Analyzing Culture of Learning and Teaching in the Iranian Secondary Schools English Language Course Books: Prospect

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Knowing and analyzing the “culture of learning and teaching” in a coursebook or series of course books can contribute to teachers’ and students’ success in the educational and pedagogical goals and objectives. Cultures of learning and teaching refer to the perspectives of teachers and learners towards learning and teaching. Most of the research studies conducted in this field have referred to values and attitudes related to good learning and teaching as reflected through observations, interviews and questionnaires. However, just few studies have examined this term with regard to language teaching materials, and course books. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to introduce, investigate, and analyze the cultures of learning and teaching in Iranian secondary school course books entitled Prospect series. Based on the model used in this study, the cultures of learning and teaching in Prospect series were investigated as reflected in their external features including aims and objectives cited in the introduction, tables of content, and layout of the students’ books, and internal features including task instructions and visual images in students’ book plus the instructions in the teacher’s book. Each of these features as well as the pedagogical issues of the Prospect series were provided and elaborated.

Keywords: culture of learning, culture of teaching, Prospect series, pedagogic issues

Introduction

Culture of learning, as a concept, suggests that learning is cultural (as well as psychological) and that people from different cultural groups might therefore learn in different ways (Yuan & Xie, 2013). Smith and Schalekamp (1997) referred to the “culture of learning and teaching” as the attitude of teachers and learners towards learning and teaching. Language teaching materials can reflect different cultures of learning through different tools, e.g., instructions, content, images, etc. The term “culture of learning and teaching” has been used by many researchers. Cortazzi and Jin (1996) used the term “culture of learning” to refer to behavior in language classroom. In particular, according to what they believe, much behavior in language classrooms is set within prevailing frameworks, expectations, viewpoints, values, and ideas about what ends to good learning, how to teach and learn, how to pose questions, etc. Hu (2002) referred to this term as different expectations, viewpoints, ideas, values, perceptions, preferences, experiences, and treats that are features of a society with relation to teaching and learning. Most of the research studies conducted in this field have referred to values

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and attitudes with regard to what contributes to good learning and teaching as reflected through observations, interviews, and questionnaires. Few of them, on the other hand, have examined this term with regard to language teaching materials and course books. This study is to introduce, investigate, and analyze the “culture of learning and teaching” in Iranian secondary school course books entitled *Prospect* series.

**Review of Literature**

Many research studies have been conducted in the field of the cultures of learning and teaching, Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990), Lee (1996), Biggs (1996), Heystek and Lethoko (2001), Hu (2002), Cortazzi and Jin (2001), Jiangqiong and Tin (2010), Tahririan and Sadri (2013), Yuan and Xie (2013), to name but a few.

Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990) discussed the choices made in a large scale textbook project concerning the cultural content of the new English course books for Moroccan secondary schools. They put forward a perfected strategy for determining the cultural content of a course, and went on to implement this strategy to the Moroccan course books. They also criticized the cultural content choosing strategies and claimed that what should really determine those choices was not the top-down developed strategy, but rather the common perceptions towards the foreign culture among English teachers (Adaskou, Britten, & Fahsi, 1990).

Lee (1996) conducted a research study on the conceptions of learning in the Confucian tradition. He claimed that Confucius himself had trained his students in almost a Socratic manner and had been mindful of individual variations in terms of the needs and capabilities of his students.

Investigating the same theme as Lee, Biggs (1996) discussed the pros and cons of Confucian culture of learning which exists in China, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan. In fact, he compared Confucian Heritage Cultures (CHCs) with Western cultures. The results obtained in the research had been used to support increases in class size in cultures that size is insignificant to effective teaching (Biggs, 1996). He then concluded that no generalization could be made on what good practice could and can be. He then pointed out the mistakes the western people had made about the CHCs classes. According to what Biggs believed, westerners used to mistake repetitive learning for a surface approach, and they thought the methods of whole class teaching used in CHC classrooms as hard and explicatory (Biggs, 1996).

Heystek and Lethoko (2001) studied the contribution of teacher unions in the restoration of teacher professionalism and the culture of learning and teaching. To carry their study out, they interviewed three officials in chief of three different unions. Analyzing the results obtained from the interviews, they elaborated the roles, area of operation, and effect on the culture of learning and teaching for each of the unions.

Hu (2002) examined one of the most important potential constraints on the adoption of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the Chinese classroom, i.e., the Chinese culture of learning. In the article he argued that CLT and the Chinese culture of learning are not in harmony in several facets, including theoretical speculations about the root of teaching and learning, beliefs of the particular responsibilities of teachers and students, learning tactics and qualities taken-for-granted in teachers and students (Hu, 2002). He then proposed that an “autonomous” attitude, rather than an “ideological” one be taken to pedagogical creativities developed in a different sociocultural context. He then concluded by arguing for the need for trying a carefully eclectic approach and making pedagogical decisions that were planned according to an understanding of sociocultural effects (Hu, 2002).

Cortazzi and Jin (2001) discussed the role of interaction in large classes of China, the country of which large classes are a prominent feature. They claimed that improving the rate of interaction in large classes, good
teachers could pave the way for the success of teachers, students, and the whole educational cycle and system.

Jiangqiong and Tin (2010) analyzed the culture of learning and teaching in three language course books used in China named Chinese, English, and Get Together as reflected through their external and internal features. They analyzed the course books and discussed their similarities and differences. Chinese was designed for secondary school students to teach them Chinese language as their mother tongue. Its main purpose was to improve learners’ language ability, to enhance their cultural knowledge, and to help them meet the educational requirements set by China Ministry of Education. English was also designed for secondary school students as a foreign language teaching book, reflecting the task-based language teaching theory. Get Together, on the other hand, was an American English course book used by secondary school students. It was used for private language schools which took language as a second language. The main purpose of this book was to encourage students to get to a complete level in language while developing vital communication skills.

According to the authors’ analysis, the unit structure in Get Together was similar to English in terms of its stress on listening and speaking activities. No reading texts were used in the unit. However, in Chinese, reading had an important role. While Chinese and English had their origin in Chinese education contexts, Get Together had its origin in what Holliday (1994) had called a BANA context (Britain, Australasia, and North American). A comparison of the aims of the three books suggested that all three books emphasized the role of cross-curricular or/and cross-cultural knowledge in language learning.

Regarding the introduction of the students’ book, Chinese had the idea of a close association between Chinese learning and cross-curricular and cross-cultural knowledge in many aspects of the students’ book as well as the teacher’s book. Get together also indicated that cross-curricular activities and projects could promote language learning, although it seemed to imply that culture learning in language mainly involves learning the target culture (e.g., the contents and visual images mainly reflect target culture). Compared with Chinese and Get Together, English emphasized the significance of integrating local culture into the target language culture (i.e., integrating Chinese culture into Western culture).

Regarding the task instructions in the students’ book, the instructions in Chinese provided learners with descriptive lead-in information about the theme of the unit before students were asked to read the texts. Effective learning and reading were associated with understanding and reflecting on the beauty and moral value associated with the topic of the text. Instructions in Chinese also emphasized the role of repetition, imitation, and reading aloud in learning.

The instruction in English covered a wide range of skills, although the emphasis was put on listening. Unlike Chinese, students were not provided with descriptive information about significance of the topic before listening to the text. The goal of reading and listening was to check students’ understanding about the factual content to perform a pedagogical or communicative task.

The instructions in Get together like English covered a wide range of language skills. No detailed information about the topic was given before listening and reading tasks. Students used certain language structures to perform a communicative or a pedagogical task.

Regarding the visual images, the learning environment was more relaxed in Get together than in English. Learners could eat and pets could stay in the classroom when the teacher was teaching in Get together, while both the teacher and students behaved formally in English. Visual images played very important roles in facilitating language learning in English and Get together and they were not for decorative purposes but
pedagogic purposes, i.e., students used these images to perform the task. Chinese, in contrast, rarely used visual images and pictures. If there was a picture there, the purpose of the picture was purely decorative. Finally, in relation to instructions in teacher’s book, the instructions in English students’ book were brief, whereas teachers were provided with elaborated instructions and information in English teacher’s book for the same unit. Task instructions in students’ book were so brief that students were to rely on teacher to do the tasks. Similarly, the instructions for teachers in Chinese gave detailed information on how to teach and what to teach in the classroom. In contrast, Get Together teacher’s book was the same length as the student’s book. Teachers were merely provided with some extra information concerning possible procedures to be adopted in teaching the unit.

They then connected the results to Confucian traditions of learning. They claimed that some features of Confucian traditions are reflected in Chinese, e.g., the importance of mental alertness, the role of memorization in deeper learning, the association between true learning, and reflective thinking, etc. (Jiangqiong & Tin, 2010).

Tahririan and Sadri (2013) investigated the different types and roles of images in Iranian EFL course books, as a subcategory of the analysis of cultures of learning. Using KVL’s (2006) model, the authors analyzed the images of course books and divided them into representational (relation between participants depicted), interactive (relation between image and viewer), and compositional (relation between elements of the text and elements of the image). They then elaborated the issues regarding the roles of images and their types.

Yuan and Xie (2013) in their comprehensive review, listed the researches regarding the field of cultures of learning conducted by Lixian Jin, Martin Cortazzi, and others between 1990 and 2012. They also provided some pieces of information on the concept of culture of learning itself and different facets of this field.

Method

Material

Prospect is the official name of a series of course books which has been published by experts and material developers of ELT in Ministry of Education (MOE) in Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). This series is used to be taught to junior secondary school students. So far, Prospect 1 and 2 are used for the seventh and eighth grade students. Prospect 3 is now said to be published in less than a year to be distributed among students of the ninth grade.

In order to answer the research question, Prospect 1 and 2 and their corresponding teachers’ guide were analyzed in terms of their external features, i.e., aims and objectives, tables of content, and the layout of the student book, and internal features, i.e., task instructions and visual images in students’ book and instructions in the teacher’s book. In the educational system of Iran, students do not deal with English in their school curriculum mainly by this program, except in some rare cases in nonprofit schools in which the curriculum and syllabus is mainly decided by the board of school and parents-teachers association, or in cases in which students go after enhancing their English language knowledge in language colleges and institutes. So, the effect and role of this series as the first source to be faced with by students is impressive and important.

Criteria for Evaluation of Culture of Learning and Teaching

The criteria used in this study were that of Jiangqiong and Tin (2010). External features included aims and objectives cited in the introduction of the student books, tables of content of student books, and layout of the student books. Internal features, on the other hand, consisted of task instructions and visual images in students’
books and instructions in the teacher’s book. The detailed elaboration of these features is provided in relation to *Prospect* series as follows on the article. In the analysis of external features, the following features should be analyzed:

**Aims and objectives cited in the introduction of the students’ book.** In every course book, or series of course books, a part of the introduction is dedicated to describe the aims and objectives of that book. These objectives vary in theme. They can be pedagogical, communicative, behavioral, moral, etc. Knowing the aims and objectives helps the users to achieve them better and urges them that they put the most possible effort in the way of fulfilling the objectives. Stating the aims and the way they are stated, is a concern of culture of learning and teaching.

**Table of the content of the student book.** Table of content is a list of the parts of a book or document organized in the order in which the parts appear. Providing users with a meticulous, comprehensive table of the content makes a feeling of informedness and gives the users the chance to analyze and review the contents in a glance. Whereas a simple, summarized table of the contents makes the user flip through the pages to attain a simple viewpoint about the features of the book, e.g., its theme.

**Layout and structure of the students’ book.** When authors decide to format their own books, they do not always make the best choices. It is important to stay within formatting conventions and cultures. They must pay attention to what cultures and habits people have regarding the layout, format, and structures of the book they intend to read or study. Longstanding habits of users and accepted trade practices have come to dictate that we follow these formatting guides. Layout of a book is almost culturally-oriented and the analysis of the layout of a book and its convergence with the local culture is within the framework of the cultures of learning and teaching.

In the analysis of internal features, three features should be investigated:

**Task instructions in students’ book.** The purpose of instruction is to help people learn. The goal of instructional designers is to make learning easier, quicker, and more enjoyable. In this way, instructional designers make use of different mediums and follow different theories to achieve their goal. To mention a few, the authors or task designers of a course book or series of course books may develop instructions according to the main principles of Feuerstein theory of mediation (cited in Williams & Burden, 2004, p. 69). As discussed in Williams and Burden (2004), there are 12 key features in Mediation theory that need to be observed when mediation theory is come up with. The main three features of Mediation theory are as follows:

- **Significance:** Teachers must make the students informed about the value and significance of the task so that they can understand the values of the task.
- **Shared Intention:** There should be a clear intention described by the teacher and that intention must be understood and responded by the learners.
- **Sharing:** This feature mostly equals cooperation. Learners should recognize that some tasks are better solved if cooperatively.

**The visual images of students’ book.** The old adage “a picture is worth a thousand words” is repeated in many EFL course books which have been brought in the global market, including Iran (Tahririan & Sadri, 2013). Pictures and visual images contribute to the better understanding. They can stimulate students’ interest and engage them in the process of language learning. In the analysis of pictures and visual images in *Prospect* series, three types were investigated:
Decorative: As the name suggests, this kind serves as the decorator and intends to beautify the course books and has nothing to do with learning tasks. Omitting the pictures of this kind does not interfere with the process of learning. However, utilizing them can amuse the students and decrease the degree of monotony and flatness.

Cognitive: This kind of pictures is mostly used in tasks or at the beginning of the main parts of the lessons. By manipulating this kind of pictures, students involve their personal experiences and engage their personal emotions. It should be noted that this kind of pictures acts as an aid to pedagogic kind, but they cannot be perceived as pedagogic since they do not solely go after reaching pedagogic objectives.

Pedagogic: This kind is thoroughly used to stimulate learners’ linguistic responses. The use of pedagogic pictures and visual images is in line with the pedagogic objectives of the tasks and the book. Pictures used in course books mostly fall under this category.

Instructions in the teacher’s book. Almost all course books have a corresponding teacher’s book in which teachers are provided with extra information about the quality of teaching. In some teachers’ books the instructions are brief and simple, whereas others provide teachers with much extra information, e.g., answers of the tasks, more elaborated versions of task instructions of students’ books, and suggestions to conduct a better training. The latter type helps teachers’ not to lose face in classrooms if they are asked by students. In other words, this type equips teachers with the best possible knowledge about the materials.

One concept that deserves noting here is “Culture of Correction”. Culture of correction refers to the ways teachers correct the mistakes or errors of students in classrooms. It can be teacher-led correction in which teacher, as a facilitator, helps students to correct their mistakes and errors in an inductive way. Another type of correction culture can be peer-correction in which students correct each other’s mistakes and in cases of need, they refer to the teacher to enjoy his correction. In cases in which much attention is not paid to culture of correction, it can be deduced that the course book seems to promote a more tolerant view of errors (Jiangqiong & Tin, 2010).

Results

In this section we aim to present the practical phase of our study. We first indicate the external features and then, in the same vain, discuss the internal features.

External Features

Aims and objectives cited in the introduction of the students’ book. In both Prospect 1 and 2, the importance of foreign languages learning is emphasized as a means to the end of international communication and understanding. The other point mentioned in the introduction of both books is designing the national curriculum; this series intends to teach English to the students while heeding the most possible attention to the Islamic-Iranian culture and identity.

In Prospect 1, according to the introduction, the main purposes are to improve learners’ language ability and communicative competence as well as their cultural knowledge and to help learners meet communicative needs in facing real-life situations. Based on the information in the introduction, this series aims at shifting the mode of teaching English usage towards communicative use of English language in the real life. Moreover, the localization of communicative approach in this series is emphasized. Writers of this series claim that they have proposed a new approach towards teaching alphabet and literacy which is claimed to be more effective than the
previous series.

In Prospect 2, the pedagogical features and purposes are more discussed. It is indicated that lessons revolve around a theme and a function or a series of related functions. Like Prospect 1, the themes and functions are chosen according to the personal needs of students, whereas in Prospect 2 the extent of pedagogical situations and practices have been more developed aiming at enhancing the level of language ability in the students.

One important point indicated in Prospect 2 is the procedure of literacy in this series. Prospect 1 solely intends to enhance students’ knowledge in the level of alphabet and then in words, whereas Prospect 2 seeks a higher objective using diagraphs, blends, and phrases. According to the introduction of Prospect 2, the syllabi of Prospect 1 and 2 pave the way for Prospect 3. It can be estimated that Prospect 3 will probably shift the attention to sentence-oriented practices.

**Table of the content of the students’ book.** Table of content in the Prospect series has taken another name, Map of Prospect. This name suggests that it provides meticulous, detailed layout of the content of the whole book, and its lessons. In the Map of Prospect 1, the title of the lesson is the first part of the table. The next part is entitled “Function” implying the major theme of the lesson. The third part is “Sound and Letters” which shows the would-be-practiced letters in the lesson. The last part provided in the map is “Key Language” which contains the vocabularies and expressions put in every lesson.

![Figure 1. Sample map of Prospect 1.](image)

The Map of Prospect 2 is more detailed. It first shows the number of the lesson, and leaves the title of the lesson and its theme and functions to the next part entitled “Theme and Function”. The next part of the map indicates the would-be-practiced sound combinations, namely “Spelling and Pronunciation” part. The next part of the map is “Vocabulary”, encompassing the major class of vocabularies of the lesson. The last part is “Key Language” which includes the expressions of the lesson.
### Layout and structure of the students’ book.

*Prospect 1* contains different parts. It starts with a “welcome” part in which the students are assessed primarily in different ways, e.g., vocabulary knowledge, writing ability, the knowledge of numbers, alphabet, etc. This book contains eight lessons. The structure of all lessons is the same. Each unit starts with a conversation which is accompanied by an image.

The next part is a set of two speaking practices. Then a part named “Sounds and Letters” is provided which utilizes a conversation to teach and check pronunciation and spelling. This part is then followed by “Listening and Reading” part, the listening files of which are provided on a CD. The next part is “Speaking and Writing” which is divided into two sections: Group Work and Pair Work. The former has the form of asking questions and writing the answers down, while the latter takes the form of a conversation. This part intends to establish the theme or lesson on the learners’ minds. It should be noted that all parts of a lesson are of the same topic and address the same theme. One of the important parts of this book are “Review” parts which are provided after every two lessons and check students’ understanding of the lesson and contains some communicative, practical tasks. A photo dictionary is also provided as the last part of the book which enhances students’ visual learning and helps them learn concepts and vocabularies through images.

The layout and structure of *Prospect 2* are almost alike, but they differ in some parts. *Prospect 2* contains seven lessons. Like *Prospect 1*, every lesson in this book starts with a conversation. Then three speaking practices are provided. The next part is “Spelling and Pronunciation” which like “Sounds and Letters” part of *Prospect 1* aims at teaching and checking pronunciation and spelling. This part is then followed by “Listening and Writing” part. The next part is “Reading, Speaking, and Writing” part which must be done by students using some card samples available inside the book. The students should ask questions in pairs and write down the information on the cards. The last part of each unit is “Role Play” in which students in pairs play a role and then they change it. After every two units, there is a “Review” part. At the end of the book a “Photo Dictionary” is provided aiming at the same objective of *Prospect 1* photo dictionary. A major difference in *Prospect 2* is that it contains some parts which aim at amusing students. For example, Lesson 1 which is about nationality includes a crossword. As another example, at the end of Lesson 4 entitled “My Health”, a page is dedicated to introduce four major figures in the field of medicine by showing their portrait. In other chapters, there are some photos describing the concepts of the lessons.

#### Figure 2. Sample of map of Prospect 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Theme and Function</th>
<th>Spelling and Pronunciation</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Key Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>My City</strong></td>
<td>th</td>
<td>Places in a City</td>
<td><strong>Expressions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talking about a Place</td>
<td>ph</td>
<td>Geographical Directions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>que</td>
<td>Adjectives to Describe a City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where is Isfahan?  
It’s in the center of Iran.  
What’s Isfahan like?  
It’s a big city.  
It’s very famous for its ........  
Is there a metro system in the city?  
Yes, there is. No, there isn’t.  
Are there any museums?  
Yes, there are. No, there aren’t.  
Is it correct?
Internal Features

Task instructions in students’ book. The instructions in Prospect series are simple and straight. They are short, not providing students with much descriptive information noting the importance of the task. A task is considered to manipulate students’ minds when it promotes the task as a spiritual activity, but in Prospect series the tasks are goal-oriented and instrumental, leading the student to perform a pedagogic task. Another important point is that the task instructions do not contain any lead-in information about the topic or the theme of the task. The instructions are not detailed, but they briefly remind students to use a certain structure to fulfill the task. The examples below indicate different tasks of Prospect series:

![Conversation](image)

Listen to the teacher and her students talking about birthdays.

*Figure 3. Sample listening instruction (Derived from Prospect 1, Lesson 3, p. 16).*

![Listening and Reading](image)

Listen to the conversations and check (√) the correct items.

*Figure 4. Sample listening instruction (Derived from Prospect 1, Lesson 3, p. 20).*

![Conversation](image)

Listen to two students and their English teacher talking about their hobbies.

*Figure 5. Sample instruction (Derived from Prospect 2, Lesson 7, p. 54).*

![Listening and Writing](image)

Listen to the conversations and fill out the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversations</th>
<th>Hobbies</th>
<th>Free Time Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 6. Sample instruction (Derived from Prospect 2, Lesson 7, p. 57).*
As can be seen in the examples, the instructions are short, simple, and asking students to use a certain structure to perform the task.

A positive point in task instructions in *Prospect* series is that they promote peer-learning and -cooperation. In other words, they are associated with exchanging information between learners. The examples in the next page indicate this aspect of instructions in *Prospect* series:

*Figure 7.* Speaking and listening task (Derived from *Prospect 1*, Lesson 3, p. 17).

*Figure 8.* Speaking and listening task (Derived from *Prospect 2*, Lesson 7, p. 55).
Another important point is related to the role of “Review” units. As mentioned in the layout of the students’ book in external features, every two units in Prospect series is followed by a review part which assesses the students’ understanding. In particular, whenever “Review” or “Rewind” parts are put in the layout and structure of a book, the role of frequent review in effective learning is indicated (Jiangqiong & Tin, 2010).

The visual images of students’ book. As discussed in Criteria for evaluation, three types for images were introduced in this study: decorative, cognitive, and pedagogic. The examples below show each kind of images:

1. Decorative visual images:

![Decorative visual images](image-url)
As seen above, these pictures are purely decorative. They intend to beautify the book and amuse the learners. The pedagogic aspect of pictures like these is particularly low, if any can be perceived.

(2) Cognitive visual images:
Figure 14. From Prospect 1, Lesson 2 (My Classmate) (p. 10).

**Conversation**

Listen to the students talking in the school yard.

Ali: Who is that boy?
Parnam: That's Erfan. He's our new classmate.
Ali: Let's talk to him.
Parnam: Hi, Erfan. This is Ali.
Ali: Nice to meet you, Erfan.
Erfan: Nice to meet you, too.
Ali: Welcome to our school.
Erfan: Thank you.

Figure 14. From Prospect 1, Lesson 2 (My Classmate) (p. 10).

**Conversation**

Listen to Morteza and Phanindra talking about Isfahan.

Phanindra: Morteza, tell me about Isfahan. Where is it?
Morteza: Well, Isfahan is an old city in the center of Iran.
Phanindra: What's it like?
Morteza: It's a big and clean city.
Phanindra: Any famous buildings?
Morteza: Yes, many. Actually, Isfahan is very famous for its mosques and palaces.
Phanindra: Are there any museums?
Morteza: Yes, some great ones.
Phanindra: I should see the city soon.
Morteza: Sure, and we can have special food downtown.

Figure 15. From Prospect 2, Lesson 5 (My City) (p. 42).
Cognitive visual images are used in the opening parts of every lesson in Prospect 1 and 2, such as conversations. Looking at the pictures and being guided by the teachers through a preview process, the students can think about the visual images and consider their personal experiences or simulate such an experience if the situation is new to them. These pictures stimulate their personal engagement and are beneficial to lead the students to the theme or the topic of the lesson.

(3) Pedagogic visual images:

Figure 16. Welcome Part (Derived from Prospect 1, p. 2).

Figure 17. From Prospect 1, Lesson 3 (My Favorite Food) (p. 42).
The pedagogic visual images can be used for various purposes.

In the first example, the visual image is used in a task to check learners’ word knowledge. This example indicates the use of visual images as a part of tasks. The second picture is accompanied with a listening practice. It can be claimed that the aspect of cognitive use is more powerful here, but since the name of the objects is written below the pictures, it takes the form of pedagogic purpose. One of the obvious and frequently-used types of pedagogic visual images in Prospect series is in a section entitled Photo Dictionary. As mentioned in the External Features, in the appendix sections of Prospect 1 and 2, a photo dictionary is provided. It was also mentioned that in Prospect 2, some parts with the form of photo dictionary are also included in lessons. The third example indicates the use of pedagogic visual images.

**Instructions in teacher’s book.** Prospect 1 teacher’s book provides teachers with full information and suggestions for each part of the students’ book. Teachers first become familiar with the lesson objectives and functions of the lesson. The suggested time for every phase of the parts and tasks of the lesson is also given. Many extra pieces of information are provided for teachers. For example, teachers are asked to tell students the significance and purpose of every part of the lesson. They are then provided with all methods and techniques for teaching, from pre-task activities to optional activities which can be practiced to enhance the rate of understanding in students. At the final sections of every lesson teachers are provided with sample assignments to be given to the students. Besides, the last section of every lesson in teacher’s book leaves a blank page for teachers so that they can reflect on their teaching and write their ideas down about the lesson and teaching methodology. The following examples are samples from Prospect series.
Lesson Objectives

Functions
- Introducing others
- Asking someone’s name

Literacy Skills
- Identifying, saying, and writing e, b, p
- Spelling one’s name

Key Language
- **Words and Expressions**: boy, girl, man, woman, friend, classmate
- **Conversational Language Frames**:
  - Who’s that (boy)?
  - He’s my (friend) .............
  - This is my (friend) .............
  - Nice to meet you.
  - Nice to meet you, too.
  - Sorry, what’s your (last) name again?
  - Can you help me, please? I can’t spell .............

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**Figure 19.** Derived from Lesson 2 (My Classmate), *Prospect 1* teacher’s book (p. 30).

**Listening and Reading**

**Preparation (5 minutes)**

- Explain that the students are going to listen to two conversations in which people are greeting and introducing themselves. The students are supposed to listen carefully and (through reading) put a check mark (✓) in the box below the names (first and last) based on what they hear on the CD for each conversation.

- Ask them to use pencils rather than pens so that they can correct their answers if wrong.

**Listening (15 minutes)**

- Play the CD once and ask them to check the correct names.
- Play the CD again and ask the students to check their answers.
- Ask them to compare their answers in pairs.
- If needed, play the CD again and check the students’ answers.

**Correct Answers:**

Conversation 1: *Bita Ebadi*

Conversation 2: *Babak Pakzad*

**Figure 20.** Derived from *Prospect 1* teacher’s book (p. 35).
Comparing to Prospect 1, Prospect 2 teacher’s book provides teachers with more elaborated information. They are first provided with a table indicating the session snapshot in which they are given suggested schedule and can find out how many sessions they should allocate for each lesson and what parts to teach in every session. Then the materials to be taught are separated according to the session snapshots. At the beginning they are reminded of what mediums and materials to have, e.g., map of Iran. They are as well suggested that what kind of interaction be taken, e.g., teacher-students (T-S), students-students (S-S) in pairs/groups, and the time specified for each phase of their class. They are then led to how to do the warm-up for each phase and what techniques and activities to carry out for each part of the lesson. They are asked about their attitudes and issues on the lesson and practice at the last part of every lesson in teachers’ book. The following examples are selected from Prospect series.

**7. Your thoughts about Lesson 5**

7.1 Are you happy with your teaching in Lesson 5? How about your students?

7.2 Was this lesson useful at all? In what sense?

7.3 Are there any expressions or functions that were not included in this lesson, but you consider them necessary for your students when talking to a tourist?

7.4 Do you see any improvements in your students’ performance in this session compared with the early sessions?

*Figure 22. Teacher thoughts (Derived from Prospect 2 teacher’s book, Lesson 5 (My City), p. 92).*
### Sessions Snapshot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>To describe cities, introduce tourist attractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warm up</td>
<td>What's our city like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Focus on famous places in a city;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice (1)</td>
<td>Where is...? It's in the north.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice (2)</td>
<td>What's (\textit{name of a city}) like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice (3)</td>
<td>Is/Are there any/many ... in (\textit{name of a city})?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Literacy skills: spelling &amp; pronunciation;</td>
<td>Spelling activities, pronunciation: [ph], [th], [que], [wh];</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sight Word Reading;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening &amp; writing</td>
<td>Talk to Your Teacher: Which is correct?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language use</td>
<td>Integration of skills: reading, speaking, writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Role play; Class Project: My Favorite City</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 23. Derived from Prospect 2 teacher’s book, Lesson 5 (My City) (p. 79).*

Materials: White/blackboard, CD player, flash cards for famous cities in Iran; Map of Iran.

Interaction: Teacher–Students (T–S), Students (Ss) in pairs/groups

Time: 50 minutes (30 mins. for warm up and conversation; 20 mins. for practice sections)

*Figure 24. Extra information for teacher (Derived from Prospect 2 teacher’s book, Lesson 5 (My City), p. 80).*

### 3. Reading, Speaking, and Writing

3.1 Pair up the students and ask for volunteering pairs. Just in case there are no volunteers, choose 3 pairs yourself and ask them to come to your desk.
3.2 Student A in each pair will open their book to page 64 for Card A and Student B in each pair open their book to page 88 for card B.
3.3 Both students will read the information provided on their cards, and ask their partner about the missing information.
3.4 They can use structures like "Is there a ...?" "What’s it famous for?"
3.5 They continue asking till they can fill out the card. Then the pair will locate the city on the map.

*Figure 25. Derived from Prospect 2 teacher's book (p. 91).*
In cultures in which teachers play important roles in the classes, the number of teachers’ instructions is more than student instructions. One way to find this point out is to compare the number of pages dedicated to a lesson in both students’ and teacher’s books. The following table is an example provided in which the numbers indicate the number of pages of each lesson:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Student Book (SB)</th>
<th>Teacher Book (TB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prospect 1 (Lesson 2)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospect 2 (Lesson 5)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 1, in both books the number of pages of a lesson in students’ book is less than the corresponding lesson in the teacher’s book. Thus, it can be induced that teacher’s instruction is highly paid attention and significant and teachers’ role in the process of learning and teaching is active and pivotal.

**Discussion**

Going through *Prospect 1* and 2, it is easily notable that these course books share some identical features and characteristics in terms of their cultures of learning and teaching. To point out a few, gender stereotyping is a common feature of this series. Originating from the religious bases, this feature is also observed in many course books in Iran. Another characteristic of the *Prospect* series is its overemphasis on the national identity. Localization is a firm characteristic as few Iranian figures or people are depicted in pictures and conversations.

From the perspective of Feuerstein’s theory of mediation (cited in Williams & Burden, 2004, p. 69), the instructions in the students’ book obviously lack the main features of mediation. The features of mediation theory, e.g., significance, value beyond here and now, and shared intention are not indicated in the students’ book at all, but the teachers are supposed to observe some of these features as the instructions in the teachers’ book imply them to do so. The teachers are supposed to tell students the significance and value of every part and task of the book and tell them the would-be-met intention and purpose of each activity. The feature of sharing, on the other hand, is observed in tasks in which students are asked to fulfill a task exchanging information and cooperating. Besides, awareness of change as one of the key features of mediation theory needs to be practiced by some tasks so that students can recognize their progress in English language. Such features can be embedded in communicative tasks in which students are asked to focus on the language use.

Regarding the visual images, as extensively discussed, images are used for a variety of purposes in *Prospect* series. Some images were decoratively-used and aimed to beautify the book and amuse the learners while some other kinds of images observed were cognitive aiming at stimulating the personal feelings and emotions of the students. The latter could be a good medium for teachers to perform preview phase of teaching and engage students in the process of training. Other types of images used in *Prospect* series were pedagogic. These images were mostly used in activities of the books.

Although the introduction of *Prospect* series indicated that classrooms in which *Prospect* series is practiced must be student-centered, the highly elaborated instructions in teacher’s books compared with the students’ book proved that the teachers play a very active role in classrooms and the classes are not student-centered as expected. Regarding the correction culture, the teachers were asked to have the least possible correcting orientation since it is perceived that correction interferes with the communication ability of the learners.
Comparing Prospect series with the three books compared in Jiangqiong and Tin (2010), we can conclude that Prospect series has the most possible similarity with “English” among all three course books. However, there are some differences.

In both Prospect and English, students were not provided with much descriptive instructions; that is, the instructions were brief requiring students to use certain structure to fulfill the task. Another similarity is that both course books were used for foreign language teaching. Besides, the images of both books indicate that learning environment represented in both course books is formal. In addition, the pedagogic uses as well as cognitive and decorative use of images were evident in both books, in Prospect series. Furthermore, both Prospect and English provided teachers with elaborated instructions for the activities to use them in the classrooms. The following table illustrates and compares the features of Prospect series and the three other books used in Jiangqiong and Tin (2010).

Table 2
Comparing Prospect With the Three Books Used in Jiangqiong and Tin (2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Prospect</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Get Together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of students</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the book</td>
<td>Foreign language teaching</td>
<td>Foreign language teaching</td>
<td>First (Chinese) language teaching</td>
<td>Teaching English as a second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practiced skills</td>
<td>Speaking, listening, writing, reading</td>
<td>Speaking and listening</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions in SB</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses if images</td>
<td>Pedagogic, cognitive, decorative</td>
<td>Pedagogic</td>
<td>Decorative</td>
<td>Pedagogic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions in TB</td>
<td>Fully elaborated</td>
<td>Fully elaborated</td>
<td>Fully elaborated</td>
<td>Simple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SB = Students’ Book; TB = Teachers’ Book.

Conclusion

From an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 2009) several factors might play a pivotal role in the construction of the ecosystem of the language learning such as classroom atmosphere, interaction among learners, and environmental factors. However, the role of materials developed for language learning within this ecology seems rather neglected. Materials per se can be the representation of the cultures of learning as well as the agents of the construction of such cultures. Thus, a meticulous analysis of the underlying culture of learning represented in the materials and course books developed for learning languages can contribute to the familiarity of the language teachers with the particularities of the different context of learning. Therefore, they can consider these particularities of learning culture in their practice. Following this orientation, the researchers in this study analyzed the culture of learning and teaching represented in the secondary school Iranian English language course books to explore the particularities of the features defining the complexity of factors shaping the culture of learning in Iran. It is hoped that the findings of this study can provide English language teachers with adequate awareness regarding the culture of learning and teaching to be practiced, modified, or reflected upon in their classroom.

References


