

## Representation of Target Culture in Oxford Modern English Textbooks: Discourse Analysis

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### Abstract

*This study is conducted to investigate about the gaps and differences that exist between the target language and learners' culture in the teaching of English Language through Oxford Modern English. At the same time, this research has also investigated the impacts of these differences on English language teaching, learning and cultural development of the ESL learner. The design of the research is mixed as data is collected from three text books through purposive sampling then arranged in tabulated form and percentage is presented in graphs by following the quantitative method. On the other hand, interpretation is given qualitatively according to the own observation of the researcher and data is categorized by applying the model of Byram et al. (1994). Therefore, this is a content based mixed method study. This study is completed under the main stream of academic discourse analysis by applying the model of Byram et al. (1994) to describe the gaps between the contents of these ELT Textbooks and the learners' society on sociological, religious and cultural level. Findings show that there are many cultural differences and a dire need is to review, revise or replace these foreign cultural contents in ELT/EFL text books written by foreign authors who are totally unaware about the learners' culture but using it with the amalgamation of target culture that is creating problems for the learners in the acquisition of this language. This discourse analysis is locating the gaps to overcome and achieve the objectives of ELT.*

**Key words:** Culture, ELT, Differences, Sociological, Beliefs, Text Book

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1- Background of the Study**

Discourse is not merely a collection of sentences but functions as interactional and transactional communication. Academic discourse refers to all kinds of text including fiction, authentic material, classroom conversation and books used in the language teaching classroom and these texts are the most suitable examples of language in use (discourse). Though “all kinds of text and books can, of course, be used for educational purposes and the term is neither précised nor stable” (Nawaz at al., 2015, p.89) yet “text books play very important role in teaching especially in classroom activities” (Johnson, 1993, p.491). In Pakistani society, text books are considered as the basic material for ELT and used widely for EFL/ESL/ELT classrooms. Many well-known publishers are in the circle but Punjab Text Book (PTB) and Oxford University Press (OUP) are two major publishers of these text books, mostly used in schools. Books of PTB are taught in Government schools and most of the private schools are using different series of Oxford Publishers. These books are selected according to the level of school and community going to be educated there. PTB books are written by local or native writers but Oxford books are written by foreigners. As these authors are not aware about the actual culture, social and religious background of the learners, they create such textbooks that are far away from the cultural and educational needs of the students. There are such “social, cultural, religious and pedagogical contents in these textbooks that do not match with the cultural values and pedagogical needs and objectives set for the ESL learners in Pakistan” (Shah, 2014, p.90).

There is a wide gap between the needs and the learning of the students. These textbooks are written in the aspects of target culture that is usually different from the learners' culture. The issue of culture inculcation in EFL/ESL learning and teaching has gained attention in 'World Englishes' scenario along with the voices of 'Glocalization' (Tiplady, 2003) and "inclusion of the target language culture in the foreign/second language textbooks is considered essential to learn language in its real context"(Shah, 2014, p.90), therefore authors of these books use political agenda to create such a different text. According to Shah (2014, p.91) "these are heavily imbued with the target culture as compared to the learner's culture". The purpose of this cultural replacement was extra-linguistic, with the so-called aim to 'civilize' the Indians" and students learn the language as has been used to convey the meanings or intended message in the target culture.

It is desired to analyze these text books for the above mentioned cultural issues, to find out either these books are relevant or appropriate with our Pakistani social, religious and cultural beliefs of the learners. The present study aims at discourse analysis of the Oxford Modern English (OME) textbooks grade 5, 6, 7 for the learners or natives' cultural point of view. The objective of this research paper is to find out those cultural differences observed in these books and find out that how many students are de-motivated or feel difficulty in language learning due to these cultural hindrances as "the use of learner's culture in the foreign language classes increases the confidence of the learners. They can apply background knowledge or 'schematic knowledge' in learning a foreign language in their own cultural context" (Ariffin, 2006, p.75-76). In Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Turkish, text books are written in the context of learners' culture. All main themes dressing, food, history and travelling are depicted in their own culture.

This study concentrates on the concept of culture, kinds of culture and its function between ESL learning and learners' own language. To investigate the cultural representation, researcher has used the model designed by Michael Byram, Carol Morgan and his colleagues for the contents analysis of cultural learning, which is outlined and recommended in their book "Teaching and learning language and culture."(1994)

### **1.2 Research Objectives**

Academic Discourse is an integral part of language teaching and text books are used as its necessary tool to perform the function of transaction and interaction as well as to teach the real sense of language. The objective of the study is to analyze those various cultural aspects used to teach the target culture to the learners in the contents of Oxford Modern English grade 5, 6, 7 classes in private schools of Pakistani society.

### **1.3 Rationale of the Study**

Oxford Text Books are taught in a lot of private schools to teach the language but it is presenting the language with the vision of teaching culture of target language. Though all Oxford Text Books are published in Pakistan, Karachi head office yet authors are not native of Pakistan as well as they are not familiar with the culture of Pakistan therefore, they are writing according to their own local culture and students are unable to learn it. This study investigates those cultural differences which are presented in these books. If these books will be written in their own context then students would be able to learn it more easily.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study will be valuable for the second language teachers and learners. The results of this study can be generalized concerning the cultural variances in the text books. In this

situation this research paper will be noteworthy for other researchers in the zone of academic discourse analysis. It would help the teachers to observe the merits and de-merits of these text books in the context of their own students as well as it would provide them an awareness to plan training or some programmes for the development of their students in the ESL, on their level of understanding.

### **1.5 Research Questions:**

- 1- How the target culture is represented in the Oxford Modern English for Pakistani learners?
- 2- How much “Oxford Modern English” textbooks designed for the Pakistani learners of English are different from the local cultural representation?
- 3- Which culture, the target language culture or the learners’ culture is being promoted.

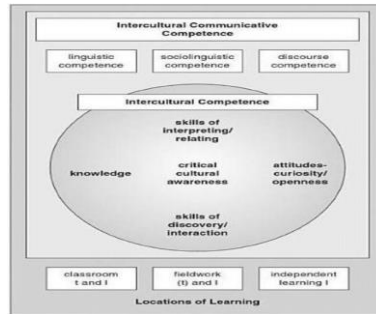
### **1.6 Delimitations of the study**

This study has investigated the cultural differences in Oxford Modern English by applying model of Byram at al.,(1994) and area of research has also been limited to oxford publishers’ three selected books of one series only, though this publisher has many other series that can be studied with the same intention.

### **1.7 Theoretical Frame Work**

For evaluation, theoretical framework is used presented by Michael Byram, Carol Morgan and his colleagues in their book “Teaching and learning language and culture (Byram et al.1994) . During content analysis, this model focused the culture related items as social identity, beliefs and behaviours, sociopolitical institutes, socialization and life style, national history, and geography.

## Byram Model



“Intercultural Communicative Competence is composed of two closely related areas including communicative competence, and intercultural competence. The communicative competence consists of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. Intercultural competence consists of three components (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and is supplemented by five values: (1) intercultural attitudes, (2) knowledge, (3) skills of interpreting and relating, (4) skills of discovery and interaction, (5) critical cultural awareness.” (Byram et al.2002, pp. 11-13).

## 2-LITERATURE REVIEW

English Language being “lingua franca” is used for communication in the form of written and spoken in the largest part of the world. Kachru (1985:1992) attempts to design a model of three concentric circles to explain the use and place of the English language in different countries. According to him Pakistan is standing in “the outer circle includes the countries with colonial past where English is an institutional variety. Examples of these countries are India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Singapore, Malaysia, etc” (pp.355-356). In Pakistan English is used as official as well as institutional language. Shamim (2008, p. 236) points out that “English language is used in Pakistan in civil administration at provincial and federal level,

electronic and print media. It is language of communication in trade and commerce, and in political and official communication in Pakistan. It is taught as ESL in Pakistani institutions.”

The most important medium of academic discourse and teaching English is text books. English language teachers rely only on printed material in the form of textbooks, only material that is being used in Pakistani language teaching class rooms at primary, secondary and tertiary level (Majeed, 2012). These text books are used for academic discourse widely in ESL/EFL and considered only reliable source of teaching material. According to Govt. of Pakistan, (2006, p.2) “The textbook is the only available Learning Material in most schools. Additional materials like teaching aids, supplementary reading materials and school libraries are virtually non-existent”. These text books are easy to approach and deliver to students without any painstaking by the teachers, therefore their reliability in unquestioned ever .Yet since 1970s, this discussion has been started and analyzed in many aspects that “textbooks should not become the aim themselves but should help the teachers and learners to get the aims” (Brown, 1995, p.57) and either these books are fulfilling our language learning objects or not as well as what type of knowledge, contents and culture these are imparting.

As in most of the private schools, Oxford Text Books are used to teach English language and “these text books are teaching the English in the context of the native speaker, not in the context of learners’ culture. Native speaker countries produce such textbooks in which a great cultural gap is found between the contents of the textbooks and the needs and objectives of the ESL learners in Pakistan.”(Shah, 2014, p.99). Some other researchers have studied other series and have the same opinion about Oxford text Books like: Mehmood et al. (2012, p. 39) says, “The results reveal that the major focus of textbook *Step Ahead 1* is non-native culture, inadequate,

inefficient inter-cultural harmony is found in it and the least consideration has been given to the source culture, which is likely to alienate the learners from their own culture”. Definition of culture is used in foreign language education by Adaskou Britten and Fashi (1990, p. 6-7) that culture has four meanings:

- i) **The aesthetic Sense Culture:** culture with capital “C”, it includes media, cinema, music and literature.
- ii) **The Sociological Sense Culture:** culture with a small “c”. It includes the nature and organization of family, home life, interpersonal relations, material conditions, customs and institutions.
- iii) **The Semantic Sense Culture** (conception and thought processes).
- iv) **The Pragmatic Sense Culture** (social skills, communication functions, appropriacy, etc.)

On the other hand, to understand the above mentioned definition, we have to go deeply in the function of the culture as according to Risager (1989, p.260) culture is:

- i) **Students’ Cognitive Development** (providing information about the countries in which the language is spoken).
- ii) **Students’ Foreign Language Skills Development** (enhance the students’ insight into the foreign culture in order to communicate properly in that cultural context).
- iii) **Students’ Attitude Development** (towards the other countries and the cultures)

Before moving ahead, it is better to introduce the terms used in the study and define the type of culture, presented in ESL/EFL textbooks:

- i) **Source Culture** i.e. native culture of the learner



ii) **Target Culture** i.e. culture of the countries where English is spoken as first language

iii) **International Culture** i.e. the culture amalgamation of English and non-English speaking countries. (Cortazzi & Jin, 1991: pp. 204-5)

Course contents of Oxford Text Book series are replete with Aesthetic Sense culture, which perform the function of Students' foreign language skill development and focus on the achievement of "Target culture" Byram et al. (1991) presented the idea that foreign language should introduce the target culture as well so that the learner may be able to understand and use the language in its original setting (p.18). However this introduction is working differently in Pakistani scenario because learner is unable to meet the language learning objectives in this different cultural representation. Apparently, content is written in the local culture yet thorough analysis diagnoses the difference of the social and religious values. The writers have incorporated their thoughts, social values and worldviews despite their claims that they prepared the material according to the needs, values and social background of the learners (Ahmad , 2012).

This difference of culture reflects its presence from title to onward in every page, text, picture and themes which affect the mind of the learner as, "The cultural contents of course books directly or indirectly communicate sets of social and cultural values" (Ahmed & Shah, 2013, p.157) along with it "Language and culture are interrelated, when one is learnt or taught the other is sure to accompany". (Mahmood et al.2012, p. 39). Though all the above mentioned types, functions of culture are not mentioned in each text yet it is not possible that we can teach language without teaching the culture in which it operates, then we teach meaningless symbols that attach with wrong meanings.

Intention of this study is to explore those differences of native and targets culture which is presented in these text books and creating problems for ESL learners.

### **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Design of the Research**

Design of this research is qualitative as content analysis of oxford text books is conducted for cultural differences but major purpose of this content analysis is to locate the cultural representation, to identify and discuss its pattern, and to quantify the presence and relationship between such words and concepts given by Byram et al (1994), in tabulated form, therefore this is also quantitative research. So overall this is an evaluative and mixed method research, conducted through content analysis.

#### **3.2 Sample**

This study is conducted on the three text books of Oxford Modern English of grade 5, 6,7 taught in private schools. Purposive sampling technique has been used in the selection of one story from each book that can represent more words for the application of Byram's Model. All the sentences are well-coherent and consist in different aspects of culture that revolve around cultural representation.

#### **3.3 Analytical Framework**

As this study is both quantitative in data collection and qualitative in discussion, therefore mixed method or design is used. Research tool is observation of the contents of three selected lessons. For analysis, data is tabulated in different cultural aspects by applying the Model of Byram et al (1994). This model includes the categories that determine the culture related aspects such as social identity, beliefs & behaviors,

sociopolitical institutes, socialization & life cycle, national history and geography.

In this study data is collected and analyzed according to the following points:

1. Social identity
2. Social interaction
3. Religion
4. Dressing
5. Eating
6. Greetings
7. Recreations

However, interpretation of related nature of social, religious and cultural aspects is given in detail, by the researcher in the discussion according to his observation.

### **3.4 Research Process**

The researcher, after selecting the topic of the research and setting the research questions, reviewed the literature related to the culture, kinds of culture, cultural differences and use of culture in the text books. Sample data was selected from three oxford text books. The selected data was entered in the evaluation model of Byram by defining category and according to the frequency of occurrence then arranged in tabulated form. After that Data was entered in Microsoft excel 2010 for further analysis in graphs and taken out percentage. Moreover, data is discussed descriptively and numerically as well as finally researcher has given conclusion and his own recommendations.

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS**

**Oxford Modern English: Book 5 Oxford Publishers**  
**Lesson No. 5 Perseus and the Gorgon**  
**Total Cultural Contents: 162**

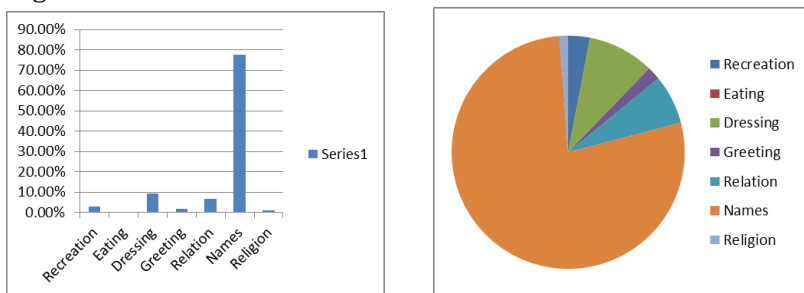
Sr.no.	Features	Elements	Total	%age
01	Recreations	Banquet(4), married(1)	5	3.0%
02	Eating	None	0	0%
03	Dressing	Helmet(2), Winged Sandel(2), shield(3), bag(2), grey robes(1), Knapsack(2), Sword(3)	15	9.2%
04	Greeting	Ha(1), Oh(1), thank you (1),	3	1.85%
05	Relations	Mother(4), brother(1), Sister(5), Sisters(1),	11	6.79%
06	Names: Persons	Perseus(42), Danae(4), Dictys(3) Polydectus(8), King(7), Medusa(9), Gorgon(4), Zeus(3), Hermes(2), Athena(4) Nymphs(3), Hera(3), witches(10), Andromeda(3)	105	64.81%
	Names: Places	Northern(3), Greek(1), Constellation(2), Serifos(5), Garden(1), forest(1), cave(3), coast (1), rock (1), sea(3)	21	12.96%
07	Religion	Wished(1), prayed(1)	2	1.2%
		Total	162	100%

## Discussion:

This selected sample story is about the Greek myths and characters that were not seen in reality ever by the native speakers or even by the writers as well but they believe in them as we believe angels though unseen. So basically, this story is totally about an irrelevant culture and ideas because how a student of grade 5 would be able to understand the idea of mortality. But he would definitely like to be a role player among such supernatural characters. On the other hand, vocabulary and pattern used in this academic discourse is rarely used in their routine or later on educational life. For Example: The result of collected data shows that “Recreation” element is very low in the life of these creatures as only 3% and no concept of “Eating” is there in that peoples’ life. Less percentage of “Greeting” (only 1.85%) shows less socialization in their life and data representation of “Dressing” as well as selected vocabulary items are clear reflection that these stories are about soldiers, bravery and fights as they used to present to their heroes. “Relations” have a little bit more weightage but more focused was feminine characters and relations as brother is given only one time comparatively to 10 times of other

feminine relations. After data collection and analysis, the results surprised the researcher that the most important and focused area is “Names” which have the highest representation. It shows that characters, their actions and places or status are more important in such type of stories. For further understanding, data is presented in figure and graph to clearly and quickly understand the percentage of every area.

**Figure No.1.1**



Apparently very less importance is given to religion by the authors as compare to the culture of the reader, that is a big cultural difference among the values and themes of the writer and reader especially when we deeply study the story, it is all about a struggle of evil and bad , among poor and rich class as well. Therefore ideology behind the whole thoughts is the victory of goodness and defeat of power and evil, yet there is no concept of God who has created all these supernatural characters.

Summing up, this story is full of cultural differences either to observe on sociological, religious and cultural level according to the model of Byram (1994). There is no resemblance of any character or situation with real life of the reader. At the same line, learner is unable to understand this discourse without proper understanding of context that is not available to him. At the same time, teachers are in the same situation of vagueness about everything. It is acknowledged

and now goes without saying that foreign language teachers should be foreign culture teachers, having the ability to experience and analyze both the cultures (Byram et al., 1994). That is not available in our society.

**Oxford Modern English: Book 6 Oxford Publishers  
 Lesson No. 7 Home , Sweet Home!  
 Total Cultural Contents: 117**

Sr.no.	Features	Elements	Total	%age
01	Recreations	Drum(1), Clanging(1), Tambourine(2), Music(1), Drumming (2), Jangling (1), Orchestra(1), Giggling (2), deck of cards (1), smiling(1), jovially(1), Amused(1), Excited (1), Nosily(2)	18	15.38%
02	Eating	Dinner(2), Vegetables (1), Feed(1),	4	3.41%
03	Dressing	Rag(1), Jacket (1),	2	1.70%
04	Greeting	Cho(1), Pleasant Surprise(1),	2	1.70%
05	Relations	Son(2), Daughter(2), Wife(3), Children(5), Husband (1), Family (1),	14	11.96%
06	Names	Antona(4) Lona(4) Janko(27), Monica (11), Eva (19), witch(1), Mikhail(2), Geese(1), Chicken(1), Goat(1), Cow(3), Duck(1)	75	64.10%
07	Religion	Hell(2)	2	1.70%
		Total	117	100%

**Discussion:**

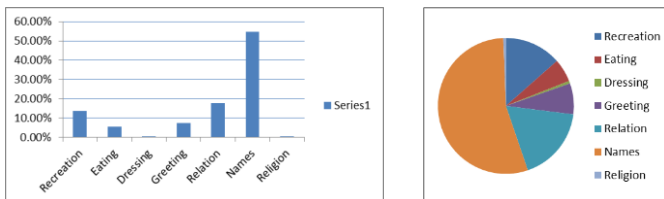
Data of lesson No.7 of Oxford Modern English class 6 is analyzed numerically and finding shows that this lesson is basically written in the colour of local or native culture yet thorough study depicts that there is a cultural gap in the presentation of every element applied from the model of Byram et al. (1994) of social, religious and cultural values and ideas. First of all “Recreation” is valued 15 % that means the importance of fun and enjoyment in the life of family and children. But this whole recreation words does not match with the social norms and values of Pakistani society like: drumming, orchestra etc.

Less weightage is given to other categories, like: Eating 3.41%, and dressing, greeting are only 1.70 %. Some of the words used here are very close to the learners' culture that makes him feel a sense of familiarity of the text as he is aware about the context.

On the other hand, names are very much used and most of the time, name of "Junko" has been used 27 times in the text of four pages. It shows the place and importance of the head of the family in local culture. After this the name of "Eva" has been used 19 times that shows the importance of such problem solvers' personality in the life of such type of families.

"Religion" and "greeting" are again on the lower usage level. So according to the model of Bryram, this categorization shows the importance of characters in the actual main topic of "Home, sweet home" and head of the family is the most important. For more elaboration, researcher has presented data in graph and figure and discussion is there for different kinds and functions of that culture, presented here.

**Figure 1.2**



According to Risager's three types of functions of culture, this lesson is an effort to develop the cognitive skill of text and foreign culture understanding by selecting the names from target culture. All animals and their names are familiar to the learner but single large room setting with kitchen and wide garden is not acceptable for Pakistani learner as this is a big difference in both cultures.

Summing up, we can say that lesson is an effort to manipulate the local culture with a blend of target culture. In this effort of amalgamation, learner would definitely miss some

points of his own culture and will learn some of the target culture.

**Oxford Modern English: Book 7 Oxford Publishers  
 Lesson No. 3: The Story of An Invitation  
 Total Cultural Contents: 163**

Sr.no.	Features	Elements	Total	%age
01	Recreations	Twilight(1), Pleasant (3), Celebrate (1), Good news (1) Love (1), Careful (1), Picnic (1), Parties (1), Merry Doing (1), Galore (1),Delightful (2) Good rest (1), Cheerfully (1), Fun (1), Glad(1), Jumped(1), Briskly (1), Good(2),	22	13.49%
02	Eating	Chocolates (1), Caramels (1), Strawberries (1), Cream (1), Pound Cake (1), Doughnuts (1), Mince Pies (1), Delicious (1), Indigestible (1),	9	5.52%
03	Dressing	Mourning(1),	1	0.61%
04	Greeting	Dear(1), Sweet(1), Love(1), Lovely (1), Oh(6), Sweetest(1), Grateful(1),	12	7.36%
05	Relations	Roommate (3), Classmates (1), Teacher (1), Aunt (17), Friends(2), Aunty (1), Mother (1), Daughter (1), Bothers (1), Sisters (1),	29	17.79%
06	Names	Bertha Sutherland(23), Post office(1), Boarding – house(1), Grace(25), Maxwell (1), Dartmouth (1), Carter (1), Margarate (1), Meg (15), Riversdale (3), Mary Fairweather (2), Louise Fyshe (2), Lily Dennis (2), Bertie (4), Clarkman(4), Church (1), Mouse (1), Gracie (1)	89	54.60%
07	Religion	Angel(1)	1	0.61%
		Total	163	

**Discussion:**

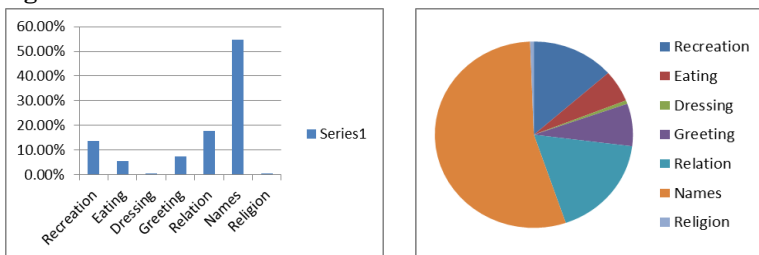
This story is about an invitation received by a student, Bertha who was studying in a boarding school. With pleasure she shares this news with a poor roommate Grace, and then transfers this invitation to her very secretly. This act of Bertha solves financial issues of Grace forever. In the categorization, it is found that “Names” are again on the highest percentage that shows the importance of characters and their role play. But all these names are again in the language or representation of target culture. So here is again the second point of Risager is followed that make the learner familiar with the culture of the



native speaker through the introduction of culture. Name of Barth and Grace are used more than 25 times, this repetition tells us that these two characters are the main characters of the story. On second number, category of “Relations” is visible with 17% that reflects the main issue is relations development but here repeated word is “aunt” that is also the third important character in this story. On third number “Recreation is observed with 13% and many vocabulary words has been used in different patterns but in same context of invitation. Rest of the categories has got less percentage in the overall findings. Yet one very important and single word in full dress category “mourning dress” has been used that is the fundamental concern at the back of the whole story.

Overall, this lesson is full of coherence and appropriate use of cohesive devices and categories are presented in graph form as well.

**Figure No 1.3**



On the other hand, findings of data analysis from cultural point of view tell us that the ideology is good but cultural differences are still there that are going to bring change in the mind of the learner under the spell of culture of target culture. As in Pakistani culture, any girl, living in boarding can't take independent decision to move toward others home without permission that has not been mentioned here in the teaching of target culture.

Summing up, the finding shows that these textbooks are replete with various examples of foreign culture that is different from

the learners' cultural and moral values. As this analysis is conducted by applying the model of Byram, so after collecting data of all categories, the researcher is of the view that there are cultural differences in the text books written by foreign authors and these difference not only creating difficulty for language learners as well as changing their values and norms.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Purpose of ELT/ESL is not only to develop reading skill or to memorize some chunks of text on the part of the students but to develop the understanding of language and ability to apply and use it in educational and practical career are included in its main objectives. Unfortunately a large number of students, studying in private schools are deprived of this capability or if they are able to develop then at the cost of diminishing their own culture that is not fruitful for us as a nation as well. On the basis of the findings of this study, it is concluded that text of these books are full of the cultural differences. Though course contents are selected according to the requirement of "National Curriculum Of Pakistan" yet the production task is completed by the non-native writers, therefore a big gap is there in the manipulation of local culture in the disguise of the "globalization" that is done under the term of "localization".

Context and text represent the western society and highly imbued with the examples of sociological, cultural and religious differences. In some lessons, content shows the total unawareness of the writer about the level, requirement, circumstances and background of their readers and sometime total unfamiliar characters and context is introduced from the culture of the native speakers that is useless for learners for being a part of long years ago removed history of the western world. According to Mahmood, Asghar and Hussain (2012,

p.38), “textbooks in Pakistan highlight the issue of representation of foreign culture in the ESL/EFL textbooks”.

There is dire need to review and revise these text books according to the cultural requirements of the learners. It is also suggested to select the textbooks for the students by keeping in mind their future needs and present situations. Learners’ needs, attitude and culture should be kept in view in the designing of these text books so that differences can be minimized.

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