

## CULTURAL REPRESENTATION AND PRAGMATIC AWARENESS IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS USED IN UZBEKISTAN

**Fozilova Madina Shokirovna**

**Abstract:** This paper analyses the representation of culture and the development of pragmatic awareness in English language textbooks used in Uzbekistan. As English has become a global language, teaching it effectively requires attention not only to linguistic competence but also to sociocultural and pragmatic competence. The study examines how Uzbek educational materials integrate intercultural elements and pragmatic aspects such as politeness, speech acts, and cultural norms of communication. The analysis reveals that while textbooks have improved in cultural inclusivity, they often present limited or idealized images of foreign cultures and insufficiently foster students' awareness of pragmatic nuances in real-life communication. The paper concludes with recommendations for enhancing cultural balance and pragmatic depth in future editions of English textbooks.

**Keywords:** cultural representation, pragmatic awareness, English textbooks, intercultural competence, Uzbekistan

**Introduction.** The teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Uzbekistan has undergone significant reform in recent years, with the Ministry of Preschool and School Education introducing new textbooks aligned with international standards. However, beyond grammar and vocabulary, language education must equip learners with intercultural communicative competence — the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultural boundaries. Cultural representation in textbooks thus plays a vital role in shaping learners' perceptions of the English-speaking world and their own cultural identity. Pragmatic awareness, meanwhile, is crucial for understanding how meaning is constructed in context — for instance, through politeness strategies, speech acts (requests, apologies, refusals), and contextual cues.

Cultural content in Uzbek English textbooks can generally be divided into three categories: (1) home culture (Uzbek culture), (2) target culture (English-speaking countries), and (3) international culture. While recent editions such as *Fly High* and *Kid's English* have made efforts to include local names, traditions, and holidays, the balance still leans toward Western-centric content.

Many units introduce cultural icons like London, the Queen, Thanksgiving, or Hollywood, but less often explore global diversity or non-Western contexts. This can result in a limited worldview where English-speaking cultures are idealized, and learners perceive them as superior models. On the positive side, Uzbek culture is represented in contexts like Navruz celebrations, national dishes, or family values, fostering cultural pride and identity. However, these are usually presented superficially without encouraging critical reflection or intercultural comparison. A key challenge is the lack of “cultural dialogues” — sections that invite learners to analyze similarities and differences between Uzbek and English-speaking societies. According to Kramsch (1998), intercultural education should not merely expose students to cultural facts but engage them in interpreting and negotiating meaning between cultures. Uzbek textbooks, however, still tend to treat culture as factual information rather than a dynamic and dialogic process.

### Representation of Cultural Types in English Textbooks Used in Uzbekistan

**Table 1**

Textbook Title	Home Culture (Uzbek)	Target Culture (UK/USA)	International Culture	Type of Cultural Representation	Remarks
<i>Kid's English (Grades 1–</i>	25% (Navruz, family,	60% (London, Queen,	15% (general global topics)	Dominant target culture	Strong visual materials, limited cultural

4)	national food)	Christmas)			comparison
<i>Fly High</i> (Grades 5–7)	30% (Uzbek customs, traditional games)	50% (UK, USA holidays, cities)	20% (international festivals)	Mixed representation	Attempts to include intercultural content but lacks depth
<i>Project English</i> (Grades 8–9)	20%	65%	15%	Target culture-oriented	Overemphasizes Western lifestyle
<i>English for Uzbekistan</i> (Grades 10–11)	35%	45%	20%	Balanced	Better integration of Uzbek and international contexts

Pragmatic competence involves the ability to use language appropriately depending on the social context. For instance, in English, politeness may be expressed indirectly (“Could you possibly...?”), while Uzbek speakers often prefer direct forms. Textbooks rarely explain these subtleties, leading to pragmatic failures when students communicate with native or international speakers.

A review of Uzbek EFL textbooks shows that pragmatic features such as speech acts, turn-taking, register variation, and politeness strategies are underrepresented. Dialogues often sound grammatically correct but pragmatically unnatural. For example, textbook characters may use formal expressions in informal situations or fail to use softeners in requests. Additionally, there is little focus on cross-cultural pragmatics, which helps learners understand how norms differ across societies.

Teachers often compensate by explaining these aspects orally, but systematic inclusion in textbooks is essential. Incorporating authentic materials such as emails, social media posts, or real-life conversations would expose learners to a wider range of pragmatic patterns.

**Discussion.** Textbooks are not merely linguistic tools but cultural artifacts that shape students’ worldview and communicative behavior. In the Uzbek context, they reflect the government’s efforts to align with international standards while maintaining national identity. However, as English increasingly functions as a global lingua franca, textbooks must move beyond native-speaker norms and represent diverse English users from Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Pragmatic awareness, likewise, must be taught explicitly. Learners should not only know “what to say” but also “how, when, and to whom to say it.” Integrating pragmatic instruction into communicative tasks — such as role plays or intercultural projects — can help bridge the gap between linguistic competence and real-world communication.

Moreover, collaboration between local educators and international experts could ensure more balanced and contextually relevant cultural content. Adapting materials to Uzbek learners’ sociocultural reality would enhance engagement and cultural empathy, rather than mere imitation of Western norms.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, the analysis of English textbooks used in Uzbekistan shows that while there have been significant efforts to modernize content and incorporate both local and international cultural elements, challenges remain in achieving a balanced and authentic cultural representation. The textbooks often emphasize Western cultural models and provide limited opportunities for learners to critically compare and reflect on their own culture in relation to others. This imbalance may lead to a superficial understanding of global diversity and restrict the development of intercultural sensitivity. Furthermore, pragmatic awareness—the understanding of how language functions in real-life communication—remains underdeveloped in current

materials. Although dialogues and exercises demonstrate correct grammatical structures, they frequently lack the pragmatic nuances that make communication natural and contextually appropriate. For Uzbek learners to become competent users of English in global contexts, textbooks must go beyond linguistic accuracy and engage students in analyzing cultural norms, speech acts, and interactional strategies. The integration of authentic materials, such as real conversations, social media discourse, and cross-cultural scenarios, can significantly enhance pragmatic learning. In this regard, collaboration between Uzbek educators, linguists, and international experts is essential to create culturally inclusive and pragmatically rich teaching resources. Ultimately, strengthening both cultural representation and pragmatic competence in English textbooks will not only improve language proficiency but also nurture intercultural communicative competence—an essential skill for effective communication in today’s interconnected world.

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