



Comparative Analysis of the Cultural Components of Persian Language Textbooks of Iranian and Foreign Publishers

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 21 September 2024 Revised: 18 February 2024 Accepted: 10 March 2025 Online: 27 December 2025</p>	<p>Culture and language are fundamentally interconnected, and the significance of culture must be acknowledged in discussions of language. Therefore, the aim of this research was to examine the cultural elements in Persian as a foreign language (PFL) textbooks published by both Iranian and foreign publishers, and how these cultural components portray the Persian language for non-native speakers. The documentary technique was used for data collection, while thematic analysis was implemented for data analysis. Two Iranian primary school textbooks (Persian Language Teaching and Persian Language) and two additional textbooks from international publishers (Persian of Iran Today and Persian is Sweet) were chosen, and the cultural elements included in each were gathered and categorized. The vocabulary of these textbooks was analyzed, and the findings were presented through tables and graphs. The findings revealed that across various semantic fields, certain words, including Juma, Toman, Qur'an, Hafiz, Nowruz celebration, Islam, football, and Tehran, appear in all four books. The presence of these words may signify shared ideologies among the authors of the textbooks. It also indicates that some phrases have more significance for them owing to their closeness to Iranian national culture. The book Persian of Iran Today emphasizes the semantic domain of literature, with its writers concentrating mostly on recent works. Predominantly, the majority of the offered terms are rooted in Iranian national culture. The authors of the domestic textbooks have not performed as effectively as their foreign counterparts. Although the total number of words in these textbooks texts is comparable, approximately 50% of the vocabulary pertains solely to verbal communication, while other semantic domains, such as literature and customs, have been largely overlooked. At the conclusion of the research, some practical suggestions for equitable cultural representations in PFL textbooks are presented.</p>
<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>Cultural Components Foreign language Non-Native Speakers Persian Language</p>	

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1. Introduction

There is a tight and intricate relationship between cultural practices and languages, and one way in which culture is passed down is via language. A person's cultural competence is their level of success in social and cultural situations, as well as their ability to interact with others from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and pick up new languages (Kramersch & Moeini Meybodi, 2021). Culture is an essential component of every language, and in fact, every language is a reflection of its native people's values, traditions, beliefs, and practices (Rooholamini, 2008). Culture relies on language as a means of communication and thought sharing between its members. Politics, history, geography, and other cultural elements shape languages (Stanlaw et al., 2017). Culture is also inexorably shaped by national attitudes, traditions, and practices as well as religious beliefs and societal processes (Goby & Nickerson, 2014).

A strategy for integrating culture into second language (L2) instruction involves using language textbooks that include cultural elements such as cultural components, cultural asides, cultural islands, and cultural capsules, as noted by Peck (1998 as cited in Shahini & Meymandi, 2017). Textbooks are crucial for efficient language instruction, and any cultural elements included within them may markedly enhance students' performance and behavior. Cleeve (2008) asserts that textbooks possess undeniable potential to serve as a vital source of essential cultural elements for learners. Ekawati and Hamdani (2012) assert that to enhance students' comprehension of the target culture, it is essential for textbooks to provide cultural knowledge. Another important role that textbooks play is in illuminating cultural differences between students' own and the cultures they are studying.

Xiong and Qian (2012) stated that in order to fully understand a language, one must be able to decipher its ideological, cultural, and sociolinguistic underpinnings, which are often hidden inside the textbook itself. Therefore, textbooks can help students understand the cultural values, conventions, and beliefs of others because of the cultural bearings they contain, which is especially important in L2 teaching and for effective communication between speakers of different languages and users of educational resources (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2021). Language teaching textbooks should encapsulate the cultural dimensions of any society; therefore, authors and designers must prioritize the accurate representation of that culture in their preparation to effectively educate language learners (Hayati & Hashemi, 2010).

As far as the researchers of the present study reviewed the literature, there was no study to analyze the content of local and foreign PFL textbooks to identify representation of Persian culture

in teaching non-native speakers. Therefore, the present study aimed to fill this gap in the literature. As a result, the present study answered the following research questions:

- What aspects of culture have been represented by the books that have been published in Iran and outside of Iran?
- What similarities and differences are there between the selected books in terms of depicting Iranian cultural aspects?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Language and Culture

Anthropologists and linguists consider language as the basic component of culture and its symbolic guidance. They believe that a greater understanding of human cultural problems requires an understanding of linguistic mechanisms. Experts also believe that language is related to most cultural behaviors of human beings (Ghasemi et al., 2013). Without an understanding of the culture, verbal patterns alone will not satisfy correct communication. A person should be able to evaluate different situations and react to them (Mir Dehghan et al., 2013). The reason why culture is important in language learning is that firstly, language and culture are completely intertwined, and a full understanding of any cross-cultural communication requires an awareness of the social and cultural significance of words and verbal expressions. Language is a medium for conveying semantics, but meaning is determined through culture (Cornell, 2016). Language should depend on culture and specific culture (Mokhlesin et al., 2015). For instance, eating is common among all human beings but the type of food, time, place, way of eating and the person with whom we eat are different from culture to culture. In the same way, verbal communication competence is common in all languages and speakers of all languages are pretty familiar with those grammars which regulate when to speak, to whom we speak and in what circumstances to speak. However, every culture has its own special patterns regarding social relationships (Kasper & Rose, 2002). The second reason for including culture in language learning is inter-cultural understanding, which is one of the major goals of teaching in the modern world and independent world communities. Understanding cultural differences also is of importance in this era. Language learning in this context can play an importance role and success in this aspect depends on the amount of presenting cultural information about differences and similarities among cultures (Zia Hosseini, 2006). The third reason why culture is important in language classes depends on language learners. They are interested in people having the language they want to learn and they want to know something about lifestyle of such people (Hall, 2013).

2.2. International Studies

Qays (2022) examined culture-specific elements in relation to Kachru's (1985) concentric circles inside English textbooks used in state-run institutions and private language institutes in Iraq. Two textbooks from the *New Interchange* series and the *English for Iraq* series were examined for culture-specific features using Newmark's (1988) framework. Cultural artifacts pertaining to ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, conventions and ideas, gestures and habits, together with anthroponyms, were identified and their frequency counts calculated. The Chi-square test was conducted to assess the importance of each group. The Chi-square test findings revealed no significant differences between the *New Interchange* and *English for Iraq* series for culture-specific elements associated with the expanding circle. A significant difference was identified between the two series of textbooks on culture-specific issues pertinent to the inner circle. Concerning cultural objects pertaining to Iraqi local culture, organizations, customs, activities, procedures, and concepts were identified as the most prevalent, whilst Anthroponyms emerged as the least common cultural things represented in the *English for Iraq* series of textbooks.

Kraifi (2019) examined the content of the Algerian secondary school third-year textbook *New Prospects*. The objective is to analyze the cultural elements of the textbook to see whether learners are exposed to both the target culture and their own culture. The research aims to examine the representation of culture in the content of *New Prospects*, its classification, and specifically if this textbook facilitates learners in developing awareness of both their own culture and the target culture. This study aims to assess whether the content sufficiently fosters learners' intercultural competence regarding the foreign culture and its people, thereby encouraging positive attitudes, such as acceptance, appreciation, empathy, and adaptability. In this context, a textbook evaluation is conducted to address the research questions. The results indicated that *New Prospects* has cultural knowledge within its content, although learners are exposed to the target and foreign culture in a shallow manner. Consequently, *New Prospects* is deficient in several cultural dimensions, including values, beliefs, and religion. Consequently, intercultural communication competence cannot be attained by the use of this textbook.

Lee (2009) determined how 22 Big "C" and 26 Little "c" components are employed to address cultural issues in 11 EFL high school discussion textbooks used in Korea. The models developed by Paige et al. (1999) and Hinkel (2001), who contend that culture learning and instruction are crucial for modern L2 culture acquisition, served as the foundation for the content analysis. The results demonstrated that all of the textbooks overlooked teaching small "c" target culture in addition to

teaching broad features of culture. Furthermore, the study found that the Anglophone world was strongly represented in a hierarchical manner, with American culture acting as the primary source.

Zu and Kong (2009) examined the cultural components of a set of English textbooks named *Learning English Used for Chinese Secondary School Students*. When it comes to defining cultural components, the researchers discovered that most of them are related to target cultures, or at the very least, represent target cultures. Additionally, the book gives students resources related to target, home, and foreign cultures. Target culture-related subjects, such as daily living, leisure, family dynamics, social conventions, and holidays were also covered in the study.

2.3. Iranian Studies

Meihami and Esfandiari (2021) examined the cultural content and aspects of English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks used for teaching ESP in economics, management, accounting, and psychology at Iranian universities. The ESP and EGP textbooks were analyzed using Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) framework for cultural content and Adaskou et al.'s (1990) framework for cultural components. The findings revealed statistically significant differences in the cultural content and aspects included in the EGP and ESP textbooks, with EGP textbooks including a greater amount of cultural content and elements. Consequently, it is essential for ESP textbook designers to prioritize the incorporation of cultural material and features in ESP textbooks to enhance the disciplinary competencies of students in articulating the concepts pertinent to their fields of study.

Hosseinzadeh et al. (2021) used the frameworks of Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) and Cortazzi and Jins (1999) to compare the cultural content of the Touchstone and Iran Language Institute (ILI) series. The model developed by Adaskou et al. (1990) was also used to examine the series' cultural components. ILI represented all four categories of cultural material, but not equally; in contrast, the Touchstone series gave more weight to the target culture, which was followed by worldwide themes, while the source culture was mostly ignored. Regarding cultural aspects, pragmatic and semantic senses of culture were not highlighted in either series, but aesthetic and sociological senses were both quite prevalent. Additionally, Chi-square tests showed that these two series differed significantly in terms of element representations and cultural richness.

Danshvar Kian et al. (2019) looked at the fusion of language and culture, presented a brief assessment of the extent and impact of cultural orientation in teaching Persian to others. It used Bayram's (1993) checklist method to measure cultural content and examine the connection between language teaching and cultural teachings in *Persian Language, Persian Language Course*

and *Persian Lesson* coursebooks. In these three books, the big culture, i.e. elements, such as history, music, literature and Iranian art, and the small culture with social components, such as behavior, manners, attitudes, beliefs, values and norms, have been examined. With this method, attention has been paid to the frequency of emphasis in each of the aforementioned books on teaching only the language with social themes in the life cycle, including family, school and workplace; on the one hand, the frequency of occurrence of cultural themes and how to address all its levels on the other hand. Culture and its education, along with the Persian language, are the main concerns of the *Persian Language* coursebook. A topic that the *Persian Language Course* also intends to address, but less effort is seen in it. In contrast, the *Persian Lesson* coursebook seems to have ignored cultural content even in the selection of stories and anecdotes in the book. The *Persian Language* completely and *Persian Language Course* partially seem to be culture-oriented books.

Shahini and Meymandi (2017) carried out a qualitative study with the goal of comparing and contrasting the degree to which cultural elements and subcomponents are covered in the elementary levels of the foreign language teaching textbooks *Top Notch Series* and *A Course in General Persian*. For the present research, the modified checklist of Lee's Big "C" and Little "c" cultural components (2009) was used. Following content analysis, the Big "C" cultural elements that appeared most, least, and not at all in each textbook were determined, and the potential causes of their occurrence were discussed. According to the results, the Persian textbook was more comprehensive in providing cultural capsules, even if the two textbooks had roughly comparable purposes in terms of omitting or presenting Big "C" cultural elements. Additionally, the English textbook's cultural capsules focused more on amusing lifestyles, but the Persian textbooks were more linked to people's everyday interactions and typical ways of living. Regarding Little "c," the two textbooks showed no signs of a cultural component.

Panahi Tavana and Maroufi (2016) analyzed the content of secondary Persian literature textbooks in order to determine the position of cultural identity components in the content of these books. The research method is qualitative and based on content analysis. The corpus of the study consisted of 9 volumes of secondary *Persian literature* textbooks. In this study, a checklist for measuring cultural identity components was used to collect data, which was provided to several experts to determine content validity and was approved with some modifications. The descriptive statistics indicators, such as frequency, percentage, mean, and graph were used to analyze the questions. The findings of the study indicate that the level of emphasis on all components of cultural identity is not the same in secondary *Persian literature* books. Based on the results of content analysis, the highest level of emphasis is placed on the components of "Literary elites" and

"Masterpieces and Iranian names", respectively, and the lowest level of emphasis is placed on the components of "Sub-cultures" and "National and Religious Glories", respectively. "Historical components" and "Myths" are in an intermediate position, such that the components of literary elites alone account for about 47 percent and the components of subcultures account for less than 1 percent of this emphasis.

Shahini et al. (2015) determined, by comparison, in two second language teaching textbooks, one in Persian (*A General Persian Course/beginner level*) and the other in English (*Top Notch series/beginner level*), to what extent and how cultural components are presented. A mixed method was used. Frequency analysis was used in the quantitative part and content analysis was used in the qualitative part. The analysis tool was the list of cultural components, 'big C' and 'small c', which were designed by Lee (2009). The findings of the study showed that the Persian book is richer in presenting cultural components. Regarding the cultural components, the highest frequency in the Persian book belonged to components, such as food, greetings and customs, and in the *Top Notch* book it was more related to the way of spending leisure time, such as recreational, sports, music and art activities. These differences were mostly due to the different environmental needs and contexts, such as local and public ceremonies and celebrations that were reflected in each book. Regarding the small 'c' cultural components, no indication of the presentation of the relevant components was observed in either the Persian or English textbooks. This seems to be due to the nature of the small 'c' cultural components, which, unlike the large 'C' components, include complex beliefs and relatively abstract hidden concepts, which require them to be addressed at intermediate and advanced levels where learners have higher language skills and a wider vocabulary. In general, the differences in the presentation of cultural components in the two textbooks reveal the cultural contrast of the two different contexts (Persian and English), which affects the selection of educational materials with different educational strategies.

3. Research Method

This comparative research adopted a qualitative approach in which a content analysis of four Persian language teaching textbooks for non-native speakers was conducted. The method of data collection was documentary, and primary and secondary resources were selected through searching international and Iranian databases, such as Google Scholar, Eric, ISC, etc. The corpus of the study was four PFL textbooks, including *Persian is Sweet (Farsi shirin ast)*, *Persian of Iran today*, published by the foreign publishers, and *Teaching Persian Language to non-Persian Speakers* and

Persian Language, published by the Iranian publishers. These four books were at the same level. These textbooks were chosen among the books available in Iran and outside of Iran due to their highest use for teaching non-native Persian speakers. As a result, two textbooks from Iranian publishers and two other textbooks from foreign publishers were selected for the purpose the present study.

Persian Language Series Volume 1 and 2 (AZFA)

The book that was chosen for this research was the Persian language collection written by Saffar Moghadam (2017), which is prepared in four volumes. The first two volumes were selected for this study. Both of these books in this series have 16 lessons. All these lessons and sections were studied for this research. This collection was created based on the author's academic experiences in the field of language and linguistics and the use of his experiences in teaching Persian as foreign language. In this book, an attempt has been made to introduce the history, civilization, and culture of Iran as much as possible in such a way that the author believes that he can integrate Iranian Islamic culture with his book and the result of this book is knowledge and awareness of Iran's cultural richness in academic centers around the world.

Persian Language Teaching to Non-native Persian Speakers series volume 1 and 2 (PLT)

The second book considered for this study was the PLT book written by Samere (2010). This book is also a 5-volume book that includes 3 elementary, intermediate and advanced courses. The initial period of this book consists of 2 volumes that were selected for this research. The first book of this course has 8 lessons and the second book has 7 lessons and all the lessons and parts of it have been studied. Undoubtedly, one of the keys of this book is the education of Iranian culture and civilization because the author of this book knows the prerequisite of getting to know Iranian culture only after learning the Persian language. He believes that he tried to convey this message in his book. In addition, he writes in the preface of the book: The key to knowing our cultural heritage is our language. Undoubtedly, it is not possible to know our Islamic-Iranian culture and civilization without knowing the Persian language (Samere, 2010).

Persian is Sweet "Farsi shirin ast"

The third sample of the study was the book: *Persian is Sweet (Farsi shirin ast)* that was written by Shabani Jadidi and Broksha (2020). The book has two elementary and intermediate volume, and each of which contains 15 lessons. The first volume of this book was selected for this study and all

15 lessons together with their different parts were investigated. Authors of this books stated in the preface of this book that teaching a second language cannot be without culture and cultural context, and training can only be successful if a second culture is accompanied with that kind of training (Jadidi & Broksha, 2020).

Persian of Iran Today

The fourth sample of the study was the book *Persian of Iran Today* written by Shahsavari and Autowood (2015). This book was released on Internet in May 2015. Totally, 15 lessons were considered for the elementary level put in two books, one having 10 and the other five lessons. The book can be used online as well as in the form of PDF to be downloaded from the site. Audio-video files are also uploaded in some lessons and some in YouTube, so that they could be investigated as much as possible.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

In this research, documentary method was used to collect data, and thematic analysis method was used to analyze the data. After studying every book lesson by lesson, words related to different semantic fields were identified and were cited below every column. Then, the frequency of the word use related to every field was determined. Totally, a bar graph was drawn for every book so that differences and comparisons were clarified more vividly.

Three points should be mentioned in this research: First, there are some interdisciplinary words among the words extracted meaning in which there are concepts that can be put in more than one semantic field such as, Friday, religion, customs and traditions, food, enjoy your meal, Avicenna, religion, scenery, shrine, communications, history, literature and so forth. Therefore, a judgment if a concept belongs to a field is not a simple, absolute decision. In conclusion, in this study, the researchers tried to choose the words for one field to have less problem while collecting the statistical data. The second point is that the repetition of a word was counted in different lessons since the repetitions were important for the author, and they can be the sign of the how the author looked at a subject.

The third point is that the semantic fields, including literature, history, art, religion, society, customs and traditions, food, clothes, sightseeing, sports, and verbal communications were selected out of cultural issues introduced by Chastain (1988). In the following table, the semantic fields and their examples from the PFL textbooks are presented based on Chastain's (1988) cultural issues.

Table 1*Semantic Fields and Related Examples Based on Chastain's (1988) Cultural Issues*

Semantic Field	Example
Verbal Communication	Say, Talk, Listen, Conversation, Please repeat
Sports	Team, Player, Baseball, Win, Lose
Sightseeing	Tourism, Travel, Visit, Museum, Airplane
Clothes	Shirt, Pants, Shoes, Bag, Leather
Food	Kebab and Rice, Ghorme-Sabzi, Tea, Coffee
Customs and Traditions	Persian New Year, Yalda Night, Eid-e Fitr
Politics and Society	Election, Democracy, Human Right, Law
Religion	Quran, Faith, Worship, Prayer, Mosque
Art	Calligraphy, Sculpture, Pottery, Tilework
History	Avicenna, Safavid, Qajar, Cyrus, Ancient
Literature	Poetry, Novel, Epic, Hafez, Ferdowsi, Saadi

4. Findings

Descriptive Results of Persian Language Teaching Series (PLT) Volumes 1&2

There were 425 words and phrases included in this series in which semantic field of verbal communications with a total of 226 words (53%) has the greatest number of words placed in the 1st position. Semantic fields of sightseeing with 59 words (14%) and food with 57 words (13.5%) hold the 2nd and 3rd position. After these 3 fields, ranking of 9 other fields is as follows: religion with 26 words in the 4th position, sports with 18 words in the 5th position, art with 14 words in the 6th position, clothes with 10 words in the 7th, politics, society, and history with 7 words in the 8th position, literature with 6 words in the 9th, and finally customs and traditions with 2 words in the 10th position. Therefore, semantic field of verbal communication with 226 words has the highest number and semantic field of customs and traditions with 2 words have the least amount in this series. The minimum semantic fields used in lessons of these 2 books were 1 and the maximum were 8 fields. Among the important points in these books are: increase in the number of the words related to the culture of the second book compared to the first one. For instance, number of the words of the first lesson in the first book is 5 while the same number of words in the second book is 13. The following graph shows number of the words in every field in the 2 mentioned books.

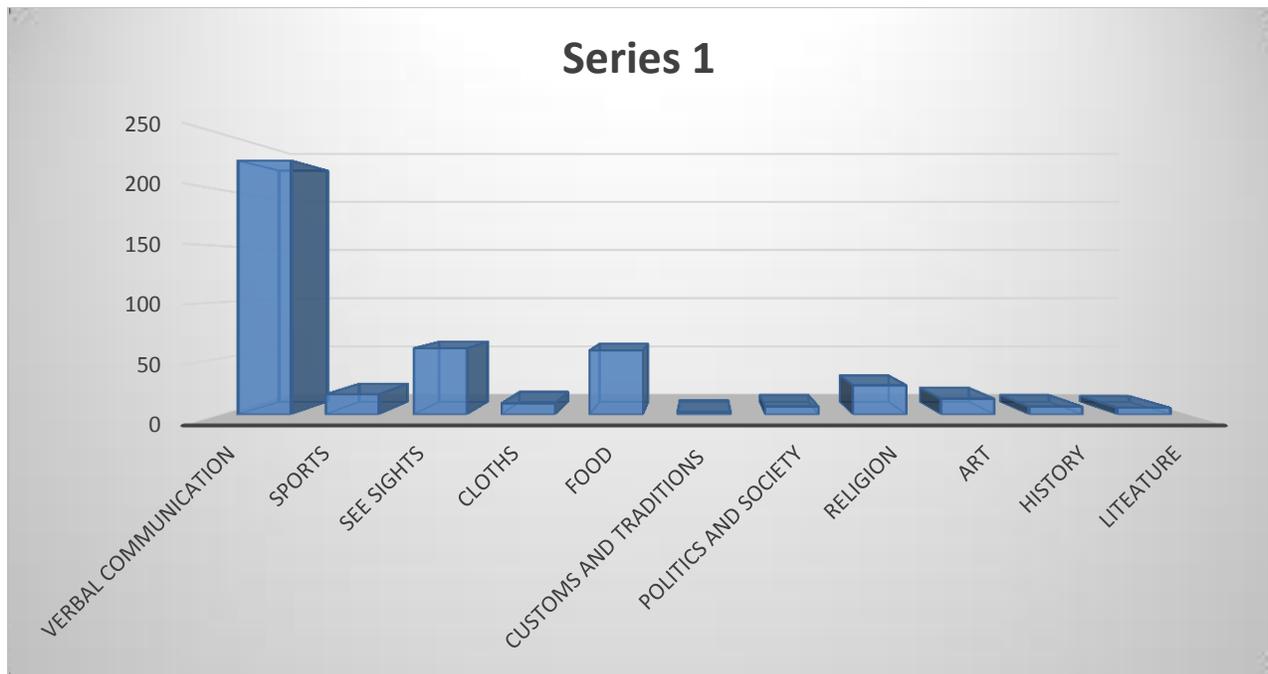


Figure 1. The frequency of cultural words in Persian Language Teaching volume 1&2

Descriptive Results of AZFA Series

477 cultural words were introduced in these 2 books in which the semantic field of verbal communication with introduction of 204 words (43%) has the highest number and holds the 1st position. Semantic field of food with 147 words (31%) is the second semantic field dealt with in this book. After these 2 fields, semantic field of clothes with 29 words and sightseeing with 25 words are placed in 3rd and 4th with far distance compared to the previous fields. Position of other semantic fields is as follows: politics and society with 19 words in the 5th position, religion with 16 words in the 6th, literature with 13 words in the 7th, art with 12 words in the 8th position, history with 6 words in the 9th, and finally semantic fields of traditions and customs and sports with 3 words are placed in the 10th position. Therefore, fields having the least words are: sports and customs as well as traditions with 3 words and fields having the most words is the semantic field of verbal communications with 204 words. In this book in all lessons, the least semantic field introduced in one lesson are two fields and the maximum is 11 fields. The following is the graph of series of Persian language.

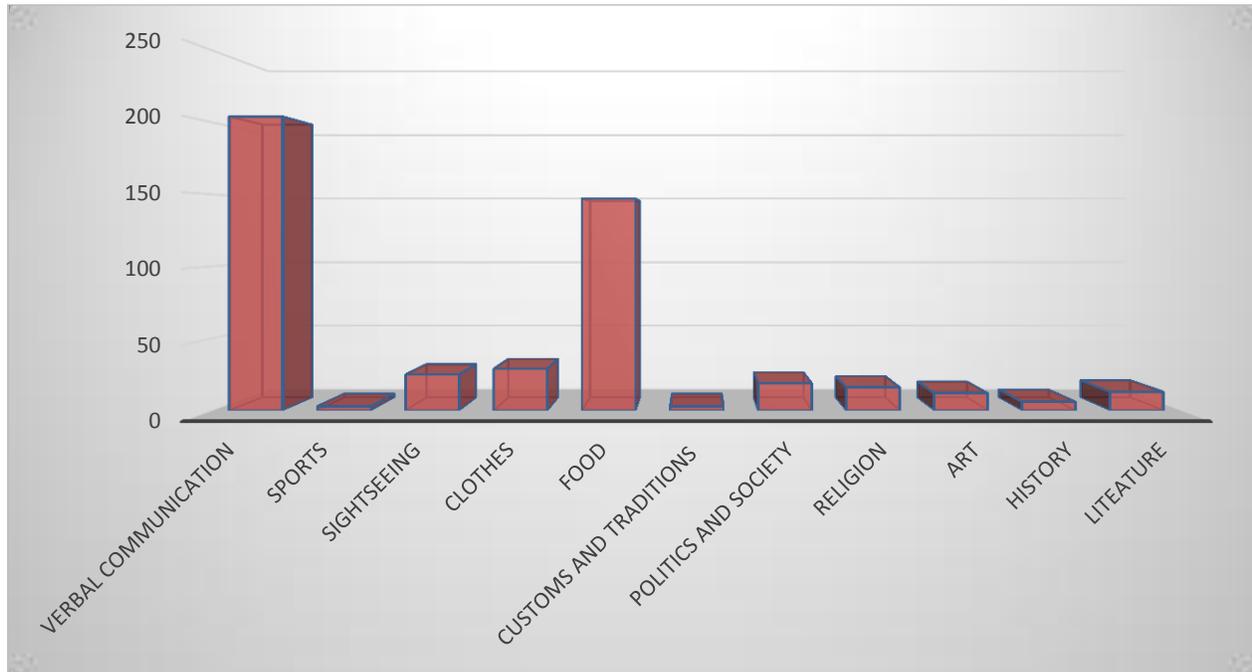


Figure 2. The frequency of cultural words in Series of Persian Language (AZFA)

Descriptive Results of *Persian is Sweet*

In this book, totally 454 words are presented about culture from which 137 words (30%) belong to the semantic field of the verbal communication which place this field in the first position compared to other 10 fields. The field of food with 85 words (19%) in the 2nd position and the field of sightseeing with 62 words (14%) is placed 3rd position. Position of other fields is as follows: semantic field of religion with 40 words placed 4th, art with 28 words placed 5th, customs and traditions with 23 words placed 6th, politics and society with 20 words placed 7th, history with 18 words placed 8th, literature with 17 words placed 9th and clothes together with sports each with 12 words have the 10th position meaning the last. This way field of verbal communications with 137 words has the highest number and semantic fields of food and clothes has have the least one. The least number of semantic field used in lessons of this book was 7 and the maximum was 9. The general graph of the book was presented as follows.

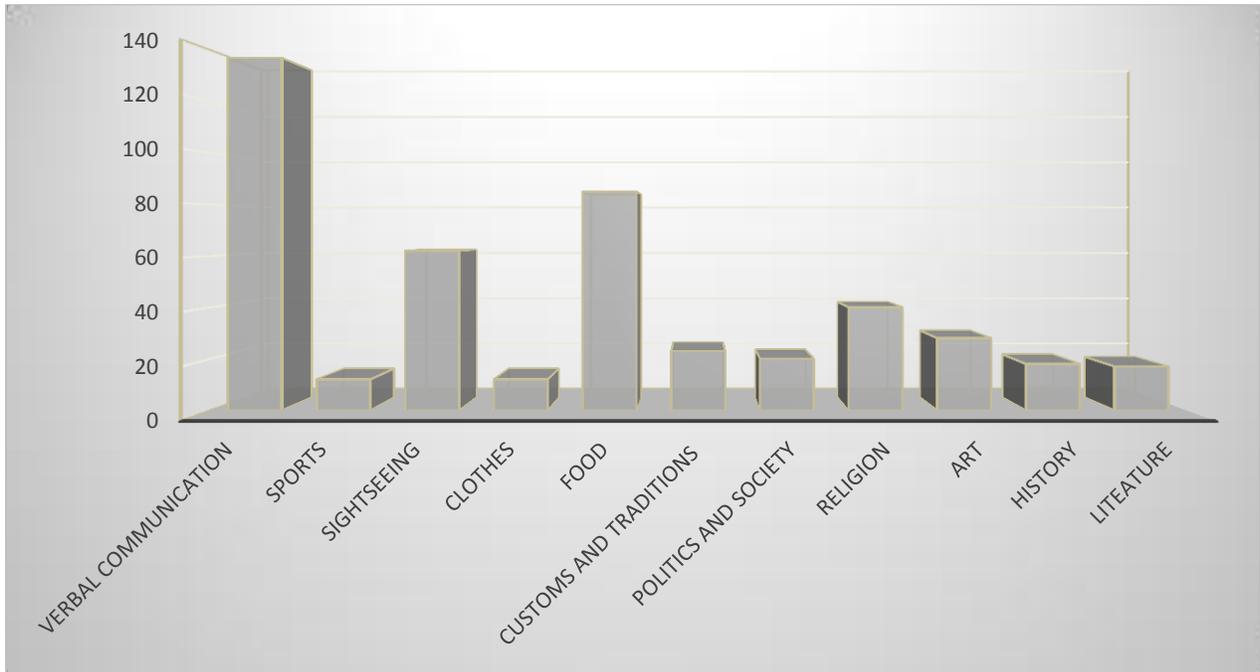


Figure 3. The frequency of cultural words in Persian is Sweet

Descriptive Results of Persian of Iran Today

There were 553 words introduced in this book in which verbal communication field with 209 words (38%) has the highest number placed 1st. After verbal communication field, two fields of art and food each with 66 words (12%) placed 2nd together and field of sightseeing with 54 words (10%) is placed 3rd and the field of clothes with 43 words (7%) placed 4th. The remaining fields are as follows: literature with 39 words placed 5th, politics and society with 25 words placed 6th, religion and sports each with 18 words placed 7th, customs and traditions with 8 words placed 8th, and finally history with 7 words held the last position. The highest number belongs to the semantic field of verbal communication with 209 words and the least is related to the semantic field of history with 7 words. The minimum semantic field used in each lesson of each book is 4 and the highest is 11.

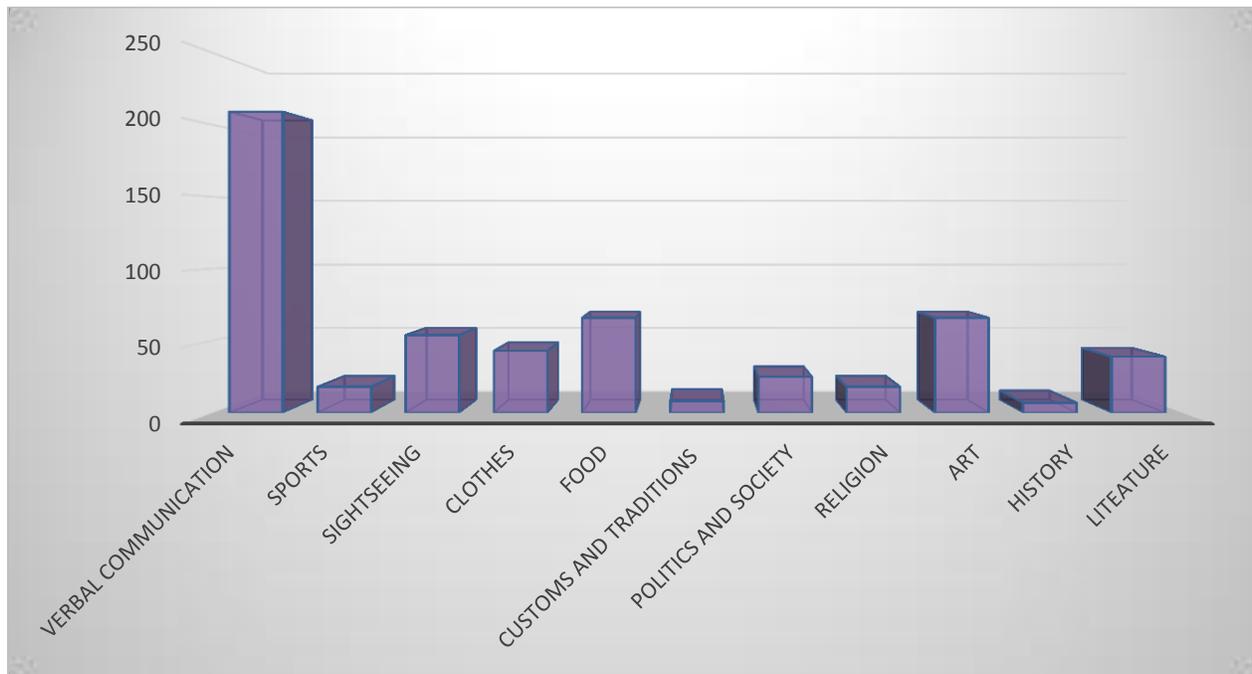


Figure 4. The frequency of cultural words in the Study of Persian of Iran Today

A Combined Visual Representation

In this section, the semantic fields of all four books are combined in order to have a whole picture of semantic fields of each book in comparison to the other books. The blue color shows PLT, the red color indicates AZFA, the gray color refers to *Persian is Sweet*, and the yellow color shows *Persian of Iran Today*. All of the textbooks has the highest percentage in verbal communication field; however, regarding sports field PLT and *Persian of Iran Today* have the highest percentage. The highest percentage of sightseeing field is related to *Persian is Sweet*, and the lowest one is related to AZFA. The highest percentage of clothes field belongs to *Persian of Iran Today*, and lowest one belongs to PLT. Regarding the food field, AZFA has the highest percentage; however, PLT has the lower one in this semantic field. With regard to customs and traditions, the highest level is related to *Persian is Sweet*, and the lowest one is related to PLT. Considering politics and society, the highest percentage is associated with *Persian of Iran Today*, and the lowest one associated with PLT. In addition, religion field has the highest percentage in *Persian is Sweet*, and the lowest religion field is found in AZFA. Considering the art field, the highest percentage belongs to *Persian of Iran Today*, and the lowest one is related to AZFA. Moreover, the history field has the highest percentage in *Persian is Sweet*, and the lowest one is found in AZFA and *Persian of Iran Today*. The last field, that is literature, has the highest percentage in *Persian of Iran Today*, and the lowest one belongs to PLT.

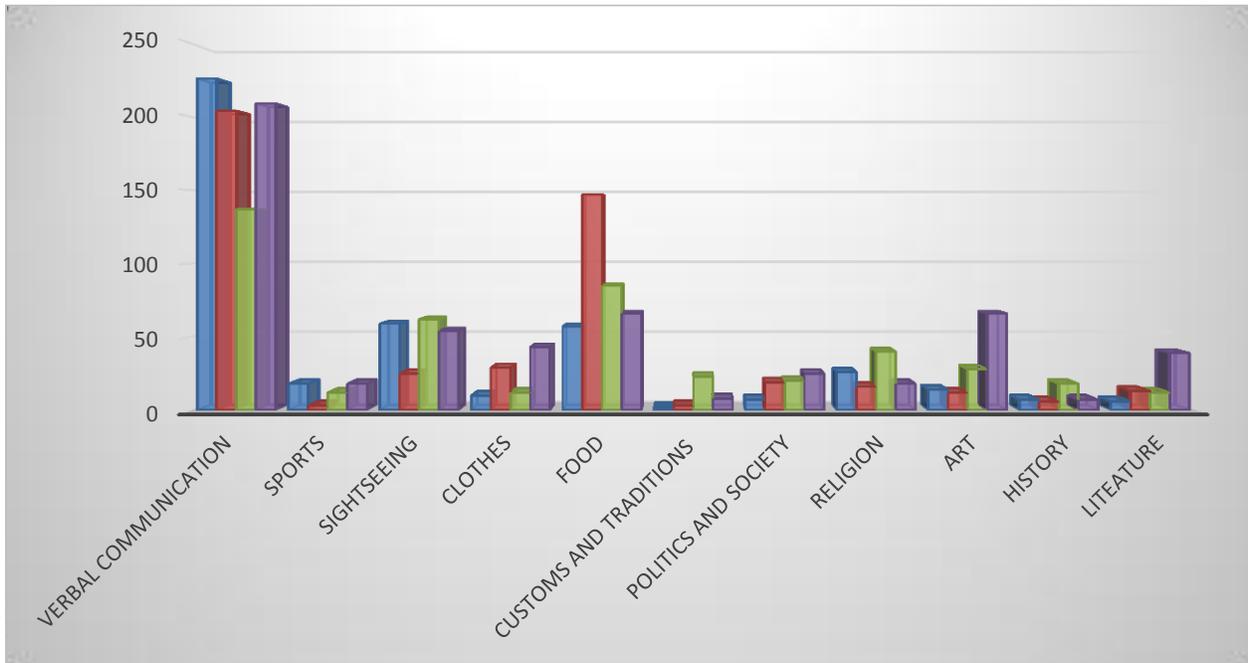


Figure 5. A Combined Representation of Semantic Fields of the PFL Textbooks

Addressing the Research Questions

RQ1: What aspects of culture have been represented by the books that have been published in Iran and outside of Iran?

The data obtained from the PLT book show that compared to AZFA with 77 words, the PLT book pays more attention to words related to culture, but both books receive the highest attention statistically to give the field of verbal communication concepts in which the number of words in the AZFA is more than the same words in the PLT book. In the AZFA after the fields of verbal communication, the second field is food, which contains 0.31% of the total words and is no different from the first field. The third field in the AZFA is food with 13.5% and only with a difference of two words compared to the previous one. But the third field in the PLT book is food, which is very different from the previous field. After ranking these three fields in two books, we are left with eight other semantic fields ranging from 26 words to two. This number is very small to present and introduce each of the semantic areas. The important point here is that the two semantic areas of literature and customs and traditions are placed in the end in these two books, which shows the avoidance of the authors of these two books to these two areas because these two cultural components play an important role in society's culture. There are some cultural components with which people of other countries recognize the culture of each country, and two fields of literature

and traditions and customs in Iran are part of them. It seems that these two areas are not very important in the author's ideology. Not only can we provide many words for these two common and dominant areas in Iran, but there are many words in these fields that belong to the native culture of Iran, which could be presented to the learner through textbooks.

The data of the book *Persian of Iran Today* with 553 words compared to the book *Persian is Sweet*, showed that the former contains culture words more. Therefore, the book *Persian is Sweet* is ranked the second one with 443 words. In each of the two above- mentioned books, the field of verbal communication is placed first. But the role of this domain is strongly represented in the book *Persian of Iran today* because this domain was 38% in this book, while this role was 30% in the book *Persian is Sweet*. The second place in both books was food. This field is shown more prominently in the book *Persian is Sweet* that equals to 19%. It should be noted that in the book *Persian of Iran today*, 43 words belongs to the clothes field, and the lowest number of words is related to the two fields of customs and traditions (eight words) and history (seven words). In the book of *Persian is Sweet*, the number of the words vary from 40 to 12, and the lowest number belongs to two field of clothes (17 words) and sports (12 words). In the book of *Persian of Iran Today*, just like the 2 books published in Iran, there is a gap in the words related to the field of customs and traditions, and the authors of this book have not addressed this field as they should, but in the book *The Persian is Sweet* this issue has been compensated to some extent and the authors have introduced the behavioral habits of Iranians in the lessons, while none of the other three textbooks have addressed this point.

RQ2: What similarities and differences are there between the selected books in terms of depicting Iranian cultural aspects?

The textbooks published in Iran have discussed history, religion, customs, and literature. If we want to compare the four books mentioned in terms of quantity, the book *Iran Persian Today*, which with five hundred and fifty-three words has shown more attention to cultural components than the other books, but throughout this book, it is evident that the authors of this book have depicted that culture from Iran, which can be said to be more of a carrier of Western culture than the national and ancient culture of Iran. If we look at each semantic area that is addressed in this book, we find that the words presented in each area have more of the color and flavor of another culture, and the number of such words far exceeds the number of words belonging to the native culture of Iran.

All four books have statistically devoted the most attention and importance to the semantic domain of linguistic communication. There is an interesting point in all four books in the field of

food, and that is, in most lessons, native and non-native foods that have a place in European culture are mentioned side by side, which can be concluded that modern European culture has found a firm foothold in Iranian society. In addition, the words mentioned in the field of art in these books can be another evidence of this conclusion, because except in a few cases, and especially in the book *Persian of Iran Today*, types of modern music were mentioned, and there is no place for Iranian music.

Some words can be found that are mentioned in all four books and are common in these books, such as the words Juma, Tuman, Quran, Hafez, Eid Nowruz, Islam, football, and Tehran. The presence of these types of words represented in these books may indicate a common ideology in the minds of the authors of these books and may also indicate that some words have greater importance in the minds of the authors of these types of books due to their proximity to the native Iranian culture.

Among the mentioned books, the book *Persian of Iran Today* has paid more attention to the semantic field of literature than the other three books. Not only is the number of these words greater than the other books, but the type of choice of words in this book is also noteworthy. The authors of this book have mainly introduced contemporary works and contemporary celebrities in this field and have paid special attention to introducing books in this field. In general, most of the words presented belong to the native culture of Iran.

5. Conclusion

Four books were considered for this study, and the data were extracted from the above-mentioned books. If we like to compare these four books quantitatively, it is the book of *Persian of Iran today* which paid more attention to the cultural components compared to other books, but it is evident in all parts of the book that the authors of the book have pictured the kind of culture about Iran conveying that of the Western culture rather than the Iranian ancient national culture. If we look at the semantic fields in this book, we could find out that the words presented in every field resemble another culture. Number of these words is much higher than those of the Iranian native culture. For instance, if we consider the semantic field of sports in this book, there are 18 words presented about it which is sufficient for this field, but if we list these words they are as follows: Tennis, Aerobics, Sailing, cycling, bodybuilding, basketball, swimming, soccer, swimming pool, gym, yoga, skiing, Mafia, Paladin, Torna, and figure skating which can be the sign of dominating ideology of the West in the authors' mind of this book. It seems that they wanted to put cultural level of Iran's sports equal to the powerful countries of the world while we can hardly find somewhere in Iran in

which one can do figure skating. Maybe the reason why this book did not deal with the field of customs and traditions, history, and religion results from such Western attitude that is evident in this textbook. Exposure to Western semantic fields often leads learners to a sense of admiration or dissatisfaction with Iranian traditions, depending on the context and content of the Western influences. Western portrayals of Iran might reinforce prejudices, resulting in misunderstandings about Iranian culture. Non-native learners may develop perceptions based on the semantic fields of the textbook contents rather than genuine experiences, thereby distorting their perception. As learners interact with Western culture, they may assimilate certain habits or ideas that correspond with Western values, resulting in a cultural amalgamation. This modification may affect their understanding of Iranian culture. The findings lend support to those of Lee (2009) who found that the Anglophone world was strongly represented in a hierarchical manner, with American culture acting as the primary source in Korean EFL textbook.

In the book *Persian is Sweet* the things are not the same since authors of this book have tried to show more consistency in introducing cultural components and dealt more with mentioning the words belonging to the native-Islamic culture of Iran. They paid attention to this point in preparing every lesson that they deal with a cultural component more than others in every lesson, and if they presented words in the specific field, they did not abandon them alone but they presented the words related to it, like the words that they presented for the semantic field of sports as follows: football, basketball, Chess, wrestling, wrestler, Takhti, champion, football, running, Persepolis, national team, and skiing. This fact can both show the attention of the authors of this book to the culture which is closely related to the ordinary life of Iranians and show their attention to the relationships among the words and their consistency. It should be noted that the points provided include other fields as well, like stating name of a city together with its sightseeing or Norouz and the places belonging to it, and other words of the same type whose number is considerable. The words, stated in this book, can show this fact that the authors revealed more faith toward native customs and traditions of Iran compared to the authors of *Persian of Iran today*. The authors also presented exceptional words that should be noted, like the words Khatam, Torna, Setar and Nasta'liq, and so on. The results are in line with the findings of Danshvar Kian et al. (2019) who explored that culture and its education, along with the Persian language, are the main concerns of the *Persian Language* textbook. A topic that the *Persian Language Course* also intends to address, but less effort is seen in it.

The findings of the present study showed that the semantic fields of verbal communication and food had the highest percentage among other semantic fields. They are notable for their importance

in social interactions and cultural activities. The findings lend credence to those of Shahini et al. (2015) who investigated that the highest frequency in the Persian language textbook, *A Course in General Persian*, belonged to components, such as food, greetings, and customs.

In Iranian culture, food and communication embody profound cultural values, hospitality, and tradition. The focus on verbal communication in both public and private relationships corresponds with cultural norms that anticipate formal conduct in public settings. This emphasis underscores the need of preserving cultural integrity and promotes connections among people. Furthermore, publications that emphasize these elements may appeal more to audiences that see these activities as integral to their cultural identity. The predominance of food as a recurrent semantic field underscores its significance in social gatherings and hospitality in Iran, contrasting with the perception of food just as nourishment, hence highlighting communal values. Consequently, these semantic categories may function to both safeguard cultural legacy and accommodate modern modes of expression within Iranian culture.

Totally, the authors of the books PLT and AZFA have not done a good job compared to other two books though the number of the words mentioned in them have no such difference with the other two textbooks but the point is that around 50% of the total words only belong to the semantic field of verbal communications and the rights of other fields were spoiled. As mentioned before, the semantic fields of literature, art, history, and customs and traditions were reviewed by the authors. That is why Iran's geography is summed up mostly in two cities of Tehran and Hamadan, and the historical places of Iran also located in Hamadan. It can be said that these two cities have a great position in the hidden ideology of the authors. The results are in line with those of Kraifi (2019) who found that *New Prospects*, an Algerian secondary school third year textbook, lacks more aspects of culture, like values, beliefs and religion etc. In addition, the findings are in harmony with those of Panahi Tavana and Maroufi (2016) who analyzed the content of secondary Persian literature textbooks, and they found that the highest level of emphasis is placed on the components of "Literary elites" and "Masterpieces and Iranian names", respectively, and the lowest level of emphasis is placed on the components of "Sub-cultures" and "National and Religious Glories", respectively.

In the two textbooks of PLT and AZFA, the diffusion among the mentioned words is obvious. The strong point is that although the two textbooks were written in the cultural context of Iran, the learners or teachers who select these textbooks for Persian language education and Persian culture may face with emptiness of the Iranian-Islamic culture in these two textbooks, and they have not met the needs regarding this problem. The results are not in agreement with those of Zu and Kong

(2009) who examined the cultural components of a set of English textbooks. When it comes to defining cultural components, the researchers discovered that most of them are related to target cultures, or at the very least, represent target cultures.

Regarding the food field in four textbooks, the interesting point is that European modern food in most lessons had a firm foothold in Iran's society. Moreover, the words mentioned in the field of art in these books can be another sign for this conclusion since except in some cases, especially in the book of *Persian of Iran today*, there is a remembrance of the modern music, and the place of Iranian music is missing.

If we have an overview to every mentioned textbooks, there are many common words in the semantic fields, like the words Friday, Toman, Quran, Hafez, Norouz, Islam, football, and Tehran. The existence of such words represented in these textbooks show the similar ideology in the mind of the textbooks' authors, and it can show this fact that some words have more importance in the mind of the authors of such textbooks due to closeness to the native culture of Iran.

Among the mentioned books, *Persian of Iran today* compared to other three books, paid more attention to the semantic field of literature. The number of the words is not only higher than other textbooks, but the type of choosing words also is notable in this textbook. The authors of this textbook have dealt more with contemporary works and celebrities of this field and paid much attention to introducing books of this field. Generally, most of the presented words belong to the local culture of Iran.

There are some practical recommendations and implications with regard to the findings of the present study. Incorporating neglected cultural elements, such as literature, art, and customs and traditions, into textbooks helps improve learners' comprehension and enjoyment of other cultures. Educators and material developers may do this by integrating actual texts, folk stories, and local customs into lesson plans, enabling students to engage more profoundly with the content. Moreover, using project-based learning centered on cultural themes may enhance engagement and allow students to investigate their own cultural identities in conjunction with those of others, as shown by several research on cultural representation in PFL teaching resources.

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