



Integrating cultural representations in English language textbooks: balancing national identity and global awareness in Uzbek ESL education

Sarvar UROLOV¹

National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received April 2025

Received in revised form

10 April 2025

Accepted 2 May 2025

Available online

25 June 2025

Keywords:

English language education,
cultural representation,
national identity,
global awareness,
intercultural competence,
curriculum development,
textbook analysis,
educational policy,
language and culture,
pedagogical content,
ideology in textbooks.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of Uzbek, Western, and global cultures in English language textbooks used in Uzbekistan and how these representations shape students' cultural awareness, national identity, and intercultural competence. Since Uzbekistan's independence, English has gained strategic importance, leading to curriculum reforms that incorporate English instruction from an early age. However, the extent to which Uzbek English textbooks promote a balanced cultural perspective remains unclear.

Textbooks are not merely linguistic tools; they serve as cultural artifacts that influence students' perceptions of their national identity and engagement with global cultures. This research will explore the cultural content in English textbooks, assess alignment with national educational policies, and analyze how students and teachers perceive these representations. By evaluating the ideological and pedagogical implications of textbook content, the study aims to contribute to the development of English teaching materials that honor Uzbek culture while preparing students for effective global communication.

By studying the interplay between cultural representation and language learning, this research will provide insights into how educational materials can foster intercultural competence while preserving national identity. The findings will inform policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators on ways to enhance the cultural dimension of English language education in Uzbekistan.

2181-3701/© 2025 in Science LLC.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47689/2181-3701-vol3-iss6/S-pp24-37>

This is an open-access article under the Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.ru>)

¹ Teacher, National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek. E-mail: sarvaruralovbaxtiyorovich@gmail.com

Ingliz tili darsliklarida madaniy tasvirlarni integratsiya qilish: O'zbek ESL ta'limida milliy o'zlik va global xabardorlik muvozanati

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

Ingliz tili ta'limi,
madaniy tasvir,
milliy o'zlik,
global xabardorlik,
madaniyatlararo
kompetensiya,
o'quv dasturi rivoji,
darslik tahlili,
ta'lim siyosati,
til va madaniyat,
pedagogik mazmun,
darsliklardagi mafkura.

Ushbu tadqiqot O'zbekistonda foydalanilayotgan ingliz tili darsliklarida o'zbek, g'arbiy va global madaniyatlarning tasvirlanishini hamda bu tasvirlar talabalarning madaniy xabardorligi, milliy o'zligini va madaniyatlararo kompetensiyasini qanday shakllantirishini o'rganadi. O'zbekiston mustaqillikka erishganidan buyon ingliz tili strategik ahamiyat kasb eta boshladi va bu o'zgarish natijasida maktab dasturlariga erta bosqichdanoq ingliz tilini o'qitish kiritildi. Biroq ingliz tili darsliklari madaniy muvozanatni qanday ta'minlayotgani hali hanuz aniq emas.

Darsliklar faqat til o'rgatish vositasi bo'lib qolmay, balki talabalarning milliy o'zligini va global madaniyatlar bilan o'zaro aloqasini shakllantiruvchi madaniy artefaktlar hisoblanadi. Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz tili darsliklaridagi madaniy mazmunni o'rganadi, ularning milliy ta'lim siyosatiga muvofiqligini baholaydi hamda talabalar va o'qituvchilarning ushbu tasvirlarga munosabatini tahlil qiladi. Darslik mazmunining mafkuraviy va pedagogik jihatlarini tahlil qilish orqali ushbu tadqiqot ingliz tili o'quv materiallarini O'zbek madaniyatini hurmat qilgan holda global muloqotga tayyorlashga xizmat qiluvchi shaklda ishlab chiqishga hissa qo'shishni maqsad qiladi.

Madaniy tasvir va til o'rganish o'rtasidagi o'zaro bog'liqlikni o'rganish orqali ushbu tadqiqot ta'limiy materiallar madaniyatlararo kompetensiyani shakllantirishda va milliy o'zlikni saqlashda qanday rol o'ynashi mumkinligini ochib beradi. Tadqiqot natijalari ta'lim siyosatchilari, o'quv dasturi tuzuvchilari va o'qituvchilarga O'zbekistonda ingliz tili ta'limining madaniy jihatini takomillashtirish yo'llarini ko'rsatishda yordam beradi.

Интеграция культурных образов в учебники английского языка: баланс между национальной идентичностью и глобальной осведомлённостью в обучении английскому языку в Узбекистане

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

Обучение английскому
языку,
культурное
представление,
национальная
идентичность,
глобальная

Данное исследование рассматривает представление узбекской, западной и глобальной культур в учебниках английского языка, используемых в Узбекистане, а также то, как эти образы формируют культурную осведомлённость учащихся, их национальную идентичность и межкультурную компетентность. С момента обретения независимости

осведомлённость,
межкультурная
компетентность,
разработка учебных
программ,
анализ учебников,
образовательная
политика,
язык и культура,
педагогическое
содержание,
идеология в учебниках.

английский язык приобрёл стратегическое значение, что привело к реформам учебных программ, включающим преподавание английского языка с раннего возраста. Однако степень, в которой узбекские учебники по английскому языку обеспечивают сбалансированное культурное представление, остаётся неясной.

Учебники – это не только лингвистические инструменты, но и культурные артефакты, формирующие восприятие учащимися своей национальной идентичности и их взаимодействие с мировыми культурами. Данное исследование анализирует культурное содержание в учебниках английского языка, оценивает их соответствие национальной образовательной политике и изучает восприятие этих образов со стороны студентов и преподавателей. Посредством анализа идеологических и педагогических аспектов содержания учебников, исследование направлено на содействие разработке учебных материалов по английскому языку, которые будут уважать узбекскую культуру и одновременно подготавливать учащихся к эффективному глобальному взаимодействию.

Изучая взаимосвязь между культурными образами и изучением языка, исследование предоставляет понимание того, как учебные материалы могут способствовать формированию межкультурной компетентности при сохранении национальной идентичности. Полученные результаты будут полезны для политиков в сфере образования, разработчиков учебных программ и преподавателей при совершенствовании культурного аспекта обучения английскому языку в Узбекистане.

INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan's post-independence era has been marked by significant transformations in educational policy, particularly in foreign language instruction. After 1991, English rapidly gained prominence as a strategic tool for global integration, international cooperation, and modernization. This shift is evident in government initiatives such as Presidential Decree No. 1875 (2012), which mandated the early introduction of English in primary schools, signaling a turning point in the country's language policy. Further reinforcing this trajectory, the 2021 *National Strategy for Foreign Language Development* (Presidential Resolution PQ-5117) placed English at the forefront of Uzbekistan's education agenda, emphasizing teacher training, curriculum reform, and the cultivation of intercultural skills. These policies underscored a move away from Russian (the lingua franca of the Soviet era) towards English as the primary foreign language, aligning Uzbekistan with global educational trends.

One notable consequence of these reforms has been the evolution of English language textbooks used in schools. Early post-Soviet textbooks often retained Soviet-era characteristics, focusing on grammar translation, rote memorization, and literature excerpts that reflected Soviet ideology. In the decades since independence, however, English textbooks have gradually transformed. Beginning around 2013, new series such

as *Kid's English* and later *Fly High* incorporated communicative language teaching (CLT) principles and more culturally diverse content, reflecting broader global trends in English Language Teaching (ELT). These newer materials include dialogues, photographs, and readings intended to expose students to a variety of cultural contexts. Such changes align with the understanding that language learning is not only about linguistic proficiency but also cultural literacy. In the era of globalization, English language textbooks are increasingly seen as tools to introduce learners to the wider world, not merely the grammar and vocabulary of English.

Despite these advancements, the extent to which Uzbekistan's English textbooks effectively promote intercultural competence and balanced cultural understanding remains underexplored. Textbooks serve not only as instructional resources but also as **cultural artifacts** that can shape students' perceptions of their own national identity and the cultures associated with English-speaking countries. For Uzbekistan – a nation negotiating its post-Soviet identity while embracing English as a gateway to the world – it is crucial to examine what cultural content is presented to learners. Are these textbooks reinforcing an Uzbek national identity, fostering understanding of Western (Anglophone) norms, or introducing a broader global perspective? How do such representations influence students' sense of identity and ability to engage with other cultures? This research proposal seeks to address these questions. The study will critically examine the representation of Uzbek, Western, and global cultures in English textbooks used in Uzbekistan and assess how these representations shape students' cultural awareness, national identity, and intercultural communicative competence. By analyzing textbook content and gathering insights from teachers and students, the research will illuminate the ideological and pedagogical implications of cultural representations in English language education. In doing so, it aims to contribute to the development of English teaching materials that both honor local culture and prepare Uzbek students for effective global communication.

RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim:

To analyze how cultural representations in English language textbooks used in Uzbekistan shape students' cultural awareness, national identity, and intercultural competence within the post-Soviet educational context.

Objectives:

- **Mapping Cultural Content:** To examine the frequency and nature of Uzbek (local), Western (Anglophone), and global cultural references in current English textbooks.

- **Policy Alignment:** To assess whether the cultural content in these textbooks aligns with Uzbekistan's national educational policy goals and contemporary global ELT standards (e.g., fostering global citizenship).

- **Perceptions of Stakeholders:** To explore how students and teachers perceive and interpret the cultural elements presented in textbooks, including which cultures are emphasized or omitted.

- **Intercultural Skills Development:** To determine whether and how English textbooks contribute to the development of intercultural communicative competence among Uzbek learners (e.g., through activities that build cultural knowledge, empathy, and cross-cultural skills).

- **Recommendations:** To provide evidence-based recommendations for improving cultural representation in English textbooks (and related teaching materials) to better support intercultural competence and balanced cultural understanding for learners in Uzbekistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Textbooks as Vehicles of Culture and Ideology

Language textbooks are powerful tools in shaping learners' worldviews and cultural perceptions. Scholars such as Risager (2018) and Byram (1997) emphasize that textbooks serve not only as pedagogical aids but also as carriers of cultural content and ideology. In Byram's terms, language instruction inherently involves a "hidden curriculum" of cultural norms and values that students internalize alongside linguistic knowledge. Textbooks often present particular lifestyles, values, and perspectives as the norm, implicitly influencing how learners view foreign cultures and their place in the world. For example, Gray (2010) observes that internationally marketed ELT coursebooks tend to promote a cosmopolitan, consumerist vision of English-speaking societies, portraying fashionable lifestyles and individualist values. Such representations are not neutral; they reflect the editors' and authors' assumptions about what cultural knowledge is desirable for learners. In some cases, this can lead to what has been described as **cultural bias** – privileging certain cultures (often British or American) as "standard" or ideal. At the same time, research in language education highlights the need for a broader cultural perspective. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) introduced a useful framework for analyzing cultural content in EFL materials, distinguishing between **source culture** (the learner's own culture), **target culture** (cultures of native speakers of the target language, e.g. British or American culture for English), and **international or global culture** (other cultures and universal themes not tied to either the learner's or the target language's culture). The balance among these categories in a textbook can greatly influence learners' cultural learning. If a textbook focuses predominantly on target-culture content, students may become well-informed about life in London or New York but learn little about their own culture's place in the world or other world cultures. Conversely, a textbook that includes source culture content can validate and strengthen learners' national identity, and one that incorporates global culture can broaden students' worldviews beyond the binary of "us" and "the English-speaking them." In the context of **English as a global language** (Crystal, 2003), many educators argue that EFL materials should incorporate diverse cultural perspectives rather than exclusively native-speaker norms. McKay (2002) posits that because English now functions as an international lingua franca, teaching materials need to prepare learners to use English in communication with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. This entails exposing students to topics, names, and contexts from around the world, and not solely focusing on, say, life in the UK or the U.S. The literature therefore, suggests that English textbooks carry a dual responsibility: they must teach language skills and also carefully consider which cultural narratives they promote. In sum, prior studies underscore that textbooks can either foster intercultural understanding or reinforce narrow stereotypes, depending on their content balance (Byram, 1997; Risager, 2018). This study builds on that insight by examining where Uzbek textbooks fall on this spectrum.

Evolution of English Textbooks in Uzbekistan's Post-Soviet Era

The development of English textbooks in Uzbekistan since independence reflects broader sociopolitical shifts. In the 1990s, immediately after the Soviet Union's collapse, educational materials were in transition. Many early post-independence English textbooks were essentially modified versions of Soviet-era books. They emphasized grammar translation, memorization of vocabulary, and reading passages with little communicative interaction. Culturally, these books offered limited content: dialogues and reading texts might feature generic scenes or Soviet contexts, and references to Western culture were minimal or presented simplistically. By the 2000s and especially the 2010s, concerted efforts were made to modernize English teaching. A National English Curriculum introduced in 2013 (with support from international experts) brought Uzbekistan in line with communicative language teaching and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) standards (Jalolov, 2018). Correspondingly, new textbook series were developed. *Kid's English* (first published in 2013 and updated in 2015 and 2018) was one of the first post-independence series to break significantly from the Soviet mold. It introduced colorful illustrations and situational dialogues. However, analyses of *Kid's English* have noted a heavy reliance on Western cultural content – for instance, lessons about British or American holidays, English food, or everyday life in Western settings – with only sparse inclusion of Uzbek cultural elements. In contrast, the more recent *Fly High* series (2019 and 2022 editions) made a deliberate effort to localize content. These textbooks include units on Uzbek history and traditions: for example, featuring national heroes like Amir Temur (Tamerlane), describing the Navruz holiday, and showing dialogues set in familiar Uzbek contexts (such as an Uzbek family gathering or a local school event). The inclusion of Uzbek cultural references aims to reinforce students' sense of national identity and make the learning experience more relatable. Additionally, internationally produced textbooks have also found their way into Uzbekistan's classrooms, especially in private or specialized schools. For instance, the *New Opportunities* series (a British-published textbook adapted for Uzbek use) exposes students to a wide range of global cultural topics – from environmental issues to cultural festivals around the world – and often portrays interactions among multicultural characters. A comparative look at these materials reveals a clear trajectory: from an initial **Western-centric** approach (*Kid's English* presenting mainly British/American culture) towards a somewhat more **balanced approach** (*Fly High* incorporating local culture alongside foreign), and with supplemental use of **global materials** (*New Opportunities* offering international contexts). Despite this progress, scholars and educators note that challenges remain. Normatov (2022), for example, argues that the integration of intercultural content in Uzbek English textbooks is still **superficial**. While modern textbooks now include references to Uzbek culture and even other world cultures, these are often presented as isolated facts or illustrations, rather than woven into a deeper comparative discussion. Students may learn a few cultural tidbits (e.g. a traditional Uzbek dish or a British custom) but might not develop the skills to critically compare cultures or engage in intercultural dialogue. Moreover, the Western (Anglophone) cultural norms continue to dominate many units of the textbooks. This dominance can lead to what one researcher called an “imagined global identity” – a scenario where students become familiar with life in English-speaking countries through textbooks, yet this imagined world may feel distant and disconnected from their local

realities (Saidova, 2021). Such an imbalance raises concerns about relevance and authenticity: if learners see English chiefly as the language of others' cultures, they might not fully internalize it as a tool for expressing their own culture or communicating in diverse contexts.

Post-Soviet Identity, Nationalism, and Educational Policy

In Uzbekistan, educational policy has been a key instrument for **nation-building** in the post-Soviet period. After independence, the government consciously reformed curricula and textbooks to remove Soviet ideological content and instead promote a sense of Uzbek national identity, history, and values (Jalolov, 2017). Textbooks in all subjects, including language courses, were revised to include national symbols, historic figures, and positive representations of Uzbek culture. For English language education, this created a unique double mandate: on one hand, to “decolonize” the content by eliminating pro-Russian or Soviet narratives, and on the other hand, to utilize the English curriculum as a means of fostering pride in Uzbek heritage for a new generation. This balancing act – integrating local culture into an English curriculum – exemplifies a hybrid approach where traditional values coexist with imported educational models. Western educational influences (like communicative methods and international content) were adopted because English is seen as a gateway to global knowledge, yet there was caution not to lose local cultural moorings. Saidova (2021) notes that current English textbooks do show more references to Uzbek culture than those in the 1990s, indicating success in indigenizing the curriculum to some extent. These include texts about famous Uzbek authors, dialogues set in Samarkand or Tashkent, and exercises involving Uzbek proverbs or traditions. At the same time, however, these textbooks must also reflect the fact that English is primarily the language of foreign cultures. Inevitably, many textbook units center on English-speaking countries – discussing U.S. geography, British royal traditions, or Western pop culture – because such content has traditionally been considered integral to learning English. The Uzbek Ministry of Education's policies (as evidenced by the 2021 national strategy) attempt to reconcile these influences by encouraging intercultural competence: essentially, using English as a means for students to engage with the world while retaining a strong sense of their own identity. This aligns with Uzbekistan's broader ideological stance of “Uzbekness” plus global openness. Nonetheless, a tension persists. Cultural content in English textbooks can sometimes skew towards an idealized internationalism that overlooks local context. Students might read about life in New York or London extensively, developing an aspirational global outlook, yet if local culture is presented only perfunctorily, they might implicitly learn to consider their own culture as less important or not connected to English. Conversely, if a textbook were too inward-looking (only Uzbek culture in English), it would defeat the purpose of learning a global language. The literature suggests that finding a **balanced intercultural approach** is challenging. As one educator put it, Uzbek English textbooks are tasked with “teaching the world to the student, and the student to the world” – that is, teaching about foreign peoples, but also representing Uzbek people and perspectives in the global language. Ensuring that balance is achieved is an ongoing concern in curriculum development (Karimov, 2015). This study will contribute by evaluating how well current materials strike that balance and adhere to the policy vision of producing youth who are both proud Uzbeks and competent global citizens.

Intercultural Communicative Competence in Language Learning

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has emerged as a central goal of modern language education (Byram, 1997). ICC refers to the ability not only to communicate effectively in a second language but to do so with an awareness of cultural differences, an openness to other perspectives, and an ability to build relationships across cultures. Byram's (1997) model of ICC outlines several components: **knowledge** of other cultures (and one's own) including facts, norms and products; **attitudes** such as curiosity, open-mindedness, and willingness to suspend judgment; **skills** of interpreting and relating (comparing cultures, interpreting cultural phenomena) and of interaction (knowing how to behave in new cultural contexts); and **critical cultural awareness**, which is the ability to evaluate cultures (including one's own) critically and ethically. Ideally, a language textbook aiming to develop ICC would include content and tasks addressing all these components – for example, factual readings about other countries (knowledge), prompts for students to reflect on differences and similarities (interpretation skills), role-play scenarios requiring empathy and appropriate behavior (interaction skills), and discussion questions that encourage critical thinking about cultural stereotypes or cultural practices (critical awareness). In practice, however, incorporating ICC into textbooks is challenging. Recent studies in Uzbekistan suggest that while students achieve solid grammar and reading skills in English, they often lack cultural **fluency** or confidence in real intercultural interactions (Turgunov, 2022). Traditional textbooks may present cultural facts (like a description of Thanksgiving or Nowruz) which increase knowledge, but they rarely go further to engage students in deeper reflection or attitude change. Moreover, many EFL textbooks focus on British-American contexts and do not address how to interact with, say, a Chinese or Arab English speaker, despite the reality that English is used worldwide. This is where the concept of English as an International Language (EIL) intersects with ICC. Educators like Alptekin (2002) argue that the conventional approach to intercultural competence—largely oriented toward understanding native English speaker cultures—needs rethinking. In contexts where English is primarily a lingua franca among non-native speakers (as is often the case for Uzbek students using English regionally or online), ICC should include preparedness for multicultural encounters beyond the Anglosphere. For example, an Uzbek speaker of English might use the language with a Korean business partner or a Nigerian classmate; thus, cultural content in teaching materials should not be confined to the UK/US, but also introduce broader global themes. The Uzbek national curriculum's emphasis on intercultural competence (as noted in the 2021 strategy) reflects an understanding of this need. The question remains: **Do current textbooks foster true intercultural competence or just surface cultural knowledge?** This literature review suggests a gap between policy ideals and classroom reality. To develop ICC, textbooks would need to engage students in comparing cultures (Uzbek vs. others), reflecting on cultural biases, and practicing intercultural communication skills. The analysis by Normatov (2022) and others indicates this depth is currently lacking. Therefore, one focus of this study will be evaluating the textbooks against Byram's ICC model – for instance, checking if textbook activities address attitudes and critical thinking, or simply present cultural trivia. By situating the textbook analysis within the broader scholarship on ICC (Byram, 1997; Alptekin, 2002), the research will critically assess whether Uzbekistan's efforts to use English education as a vehicle for intercultural development are bearing fruit, or if further improvements in content are needed.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study will employ a **mixed-methods research design**, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The core of the research is a qualitative **content analysis** of selected English language textbooks, through which cultural representations will be identified and evaluated in depth. This will be complemented by quantitative and qualitative data from **surveys** and **interviews** with students and teachers, providing perspectives on how the textbook content is perceived and its impact in practice. The rationale for this design is triangulation: by analyzing textbooks themselves and also gathering stakeholder reactions, the study can correlate the intended curriculum (textbook content) with the received curriculum (learner/teacher experiences).

Data Collection

- **Textbook Sample:** The content analysis will focus on a sample of widely-used English textbooks in Uzbekistan's secondary education. Three main textbook series have been selected: (1) *Kid's English* (editions from 2013, 2015, and 2018), an earlier post-independence series; (2) *Fly High* (2019 and 2022 editions), a more recent series implemented nationally; and (3) *New Opportunities* (an English textbook by the British Council used in some private institutions). These textbooks were chosen to represent both state-produced materials and an international ELT material in local use, as well as to capture changes over time. Collectively, they cover content for students roughly in grades 5–9 (middle to early high school). All textual and visual content in these books will be examined for cultural references.

- **Surveys:** Structured surveys will be administered to a larger pool of participants to gather quantitative data on perceptions of textbook content. Approximately 150 high school students (ages ~15–18) and 50 English teachers from various regions of Uzbekistan will complete a questionnaire. The student survey includes Likert-scale and multiple-choice items regarding how engaging and relevant they find the cultural topics in their textbooks, how well they feel the textbooks prepare them to interact with people from other cultures, and whether the textbooks reflect their own culture in a respectful and interesting way. The teacher survey asks teachers to rate the sufficiency and balance of cultural content in the textbooks they use, any challenges they face in teaching culture, and their views on the importance of including Uzbek versus foreign cultural topics. These surveys will provide measurable indicators (e.g. percentage of students who feel the textbook focuses mostly on Western culture, or mean ratings of textbook cultural balance) that can complement the qualitative findings.

- **Interviews:** To gain deeper insights, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of the survey participants. Specifically, ~15 English teachers (from both public schools and private language centers) and ~30 senior students will be interviewed. The interviews will allow participants to elaborate on their experiences: teachers might discuss how they use (or adapt) the textbooks to teach culture, provide examples of student reactions, and suggest improvements; students might share what they have learned about other cultures from English class, how they relate it to their own culture, and any memorable or confusing cultural lessons. Interviews will be audio-recorded (with consent) and transcribed for analysis.

All necessary ethical protocols will be followed during data collection. Participants will be informed about the purpose of the study and how their responses will be used, and consent (from students and/or their guardians, and from teachers) will be obtained. Participation will be voluntary and anonymous to encourage honest feedback.

Analytical Framework and Data Analysis

• **Content Analysis of Textbooks:** The collected textbooks will undergo a systematic content analysis focusing on cultural representations. Using the Cortazzi & Jin (1999) framework as a guiding lens, textbook content will be coded into categories: **Source Culture** (Uzbek culture – e.g. references to Uzbek people, history, geography, traditions, and daily life), **Target Culture** (culture of native English-speaking countries – primarily UK, USA, and other Anglophone societies presented), and **Global/International Culture** (cultures of other countries or global themes that are not specific to either Uzbek or Anglophone contexts). Every dialogue, reading passage, image, and exercise in the textbooks will be examined for cultural content. For each occurrence, the cultural reference will be identified and classified into one of the categories. For example, a lesson about the Great Wall of China would count as international culture, a dialogue about an Uzbek family celebrating Navruz would count as source culture, and a text about London's Underground or an American teenager's routine would count as target culture. Quantitatively, the frequency of each category will be tallied to see the proportional representation of Uzbek vs. Western vs. global content in each book. Qualitatively, the **nature** of the representation will also be analyzed – e.g., depth and context. Are cultural facts presented superficially or with explanation? Are cultures portrayed stereotypically or with nuance? Do the textbooks invite comparisons or reflections about culture? Additionally, the analysis will consider which aspects of culture are highlighted: “Big C” culture (formal institutions, history, art, literature) vs. “small c” culture (everyday life, social norms, humor, beliefs) (Yuen, 2011). This fine-grained analysis will help determine not just how much culture is included, but how it is integrated pedagogically.

• **Intercultural Competence Criteria:** Alongside the cultural content categories, the textbooks will be evaluated against Byram's (1997) ICC components. A checklist or rubric will be used to assess whether textbook activities address ICC skills. For instance, do any exercises encourage students to reflect on differences between Uzbek culture and another culture (skill of comparing)? Are students asked for their opinions or to empathize with people from a different background (attitude of openness)? Are there any project tasks that involve researching another culture or interacting with people from abroad (which could foster skills and knowledge)? The presence or absence of such elements will be noted. This qualitative judgment will indicate to what extent the textbook goes beyond factual cultural knowledge toward actually nurturing intercultural skills and attitudes.

• **Survey Data Analysis:** The quantitative survey data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, means) and, if appropriate, comparative statistics (e.g., comparing responses of teachers vs. students, or urban vs. rural students if such data is collected). For example, if a large percentage of students indicate that “most of the culture in my English textbook is about Western countries,” that would triangulate with the content analysis findings. Likewise, if teachers overwhelmingly “agree” that they have to supplement the textbook with additional cultural information, that supports the notion

that textbooks alone are insufficient. The survey results will thus be used to validate and enrich the textbook analysis. They might also reveal any perceptual gaps (perhaps students believe they are learning a lot about other cultures, or conversely perhaps they feel the textbooks are boring or culturally irrelevant – these perceptions are valuable for interpreting the impact of textbook content).

• **Interview Analysis:** Interview transcripts will be analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. Initial coding will identify recurring themes or points of interest, such as: *perceived bias* (e.g. a teacher notes the textbook always shows Western names), *examples of cultural learning* (a student describes a lesson that taught them something new about a culture), *identity connection* (someone mentions feeling proud seeing Uzbek culture in the textbook), *challenges* (teacher or student points out confusion or stereotypes), and *suggestions* (participants' ideas for improvement). These themes will be related back to the research questions. For instance, teachers' comments can illustrate how they interpret the alignment of textbooks with policy (Objective 2) or how they perceive students' intercultural skill development (Objective 4). Direct quotes (anonymized) may be used in the findings to give voice to stakeholders' perspectives.

Throughout the analysis, a conscious effort will be made to ensure **reliability and validity**. For the textbook content coding, a second coder (another researcher or a trained assistant) may independently code a sample of the material to check for consistency in identifying cultural references. Any discrepancies will be discussed, and the coding scheme will be refined as needed. This increases the reliability of the content analysis. For validity, triangulation of methods (text analysis, surveys, interviews) will help confirm that the conclusions drawn are supported by multiple sources of evidence. Overall, this mixed-method analytical approach is intended to produce a rich, credible understanding of cultural representations in Uzbek English textbooks and their implications.

Expected Findings and Contributions

Based on the preliminary review of textbook content and the literature discussed, the study anticipates several key findings:

• **Dominance of Western Cultural Content:** It is expected that although recent textbooks include a growing number of Uzbek cultural elements, **Western (Anglophone) culture will remain the most dominant strand** of content. In other words, the imagery, names, places, and social contexts in the English textbooks are likely skewed toward British and American settings more than toward local or other international settings. This hypothesis is consistent with prior analyses in similar EFL contexts that found an enduring prominence of target-culture content (Saidova, 2021). A likely finding is that, for example, students might learn far more about life in London or New York through their English lessons than about life in neighboring countries or even different regions of Uzbekistan. Such an imbalance may subtly position Western culture as the “norm” associated with English, reaffirming its prestige.

• **Intercultural Competence Gaps:** The study also expects to find that the **development of deep intercultural competence through textbooks is limited**. While the textbooks may successfully impart factual knowledge of other cultures (holidays, customs, etc.), they probably do less to cultivate skills like intercultural communication or critical cultural awareness. For instance, few if any activities might ask students to discuss cultural differences or reflect on their own assumptions. Consequently, students

may struggle to apply their cultural knowledge in real-life communication. One possible outcome, indicated by Turgunov's (2022) observations, is that students know cultural facts (e.g. they can list English-speaking countries' festivals or famous landmarks) but demonstrate uncertainty or discomfort when having to interact with native or non-native English speakers in real situations. Any such finding would suggest that current textbooks approach intercultural topics in a rather **superficial** way – checking the box of including culture without truly engaging students in intercultural learning processes.

- **Teacher Mediation:** It is anticipated that teachers will emerge as crucial agents in mediating cultural content. If the textbooks fall short in certain areas (for example, providing only brief cultural notes), **teachers likely supplement or contextualize this material** using their own knowledge, additional resources, or classroom activities. From the interviews, we expect many teachers to report that they bring in extra cultural information (like showing videos, sharing personal experiences abroad, or organizing projects) to enrich what is in the textbook. Teachers might also describe adapting content to make it more relatable, for instance, drawing parallels between a textbook topic and an analogous aspect of Uzbek culture. This anticipated finding aligns with the idea that textbooks alone do not determine learning; how teachers use them is equally important. If teachers commonly feel the need to fill gaps, it indicates that the textbooks are not fully self-sufficient in achieving intercultural aims. On the positive side, strong teacher involvement could mean that, despite any textbook shortcomings, students are still being exposed to diverse perspectives through their instructors' efforts. However, reliance on teacher initiative also means the intercultural outcomes can vary greatly depending on the teacher's competence and outlook, which raises questions about consistency and teacher training.

If these hypotheses are confirmed, the study will yield important **theoretical and practical contributions**:

- **Theoretical Contributions:** This research will deepen our understanding of how cultural identity and globalization interact within language education, specifically in a post-Soviet, non-Western context. Most prior studies of ELT textbooks' cultural content have focused on either global coursebooks or contexts in East Asia and the Middle East. By focusing on Uzbekistan, this study extends the conversation to Central Asia, shedding light on how a nation with a Soviet legacy negotiates the cultural dimension of English education. It will contribute to applied linguistics theory by illustrating how concepts like intercultural communicative competence are being interpreted on the ground in a context of simultaneous nation-building and globalization. The findings may support or challenge existing theories. For example, if Uzbek textbooks are found to strongly favor target culture despite policy rhetoric of intercultural competence, it might suggest limitations in the global spread of ICC-focused pedagogy. Alternatively, evidence of a balanced cultural approach would offer a model for blending local and global content. In essence, this study will provide a case study in the negotiation of cultural content, adding to the literature on post-colonial curriculum transformation, the role of English as a global language, and the pedagogical strategies for intercultural education. It can also refine the analytical frameworks used for textbook analysis by possibly identifying nuances (such as the particular types of local culture included or omitted) that existing frameworks haven't addressed in depth.

• **Practical Contributions:** Practically, the research will offer concrete insights and recommendations for stakeholders in Uzbekistan's education sector and beyond. **Policymakers and curriculum developers** can use the findings to gauge how well current materials align with the national goals of fostering globally aware but nationally grounded citizens. For instance, if the study finds an over-emphasis on Western content, curriculum planners might consider revising textbooks to incorporate a greater variety of cultural contexts or to include more tasks that require intercultural reflection. If students are found to lack engagement with the cultural parts of the textbook, it may prompt a reevaluation of how those topics are presented (perhaps making them more interactive or personally relevant). **Textbook authors and publishers** would benefit from the detailed feedback on their content. The study's cultural content analysis could serve as an evaluative audit, highlighting strengths (e.g. effective inclusion of Uzbek culture) and pointing out areas for improvement (e.g. adding more global cultural topics, or including follow-up questions that prompt critical thinking). By implementing the recommendations, future textbooks could achieve a more appropriate balance that aligns with international standards for intercultural education while still meeting local expectations. **Teachers and teacher trainers** may also find value in the research. Awareness of the identified gaps could inform teacher training programs – for example, training teachers on how to effectively teach intercultural skills, or how to supplement textbooks with meaningful cultural activities. In a broader sense, this study's insights into cultural representation are applicable to other post-Soviet or similar EFL contexts (such as Kazakhstan, Russia, or Eastern European countries navigating their identity in ELT). Therefore, the practical recommendations may resonate with a wider audience concerned with how global English education can be adapted to local cultural needs. Ultimately, by proposing ways to enhance the cultural dimension of English textbooks, the study strives to ensure that English language learning in Uzbekistan not only teaches the language, but does so in a way that empowers students to confidently participate in a multicultural world without losing sight of who they are.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this research will examine the cultural representations embedded in Uzbekistan's English language textbooks and evaluate their impact on learners' national identity formation and intercultural competence development. The topic sits at the intersection of language education, culture, and policy in a rapidly changing post-Soviet context. By reviewing educational reforms and analyzing textbook content, the study addresses how Uzbekistan is negotiating the dual imperatives of preserving cultural identity and embracing the global role of English. The mixed-methods approach – blending textbook analysis with teacher and student perspectives – will provide a holistic understanding of both the intended curriculum and its reception in the classroom. We anticipate finding that while reforms have made textbooks more inclusive of Uzbek culture, Western cultural narratives still dominate, reflecting the complex influence of global English norms. We also expect to highlight a gap between policy aspirations for intercultural competence and the on-the-ground reality of textbook practice. These findings will carry significant implications. The research will contribute to scholarly conversations on how global forces and local identities converge in educational content, offering evidence from an understudied national context. In practical terms, it will offer recommendations to enrich the cultural dimension of English teaching in Uzbekistan so

that learning English also means learning to navigate diverse cultures. The overarching goal is to support the development of curricula that produce students who are linguistically proficient, culturally aware, and confident in their dual identity as citizens of Uzbekistan and members of a global community. In doing so, the study aims to help bridge the gap between **linguistic competence** and **intercultural competence** in foreign language education. Ultimately, a more culturally balanced and critically engaging English curriculum will better prepare Uzbek students for the demands of international communication while reinforcing a positive sense of their own cultural identity – outcomes that are invaluable in today's interconnected world.

REFERENCES:

1. Alimov, B. (2020). *Globalization and Foreign Language Education in Uzbekistan: Shifts in Policies and Practices*. **Journal of Educational Development**, 5(2), 45–57.
2. Alptekin, C. (2002). Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT. *ELT Journal*, 56(1), 57–64.
3. Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
4. Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (1999). Cultural mirrors: Materials and methods in the EFL classroom. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 196–219). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
5. Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Gray, J. (2010). *The Construction of English: Culture, Consumerism and Promotion in the ELT Global Coursebook*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
7. Jalolov, J. (2017). *Reforming Language Education in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan: National Identity and Global Integration*. **Tashkent Journal of Education**, 3(1), 10–24.
8. Jalolov, J. (2018). Communicative approach and textbook development in Uzbekistan's EFL curriculum. **Uzbekistan Journal of Applied Linguistics**, 2(2), 50–59.
9. Karimov, A. (2015). English language teaching in Uzbekistan: Challenges and prospects. **Uzbek Journal of Applied Linguistics**, 1(1), 15–22.
10. McKay, S. L. (2002). *Teaching English as an International Language: Rethinking Goals and Approaches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
11. Normatov, D. (2022). *Integrating Intercultural Competence in Uzbek EFL Textbooks: A Critical Analysis*. **International Journal of Language Studies**, 15(4), 100–115.
12. Saidova, Z. (2021). Balancing local and target cultures in foreign language textbooks: A content analysis of Uzbek school materials. **Journal of Language and Education**, 7(3), 132–146.
13. Turgunov, B. (2022). *Intercultural Communicative Competence among Uzbek Learners of English: Issues and Insights*. **Proceedings of the National Conference on Language Education**, Tashkent, pp. 55–63.
14. Uzbekistan, President of the Republic. (2012). *Decree No. 1875 on Measures to Further Improve the System of Foreign Language Learning*. Tashkent: Government of Uzbekistan.
15. Uzbekistan, President of the Republic. (2021). *Resolution No. PQ-5117 on Measures to Develop Foreign Language Education (National Strategy for Foreign Language Development)*. Tashkent: Government of Uzbekistan. (Available at Lex.uz database).