



## **Analysis of Cultural Hegemony in Touchstone EFL Course Book Series**

**Dinçay Köksal**

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University

**Ömer Gökhan Ulum**

Mersin University

### **ABSTRACT**

*Although a number of studies have been conducted on the existence of cultural and linguistic hegemony in EFL course books, both global and local publishers, and authors intentionally or unintentionally seem to reflect specific cultures, norms, and ideologies more in the course books. Thus, the present study aims to explore the state of hegemonic practices with regard to the inner, outer and expanding circle cultural compounds imbued in EFL course books used by Turkish university students. This study seeks to highlight how the users of the related course books perceive the mentioned issue. The sample group of the study consisted of 109 Turkish EFL students. An interview formed by the researchers was utilized to get the related views of the users of these course books. Further, the second strand of the data was collected by qualitative content analysis through Touchstone Level 1 Student's Book and Touchstone Level 2 Student's Book. The findings of the study suggest that the inner circle (English) hegemony was dominant in the analyzed course books and the users of these course books mostly desire to see the target (English) culture in order to better learn English language. This study may supply great help for course book authors and publishers.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Hegemonic practices may be highly encountered while learning English as a foreign or second language, and accordingly this may form a complete impact on students' world views in that, for a long while, related researchers have focused on enlightening why economically weak countries welcome social hierarchies that respect some groups while disregarding others (Tietze & Dick, 2013). Hegemonic practices have been specifically included in the education process of young learners in order to maintain unfair power hierarchies (Ulum & Köksal, 2019). The developing hegemony of English gave way to a global business of English Language Teaching which appeared as a giant financial investment. This also resulted in the global industry of English as Foreign Language textbooks making it the cornerstone of the business (Garza & Crawford, 2005). Moreover, studies on the hegemonic practices in textbooks or course materials have recently grown as a result of the popularity of critical pedagogy, critical theory, and critical thinking. This also inspired and motivated the researchers to develop a critical point of view towards the hegemonic practices in course books (Smith, Ryoo, & McLaren, 2009).

English, which is the mostly used language, is considered as the global tool of communication. Around a quarter of the overall people in the world are proficient in English, which clearly signifies the close relationship between language and power (Crystal, 2004), in that a language may have dominance over others (Brumfit, 2006). The power granting the

expansion of English in the last century stemmed from Great Britain and the flag has been taken over by the US (Chomsky, 2003) since World War II, and with the dominance of internet, it has established itself almost the sole language for instate communication. The rising power of America has given way to a cycle of a switch in the extent and makeup of teaching English as a foreign or second language, which carried on the custom of practicing English to dictate hegemonic supremacy by means of cultural extension (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004). Linguistic hegemony is firmly associated with globalization term, particularly in the present case of English as a lingua franca. Educational strategies and practices should be re-edited to take advantage of linguistic divergence in order to keep balance with a seemingly dominant language (Shakouri and Esfandiari, 2015).

Galloway (1984) defines proficiency as the capability to maintain proper performance of particular universal practices within various societal and efficient language-use settings. Such authentic practices necessitate students to represent spontaneity, adjustability, ingenuity in contexts which may cause both predictable and unpredictable situations. Kramsch (2013, p.71) defines culture as “outdoor gardens with no meaning in themselves unless they are related to and contrasted with indoor apartments and dwellings”. Transmitting knowledge in a language is maintained through systematic and schematic forms. While systematic form refers to syntactic and semantic dimensions, schematic form is based on social background knowledge. Acquisition of native language is achieved through developing both schematic and systematic knowledge (Alptekin, 1993). EFL course books bear socio-cultural characteristics which may be encountered implicitly or explicitly. The implicit feature may be attributed to a hidden curriculum which is the reality of any course program. Neither a curriculum nor a teaching material may be neutral, as particular social values are, implicitly or explicitly, ingrained in them (Cunningsworth, 1995). Ulum (2014) puts forward that once a course book includes diverse cultures, it satisfies learners’ needs. Similarly, Toprak and Aksoyalp (2014) suggest that intercultural communication has developed particular aims in language education– like enhancing intercultural competency. So, taking the lack of EFL contexts, course books may be regarded as the most required materials in EFL settings. Kilickaya (2004) states that languages are intertwined with particular cultures. Once they are learned, their hidden cultures are learned as well. Therefore, when utilizing materials bearing cultural compounds, teachers should check the material to conceive if it is suitable for the learners. Regarding all these issues, this study focused on seeking answers to the following research questions:

1. How do EFL course books portray hegemonic practices?
2. What are the characteristics of inner/outer/expanding circle hegemonic practices contained in EFL course books?
3. How do EFL students perceive the hegemonic practices in EFL course books?

## **METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative content analysis has been defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1278). Wildemuth (2017) states that qualitative content analysis refers to a practice developed to categorize unprocessed data or themes built on credible interpretation. This practice employs inductive reasoning, through which themes and groups arise from the data by precise analysis. As a content analysis study, this paper investigated the hegemonic practices included in EFL course books used by Turkish university students. This study was carried out through qualitative methods of data collection by using content analysis technique employed to make replicable and valid premises by interpreting and coding textual materials. Qualitative research bears interpretative and naturalistic characteristics in that it is conducted in natural contexts in order to interpret

phenomena through the meanings humans bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). In other words, qualitative research focuses on reaching an understanding of humans' lives from their perspectives and their constructing reality. In a similar vein, interpretative phenomenological analysis examines a person's self-perception of an object (Smith, 2015). In the study, qualitatively collected data through interviews with students aim to affirm the views of the participants about the hegemonic practices included in EFL textbooks. In brief, besides a qualitative document analysis, an interview was also used to obtain qualitative data from the students. The data sets were analyzed by using SPSS (24.00), a Statistical Program for Social Sciences, to present both the extent of hegemonic practices and the views of EFL students in numerical data.

### **Data Collection**

The data for this study were collected from two globally written course books in total. The course books were selected from a list of EFL course books used by Turkish EFL students. The main reason for choosing this material is due to the fact that the books were highly recommended by educational institutions. Each book was analyzed focusing on cultural compounds which would represent the cultural features of inner, outer, and expanding circle culture. In the books all topics with reading passages, dialogues and exercises were perused and consequently employed cultural inner/outer/expanding circle compounds were categorized as social, geographical, entertainment, and economic. Moreover, an interview related to the views of students pertaining to the hegemonic practices in EFL course books was employed to see the users' approaches.

### **Participants**

The data for the study were collected from prep-class Turkish EFL students studying at Çukurova University, and Adana Science and Technology University, Turkey. The students in the study were selected from the most convenient and accessible schools. The sample consisted of 109 Turkish EFL students who voluntarily participated in the study. In selecting the students, we used the convenience sampling method as the target population was too large (Teddlie and Yu, 2007).

### **Instruments**

As was indicated above, the two EFL course books chosen for the study were extensively used in educational institutions in Turkey. The books are Touchstone Level 1 Student's Book and Touchstone Level 2 Student's Book. Besides, the interview questions were formed by the researchers by reviewing the related literature and asking the views of experts from the related field.

## **FINDINGS AND RESULTS**

Initially, for each occurring theme, a frequency test was run utilizing SPSS 24.0 program. Then, a chi-square test was run to define any potential significant difference in dispersion of overall themes for each item. Finally, samples for each cultural ingredient were represented in sentences regarding inner/outer/expanding circle cultural characteristics.

### **Social Factors**

This group of social factors consists of 9 themes categorized into inner, outer, and expanding circles of English with each occurring theme and its related percentages. In Table 1, we can clearly see the frequencies of cultural compounds utilized in the analyzed course books in terms of social factors.

**Table 1.** Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle Themes of Social Factors Utilized in Touchstone Course Books

Themes	Inner		Outer		Expanding		Total		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Name	228	78.35	1	0.34	62	21.31	291		
Personality	20	76.92	2	7.70	4	15.38	26		
Nationality	9	17.31	3	5.77	40	76.92	52		
Language	6	13.04	–	–	40	86.96	46		
Social Factors	History	6	54.54	–	–	5	45.46	11	100.00
	Celebration	3	30.00	–	–	7	70.00	10	
	Cuisine	2	8.70	1	4.34	20	86.96	23	
	Stereotype	1	100.00	–	–	–	–	1	
	Clothing	–	–	–	–	1	100.00	1	

One can clearly understand from the table that the theme *name* in the inner circle group (78.35%) highly outnumbers its counterpart in the expanding circle group (21.31%), while a bare dispersion was observed in the outer circle group within this category (0.34%). Regarding the theme *personality*, it is easy to understand from the table that the inner circle group (76.92%) surpasses its inner (7.70%) and expanding circle correspondence (15.38%). However, the theme *nationality* in the expanding circle group (76.92%) highly surmounts its counterparts in the inner (17.31%) and outer (5.77%) circle groups. Additionally, when we have a look at the theme *language*, it is clear from the table that the expanding circle group (86.96%) highly surmounts the inner circle group (13.04%), while no occurrence is seen in the outer circle group in this category. On the other hand, by looking at the theme *history*, one can notice that the inner circle group (54.54%) surpasses the expanding circle group (45.46%), while no emergence is encountered in the outer circle group. Furthermore, when having a look at the theme *celebration*, it is clear that the expanding circle group within this category (70.00%) greatly surpasses its inner circle equivalent (30.00%), while no occurrence was detected in the outer circle group. Besides, the theme *cuisine* in the expanding circle (86.96%) supremely surmounts its inner (8.70%) and outer (4.34%) circle counterparts. Finally, occurring only once, such themes as *stereotype* and *clothing* were scarcely detected in the analysis. Samples reflecting these themes are given below:

- Sam (inner circle name)
- Samir (outer circle name)
- Joshua (expanding circle name)
- Julia Roberts (inner circle personality)
- Bob Marley (outer circle personality)
- Ang Lee (expanding circle personality)
- American (inner circle nationality)
- Indian (outer circle nationality)
- Russian (expanding circle nationality)

- All my friends studied English in junior high school. All junior high school students take English. (inner circle language)
- Well, we always spoke Chinese at home. (expanding circle language)
- Old St. Mary's Cathedral (inner circle history)
- Colosseum (expanding circle history)
- Bonfire Night (inner circle celebration)
- Children in Taiwan love Chinese new year because they know they are going to get hong bao from their relatives. Hongbao are red envelopes with money inside. (expanding circle celebration)
- The Sea Grill (inner circle cuisine)
- Lassi (outer circle cuisine)
- Tortilla (expanding circle cuisine)
- On average, Americans sleep for 24 years and watch TV for 12 years. (inner circle stereotype)
- Hanbok (expanding circle clothing)

### Geographical Factors

Three themes occurred in the inner, outer, and expanding circle of this group. Related themes and percentages are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle Themes of Geographical Factors Utilized in Touchstone Course Books

	Themes	Inner		Outer		Expanding		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Geographical Factors	Location	70	41.92	9	5.39	88	52.69	167	
	Climate	1	100.00	–	–	–	–	1	100.00
	Land Form	1	50.00	–	–	1	50.00	2	

From the table, we can understand that the theme *location* in the expanding circle group (52.69%) was utilized (52.69%) more than its inner (41.92%) and outer (5.89%) circle counterparts. However, the theme *climate* emerged only once in the inner circle group (100.00%), while no such occurrence was detected in the outer and expanding circle groups. Besides, the theme *climate* occurred once in both inner (50.00%) and expanding (50.00%) groups, while no emergence was seen in the outer circle group. The samples below represent these themes:

- California (inner circle location)
- India (outer circle location)
- France (expanding circle location)
- It was hot, but not too hot (in Hawaii). (inner circle climate)
- Lake Tahoe (inner circle landform)
- The Atacama Desert (expanding circle climate)

### Entertainment Factors

Two themes emerged in this group of entertainment factors. The themes and their percentages of occurrence are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle Themes of Entertainment Factors Utilized in Touchstone Course Books

	Themes	Inner		Outer		Expanding		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Entertainment Factors	Music	6	66.67	–	–	3	33.33	9	
	Movie	1	100.00	–	–	–	–	1	100.00
	Sport	2	100.00	–	–	–	–	2	

From Table 3, we can see that the theme *music* in the inner circle (66.67%) was observed to highly outnumber its expanding circle counterpart (33.33%), while no occurrence was detected in the outer circle group. Besides, the theme *movie* was seen only in the inner circle group (100.00%), while no emergence was observed in the outer and expanding circle groups. Lastly, the theme *sport* was only detected in the inner circle group (100.00%), while no occurrence was observed in the other groups. The samples below represent the themes of entertainment factors:

- Rock music (inner circle music)
- Latin music (expanding circle music)
- Friends (inner circle movie)
- The Red Sox (inner circle sport)

### Economic Factors

In this group, one theme was observed to occur in the inner and outer circles. Related themes and their frequencies are displayed below.

**Table 4.** Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle Themes of Economic Factors Employed in Touchstone Course Books

	Themes	Inner		Outer		Expanding		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Economic Factors	Consumption	1	25.00	–	–	3	75.00	4	100.00

As can be understood from the table, the theme *consumption* in the expanding circle group (75.00%) was observed to outnumber its counterpart in the inner circle group (25.00%), while no occurrence was observed in the outer circle group. Related samples are represented below:

- The West Edmonton Mall (inner circle economy)
- You need all day to shop at Takashimaya Times Square, located in the Shinjuku section of Tokyo. (expanding circle economy)

### Overall Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle Factors

All inner, outer, and expanding circle factors include four groups: social, geographical, entertainment, and economic. Table 5 represents these factors as well as their frequencies of occurrence.

**Table 5.** Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle Cultural Compounds: Four Categories

Factors	Inner		Outer		Expanding	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Social	275	59.65	7	1.52	179	38.83

Geographical	72	42.35	9	5.29	89	52.36
Entertainment	9	75.00	–	–	3	25.00
Economic	1	25.00	–	–	3	75.00

From Table 5, we can simply observe a striking tendency towards employing inner circle cultural compounds. For instance, while inner circle social factors occupied 59.65%, we can observe that these compounds in the expanding circle were included with 38.83%, while a scarce occurrence was detected in the outer circle group (1.52%). Themes pertaining to geographical factors in the expanding circle occurred by a 52.36% frequency compared to a 42.35% in the inner circle and a mere 5.29% in the outer circle group. Besides, entertainment themes in the inner circle group (75.00%) outnumbered the expanding circle counterparts (25.00); while no occurrence was observed in the outer circle group. Economy related themes, however, occupied a different position; in that, the expanding circle themes (75.00%) outnumbered their correspondents in the inner circle, while no emergence of such themes was encountered in the outer circle group.

### Total Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle Frequencies of Cultural Compounds

From our analysis above, we can observe that the inner circle themes significantly surpassed their outer and expanding circle counterparts. A summary of this analysis can be observed in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Overall Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle Cultural Compounds

Items		f	%
Culture	Inner	357	55.18
	Expanding	274	42.35
	Outer	16	2.47
Total		647	100.00

By looking at Table 6, we can simply understand the dominance of inner circle compounds in the analyzed EFL course books. While such compounds were utilized by 55.18% in the inner circle group, compounds of expanding circle group occupied 42.35%. On the other hand, the outer circle group occupied only a mere 2.47%. This finding is appealing in that it represents the tendency of inner circle coursebook authors carrying their native cultural compounds to the course books they write.

### Interview Results

In this section, the percentage of culture the students desire to see in their EFL textbooks, their perspectives on why the target culture, source culture, and other cultures should be represented in EFL textbooks are displayed. Further, the related remarks from the students are represented.

**Table 7.** The Percentage of Culture the Students Desire to See in their EFL Course Books

Cultural Components	N	%
Target Culture	109	44.31
Source Culture	109	37.41
Other Cultures	109	18.28
Total	109	100.00

As can be observed from the table, most of the participants (44.31%) desire to see the target culture in their course books. Further, while 37.41% of the participants want the source culture to be included in their course books, a mere 18.28% of them suggest other cultures. Samples representing the views of the participants are given below:

- I would like to see American and British cultures in my EFL course books as we learn English.
- I would like to see Turkish culture in my EFL course books as we are Turks.
- I would like to see various local cultures in my EFL course books in order to broaden my worldview.

**Table 8.** Students' Perspectives on why Target Culture should be more in EFL Course books

Codes	Keywords	f	%	N
Target Culture	To better learn the language	68	68.00	
	Already familiar with our own culture	15	15.00	
	Curiosity of English-American Culture	9	9.00	73
	Being a global language	8	8.00	
Total		100	100.00	73

In terms of why the target culture should be more in EFL course books, the table clearly represents that most of the participants (68.00%) suggest *to better learn the language*, while the rest of the respondents declare the following reasons: *already familiar with our own culture* (15.00%); *curiosity of English and American cultures* (9.00%); and *being a global language* (8.00%). Sample sentences from the remarks of students are represented below:

- If we want to learn English language more, we should be imposed to English culture.
- Since we already know Turkish culture, we should learn more about English and American cultures.
- I have always been curious about the western culture, particularly American culture.
- As English is a global language, we should learn English culture.

**Table 9.** Students' Perspectives on why Source Culture should be more in EFL Course Books

Codes	Keywords	f	%	N
Source Culture	Ease learning a new language	45	41.28	
	Should be more dominant	35	32.11	
	Curiosity of my own culture	11	10.09	80
	Not to lose own national identity	10	9.17	
	To better express my own culture	5	4.59	
	Already unaware of my own culture	3	2.76	
Total		109	100.00	80

Regarding why the source culture should be more in EFL course books, it is easily comprehended from the table that majority of the participants (41.28%) indicate *ease learning a new language*, while the rest of the respondents declare the following reasons: *ease learning a new language* (41.28%); *should be more dominant* (32.11%); *curiosity of my own culture* (10.09%); *not to lose own national identity* (9.17%); *to better express my own culture* (4.59%); and *already unaware of my own culture* (2.76%). Samples from the remarks of students are given below:

- Being imposed to Turkish culture eases learning English language as I am already familiar with my own culture.
- Turkish culture should be more dominant in the EFL course books as we are Turkish.
- I am always curious about Turkish culture.
- I always want to see Turkish culture in the course book, as I don't want to lose my national identity.
- If I encounter Turkish culture more, I express it sufficiently.
- As I don't know much about Turkish culture, I want to see it more in my EFL course books.

**Table 10.** Students' Perspectives on why Other Cultures should be more in EFL Course Books

Codes	Keywords	f	%	N
Other Cultures	Beneficial to learn diverse cultures	28	38.35	73
	Develop worldview	23	31.51	
	Curiosity of other cultures	16	21.92	
	English language includes all cultures	4	5.48	
	To interact with other cultures	2	2.74	
Total		73	100.00	73

As to why other cultures should be more in EFL course books, it is clearly observed from the table that a number of the respondents (38.35%) suggest *beneficial to learn diverse cultures*, while another group (31.51%) state *develop world knowledge*. Besides, the rest of the respondents indicate the following reasons: *curiosity of other cultures* (21.92%); *English language includes all cultures* (5.48%); and *to interact with other cultures* (2.74%). Some remarks of respondents are represented below:

- It is beneficial to learn various cultures because we can easily understand people from other cultures.
- Learning different cultures develop our worldview and we can be more successful by developing our cultural intelligence.
- I have always been curious about diverse cultures and tried to learn more about them.
- English language being a lingua-franca covers all cultures.
- Interacting with diverse cultures is important in learning English because it is a universal language.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A number of studies have been conducted to see the extent of cultural compounds in EFL course books (Ansary and Babaii, 2002; Aliakbari, 2004; Lee, 2009; Gray, 2010), however there are not many studies specifically examining the inner, outer, and expanding circle cultural characteristics. By looking at the issue from this perspective, this study aims to highlight the state of hegemonic practices with regard to the inner, outer and expanding circle cultural compounds imbued in EFL course books used by Turkish university students. Further, this study seeks to understand what the users of these course books think about the mentioned issue. The results of the study display that:

- The inner circle hegemony was dominant in EFL course books used by Turkish students, with a higher frequency compared to outer and expanding circle cultural characteristics;
- Inner, outer, and expanding circle hegemonic characteristics were portrayed in different groups and sub-groups; and
- The users of the globally written EFL course books mostly desire to see the target culture in order to better learn English language.

This study may supply great help for course book authors, policy makers, curriculum designers, researchers in the related fields, and EFL teachers. EFL course books and curriculums should aid the students with an opportunity of raising cultural awareness (Shin, Eslami, and Chen 2011).

### Implications

Teachers should be aware of the fact that EFL textbooks may be biased when presenting specific topics. Thus, not only topics that are contained but also those that are not contained in the textbooks should be taken into consideration in the related materials. Furthermore, especially

state school teachers in many countries, such as in Turkey, own passive roles in the selection of textbooks since authorities tend to choose these textbooks. Therefore, authorities need to take the required precautions to avoid such contractions. Foreign language teaching and learning cannot be conceived solely as learning the pragmatic, linguistic, communicative or strategic skills and proficiency. EFL textbooks require particular language teaching and learning methods on both teachers and students who do not have much control over the education process. They remain under the effect of textbook publishers who market their textbooks. In order to enlighten the teachers accordingly, the researchers in the related field need to conduct more specific studies.

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***Dinçay Köksal*** is currently working as a Senior Professor in the Department of English Language Teaching, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey. He has trained numerous pre-service EFL teachers and worked as an academician at diverse universities in Turkey. He is the head of ELT department and the dean of Faculty of Fine Arts in Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. Further, he organizes International Conferences on Education and Language. His research areas cover Language Assessment, Language Testing, Culture, Language Hegemony, Research Philosophy, and Research Methods.  
Email: [koksal.dincay@gmail.com](mailto:koksal.dincay@gmail.com)

***Ömer Gökhan Ulum*** is currently working as an Associate Professor in the Department of English Language Teaching, Mersin University, Turkey. He worked as an Academician at different universities in Turkey. Further, he was appointed as a Language Assistant at Moseley School in Birmingham, UK. His research areas cover Language Ideology, Language Imperialism, Cultural Hegemony, Discourse, Pragmatics, and Research Methods.  
Email: [omergokhanulum@gmail.com](mailto:omergokhanulum@gmail.com)