparatively limited. More importantly, the analysis identified almost no opportunities for learners to engage with disagreement, refusal, negotiation, complaint, persuasion, or conflict resolution. This pattern

suggests that the textbook presents communication primarily as cooperative and problem-free rather than as a process in which speakers must also manage differences of opinion, competing interests, and interpersonal tension. Such omissions may restrict learners' exposure to the wider range of pragmatic strategies required for authentic communication.

4.1. Respect, Politeness, and Appropriate Social Behaviour

One of the most prominent cultural features identified in the textbook is the consistent use of respectful and polite language. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness strategies play a crucial role in maintaining social relationships and avoiding communication that may threaten the listener's social identity. The textbook introduces learners to these strategies through authentic interactions involving teachers, students, parents, and friends. For example, in a discussion about future careers, Dania begins her conversation with the headteacher by saying, *"*Good morning, Headteacher*"* (p. 112). Throughout the dialogue, both speakers maintain a respectful tone that reflects appropriate communication between a student and a school authority figure. Similarly, when Hassan asks for directions to a bookshop, he starts with the expression, *"*Excuse me, Mr Fituri,*"* before making his request (p. 113). The phrase *"*Excuse me*"* functions as a politeness marker that prepares the listener for the request and demonstrates consideration for the other person.

The textbook also introduces a range of indirect requests, including *"*Could you tell me...?*"*, *"*May I ask you...?*"*, and *"*Do you mind if I ask you some questions?*"* (pp. 113–114). These expressions are important because English-speaking cultures often favour indirectness when making requests, particularly in formal situations. By exposing students to such expressions, the textbook contributes to the development of pragmatic competence, which involves understanding how language should be used appropriately in different social contexts (Kasper & Rose, 2002). However, while learners are exposed to these politeness conventions, the textbook does not explicitly explain why indirect forms are preferred or how levels of politeness vary according to social relationships. The emphasis on politeness routines identified in *English for Libya* is consistent with findings reported in previous evaluations of EFL textbooks. Studies by Cortazzi and Jin (1999), Gray (2010), and Risager (2018) similarly observed that many ELT materials introduce learners to conventional expressions of politeness through scripted dialogues and classroom interactions. However, like those textbooks, *English for Libya* tends to emphasise the linguistic forms of politeness rather than encouraging learners to examine the cultural values underlying these expressions or how politeness conventions vary across English-speaking communities. This suggests that the implicit treatment of pragmatic norms reflects a broader tendency in EFL materials rather than a feature unique to the context.

4.2. Thanking and Expressing Appreciation

Another important finding concerns the representation of gratitude and appreciation. Thanking is a fundamental communicative practice in English because it acknowledges assistance, cooperation, or kindness and contributes to positive interpersonal relations. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) argues that speech acts such as thanking are essential components of pragmatic competence because they allow language users to participate effectively in social interaction. Several examples of thanking behaviour appear throughout the textbook. During an interview about careers, Faisal concludes the conversation by saying, *"*Thank you very much for helping me with my project,*"* to which Bob replies, *"*Not at all. Good luck with it*"* (p. 114). This exchange is particularly valuable because learners are exposed not only to the act of thanking but also to an appropriate response and the setting where it is used. In English-speaking communities, responses such as *"*Not at all,*"* *"*You're welcome,*"* and *"*No problem*"* are commonly used to minimise the effort involved and maintain friendly relations. Another example appears in Unit 8 when Jassim responds to his friend's willingness to help by saying, *"*I'm very grateful*"* (p. 114). This expression introduces learners to a more formal way of expressing appreciation and broadens their communicative knowledge beyond the simple phrase *"*thank you.*"* Through these examples, the textbook exposes learners to linguistic patterns associated with gratitude and appreciation, thereby helping them develop socially appropriate communication skills. Nevertheless, the cultural significance of thanking behaviour remains implicit because no activities encourage learners to examine when gratitude is expected or how thanking practices may differ across cultures. This finding also corresponds with previous research showing that expressions of gratitude are

among the most frequently represented speech acts in EFL textbooks because they provide clear models of socially appropriate interaction (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Similar observations have been reported in studies conducted in Asian and Middle Eastern contexts, where textbooks typically prioritise routine interpersonal exchanges over deeper cultural discussion. The Libyan textbook therefore reflects an international pattern of emphasising communicative routines while providing limited opportunities for intercultural reflection.

4.3. Apologising and Maintaining Social Harmony

The analysis also revealed that the textbook teaches learners how to apologise and respond to apologies appropriately. Apologies are culturally significant because they help restore social harmony after mistakes, accidents, or inconveniences. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) argue that apology strategies reflect important social values such as responsibility, politeness, and respect for others. A clear example occurs when Hassan accidentally spills water on Omar's shoe. Hassan immediately says, *"*I'm so sorry. I've just spilled my water on your shoe,*"* and Omar responds, *"*Don't mention it*"* (p. 114). This interaction introduces learners to both sides of the apology sequence and demonstrates how misunderstandings or minor accidents can be resolved politely. Another example appears when Salwa apologises to her mother by saying, *"*I'm really sorry, Mum*"* (Unit 1). Such examples teach learners that apologies are expected when one's actions inconvenience another person.

The inclusion of apology routines supports the development of pragmatic awareness because learners are exposed to language that reflects socially acceptable behaviour. However, as with other cultural elements in the textbook, the focus remains on linguistic forms rather than cultural interpretation. Learners practice the expressions but are not encouraged to discuss why apologies are important or how apology norms differ across societies. The prominence of apology routines likewise reflects patterns identified in earlier textbook analyses. Previous studies have shown that apologies are commonly included because they represent highly predictable speech acts that can be taught through formulaic expressions. However, researchers have also noted that textbooks rarely address the contextual factors influencing apology strategies, such as power relationships, social distance, or cultural expectations. The present findings therefore suggest that the Libyan textbook follows a widespread pedagogical approach rather than presenting a distinctive local model of pragmatic instruction.

4.4. Requests, Clarification, and Interactional Norms

The textbook further promotes communicative behaviours associated with cooperation and successful interaction. Many dialogues model how speakers seek assistance, request information, and clarify misunderstandings politely. Examples include expressions such as *"*Can I borrow a ruler, please?*"* (p. 112), *"*Can you tell me how to get to the bookshop?*"* (p. 113), and *"*May I ask you about your own training?*"* (p. 113). These requests are softened through modal verbs and politeness markers, reflecting communicative practices commonly found in English-speaking environments. The textbook also teaches learners how to ask for clarification. In one classroom interaction, a student says, *"*Pardon, sir? I didn't hear which page*"* (p. 114). This brief exchange is significant because it introduces learners to a socially acceptable strategy for dealing with communication breakdowns. Rather than simply saying *"*What?*"*, the learner uses a more polite expression that demonstrates respect toward the teacher. These examples indicate that the textbook pays considerable attention to interactional competence by teaching students how to initiate, maintain, and repair communication. Such skills are central to successful communication and are widely recognised as important components of communicative language teaching. Similar findings have been reported in evaluations of communicative textbooks across different educational contexts. Tomlinson (2013) notes that many ELT materials successfully teach functional language for requesting information and maintaining interaction but often rely on carefully controlled dialogues instead of authentic spoken discourse. The findings from *English for Libya* support this observation, indicating that although learners receive substantial exposure to interactional routines, opportunities to engage with naturally occurring communication remain limited.

4.5. Friendship, Suggestions, and Social Relationships

The textbook also introduces learners to language used in maintaining friendships and negotiating social activities. Students encounter expressions for making suggestions, expressing preferences, and discussing plans with others. These communicative functions are important because they reflect everyday interaction among peers. For example, learners are exposed to expressions such as *"*How about going to the park?*"*, *"*Let's go to the mall,*"* and *"*I'd rather go to the cinema*"* (Unit 1). Through these examples, students learn how to propose activities, negotiate alternatives, and express personal preferences politely. The textbook also includes activities related to invitation writing and discussing leisure activities, exposing learners to language commonly used in social relationships. According to Byram (1997), communicative competence involves understanding how language functions within social relationships. The inclusion of suggestions, invitations, and collaborative decision-making therefore contributes to learners' sociocultural development. Nevertheless, the textbook does not explore the cultural norms associated with accepting or declining invitations, nor does it discuss differences in social expectations across cultures. The inclusion of invitations, suggestions, and collaborative decision-making is also consistent with previous textbook research, which has found that interpersonal communication is commonly represented through familiar social situations involving friends and classmates (Gray, 2010; Risager, 2018). However, as in many internationally published EFL textbooks, these interactions are generally presented as culturally neutral and harmonious, with limited exploration of how friendship practices or social expectations may differ across cultures.

However, the interpersonal relationships portrayed in the textbook are almost exclusively positive and cooperative. Learners rarely encounter situations involving disagreement between friends, refusal of invitations, negotiation of conflicting preferences, or repair of damaged relationships. Consequently, friendship is represented primarily as harmonious social interaction rather than as a relationship requiring negotiation, compromise, and conflict management.

4.6. Limitations in the Portrayal of Culture

Although *English for Libya* exposes learners to important communicative practices, this finding is consistent with a substantial body of textbook research indicating that many EFL materials prioritise functional language over explicit intercultural understanding (Gray, 2010; Tomlinson, 2013; Risager, 2018). Similar studies have reported that learners are frequently taught appropriate expressions for everyday interaction but receive relatively little support in interpreting the cultural values that shape these communicative practices. The findings therefore suggest that the implicit treatment of culture observed in the Libyan textbook reflects a broader tendency within ELT publishing rather than an issue unique to Libya.

In *English for Libya*, learners are introduced to communicative practices such as politeness, thanking, apologising, requesting assistance, and maintaining social relationships through dialogues, role plays, and classroom interactions. They encounter polite requests such as *"*Could you tell me…?*"* and *"*May I ask you…?*"*, together with gratitude and apology routines such as *"*Thank you very much*"* and *"*I'm so sorry.*"* While these examples provide useful models of socially appropriate communication, the textbook rarely encourages learners to examine the cultural values and social expectations underlying these expressions. There is little discussion of why particular forms are preferred, when they are expected, or how their use may vary across different English-speaking communities. This limitation is significant because communicative competence involves more than mastering linguistic forms; it also requires understanding the sociocultural norms that govern language use (Hymes, 1972). Likewise, pragmatic competence develops when learners understand both the linguistic form and the social context in which it is used (Kasper & Rose, 2002). As Byram (1997) argues, intercultural communicative competence requires learners to interpret, compare, and critically evaluate cultural practices rather than simply reproduce language forms.

Beyond the implicit treatment of culture, the analysis revealed a systematic imbalance in the communicative situations represented. The textbook overwhelmingly favours routine, cooperative exchanges while giving little attention to communicative practices that involve interpersonal tension, disagreement, refusal, negotiation, persuasion, complaint, or conflict resolution. As a result, learners are exposed primarily to formulaic interactional routines rather than to the broader range of pragmatic behaviours required in authentic communication.

4.7. Cultural Simplification and Misrepresentation

The textbook does not contain overt cultural stereotypes or negative portrayals of English native speakers. Nevertheless, its representation of communicative culture is often simplified and selective. Most interactions involve familiar social roles such as students, teachers, parents, friends, and professionals, while little attention is given to the cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and social diversity that characterises contemporary English-speaking communities. As a result, learners may develop a relatively homogeneous view of English-speaking cultures rather than recognising their multicultural and multilingual nature. In addition, communicative behaviour is frequently presented as uniform and predictable. Politeness strategies are largely represented through standard forms such as *"*Could you…?*"*, *"*May I…?*"*, and *"*Do you mind…?*"*, with limited attention to variation across contexts, social groups, or levels of formality. This may unintentionally suggest that there is a single correct way to communicate in English, despite research showing considerable variation in communicative practices across English-speaking communities and interactional settings (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Overall, *English for Libya* introduces learners to many important communicative routines associated with everyday interaction. Nevertheless, the findings reveal a clear imbalance in the range of communicative practices represented. The textbook consistently privileges politeness, cooperation, friendship, and routine requests, while communicative acts involving disagreement, refusal, negotiation, complaint, persuasion, and conflict management receive little or no attention. Consequently, learners are exposed to a simplified model of communication that emphasises social harmony but underrepresents the pragmatic complexity of authentic interaction. This imbalance may limit opportunities to develop the broader pragmatic and intercultural competencies required for effective communication in diverse English-speaking contexts.

4.8. Stereotypes and Misrepresentation in the Textbook

Although the '*English for Libya*' textbook generally presents cultural communicative practices in a functional and pedagogically simplified manner, a closer critical reading reveals some potential tendencies toward stereotyping and cultural misrepresentation. These do not appear as explicit negative portrayals, but rather as subtle forms of reduction, idealisation, and limited cultural diversity, which may influence learners' understanding of real-world communication.

One key issue is the idealised representation of social interaction, where communication is consistently smooth, polite, and conflict-free. For example, in the textbook dialogues, interactions such as requesting help, apologising, and thanking are typically resolved immediately and politely, such as *"*Thank you very much for helping me…*"* followed by *"*Not at all. Good luck with it*"* (p. 114), or *"*I'm so sorry…*"* followed by *"*Don't mention it*"* (p. 114). While these exchanges are useful for teaching politeness routines, they present communication as highly predictable and harmonious. In real-life communication, however, misunderstandings, disagreement, hesitation, and repair strategies are common features of interaction. This overly smooth representation may therefore create what Gray (2010) describes as 'sanitised discourse' in ELT materials, where potentially complex or sensitive communicative realities are avoided to maintain pedagogical simplicity. Another form of potential misrepresentation is the limited sociocultural diversity of speakers and contexts. The textbook largely presents generic social roles such as students, teachers, parents, and professionals, with minimal reference to cultural, ethnic, or regional variation within English-speaking contexts. For instance, interactions such as *"*Good morning, Headteacher*"* (p. 112) or *"*Excuse me, Mr Fituri*"* (p. 113) are presented in neutral institutional contexts without broader cultural embedding. This aligns with findings in ELT textbook research showing that learners are often exposed to generic and decontextualised cultural settings rather than authentic sociocultural diversity (Gray, 2010; Risager, 2018). Furthermore, politeness strategies are presented in a uniform and standardised way, mainly through indirect forms such as *"*Could you…?*"*, *"*May I…?*"*, and *"*Do you mind if…?*"* (pp. 113–114). While these expressions are appropriate in formal contexts, the absence of variation (e.g., informal requests such as *"*Can you…?*"* among peers) may unintentionally suggest that English communication follows a single, fixed politeness system. Research in intercultural pragmatics warns that such simplified presentation can lead to pragmatic stereotyping, where learners assume that one form of communication is universally appropriate across all contexts (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Another important limitation is the absence of intercultural contrast and critical reflection. The textbook teaches learners how to say things (e.g., thanking, apologising, requesting), but does not encourage comparison with learners' own cultural

norms. For example, expressions of gratitude such as *"*I'm very grateful*"* (p. 114) are presented without discussion of when, why, or how gratitude conventions might differ across cultures. According to Byram (1997), this lack of reflection limits the development of intercultural communicative competence, which requires learners to interpret and evaluate cultural meanings rather than simply reproduce linguistic forms.

Overall, these findings indicate that *English for Libya* shares many characteristics with internationally published EFL textbooks. Like materials examined in previous studies, it successfully introduces learners to everyday communicative routines while presenting culture in a largely implicit, idealised, and simplified manner. At the same time, the textbook reflects local curricular priorities by embedding communicative practices within familiar educational and social contexts rather than providing extensive exposure to the cultural diversity of English-speaking communities. Consequently, the findings suggest that the textbook combines broader international tendencies in ELT materials with context-specific features shaped by the Libyan educational environment.

4.9. Patterns of Omission and Imbalance

While the textbook provides frequent exposure to politeness routines, requests, gratitude, apologies, and friendship, the analysis also revealed clear patterns of omission. Across the textbook, communicative interaction is overwhelmingly cooperative and supportive, with very few situations requiring learners to express disagreement, refuse requests, negotiate competing viewpoints, challenge opinions, complain appropriately, or resolve interpersonal conflict. Even when differences of opinion occur, they are generally brief and are resolved quickly without extended negotiation or justification. This imbalance is pedagogically significant because authentic communication involves more than maintaining harmonious relationships. Speakers frequently need to reject invitations politely, negotiate alternative solutions, express dissatisfaction, defend their viewpoints, and manage disagreement while preserving social relationships. These interactional skills constitute important components of pragmatic and intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997; Kasper & Rose, 2002). Their limited representation therefore narrows learners' exposure to the complexity of everyday communication. Furthermore, the predominance of cooperative exchanges contributes to an idealised representation of communication in which misunderstandings are resolved immediately, requests are generally accepted, and social interaction proceeds without significant tension. Although such simplified interactions may be appropriate for language learning at this level, they provide limited preparation for the communicative challenges learners are likely to encounter in authentic intercultural settings.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of *English for Libya* demonstrates that the textbook incorporates a substantial amount of English language communicative culture through everyday interactions and communicative activities. Learners are regularly exposed to important communicative practices such as politeness, respect, gratitude, appreciation, apologising, requesting assistance, seeking clarification, making suggestions, and maintaining social relationships. These practices are embedded in dialogues, role plays, and classroom tasks that provide learners with opportunities to develop pragmatic awareness, interactional competence, and familiarity with common speech acts and interactional norms used in English-speaking contexts. Consequently, the textbook moves beyond teaching grammar and vocabulary by introducing learners to socially appropriate ways of using English in a range of communicative situations and demonstrating how politeness, cooperation, and mutual respect are expressed through language.

Beyond evaluating a single textbook, this study contributes to research on communicative competence, pragmatics, and textbook evaluation in several ways. First, it demonstrates that exposure to appropriate linguistic forms alone is insufficient for developing intercultural communicative competence; learners also require opportunities to understand the cultural values, contextual factors, and social meanings that shape language use. In doing so, the findings reinforce arguments advanced by Hymes (1972), Byram (1997), and Kasper and Rose (2002) that effective communication depends on integrating linguistic, pragmatic, and sociocultural knowledge. Second, the study shows that while *English for Libya* provides extensive exposure to common speech acts, these are largely presented as formulaic routines with limited attention to contextual variation and intercultural interpretation. Finally, the findings indicate that the

strengths and limitations identified in *English for Libya* closely resemble broader patterns reported in international studies of EFL materials. Like many contemporary textbooks, it successfully promotes functional communication but gives less attention to intercultural reflection, cultural diversity, and authentic communicative complexity. Consequently, the challenges identified appear to reflect broader tendencies in EFL textbook design rather than issues unique to the Libyan context. Future textbook development should therefore incorporate richer cultural content, greater opportunities for intercultural comparison, and more authentic communicative situations to better prepare learners for communication in diverse English-speaking contexts.

However, the analysis also reveals several limitations, both in the representation of communicative culture within the textbook and in the scope of the present study. In *English for Libya*, communicative culture is generally presented implicitly through language forms rather than explicitly explored as a cultural phenomenon. Learners are taught what to say in particular situations, but they are rarely encouraged to examine the social values, cultural assumptions, and contextual factors that shape communicative behaviour. Moreover, the textbook emphasises routine and cooperative interactions while providing limited exposure to more complex communicative situations involving disagreement, refusal, negotiation, or conflict resolution. Communication is portrayed as consistently successful, polite, and harmonious, with little attention to the diversity, complexity, and intercultural dimensions of authentic language use. As a result, learners may become familiar with common communication patterns without fully understanding the sociocultural and intercultural factors that influence English as a global language. In addition, this study focused on a single EFL textbook and relied exclusively on qualitative document analysis. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalised to other textbooks or educational contexts, nor do they capture how the textbook is implemented in classrooms or interpreted by teachers and learners. Future research could address these limitations by examining multiple textbooks and incorporating classroom observations, teacher interviews, learner perspectives, or comparative studies across different educational contexts. Such approaches would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how communicative and intercultural content is represented, taught, and experienced in EFL settings.

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