Food Culture in ELT Coursebooks: A Neglected Dimension[*]

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Abstract

This study provides a comprehensive examination of how food culture is employed in two English as a Foreign Language coursebook series *Headway* and *Pioneer*. Through a comparative analysis of these books this research focuses on the Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, and Intermediate levels, to explore how food culture is represented in these coursebooks and whether food culture representation changed from the 1990s until the 2010s. The selection criteria of these coursebooks is based on the assumption that these books are used widely and globally, and they play a critical role in shaping language learner exposure to items of food culture. Adapting content analysis, these books are examined regarding seven distinct aspects of food culture to show the representation and change in a significant and meaningful way. The findings reveal that while both series incorporate elements of food culture, the *Pioneer* series notably integrate multicultural dimensions and place greater emphasis on promoting healthier lifestyles, whereas in the *Headway* series there is not a considerable emphasis on health concern. This study highlights the evolving representation of food culture in EFL materials, reflecting broader shifts in societal values towards diversity and health consciousness. Given the widespread use of these coursebooks, the results underscore the importance of embedding diverse, inclusive, and health-promoting content in language learning resources to better align with modern educational and social priorities.

Keywords: coursebooks, EFL, food culture, health consciousness, multicultural aspects

1. Introduction

Incorporating culture into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms is increasingly essential upon recognizing its beneficial impacts on language learners. Understanding a foreign language's culture is deemed crucial, as culture significantly shapes language acquisition. In the era of globalization, cultural boundaries are more fluid, prompting EFL

coursebooks to serve as primary sources for exposing learners to different cultures while teaching the target language. Cultural barriers are more brittle in today's globalised environment, emphasising the importance of EFL coursebooks as the main means of transferring cultural knowledge in addition to language teaching. That this study is also supporting and confirming the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 12 (Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns) is significant because the contents of the coursebooks were designed according to concerns of promotion of good health, avoidance of unhealthy food and drinks, and development of a healthier environment.

From the 1990s to the first quarter of the 2000s, people's interest in and concerns about health, healthy food, beverages, and lifestyle increased noticeably. Consequently, it is thought that a book published in the 2000s would give more emphasis to such topics and aim to inoculate the right ideas, especially in young people who are impressionable. Thus, considering the aim of the study, the research questions given below are set:

1) In what ways is food culture represented in EFL coursebooks?
2) What differences can be observed in how food culture of the target language is depicted in publications from the 1990s compared to those from the 2010s?

2. Literature Review
2.1. Culture and Cultural Reflections in EFL

Culture encompasses the collective beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts that characterize a particular group or society. It spans various aspects including language, religion, social norms, artistic expressions, and technologies. While often transmitted across generations, culture is also subject to change and can be influenced by interactions with other cultures. Research indicates that culture significantly shapes individuals' thoughts, behaviours, and social interactions (Triandis, 1995; Hofstede, 2001). Moreover, culture can impact both physical and mental well-being (Kirmayer et al., 2007; Marsella, 2010). As individuals come together to form a community, a distinct culture emerges, reflecting the group's specific norms and ultimately shaping its identity. Immersion in a culture fosters a unique perspective on the world, allowing individuals to influence other societies with their thoughts. Damen (1987) states that culture is "learned and shared human patterns or models for living; day-to-day living patterns. These patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction. Culture is mankind's primary adaptive mechanism" (p. 367). People who

can understand people from different cultures are better able to raise awareness and comprehend the multitude of cultures and people that exist in the world.

Regarding the fact that culture is inherently intertwined with language, incorporating culture into language teaching has emerged as a pivotal component of effective language instruction as it enriches students' communicative abilities and cultivates their awareness of diverse cultures. Culture serves as a contextual backdrop for language usage, enabling learners to grasp and utilize language effectively in practical scenarios. The relationship between language and culture is reciprocal, with language recognized as a fundamental aspect of any culture (Brooks, 1964). It is widely acknowledged that without proper emphasis on cultural aspects, language learners may struggle to comprehend language use in context fully. Hence, general consensus is that culture must be integrated into the process of teaching a foreign language (FL) and several researchers assert its crucial role in conveying cultural meanings associated with the target language or second language (L2) (Rodríguez & Espinar, 2015; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015). As Gerfanova et al. (2018) suggest, culture encompasses "social norms, values, and beliefs that may affect many issues of FL use, teaching and learning" (p. 2), which facilitates the adoption and comprehension process of learners' language acquisition. Furthermore, cultural competence equips EFL learners to engage in cross-cultural interactions sensitively and respectfully, fostering meaningful communication and breaking down barriers. Given that culture largely mirrors the target language, they cannot be treated as distinct entities, necessitating their integration when teaching the language. As Mao (2009) indicates, integrating cultural elements into EFL classrooms enhances understanding of the target language and facilitates cross-cultural connections in authentic settings. Acknowledging the role that culture plays in EFL teaching allows teachers to create a vibrant, welcoming classroom environment that prepares students for cross-cultural communication in today's interconnected world. Instead of concentrating only on teaching culture, language teaching aims to use culture as an instrument to create a smooth and joyful learning environment that is enhanced by cultural understanding. Students naturally become immersed in the culture when language instruction takes place in a cultural setting. As a result, culture continues to be crucial to language teaching and acquisition and it is almost impossible to become proficient in a foreign language without also being aware of the culture that surrounds it, because culture plays a big role in language.

2.2. Coursebooks in EFL

In the realm of EFL education, traditional coursebooks have long served as primary instructional tools alongside teaching materials encompassing any resources utilized to facilitate language learning within the classroom setting. Brown (1995) defines materials as

systematic descriptions of techniques and exercises employed in teaching and adds that teaching materials serve as aids for instructors during the foreign language learning process. According to Nunan (1988), materials not only enrich learning experiences but also constitute an integral aspect of the curriculum, offering tangible examples for classroom application, supporting the curriculum, and assisting teachers in their instructional endeavours. Among these materials, Crookes (2013) claims, EFL materials transmit attitudes and values in addition to linguistic skills. Particularly coursebooks stand out as valuable in English language instruction, as they are specifically designed to furnish both students and teachers with the necessary content and resources for effective learning and teaching. Therefore, coursebooks are instrumental in shaping the learning environment and play a critical role in language education.

Tomlinson (2012) defines coursebook as something which "provides the core materials for a language-learning course. It aims to provide as much as possible in one book and is designed so that it could serve as the only book which the learners necessarily use during a course" (p. xi). Coursebooks provide a structured advancement of language abilities, covering reading, writing, listening, and speaking, to facilitate the comprehensive enhancement of learners' communicative skills. The primary objective of EFL coursebooks is to guide learners in utilizing the target language effectively and functionally to convey messages during communication. By incorporating a variety of activities and tasks aimed at practicing language skills and grammar structures, coursebooks also provide opportunities to encounter real-life situations that reflect the speech norms of native speakers (Fasih & Narcycombes, 2011). Through the utilization of coursebooks in the classroom setting, students are consistently immersed in the target language. Brown (2007) defines language teaching as "guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the conditions for learning" (p. 7). Therefore, coursebooks, serving as the primary instructional tool for teachers, play a significant role in facilitating the language acquisition process and guide learners in effectively and functionally utilizing the target language to convey messages during communication.

While historically valued for their role in facilitating language acquisition, contemporary discourse highlights the fundamental function of coursebooks in both imparting language skills and exposing students to the cultural nuances inherent in the target language. Foreign language teaching is commonly considered as conveying the main aspects of the language which necessitates teaching linguistic skills. It also requires teaching the culture of the target language as well because the foundational aspect of language acquisition lies in its cultural context. Chlopek (2008) states that comprehending the cultural context of a language is essential for achieving proficiency in language acquisition. In the same vein, McGregor (2007) suggests that different types of written communication hold significance when contextualized

within their cultural milieu, serving as representations of societal customs and beliefs. Particularly, the intersection of language and culture in coursebooks, epitomized by elements such as food culture, social culture, clothing culture, family culture, customs, serves as a potent means for students to deepen their understanding of the language they are learning. Due to the close relationship between language instruction and culture, coursebooks selected by teachers which are supposed to cover every facet of the language essential for students to become proficient act as the main tools for raising students' understanding of culture through their content. This recognition of coursebooks as outlets for cultural immersion underscores their relevance in fostering a more nuanced and authentic language acquisition experience.

2.3. Food and Food Culture in EFL

Exploring the culture of a language often involves delving into its fundamental necessities, such as food, which can unveil various societal habits. Culture extends beyond oral and written traditions like literature, encompassing elements like cuisine, clothing, rituals, ethics, morals, and customs, which offer valuable insights into the culture associated with the language. To focus learners' attention on relatable topics and to highlight cultural diversity, food culture can serve as a starting point, facilitating comparisons of cultural changes over time. Food is a basic and complex component of human existence, consisting of a wide range of edible materials that are ingested for pleasure, sustenance, and nutrition. Food has important cultural, social, and psychological value in human cultures in addition to its physiological role of delivering energy and necessary nutrients (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). Appreciating human behaviour, social interactions and the intricate interactions between people and their environment all depend on an understanding of the complicated nature of food (Sutton, 2010). Kittler et al. (2017) indicate that,

> The choice of which foods to ingest is further complicated by another psychological concept regarding eating—the incorporation of food. This means that consumption is not just the conversion of food into nutrients in the human body, but also includes gaining the food's physical properties as well—hence the phrase "You are what you eat.". (p. 2)

Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate food culture, customs, and traditions into classroom instruction via coursebooks to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the society where the language is spoken.

Each culture's culinary customs reflect its past, present, and core beliefs. Jacobs, Joyce and Subramaniam (2018) suggest that "research on the depiction of food in learning materials may be timely, as food has drawn increased attention for its roles in many aspects of today's world, including health, environmental protection, and relations between humans and other

animals" (pp. 2-3).By including food-related topics into EFL lessons, teachers can give their students real-world situations in which to practise their language abilities and develop understanding of various cultural perspectives and experiences.

Food culture serves as a mirror reflecting the cultural nuances of the target language. It provides a lens through which the impacts of industrialization, digitalization, and consumerism on the target language's culture can be scrutinized. Additionally, the multicultural influences stemming from the UK's colonial history, its global presence, and the US's irrefutable cultural hegemony are evident in food culture, offering insights into the effects of multiculturalism both domestically and internationally.

Integrating food culture into language teaching can improve students' comprehension of culture and their enthusiasm for learning the language. Gunkel (2016) indicates that "examining foodways requires us to understand the complex ways in which social norms, cultural meaning, historical contexts, and economic realities underlie food habits" (p. 245). According to Kittler, Nelms and Sucher (2017), "an essential symbolic function of food is cultural identity. What one eats defines who one is, culturally speaking, and, conversely, who one is not" (p. 4). Therefore, considering food's essential role in sustaining life and its multifaceted significance encompassing cultural, economic, social, and psychological dimensions, its inclusion in educational materials is indispensable. Wang, Huang & Hsu (2015) suggest that integrating cultural content into language instruction boosts students' motivation to learn English and enhances their proficiency in applying the language in authentic contexts by establishing a connection between their native language (L1) and second language (L2). Cognard-Black and Goldthwaite (2008) suggest on teaching food:

> To teach food as a written art form is to teach a part of what it means to be human. Through the record of food traditions, culture and history are transmitted as well as transformed - practices of sharing, preparing, and eating recipes both create and convey human interactions. Moreover, like humanity, food is both elastic and contradictory. It symbolizes birth, rebirth, and death. It represents the natural as well as the artificial. It can mean both health and poison, war and peace, surfeit and hunger, art and commodity. In other words, food texts are multifaceted in terms of their content, and yet they're also complex in terms of genre, tone, and approach - thereby mirroring the intricacies of writers and reader. (p. 422)

Nonetheless, there are limitations in incorporating food culture into EFL coursebooks as some researchers suggest and numerous EFL coursebooks lack thorough and precise depictions of food culture, often relying on stereotypical representations, particularly centred around British and American cultures (Alshenqeeti, 2019; Anita, 2019; Böcü & Razi, 2016; Syahri & Susanti, 2016; Thumvichit, 2018; Waharak, 2015). This emphasises the significance of ensuring that EFL coursebook content is authentic and culturally sensitive to avoid

perpetuating stereotypes and to foster a more accurate appreciation of the culture. Additionally, there is a growing recognition of the need to offer a diverse array of content, including food culture, from various cultures in EFL instruction (Böcü & Razi, 2016). This ensures a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of different cultures beyond those traditionally featured in coursebooks. Since food items featured in coursebooks help students understand other cultures when studying a foreign language, food and language should be linked together as components of culture to facilitate language acquisition.

In light of these considerations, this study seeks to address a notable gap in scholarly literature by investigating the portrayal of food culture within EFL coursebooks. By scrutinizing two distinct series of coursebooks in three levels, - *Headway* and *Pioneer*, to be precise - the research endeavours to elucidate the manner in which food culture is incorporated and represented within these instructional materials. Through this inquiry, the study aims to shed light on the pedagogical implications of leveraging food culture as a conduit for cultural and linguistic learning within the EFL classroom. Furthermore, the study seeks to raise awareness among language teachers regarding the integration of food culture into classroom instruction and promote appreciation for diverse cultural customs and traditions. To achieve these objectives, the study involves a detailed analysis of six books across three proficiency levels from the two coursebook sets, scrutinizing words, texts, pictures, and exercises to determine the inclusion of food culture elements and customs/traditions from both British culture and other cultures.

3. Methods

Aiming to investigate how food culture is portrayed in EFL coursebooks and compare the variations in two publications from the 1990s and 2010s about the target language's food culture, the study aims to examine the integration of food culture content in EFL coursebooks by examining two different publications that were published in different decades.

The study adopts a case study approach, utilizing qualitative methods with content analysis techniques to compare and examine differences in the portrayal of food culture in the target language from the 1990s to the 2010s. Qualitative research involves various philosophical assumptions, inquiry strategies, and data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods (Creswell, 2009). Content analysis, as a qualitative research method, is employed in this study due to its inherent connection with qualitative analysis methods. Two distinct publications from different decades are analysed to explore and contrast representations of food culture in EFL coursebooks. Qualitative research allows for data collection from diverse sources and in various forms, including interviews, observation, or content analysis of existing

materials (Pardede, 2018). Content analysis is utilized to uncover cultural patterns and beliefs, describe communication themes and trends, and analyse attitudinal and behavioural responses (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 2004; Polit & Hungler, 1991; Weber, 1985). Using content analysis approach, data is gathered by comparing two publications across three different proficiency levels, totalling six coursebooks. The analysis focuses on elements pertaining to food culture and examines how they have evolved over the decades within EFL coursebooks.

In the study, the literature review undergoes thorough content analysis and interpretation, involving comprehensive data analysis. This method entails a holistic examination of samples drawn from relevant studies and articles. The researchers provide objective commentary on the findings, supported by transparently documented notes. Furthermore, previous research studies are utilized as supplementary resources, contributing to the overall framework.

The primary emphasis of the study involves analysing six coursebooks spanning three proficiency levels, complemented by the utilization of articles, books, journals, publications, and online sources as secondary materials. The selected coursebooks include three levels from the *Headway* series - Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, and Intermediate - and three levels from the *Pioneer* series - Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, and Intermediate. The objective is to investigate and evaluate the portrayal of food culture, traditions, and customs related to food across these coursebooks.

During the analysis of data extracted from the chosen coursebooks, a table featuring five columns is utilized, categorizing identified items under the headings Food, Drink, Alcoholic Beverages, Meals, and International/Foreign Food & Drink. Upon completion of the tables for each of the six books, main tables are highlighted under seven headings: 'Eating Out/In a restaurant/Café', 'Cooking at Home', 'Alcoholic Beverages/Pubs/Bars', 'International Food Culture', 'British Food Culture & British Customs', 'Fast Food', and 'Smoking/Cigarettes'. The items are then categorized accordingly to establish connections between them.

4. Findings

In this section, the analysis focuses on examining how the coursebooks incorporate images, reading texts, and exercises related to food culture, categorizing the findings into seven subcategories. The first subcategory assesses the portrayal and frequency of dining out and visiting restaurants or cafes within the books. The second subcategory evaluates depictions of eating and cooking habits at home. The third subcategory examines the inclusion of alcoholic

beverages and venues where alcohol is consumed. In the fourth subcategory, the representation of international dishes, locations, and customs is explored. The fifth subcategory highlights references to British cuisine and traditions. The sixth subcategory evaluates the depiction of fast food within the books. Additionally, the seventh subcategory identifies instances within the reading texts and units where smoking and tobacco are mentioned. Finally, the last subcategory lists individual food culture-related items not fitting into the previously mentioned categories. Each subcategory features six tables, one for each coursebook, except for the seventh subcategory, which focuses solely on smoking and cigarettes. Tables are divided into six sections to facilitate a clear comparison of how each book addresses the topics. Some items may appear in multiple categories due to their varied contextual relevance.

'Eating Out/In a Restaurant/Café' is mentioned a total of 5 times in *Headway Elementary Student's Book*, 7 times overall in *Headway Pre-Intermediate Student's Book*, and once in *Headway Intermediate Student's Book*. In *Pioneer Elementary Student's Book*, it is presented 4 times, twice in *Pioneer Pre-Intermediate Student's Book*, and twice in *Pioneer Intermediate Student's Book*, across all categories.

The first subcategory lists statements and food-related items categorized under themes such as eating out, visiting a restaurant, or going to a café. Each of the six books in this category is analysed and examined within these tables to assess how dining out is depicted in the source material. While the references vary between books, it can be noted that the *Headway* series portrays dining out more frequently than the *Pioneer* series.

For the second subcategory, 'Cooking at Home', cooking at home or preparing meals at home is mentioned 4 times in *Headway Elementary SB*, cooking/preparing food at home is mentioned once alongside with mentioning giving a party once and recipes twice in *Headway Pre-Intermediate SB*, and once in *Headway Intermediate SB* while in *Pioneer Elementary SB*, cooking at home is observed 6 times, twice in *Pioneer Pre-Intermediate SB*, and once in *Pioneer Intermediate SB* as "having a barbecue".

The second subcategory, titled 'Cooking/Preparing Food at Home', examines how this theme is represented in the two series across six tables. In the *Headway* series, cooking at home is depicted as a communal activity, with the kitchen portrayed as a central meeting place for British families in the 1990s. The series highlights traditions such as baking and cooking together, sharing recipes, and even introduces vegetarianism as a lifestyle, emphasising the importance of meal preparation in maintaining it. In contrast, the *Pioneer* series mentions cooking at home less frequently, typically portraying it as a quick, practical activity like making

sandwiches or hosting barbecue parties. It also suggests a shift in lifestyle by illustrating how people in the 2010s often cook during weekdays but opt for convenience, such as ordering food, on weekends. This reflects a broader cultural change, where the communal and time-intensive cooking traditions of the past have given way to quicker, more flexible solutions to accommodate modern, fast-paced lives.

'Alcoholic Beverages/Pubs/Bars' is mentioned frequently with 10 times of mentioning wine as an alcoholic beverage and going to bars is mentioned 4 times in *Headway Elementary SB*, once in *Headway Pre-Intermediate SB*, and wine as an alcoholic beverage is also mentioned 3 times in *Headway Intermediate SB*, whereas in *Pioneer Elementary SB* wine is seen once in a picture, a glass of beer is observed in *Pioneer Pre-Intermediate SB*, and never mentioned or observed in *Pioneer Intermediate SB*.

The tables in the third subcategory highlight how attitudes toward alcoholic beverages have evolved over the years. In the 1990s, it was more common for people to visit pubs for drinks, as reflected in the *Headway* series. By contrast, in the 2010s, the *Pioneer* series depicts fewer individuals consuming alcoholic beverages. While the *Headway* series does include references to adopting a healthy lifestyle, alcohol consumption remains portrayed as a regular part of daily life during that time.

The fourth subcategory 'International Food Culture' is examined throughout the series as following: 6 times in *Headway Elementary SB*, 5 times in *Headway Pre-Intermediate SB*, and 15 times in total in *Headway Intermediate SB*. In the other set of series, in *Pioneer Elementary SB* food from other cultures is mentioned 19 times, 13 times in *Pioneer Pre-Intermediate SB*, and twice in *Pioneer Intermediate SB*.

The *Pioneer* series makes fewer references to international food compared to the *Headway* series, as dishes like pizza, hamburgers, spaghetti, and sushi are presented as commonplace and integrated into everyday diets. Sushi, in particular, is portrayed as so ordinary that people express frustration over the lack of quality sushi restaurants in their area. Additionally, the *Pioneer* series includes references to the dining customs of other cultures, such as a detailed passage on Chinese culinary traditions, which explains proper etiquette and behaviour during meals.

'British Food Culture & British Customs' are represented 8 times in *Headway Elementary SB*, 4 times in *Headway Pre-Intermediate SB*, 8 times in *Headway Intermediate SB* while it is observed once in *Pioneer Elementary SB* and *Pioneer Pre-Intermediate SB*, and thrice in *Pioneer Intermediate SB*.

The *Headway* series highlights British culinary traditions, including references to British and English food, the iconic British breakfast, and Easter customs like Easter eggs. While discussing breakfast, the series notes that the traditional British breakfast of sausages, bacon, eggs, tomatoes, and mushrooms had largely shifted by the 1990s to simpler options like cereal with milk and sugar or toast with marmalade, jam, or honey, signalling a change in eating habits. The series also features a recipe for Shepherd's Pie, a classic British dish, and describes fish and chips as a "typical" meal. Additionally, tea culture is emphasized, with mentions of scones, teacakes, and hot cross buns, which are iconic elements of British food heritage. The custom of leaving milk bottles at front doors for the milkman is also noted. In contrast, the *Pioneer* series offers limited insights into traditional British food and customs, with barbecues and barbecue parties being the only activity that could be considered a reflection of traditional British culinary practices.

The subcategory 'Fast Food' is mentioned 18 times in *Headway Elementary SB*; 8 times of mentioning hamburger, four times of mentioning ice-cream, 3 times of pizza and other items. In *Headway Pre-Intermediate SB*, fast food items are mentioned 12 times, and twice in *Headway Intermediate SB* whereas in *Pioneer Elementary SB*, related items are mentioned 14 times, 5 times in *Pioneer Pre-Intermediate SB*, and 7 times in *Pioneer Intermediate SB*.

In the *Headway* series, hamburgers are the most frequently mentioned fast-food item, followed by ice cream. While pizza is also noted, fizzy drinks like Coca-Cola are referenced more prominently than pizza in the *Headway Pre-Intermediate Student's Book*. Coca-Cola is specifically mentioned in a reading passage, giving the impression of brand advertisement. Common fast-food items across both series include ice cream, hamburgers, snacks, pizza, chips/crisps, chocolate, and popcorn. However, the *Pioneer* series introduces strawberry milkshakes and marshmallows as fast-food items, which are not mentioned in the *Headway* series.

The final subcategory, 'Smoking/Cigarettes' is cited in multiple contexts throughout the *Headway* series, functioning as a reference in grammar and vocabulary lessons, in addition to speaking, writing, and reading activities. Conversely, in the *Pioneer* series, this subcategory is neither observed nor referenced in any context.

The incorporation of smoking-related content within educational texts fulfils multiple objectives, ranging from enlightening students about the health risks associated with smoking to shaping cultural attitudes and behaviours. This synthesis examines the various facets of smoking education in textbooks and its cultural ramifications. Smoking-related content has been integrated into a variety of subjects, including biology, social science, chemistry, and geography, in Danish educational materials targeted at students aged 16 to 19. These

publications are part of a broader initiative aimed at influencing the attitudes and behaviours of young individuals towards smoking (Trangbek, 2000). The cultural framing of messages regarding smoking cessation significantly influences their efficacy. For instance, culturally tailored messages directed at low-income African American smokers have demonstrated a greater ability to enhance personal risk perceptions and readiness to quit smoking when compared to standard messages (Webb et al., 2010). The cultural positioning of smoking has transformed over time, with historical contexts affecting its perception. For example, smoking was historically regarded as a symbol of modernity and sophistication in Europe and China, accompanied by various rituals and paraphernalia associated with its use.

5. Discussion

In the realm of foreign language education, fostering intercultural understanding and communication is paramount in our increasingly interconnected world. EFL coursebooks play a key role in shaping students' perceptions of diverse cultures, particularly in terms of their culinary traditions, serving as a gateway to intercultural exchange. Food, beyond its mere sustenance, holds profound cultural significance, reflecting the essence of a society's identity. Thus, comprehending how food culture is depicted in EFL coursebooks is crucial for developing an objective perspective on cultural representations within a target language. This study which aims to investigate the reflections of food culture, customs/traditions in the EFL coursebooks analyses the representation of food culture and culinary customs/traditions in two sets of coursebooks and compares them to identify similarities, differences, and potential changes in food habits over time. Additionally, the research investigates any international references to food items and cultural practices within the coursebooks. In this study, six distinct books - *Headway Elementary Student's Book*, *Headway Pre-Intermediate Student's Book*, *Headway Intermediate Student's Book*, *Pioneer Elementary Student's Book*, *Pioneer Pre-Intermediate Student's Book*, and *Pioneer Intermediate Student's Book* - are examined across seven subcategories to gain insight into the portrayal of food over different decades. This analysis encompasses not only food-related items, but also events, food traditions, customs, presentation methods, eating practices, and ingredient usage.

Both the *Headway* and *Pioneer* series of coursebooks frequently incorporate references to food, particularly emphasizing its role as a teaching tool in language instruction, notably in the *Headway* series. Not only do these books feature food items from the target language's culture, especially British culture, but they also showcase elements from other nationalities' culinary traditions. These concepts are seamlessly integrated into the lessons' content, providing students with exposure to diverse cultural aspects. Similarly, the *Pioneer* series utilizes food items as a means to introduce language concepts to learners. However, in this series, international food items are predominantly portrayed as integral components of the

target language's culinary culture. Overall, both sets of coursebooks employ food items as integral elements of the teaching process throughout the entirety of the books.

The analysis compares the differences between the 1990s and the 2010s as depicted in the coursebooks. Firstly, coursebooks from the 1990s reflect the societal lifestyle of that era, where individuals commonly cooked at home and dined in the kitchen. Going to a restaurant or café was perceived as a social activity, particularly for socializing with friends, especially after work or during busy times when cooking at home was not feasible. Contrasting these eating habits with those depicted in the *Headway* series from the 2010s, where individuals are portrayed as frequently eating in front of the TV, illustrates the distinct eating habits prevalent in the 1990s. Conversely, in the *Pioneer* series from the 2010s, the findings suggest that dining out is a prevalent aspect of people's lifestyles, with individuals either dining out or ordering food from restaurants.

Based on the findings derived from analysing the two sets of coursebooks, it is evident that the selected materials effectively showcase both food-related items and culinary customs/traditions of the target language, while also illustrating changes over time. In addition to highlighting British culture within the units, the coursebooks also promote the appreciation of diverse cultures, fostering students' intercultural awareness within the classroom setting.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that while both sets of coursebooks incorporate elements of food culture, there are noticeable changes in the depicted locations and culinary habits over time. Both sets utilize culinary customs to familiarize students with the culture of the target language, in addition to teaching the language itself. Overall, the variations between the two sets of coursebooks demonstrate content changes over the span of three decades. These differences contribute to students' appreciation of diverse cultures and foster multicultural awareness. As a result, by observing common objects associated with the food culture of the target language, students will have more opportunities to improve their foreign language proficiency.

In addition to the aim of promoting language awareness and developing language skills, the creation and selection of issues and items in the content of the coursebooks is based on the concerns of creating contextually appropriate books, and promoting healthier environment, healthier people, healthier food and drinks for the learners of whom the great majority are thought to be children and teenagers who are at very impressionable and mislead.

By incorporating familiar elements of food culture from the target language, students are given more opportunities to enhance their foreign language skills. Encountering and using

items from the coursebooks in their daily lives enables quicker and more effective learning. Unlike themes such as traveling to distant places, extreme sports, historical events, or celebrity lifestyles—which may not resonate with students—food-related texts and topics are universal and directly relevant. Viewing food as a cultural artifact allows students to explore culinary practices, social norms, and the symbolic meanings of different cuisines, fostering culturally responsive teaching. This approach promotes intercultural competence, encouraging students to appreciate and respect cultural diversity. It also provides a practical connection to real-world themes, enhancing communication skills and offering a deeper understanding of the global community they are part of. Additionally, food-based activities and discussions create an engaging, interactive learning environment, making language learning memorable and motivating students through the inclusion of relatable and familiar elements of food culture.

Disclosures

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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