

SOME DETECTIONS REGARDING CULTURAL CODINGS IN 8TH GRADE ENGLISH EDUCATION MATERIAL IN TURKEY

Mesut Uğurlu, page 83-98

ABSTRACT

According to the realist approach, states act in line with their own interests. Therefore, in terms of economic, political, military and cultural terms, each state tries to strengthen its position. In order to be stronger in terms of culture, states are trying to transfer their cultures to other cultures. In this way, states want to create sympathy for their own culture. This will benefit them both in terms of tourism and qualified workforce. There are other positive effects of the fact that the culture of a country is sympathized by other citizens of the country. Therefore, each country wants to coding its culture to the cultures of other states. One of these cultural coding tools is foreign language education. Foreign language education in Turkey is mainly in English. English education is provided as a foreign language in primary and secondary education institutions. In our study, the English education material was selected as an example of the 8th grade students of primary education as a sample. The special cultural coding elements in this material were identified. However, general cultural coding elements were determined. This determination was analyzed comparatively with the general cultural coding methods on the Voice of America Learning English website.

Keywords

Cultural Code, Turkish Culture, Foreign Language Education, English Education, Transfer of Culture.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Gökalp, culture is “a harmonious whole of a nation’s religion, morality, law, reason, aesthetic, language, economy and science lives” (2018: 39). In the Turkish Language Association Dictionary (TLAD), culture is defined as “All the material and spiritual values created in the historical, social development process and to transmit them to the next generations, and the whole of the vehicles that show the sovereignty of the natural and social environment of the human being, hars, crop” (TLAD, 2023). Culture, which has the feature of shaping the behavior patterns and preferences of a group or individual (Özdemir, 2014: 351), is an important element that every state and the administrators of that state attach importance to because of this feature. *Culture consists of many different factors that hold societies together and offer them common values, such as economy, technology, traditions, the needs of the period, and the belief of the society* (Durmaz, 2020: 324). Based on the word “belief” in this sentence, we can say that there are also cultural code studies that are processed religiously¹. The meanings of terms such as “cultural code”, “culture coding”, “code culture” have been defined differently by some researchers. Teliya defines the term “code culture” as “all words and phrases that contain various cultural phenomena in addition to its own meaning” (1996: 216); Gudkov, as “Nouns and noun sets that have the feature of carrying some additional/secondary meanings, apart from fulfilling the basic meaning function of any natural or artificial object in the environment of human beings” (2004: 39); Krasnih, on the other hand, defines it as “a kind of invisible web in which culture divides, classifies, structures and determines the value of the people around” (2002: 232). On the other hand, Uğurlu uses the term “cultural code” as “Each of the cultural assets, beliefs and practices included in the traditions and customs of a society” or “Each of the cultural values accepted by a society as its own”; he defines the term “cultural coding” as “transferring the cultural values of one society to another society/individual” (2021, 3-4). The cultural coding used in this sense is a phenomenon that is applied by all countries in the world.

States want their own culture to be known by others. For this, they carry out cultural studies. These studies are both to protect and spread their own

¹ For religious-themed cultural code studies, see. (Gündüz, 2016).

culture and to be protected from the influence of other cultures. They also use their own folklore motifs as a cultural coding element for this purpose². They use various tools for these purposes. In addition to TV series and movies, advertising promotion activities are also included in these tools. One of these tools is foreign language education. Language itself is a cultural phenomenon. Learning a language means learning the culture in which that language is used. Therefore, countries want to teach their own language to the citizens of other countries. For this, they prepare various training materials. The contents of these educational materials are intended to teach culture while teaching the language^{3,4}. Therefore, the contents of foreign language education materials should be prepared both to provide language education and to give cultural coding for the target audience⁵.

Within the scope of our study, the 8th grade English education material prepared and presented by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) was determined as a sample. As a result of the analysis we made on this sample, specific and general cultural coding determinations were presented within the scope of the study.

Sample, Sample Analysis and Findings

In the article we prepared based on this case, the English education material prepared by Turkish MoNE for 8th grades was analyzed as a

² One of these folklore elements is epic poems. For detailed information on cultural coding motifs in epic poems, see (Bastem: 2019).

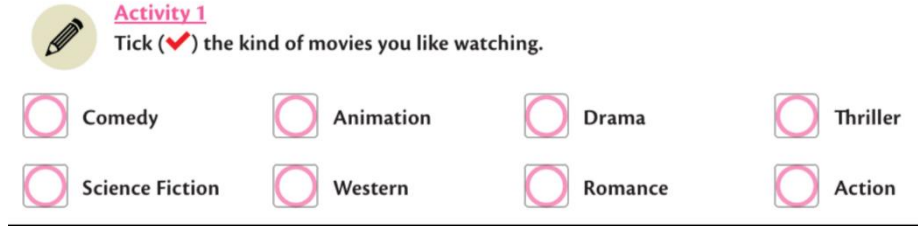
³ One of these training materials is the Voice of America (VOA) website of the United States (USA). VOA, one of the multimedia news and information sources in the USA, offers English education to users with its social media accounts such as Youtube, Facebook and Twitter, as well as radio and satellite TV broadcasts, and at the same time clearly and effectively reflects the policies of the American administration (Uğurlu, 2021: 8).

⁴ One of these cultural values is the National Anthem. For the cultural codes in Turkiye's National Anthem, see. (Aev, 2014).

⁵ Countries whose natural language is English are more advantageous than other countries in keeping their culture alive and spreading. Because English is now a language of world. Outperforming languages such as French, German and Spanish by a large margin, English has established itself as the most important language after their natural language in all countries in the world. Therefore, the obligation to use English as a means to transfer/disseminate their own culture to other cultures has emerged (Uğurlu, 2012: 265).

sample⁶. The special cultural codes we identified as a result of our analysis are as follows:

Detection 1



Activity 1
Tick (✓) the kind of movies you like watching.

<input type="checkbox"/> Comedy	<input type="checkbox"/> Animation	<input type="checkbox"/> Drama	<input type="checkbox"/> Thriller
<input type="checkbox"/> Science Fiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Western	<input type="checkbox"/> Romance	<input type="checkbox"/> Action

Image 1 (I1): Class 8 (C8), Unit 1 (U1), Lesson 4 (L4), Activity 1 (A1), (İlter et al., 2018: 15).

When you pay attention to the options in this activity, there is no Turkish movie among the favorite movies. Therefore, Turkish films must be included in these options. It is recommended to remove the western option in the options. It should be replaced by a Turkish movie or films that encode Turkish culture can be promoted. For example, the movie *Bal Ülkesi* (Honeyland) is an important movie that encodes both Turkish culture and the culture of Turks abroad⁷.

⁶ As the cultural coding educational material, the educational material of the Foreign language education course (English course) was chosen as the sample because the transfer of cultural codes that cannot be applied in other courses can be applied more easily in foreign language education. For example, how is it possible for nation states to code their own cultures while transferring course content in the field of science such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology to students? However, all the contents of social courses such as history and literature are already a cultural transfer. Therefore, the course materials themselves are functional in the transfer of social culture. If the themes and linguistic/visual discourses in these course materials are not taken into consideration, negative culture transfer may be caused instead of positive culture transfer. Therefore, nation states analyze the visual and textual discourses of educational materials and design in a way that will create a positive perception about their own culture in order to ensure the cultural unity and solidarity of their own people and to transfer their own cultures to other states, nations or ethnic groups. Among all these courses, the most important one in terms of transferring cultural codes is "Foreign Language" (Uğurlu, 2021: 4-5).

⁷ For the movie *Honeyland* which is coding of Turkish culture, see (Uğurlu, 2020).

Detection 2



I2: C8, U1, L4, A1 (İlter et al., 2018: 19).

“What do they like doing with their friends?” One of the options given in response to this question is a young man playing the guitar and his friends around him as the 6th option. It is recommended to replace the person playing the guitar with a young person who plays “bağlama”, “davul-zurna” or “tulum” from the Black Sea culture.

Detection 3



Activity 2

What type of music do you prefer/ like/ dislike? Why? Use the adjectives in the box.

energetic

harmonic

impressive

terrific

unbearable



I prefer pop music because it's trendy.



Indian music is energetic so I like it.



I dislike rock music because it's unbearable.

I3: C8, U2, L1, A2 (İlter et al., 2018: 24).

In this activity, it is recommended to replace “Indian music” with “Turkish music” or “Turkish folklore music”.

Detection 4

An Ordinary Day of a Young Archer

Mete Gazoz is a 19 year-old national sportsman. His branch is archery. He is among the best 15 archers in the world. He gained many rewards and medals. Moreover, he attended the Rio Olympic Games in 2016.




He has a very busy day. He always gets up early on weekdays. He has a shower and



I4: C8, U2, L5, A2 (İlter et al., 2018: 28).

This text is a very important text in terms of Turkish culture coding. Archery is one of the oldest sport types of Turks. It is a very important Turkish culture coding for a Turkish competitor to be the Olympic champion in archery and this championship to be included in the English education material. The image of the Olympic champion Mete Gazoz taken just as he was shooting an arrow, is extremely impressive. In addition, the inscription of “Tur”, which is the abbreviation of Turkey, under the arm holding the bow, and the partial appearance of the crescent and star, which is the symbol of the Turkish flag in red and white colors, is an important cultural coding. Perhaps an additional activity can be added to this text that indicates that archery is an old Turkish sporting tradition.

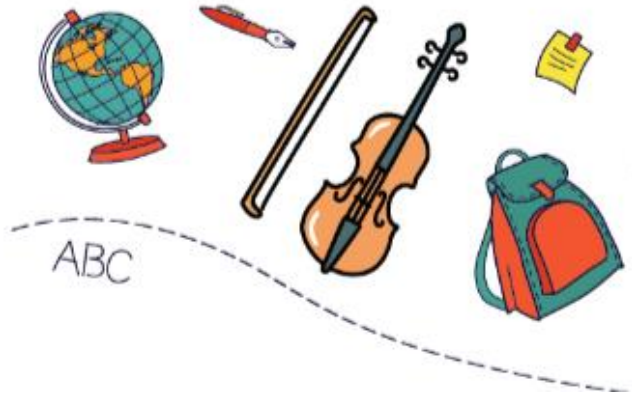
Detection 5

	8	Who dislikes listening to jazz music?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	9	Who enjoys reading travel books?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	10	Who likes having a good relationship with teachers?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	11	Who dislikes arguing with friends?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	12	Who dislikes listening to jazz music?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

I5: C8, U2, L6, A1 (İlter et al., 2018: 29).

If you pay attention here, options 8 and 12 are the same. It's probably an accidental mistake. It is recommended to change any of these same options as "who likes listening to Turkish music?".

Detection 6



I6: C8, U2, L6, A1 (İlter et al., 2018: 29).

Looking at the world map in this activity, the geography of the America is seen. Instead, the geography of Europe and Asia, including Turkey, should be included in the image. In addition, instead of the violin, a picture of the bağlama, davul, zurna which belongs to the Turkish culture or "tulum" which is the famous instrument of the Black Sea region in Turkey, can be placed.

Detection 7



I7: C8, U2, L6, A2 (İlter et al., 2018: 30).

The group involved in this activity is a western music group. Therefore, it gives western culture codes. In addition, the fact that the names are Turkish will encode Turkish students to be a member of a western music group or to listen to this type of music. If this activity is to be encoded in Turkish culture, it must be a Turkish classical music or Turkish folk music group. Instruments in the orchestra also need to be changed accordingly to this.

Detection 8



I8: C8, U3 (İlter et al., 2018: 35).

An Irish proverb is seen on the cover of Unit 3. It would be appropriate to replace this with a Turkish proverb. Because, proverbs are one of the most important elements in the formation of cultural identities⁸.

Detection 9



⁸ For the importance of proverbs and idioms as a language and culture transfer tool in Turkish education and teaching, see (Bulut, 2013).



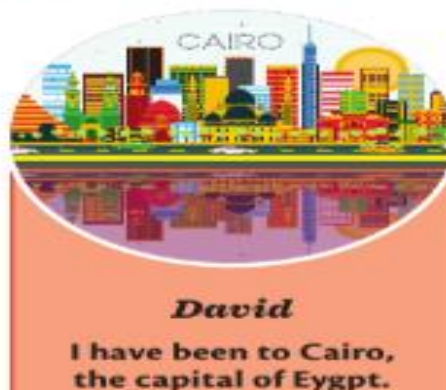
I9: C8, U6, L1 (İlter et al., 2018: 72).
A1 (İlter et al., 2018: 72).

I10: C8, U6, L1,

The Turkish police officer image be placed on I9. Based on this example, it can be said that if all the visuals of the professions in the training materials belong to the professionals in Turkey, thus the Turkish culture will be coded. The I10 image is another example on this subject. In this image, there are likely miners who are from the Far East. These mine workers should be replaced by Turkish mine workers.

Detection 10

4. Read the texts. Which questions don't have their answers? Tick (✓) them.



I10: C8, U7, L6, Self-Assesment 7-4 (S7-4) (İlter et al., 2018: 91).

One of the cities involved in this activity is Edinburgh and the other is Cairo. Edinburgh is the capital city of Scotland and Cairo is the capital of

Egypt. In fact, when we look at this unit in general, quite a lot of Turkish culture is coded. Therefore, in order not to be boring, other cultures should be included from time to time. So this is the right approach. However, even if foreign culture is to be coded, it can be found in cities where Turks live, especially in the Balkans. One of these cities is Gostivar which is the of Northern Macedonian republic. Another is the Prizren, which is the Republic of Kosovo. In this way, cultural coding will be done indirectly, not directly.

Detection 11



Activity 3

Match the questions with their answers.


1. Where can you stay in Japan? (...)	2. Which one do you prefer? All-inclusive or bed and breakfast hotels? (...)	a. Bed and breakfast.	b. By plane or by boat.
3. What is the weather like in Santorini? (...)	4. What are the tourist attractions in México City? (...)	c. I think it's a magnificent city.	d. In hotels and guesthouses.
5. How can I go to Ibiza? (...)	6. What do you think about Barcelona? (...)	f. Centro Historico, Frida Kahlo Museum and Gran Templo de México.	g. It's hot.

I11: C8, U7, A3 (İlter et al., 2018: 93).

Turkish culture was not coded in this activity. This is probably because enough Turkish culture is coded in the same unit. From this point of view, indirect coding should be done instead of direct coding. In other words, indirect coding can be done instead of direct Turkish culture coding. Therefore, the Turks can be indirectly coded by substituting northern Macedonia and Kosovo instead of the Spanish, Mexico and Japan coded above.

Detection 12

(I) İlayda Şamilgil was a 12th grade student when she got a prize with her project. (II) She graduated from a private high-school in İstanbul. (III) The name of the prize is "The first step to Nobel Prize in Pysics." (IV) Her project outdistanced five thousand projects from seventy countries. (V) As a result of her success, she got an invitation from NASA for Mars project.



I12: C8, U9, S9-4 (İlter et al., 2018: 115).

If we pay attention to the text in this activity, it is thought that Turkish culture is coded at first glance. Of course, introducing İlayda, a successful Turkish girl, is a coding of Turkish culture. However, the cultures of other countries are also strongly coded through two separate organizations in the text. One of these is Sweden, where the Nobel prizes were awarded. Another is the headquarters of NASA organization in the USA. Therefore, it is not appropriate to highlight these two institutions here. Instead, awards and invitations given to İlayda from Turkish institutions, if any, should be highlighted.

Our 12 observations presented above are specific cultural codes in the 8th grade material. Let's compare the general cultural codes in this material with the cultural codes methods in the English education material on the VOALE website. In the previous study on the subject, the issues identified in the content and materials of Voice of America Learning English (VOALE) regarding the methodological practices for the coding of American culture are as follows:

1. The data and content on the website/educational material are presented to users in a simple and understandable manner.

2. While preparing the contents of the educational materials, orientation was applied to the area which the American culture is strong.
3. Although the primary purpose may seem to be “To provide free English education to users”, the main purpose is to encode the American culture to the users.
4. All the contents of the training materials have been prepared to entertain the users. In particular, educational materials in video format are presented to users in the form of comedy series. Professional actors in the training videos contribute to the shooting, and the scenarios of the videos that are related to each other in terms of subject are designed to ensure the continuous participation of the users in the lessons.
5. In education, a curriculum that goes from easy to difficult draws attention. The courses offered at the beginning of the training are relatively simpler to the following courses. The course content that users encounter in the first lessons is video presentations and the contents in these presentations are conveyed in an extremely simple and plain manner. For users who want to get detailed information about the courses, applications such as more detailed texts and question solutions are available in the same course content. No guidance has been given for users to participate in these applications. The use of applications is completely left to the wishes of the users. Therefore, users can receive training simply by watching the video content and can access detailed data on the subject from the same course page if they wish. Thus, it was ensured that the English education content was presented to the users on demand and away from the boring.
6. There is a “comments” section at the end of each course material, and users share their comments with all users in this section. It is seen that many users actively share their opinions and suggestions. These sections are also used as social dialogue platforms. Thus, it is aimed to establish a dialogue between users and to create a community with common values related to the subject as a result of these dialogues.
7. The video shoots in the English educational materials took place in a certain city (Washington D.C. State, the capital city of the USA). By constantly promoting different parts of the same city, it is aimed that the users become familiar with the introduced city. By presenting the most beautiful places of the selected city, the welfare level and high quality of life of the people living in that city are reflected to the users. Thus, it has

been tried to ensure that the users sympathize with the coded culture and the desire and desire to live in the presented culture.

8. A certain cultural code theme has been determined in the content of each course. The keywords of this theme, which was intended to be conveyed to the other party, were repeated many times. Thus, the message to be conveyed to the users is reinforced.

9. In addition to the cultural codes, which are determined as the main theme in the course contents and transferred directly to the users, cultural elements are also included in the background. In particular, local and national brands were transferred to the users in the background and these brands were constantly placed in the memory of the users indirectly in other lessons as visuals.

10. The course contents mostly included the introductions of cultural venues. Cultural assets were promoted with attention visuals and presentations that would impress users. Thus, it is aimed that users like the culture introduced in the course content, become familiar with that culture and adopt it.

11. In addition to direct cultural coding, indirect cultural coding method was also used. For example, a musical instrument was introduced as the main theme of the course content and the features of this musical instrument were explained. The theme directly conveyed here is the traditional musical instrument. However, there are artists who identify with that musical instrument. These artists are indirectly coded to users.

12. The cultural code, which was transferred as the main theme in a course content, was transferred as a sub-theme in the next courses or cultural codes, which were transferred as a sub-theme in the previous lessons, were transferred as the main theme in the following lessons. Thus, the coded culture is internalized by the user (Uğurlu, 2021: 53-6).

As a result of the comparative analysis of these general coding methods of VOALE and the general coding method of the 8th grade education material we examined, we made the following determinations: Methods 1,5 and 10 identified in VOALE were also applied to the 8th grade material. In other words, the data and content in the training material we examined are presented to users in a simple and understandable way. In education, a curriculum that goes from easy to difficult has been applied. English education content is provided to users on demand and away from boring and cultural introductions are generally included in the course

contents. Cultural assets were promoted with interesting visuals. Thus, it is aimed that users like the culture conveyed in the course content, get to know and adopt that culture.

Methods 2 and 3 in VOALE were partially applied in the 8th grade material is analyzed. In other words, while the content of the training material was being prepared, the method of directing to the area where the Turkish culture is strong was partially applied. The primary purpose of the material is to educate users in English. One of the sub-purposes is to encode Turkish culture to users.

Methods 4,6,7,8,9,11, and 12 in VOALE were not used in the 8th grade material we reviewed. In other words, not all contents of educational materials are prepared to entertain users. The course materials do not have a social dialogue platform. It is not intended for users to internalize the promoted city by constantly promoting different parts of the same city. A certain cultural code theme was not determined in the content of each lesson, and the keywords of this theme, which was intended to be conveyed to the users, were not repeated many times. Domestic and national brands are not transferred to the users in the background. Indirect cultural coding method was also not applied. The cultural code, which was transferred as the main theme in one lesson, was not transferred as a sub-theme in the following lessons.

CONCLUSION

This research has been carried out in order to determine the method by which cultural coding is done in the English education materials of the Ministry of National Education in Turkey. In our research, 8th grade education material was taken as a sample. As a result of the examination, the cultural codes in this material are divided into two as general and special. As a result of this separation, the specific results determined in the analysis are as follows:

Turkish movies must be included in the choices about movies. Young people should play bağlama, davul-zurna or tulum instead of guitar players. Texts related to music must have the options “Turkish music” or “Turkish folklore music”. The cultural coding elements in the images in the background should be chosen for coding the Turkish culture. Instead of activities that encourage Turkish students to be a member of a western music group, activities involving Turkish classical music or Turkish folk

music groups should be offered. All occupational images included in the training materials must belong to the professionals in Turkey. Cities in the Balkans where Turks live (Gostivar and Prizren etc.) can be included in foreign cultural coding. In this way, cultural coding will be done indirectly, not directly.

As a result of the comparative analysis of the general coding methods of VOALE and the general coding method of the 8th grade educational material within the scope of the study, the following determinations were made: Methods numbered 1,5 and 10 in VOALE were applied in the same way in the 8th grade material. Methods 2 and 3 were partially applied in the 8th grade material. Methods 4,6,7,8,9,11 and 12 were not used in the 8th grade material. Our recommendation is to implement methods that are partially applied or not applied at all.

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