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Analysis of Road Maps ELT Textbook Series: A Semio-Cultural Conceptualization Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Language is not just a system of communication but a carrier of cultural meaning and values. Therefore, ELT textbooks as the main resources of teaching English should reflect sociocultural realities, promoting intercultural understanding and communicative competence. Accordingly, study aims to examine the semiotic relationship between text (as a sign) images (as an object) and students' perception (as an interpretant) in the Road maps textbook A1 and B1 series taught at the preparatory school of Cyprus International University. Three pictures from beginner (A1) level and three pictures from intermediate (B1) level were chosen to analyze whether the relationship between textual and visual elements for students was denotational or connotational from a Semio-cultural conceptualization perspective. This perspective emphasizes the importance of analyzing language materials, such as textbooks, through a semiocultural lens to identify the cultural messages conveyed. The study draws on a new analytical framework as the tool for analyzing data that incorporates elements of semiotics into cultural conceptualization in the field of cultural linguistics. The study found that at the A1 level the relationship between sign, object and interpretant for students is connotational, that is, guided by the teacher (guided semiosis) and for B1 students, it is comprehended denotational. In addition, the results of the semi-structured interview with ten English teachers who are teaching the same books at the CIU show that individualism, westernization, globalization, family values, and traditional gender roles are Cultural conceptualizations and categories used in these textbook series.

Keywords: Semiotics; Cultural Conceptualization; Semio-Cultural Analytical Framework; Connotational Meaning; Denotational Meaning; Cultural Linguistics

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1. Introduction

In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), textbooks play a significant role in learning a new language. Depending on their content and design, textbooks can motivate or demotivate the learners, thus affecting their learning experiences. An important factor to be considered in the design as well as in the adaptation of ELT textbooks is the cultural content of the books^[1]. Language and culture are so interwoven that it is difficult to separate them from each other. Therefore, textbook writers should incorporate features of the target language culture in the teaching material^[2], in other words, ELT textbooks should reflect the sociocultural realities of the lives of native speakers of the languages. Textbooks designed this way not only help learners in the mastery of linguistic properties of the target language, but also promote intercultural understanding and foster communicative competence in the learners^[3]. This can be achieved through the adoption and application of the Semio-cultural conceptualization framework that recognizes the interplay between language and culture in general including in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. This approach acknowledges that language is not simply an abstract system or a vehicle of communication; rather it is a carrier of cultural meaning and values^[4]. The analytic framework adopted in this paper, namely the Semio-cultural Conceptualization perspective^[4] was applied in A1 Road map English textbooks written by Amanda Maris and B1 by Monica Berlis and Heather Jones published by Pearson Practice English. This series has been used at Cyprus International University preparatory school since 2023 as the main source.

1.1. Semiotics

“In plain English, Semiotics can be defined as the scientific study of signs in their different forms, e.g., words, images, icons, sounds, symbols, objects, and gestures. Words in any given language are symbolic as they can be considered signs”. It is the study of signs, lexicon, body language and the speech sounds in a language. The main concern of semiotics is to study the meaning, and its connection and correspondence with reality. Therefore, it might be possible to analyze every aspect of life through semiotics as a basic field of study to explain everything^[4].

1.2. Culture and Language

The relationship between Language and culture is so interrelated that it is not possible to think of or talk about one of them without considering the other. In order to preserve a culture, the language associated with it needs to be preserved since the loss of a language is the loss of a culture^[4]. According to Kramsch “without language as a symbolic system, all the habits, beliefs, conventions, and monuments that we call culture might be just observable realities, not cultural phenomena. Culture is not just aspects of life such as food, music, clothing, and rituals but it’s about having a suitable function in society^[5]. To understand how language is used to construct our social and cultural worlds language must be used in real-world situations^[6].

1.3. Culture and ELT Textbooks

Textbooks are considered powerful means that provide a platform in an educational context for most of the classroom activities and exercises, accelerate the process of socialization and cultural adaptation for inexperienced teachers, and facilitate target language learning for learners by integrating culture and communication^[7]. Thus, as a main source of guidelines, textbooks determine the curriculum and tell instructors and teachers how to address and continue a particular topic. English as a global and cross-cultural language for communication, is not only limited to the four traditional language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) but also learning Culture as a fifth language skill that has resulted in more language textbook analysis and evaluation studies over the last five decades^[8, 9].

1.4. Semiotic Perspective of Culture in Textbooks Analysis

As a result of the acceptance of culture as a process instead of a product, semiotics has become an integral part of linguistic anthropological theory over the past twenty years^[10]. The Semio-cultural analytical framework put forward by Keshavarz and Noshadi in 2023 integrates features of cultural and semiotic conceptualizations based on the rationale that cultural conceptualization and semiotics alone cannot explain all culturally-constructed concepts. It also introduces the notion of cultural symbols to connect

elements of semiotics with those of Cultural Conceptualizations^[4].

1.5. Cultural Conceptualization

Cultural conceptualization that is embedded in every aspect of life and even language, encompasses the shared beliefs, values, experiences, and mental frameworks that influence how people in a particular cultural environment understand and make sense of the world around them. In this respect, how cultural features of various communities or individuals can be assessed, or how the diversity and complexity of culture can be totally captured^[4]. According to Sharifian in terms of ELT content and materials cultural conceptualizations are included in dialogue, stories, discourse, rituals, and pictures^[11].

1.6. Cultural Linguistics

Cultural linguistics, with lowercase 'c' and 'l' refers to the general field of study that explores the interrelationship between language and culture. It examines how language is shaped by culture, and how language, in turn, influences one's worldview and culture. In this sense, 'cultural linguistics' is a general term without being associated with a specific framework, approach, or theory^[4]. 'Cultural Linguistics' written with capital C and L, refers to a recently developed interdisciplinary research areas of study that investigate the relations among language and cultural conceptualizations. "Cultural Linguistics" involves all aspects and features of human languages that are constructed culturally all of the human experiences; in other words, most of the features of human languages are embedded in cultural conceptualizations^[12, 13]. The theoretical and analytical frameworks introduced by Farzad Sharifian provide a systematic way to study how cultural values, norms, and conceptual systems influence language structure and use. This approach aims to identify cultural conceptualizations embedded in language and analyze how they shape communication and cultural understanding^[14]. As a result, it is defined as an interdisciplinary field of study that integrates different perspectives, aiming at exploring the relationship between language, culture, and conceptualizations. And investigate how each member of a speech community experiences, interprets and shares their perspective of the world^[4].

1.7. Cultural Linguistics and Semiotic Approach

Cultural Linguistics studies how language, culture, and conceptualization interact with each other. Palmer argued that narrative, semantics, grammar, discourse figurative language, and even phonology are influenced by cultural conceptualization^[15]. In The Cultural semiotics approach focuses on the study of culture through two main tasks. Firstly, to uncover the embedded meanings, values, and beliefs within a culture or how things can mean. Secondly, examines the norms, practices, and social structures that shape individuals' perspectives and experiences, and tries to understand how cultural sign systems influence identity, behavior, and worldview^[16]. A semiotics approach toward cultural linguistics will not discover a meaning but will describe the logic according to which meanings are engendered^[17].

1.8. The Analytical Framework

The analytical Semio-cultural Conceptualization framework which acts as an interplay between language and culture and was introduced by Keshavarz and Noshadi in 2023, is used in this research as a tool to examine the relationship between texts and visual elements in the Road Maps ELT series. This framework incorporates semiotics, i.e., signs, objects, and interpretants (i.e., immediate, dynamical, and normal/ final interpretants) to cultural conceptualizations and reaches a new and detailed visualization of cultural conceptualizations. To link the relationship between semiotics and cultural conceptualizations, cultural symbols, that are derived from the final interpretant, come under the elements of cultural conceptualizations from a semiotic perspective to Cultural Linguistics, see **Figure 1**.

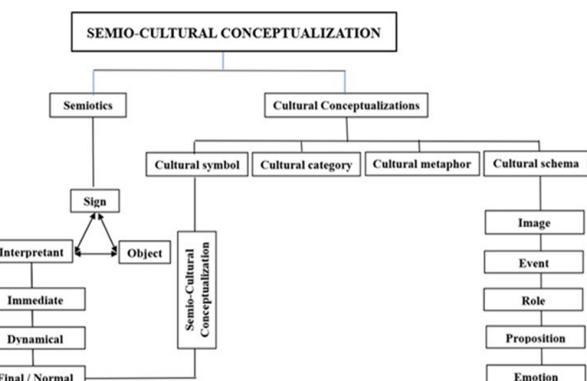


Figure 1. Semio-cultural Analytical Framework.

Source: Keshavarz & Noshadi, 2023.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sign, Object and Interpretant

A sign is something that is determined by another thing, known as its Object, and has an effect on a person, which is interpretant. According to Peirce's view, anything might be a sign as long as these formal requirements are met: Every sign represents an object; in other words, each sign is associated with an object or a real thing that corresponds to it^[18]. Therefore, a sign consists of three elements: a sign, an object, and an interpretant. In the semiotics field we can conceptualize a sign as the signifier. For example, the written and spoken words and phrases, or even a smoking sign for fire are some examples of signs. According to Peirce's view, anything might be a sign as long as these formal requirements are met^[19]. As Keshavarz defined, a sign is a medium that stands for the idea or notion which conveys something in the mind. The thing that a sign stands for is an object, the conveyed content is the Meaning and the given concept is the Interpretant. Signs cannot be studied in isolation, but in a meaningful context and in relation to objects and meanings that they signify^[4]. The object (what is present) might be called the signified as it represents and is attached to the sign. The interpretant is defined as understanding the relation of sign and object. Interpretant can be considered as a means for translation of the sign, which enables us to develop a more complex comprehension of the sign's object. Therefore, it could be seen as a sign since it triggers the process of semiosis. The meaning or mental image of a sign is revealed by the interpretation that it creates through the interpretant in the audience's minds^[4]. The importance of considering interpretants as translations has been highlighted by Savan; in this respect, Savan proposes that Peirce should have called it the "translatant" because it facilitates the process of understanding sign and its intended meaning^[20]. The components of semiotics are illustrated in **Figure 2**.

Three subcategories of interpretants: the immediate, the dynamical, and the final or normal, have been defined by Peirce; in the first place, there is an interpretant that is the meaning of a sign. And then, the Immediate Interpretant is the true understanding of the sign and refers to the intended interpretation of a given sign. The third place is the Dynamical Interpretant and it refers to the actual impact that a Sign, really brings about and determines^[18]. Dynamical

Interpretant represents the real outcome that make a sign being understood, because it is the active nature of the Sign and emphasizes the practical and observable effects that the Sign has on the interpretive process; his implies that meaning is not fixed or unchanging, but rather it is influenced by the continuous processes of interpretation within a complex system of signs and their interpretations, hence the dynamic nature of meaning. At the final stage, there is the Final Interpretant, which identifies the manner in which the Sign tends to represent itself as being connected and related to its Object.

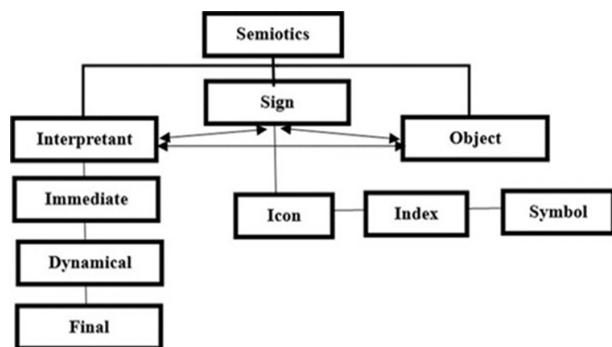


Figure 2. Components of Semiotics.

However, Keshavarz suggested that in cases where an interpretant related to a symbolic conceptualization reaches its final stage, a symbol would be culturally conceptualized and interpreted in a speech community^[4].

2.2. Review of Related Empirical Studies

The literature has shown that numerous studies have been done through applying a content analysis approach to examine culture in ELT textbooks by focusing on different aspects of language such as culture and so on. To begin with, one research has been done from the perspective of the social semiotics approach and critical discourse analysis of cultural representation in two German textbooks as a foreign language: Studio A1 and Netzwerk A1 which are used in Indonesia. The results indicated that the learners are more able to learn German culture and reflect it through images and pedagogical questions that are provided in the Netzwerk A1 textbook. While, in A1 Studio the priority is learning linguistic knowledge and limited learners in terms of exploration and negotiation of the cultural value. This research concluded that language textbook authors should consider cultural repertoire in designing language

coursebooks to engage students actively in cultural language learning^[21, 22].

In order to show the effectiveness of cultural linguistics and conceptualizations in Vietnamese high school students' English textbooks, through analyzing the textual and visual reading part of students' books grade 11, unit 8 another study was conducted; the study showed that some lexical items have a similar meaning as they are in correspondence with Vietnamese culture. For example, Tet, or Lunar New Year, is represented as "a time for getting together", "happiness", "plants", and "animals". The study provided some evidence of Vietnamese cultural and conceptualization notions and perspectives that are reflected in ELT textbooks studies; how Lunar New Year is presented in the local textbook and materials is linked to the idea of Tet in Vietnam^[23]. Another research investigated the existence of "Vietnamese English," as a variety of the language used by Vietnamese speakers of English that has its own lexical characteristics. The study focused on areas such as: lexical innovations in Vietnamese English and cultural Linguistics as a new framework to analyze and categorize English varieties considering lexical and semantic innovations, and underlying cultural conceptualizations. This study concluded that in terms of cultural conceptualization, Vietnamese English has its own different lexical variations to encode the Vietnamese cultural aspects and dimensions^[24]. Victor has studied cultural context by applying cultural analysis approach in two ELT textbooks named 'You're English' and 'L'anglais Vivant' in Gabon. The result of the study found that the textbooks are not designed based on the students' conditions and needs^[25]. Ilieva had studied the cultural concept of the target language in 'Canadian Concept' ELT textbooks for adults by applying the discourse analysis approach. The final result revealed that cultural concepts of the target language were noticeable in the textbooks; second language learners as immigrants were not supposed to consider and reflect on their own culture in the recent learning setting^[26]. Ahmadi and Derakhshan carried out research on Iranian high school English 'Prospect 1' textbooks to investigate the weaknesses and strengths of the books from teachers' perspectives. The result revealed that learners had a positive attitude towards the new books. Some main strengths of the textbooks were reported as follows: a) the main focus in newly developed textbooks is based on approach; b) integration of four language skills is noticeable,

and c) more emphasis is on learners' needs and expectations in the new textbook. The weaknesses were: a) not following the alphabetical order of the alphabet letters; b) teaching time is not appropriate and enough for the learners, c) compared to listening and speaking, less attention is given to reading and writing skills^[27]. Setyono and Widodo analyzed cultural values and qualities depicted in a secondary school English textbook in Indonesian. This study disclosed that visuals and texts that are presented in the textbooks represent the multicultural values that teachers and learners need to be aware of. The values are: (1) to respect different cultures and religions of different people, (2) to respect the culture of Aboriginal people. (3) Avoid conflict and live in peace with nature and life (4) to have an understanding perception of cultural outcome^[8]. Weninger and Kiss, Conducted a quantitative approach to study culture in EFL textbooks developed for Hungarians to analyze texts, images, and tasks in terms of meanings in the field of semiosis that have examined conceptualizations of culture as well as intercultural citizenship in language learning; they argued that making meaning for students in the classroom was mainly guided (guided semiosis) and texts and images linked indexically in a denotational manner and the main focus in these series is linguistic competence which is significant but not enough for students to think and discover cultural values to develop intercultural citizenship in the global world^[28]. In another critical study, Widodo looked at how cultural principles are expressed in one of the Indonesian Ministry of National Education-approved high school English textbooks that uses different discursive resources and lexicon-grammatical. The study concluded that the visual items and the texts with different genres found in the textbook represent a large number of values that instructors and learners must be aware of^[22]. Yuen argues the representation of cultures and cultural aspects in English as a foreign and an international language in two ELT textbooks used in the secondary schools in Hong Kong, namely: 'Treasure Plus' and 'Longman Elect'. The researcher adopted a qualitative content analysis of cultural aspects in ELT textbooks. The conclusion indicated that, more aspects of English as an international language have been reflected in English-speaking countries, and engaged learners in cultural representation of target language, while the African cultures were not illustrated^[29]. Dinh has adopted a semiotic approach to investigate the reflection of culture

and cultural conceptualizations in three sets of locally English language teaching curriculum textbooks version ('New Headway' – intermediate, upper intermediate and advanced) developed for Vietnamese high school students in grades 10,11 and 12. The study focused on: a) the reflection of culture in the ELT textbooks, b) learners' comprehension of the cultures presented in visuals and texts, and c) the relation of cultures and students' own experience. The findings revealed a) noticeable Vietnamese culture, in another words the dominant culture reflected in locally developed textbooks is Vietnamese culture not British and American cultures, which are the dominant ones in internationally ELT textbooks, while there is no representation of other cultures, b) learners' inadequate understanding of the local culture that is presented in the content and material, and c) similarity in the national Vietnam and in South Korean's they focused on the roles of culture and intercultural communication. d) the focus in texts and tasks provided in the ELT textbooks is on linguistic aspect of learning rather than supporting cultural and intercultural communications. e) Vietnamese and English cultural conceptualizations were found in both visuals and texts in English language teaching textbooks^[10]. Safari, P & Pourhashemi examined semiotic approach and discussed the meaning of culture in the Iranian high school English textbooks. The results showed that students' awareness and their understanding of cultural potential and reflection were not facilitated in the EFL textbooks. Besides, denotational relationship between texts and images could not promote students' intercultural perception. So, teachers need to facilitate cultural aspects of texts and images to help them develop their cultural understanding of others^[30].

The literature has shown that there is an outstanding similarity among most of the studies carried out in this field of study; they have examined textbook series from students or teachers' perspectives. This study aims to investigate the ELT textbook in prep school of CIU from more perspectives to come to a richer evaluation rather than focusing on a single aspect investigation study like culture.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Are cultural features included in Road Map ELT Textbook Series denotational or connotational?
2. To what extent are Road Map Series suitable and reflect different cultures according to teachers' perspectives?

3. To what extent are these series designed to be adaptable to different cultures and teaching contexts?

3. Materials, Samples and Tools

3.1. Materials

3.1.1. Road Maps ELT Textbook Series

The data for the analytical framework of Semio-cultural Conceptualization were collected from A1 and B1 Roadmap English language textbooks series, published by Pearson Practice English. The reasons for selecting these books are that (1) these books are widely used in preparatory school of Cyprus International University as the main course resources in an international and multicultural context. (2) these learning sources and materials are used by all the participants in this study including the teacher, students and the author of this research. (3) all of these textbook series support students learning and understanding of what they are supposed to learn with pictures. (4) they were written and designed by English language experts and writers. From each book three pictures have been selected for cultural content analysis. This series has been chosen because the researcher and all participants (students and teachers) are teaching and studying these books as the main English language sources at Cyprus International University preparatory school since 2023. So, in order to collect the necessary data for this research, a qualitative method was applied, allowing for a detailed exploration of the Semio-cultural conceptualization within the textbooks.

3.1.2. Sample and Sampling Technique

For collecting data, a semi-structured interview was administered to 10 teachers as participants (3 Male and 7 Female) out of 40 with different L1 background who were teaching the Roadmap series textbook at Cyprus International University, prep school at the moment of doing this research. Random Sampling technique has been applied; in this method a number was assigned to each teacher from all levels. So, all of the population has an equal chance of being selected with no bias.

3.1.3. Tool

In order to tap into the teachers' perception regarding the visuals used in English textbooks, a semi-structured inter-

view was administered to them to collect data. This method allowed for flexibility in the interview process, enabling the researcher to explore and compare teachers' perceptions, also creating a direct link between their experiences and the research questions.

The semi-structured interview questions were as follows:

1. What Semiotic elements have you noticed in the Road Map textbook series? Can you mention some examples?
2. What features of the Western and non-Western cultures are reflected in the Road Map textbook series? Please mention some examples.
3. To what extent are the book series designed to be adaptable to different cultures and teaching contexts?
4. Are conceptualizations like respect and tolerance towards other cultures, family values, globalization, and the like included in the series? Please elaborate.
5. To what extent does this book series promote multiculturalism?

3.2. Data Analysis Method

The procedure of data collection and analysis in this study consists of two main stages:

The first tool to analyze texts and visuals or the findings is the Semio-cultural analytical model and the unit of study is Roadmap ELT textbook. The focus is on the relationship between signs, objects, and interpretants, to analyze whether this link is denotational or connotational. Therefore, the text is considered (as a sign), the picture (as an object) and interpretants (students' perception of the given tasks), to study the meaning of sign, objects and interpretants. Then try to find out the semiotic relationship between them whether it is denotational (direct) or connotational(indirect) in the process of cultural learning. So, in this qualitative data collection method, semiotic analysis and its influence on cultural learning in ELT textbooks are highlighted. The second tool to analyze the findings is a semi-structured interview with a group of 10 EFL teachers who are teaching the Roadmap books at CIU prep school (two teachers from each level) to explore the perceptions of EFL teachers about the factors that affect their cultural perception. The participants were asked 5 open-ended semi-structured interview questions and

they were free to clarify their own perceptions and attitudes toward culture and explain their answers (see the **Supplementary Materials**). Then it was analyzed through qualitative content analysis.

In order to examine the connotational and denotational semiotic relationships between signs, objects, and interpretants in ELT textbooks, and their influence on cultural learning, the qualitative approach is selected. The focus of the finding is to indicate in detail that in Roadmap ELT textbooks, there are two types of semiotic relationships within the texts and images. The first one, direct(explicit) semiotic relationship is shown by giving three examples from B1 level textbook. Chapters 3A (page 22), 5B (page 99), 7A (page 104) from A1 level have been analyzed and indirect(implicit) semiotic relationship in the texts and images by giving three examples in detail is clarified. Units 3C (page 26), 5B (page 100), and 8B (page 64) from B1 level have been analyzed. The analysis of these six lessons from A1 and B1 Roadmap textbooks emphasizes the importance of the relationship between texts, images, and tasks to enhance students' communicative skills in both direct and indirect semiotic conceptualization to facilitate language learning in ELT textbooks. The lack of this relationship results in students' misunderstanding and confusion in their learning process. And for the second part, after collecting data from the teachers, we have categorized their answers to different themes and provided their meaning by giving some examples from the books that include: individualism, westernization, globalization, traditional gender roles and Family values.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Results of the Analysis of Road Maps ELT Textbooks

To answer research question one—Are cultural features included in Road Map ELT textbook series denotational or connotational? —in the section 4.1.1 (parts A, B, C) and then 4.2.2 (parts A, B, C) the results of semiotic analysis of the texts and images in the textbooks are presented. Accordingly, our first attempt is to determine whether the link between sign, object and interpretant in Roadmap series is denotational or connotational.

4.1.1. Images and Texts That Provide Direct (Denotational) Language Input and Facilitate Semiotics Thinking and Learning

Denotational semiotics relationship is when the relationship between text (sign) and image(object) is direct and explicit. In this section, we first want to find out whether the semiotic relationship between text and image in the Road map ELT textbooks is direct (explicit) which means the text is related by the close association to the image, or not. Let's have a look at some examples from the Road Map ELT textbooks to illustrate this point.

In Developing their writing skills part, exercise 1, the students are supposed to first read the leaflet, and write a leaflet. The linguistic form (as a sign) which is the word 'leaflet' maybe unknown to the students. However, the picture of the leaflet, (as an object) in **Figure 3** helps them to understand the meaning(interpretant) of the leaflet in this activity. In other words, when they turn to this page, and see the word leaflet and the picture next to it as an object, they immediately start the process of interpretation. Since the purpose of our analysis is to focus on semiotic analysis of the task, and not simply the pedagogical purpose of the activity in the class, we conclude that as it is clear from the text (sign) and picture(object), here we can see the denotational semiotics relationship has been easily established, as illustrated through the text (sign) and picture (object). In other words, in this task, the word leaflet accompanied by the picture and given information in the task, helps students to explore the denotational meaning easily.

In developing their reading skill, the bold written word Tipis (a kind of tent for native Americans, as a sign) is unfamiliar to the students. So, before starting the reading process they need to consider the picture (as object) and they are likely to begin the process of denotational semiotics interpretation within the text and image. However, by looking at the picture, they might be able to guess the meaning of the unknown words before reading the text and try to distinguish that these homes are examples of traditional homes in ancient times in America and China. Furthermore, in the second example the word Tulou earth buildings (traditional homes in the twelfth century in Fujian, south China) is a sign that is presented by its picture (object) in an explicit way (**Figure 4**). This denotation semiotic relationship is a direct guidance for students to interpret the meaning of unknown words even without teacher's guidance.



Figure 3. B1 level, Lesson 7A, page 104.



Traditional homes are built in different ways around the world. Let's look at some examples of traditional homes from North America and China.

Tipis

Native Americans used to live in **tipis**, which are a kind of tent. They were **nomadic** so they needed homes that were easy to move from place to place. They used to **hunt** and kill wild animals for food and they **roamed** across the land following the animals. They used the skins of the animals to build their tipis. They attached the skins to tall wooden **poles**. That meant they could put the tipis up and take them down again quickly.

Tipis were cool in summer and warm in winter. The shape of the tipis **protected** them from the cold winter winds.

Today, most Native Americans live in cities and towns of the US. Others live in houses on **reservations**, areas of land specially reserved for them.

Tulou earth buildings

The tulou homes of Fujian in Southern China **date back to** the twelfth century. At that time, thieves used to attack homes and steal food. So the people who lived there needed to **defend** themselves. The tulou were built in a circle. They were up to four stories high, with very thick earth walls. Tulou means 'earth building'. There was usually only one entrance gate into the building. This design helped to protect the **residents**.

The tulou design had another purpose as well: **communal living**. Many families lived together in the same tulou building. Although each family had their own rooms, the residents of the tulou met outside every day. They also used to get together for weddings and ceremonies.

Today there are still about 3,000 tulou homes in Fujian, but many of them are empty. The residents are moving to the cities to find jobs and they are **abandoning** their homes. As a result, the buildings are falling down. One man, Lin Lusheng, is trying to save them. He believes it's important for any country to **preserve** its traditional buildings and culture.



Figure 4. B1 level, Lesson 5B, page 99.

The topic of this unit, from which this example is taken, is Bucket lists (Figure 5). The topic is narrowed by first giving the definition of the word bucket list. The definition of new word, mentioning some ideas and giving some verbs which are written in bold directly clarifies the meaning of unknown words (as a sign) and then pictures A, B, C, D, E (as an object) on the page are direct guidance to start the meaning-making process. Like the previous two examples, here again the text and image are linked denotationally. So, the mental image or meaning (interpretant) that is created in the students' mind is a denotational symbol. In other words, each text or linguistic form (as a sign) contributes to the meaning in a direct way and all of the new words, phrases and ideas are associated with its images explicitly. Therefore,

it enables students to form the interpretant in learning process, according to Peirce's model, in order to interpret a text semiotically three elements are vital: sign (what is represented), an object (how it is represented) and interpretant (how it is interpreted). These examples are provided to demonstrate the denotational relationship between texts and images; in all of the mentioned items which item is the sign and which one is the object depends on the students' understanding in other words the identification of the sign and the object depend on the student's recognition of either the image or the word, which are the aims of learning a foreign language. In all three random examples from B1 level, cultural content and representation of the text and images reinforced denotational relationship in foreign language learning context.

3A Bucket lists





Goal: talk about experiences
Grammar: present perfect and past simple
Vocabulary: experiences



B



C

Reading and vocabulary

1 a Read the definition of a bucket list and discuss the questions.

A bucket list is a list of all the experiences you want to have during your life.

- 1 Do you have a bucket list? Why/Why not?
- 2 What kind of things do you think people put on them?

b Read the bucket list ideas. Which can you see in the photos?

- take part in a marathon
- perform in a play
- raise money for charity
- take up a new sport
- go backpacking
- explore the ancient ruins of Egypt
- experience a new culture
- apply to be a film extra
- try hot-air ballooning

2 a Match the verbs in bold in Exercise 1b with phrases a–i.

- a _____ in a band/in a show/on stage
- b _____ travelling/hiking/ice skating
- c _____ a new cuisine/scuba diving/learning a new language
- d _____ a new cuisine/something new/living abroad
- e _____ to appear on a TV programme
- f _____ a hobby/golf
- g _____ to help animals/for your local school
- h _____ the jungle/the coast of Canada
- i _____ a singing competition/a race

b Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- 1 Which activities have you done?
- 2 Which would you like to do?

3 Read the blog and answer the questions.

- 1 What activities and experiences does the writer recommend? Why?
- 2 Which activities has the writer already done? Does he say exactly when?
- 3 Which hasn't he done yet?

 Go to page 138 or your app for more vocabulary and practice.

Figure 5. B1 level, Lesson 3A, page 22.

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4.1.2. Images and Texts That Provide Indirect (Connotational) Language Input and Facilitate Semiotics Thinking and Learning

Connotational semiotic relationship, refers to the relationship between text and image in an indirect and implicit way, as illustrated by the following analysis.

In A1 book Unit 3C the pedagogical goals are describing a town or a city (**Figure 6**). In this task, the students are expected to read the texts 1,2 and 3 on the left side of the picture about places and match them with photos A, B and C on the right side. After reading information they might say: Here the teacher guided them to clarify the picture, as they only see the train station (guided semiosis). Furthermore, the rest of unit 3 on page 94, which is “develop your writing” part, in activity one, they have a social media post and read the short passage about that (sign) but they cannot find any of the information presented in the passage within the picture (object). Also, on the same page in the activity 5, they see a picture (object) and they are expected to read and complete the short passage (sign), but there is no picture relevant to that. In other words, when they look at these two pictures as object, the process of interpretation might be difficult and confusing to make a relation between sign (text), object (picture) and interpretant (their understanding)^[4].

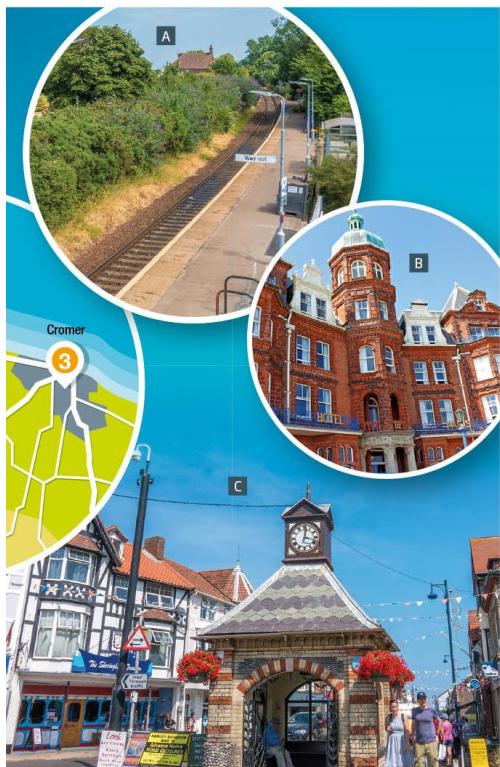


Figure 6. A1 level, Lesson 3C, page 26.

The interaction between these three elements (sign, object, interpretant) has been illustrated in **Figure 7** by Peirce as Charles Sanders Pierce's Semiotic Triad (1980, 1998) semiotic relationships theory of signs. When the students read the text (sign), they expect to see a clear picture of what they have read (object). In other words, the semiosis process cannot easily flow through the visual and textual semiotic sign because the connection between the text and image is implicit and indirect. In the A1 level the teacher needs to contextualize the image and text and act as a facilitator to make it comprehensible to them (guided semiosis).

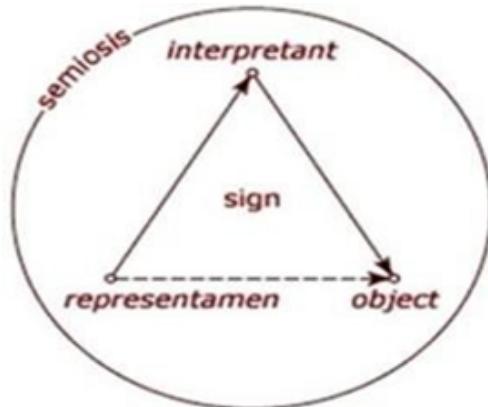


Figure 7. Charles Sanders Pierce's Semiotic Triad.

A1 level page 100, unit 5 is about foods and drinks (**Figure 8**). As they read the information about the people food in Paris, they expect to see these foods in the three pictures but the image (as object) next to the text (as sign) depicts something which is not completely match the information in the text. As a result, their interpretant is not clear when focusing only on the given information. Since, the purpose of this study is to consider semiotics potential, the main focus is on the texts in association with their images. Our focus is not just on the pedagogical part of the activity in the classroom, but rather on the semiotic analysis. We can conclude that as it is obvious, the link between the text and image in this example is also connotational.

Lesson 8B of A1 book, page 64 is titled You had a bad day (**Figure 9**). The students should listen to complete the sentences as they know what the purpose of this task is. Then they read the text and match it with the correct photo, A, B, C. These three pictures show images which is not clear from the text. While the visual mode should include elements that provide associations and connections related to the task and texts to guide students to find the appropriate image.

2 Read Pierre's answer and complete the table.

Hi Jess,
Paris? Great! We've got lots of good food here. 😊
In the morning, we have a small breakfast at 8 a.m.
We usually have tea or coffee and bread and jam. I sometimes have fruit.
At 12 or 1 o'clock, we have lunch. We often have a big lunch. We have fish or meat. We usually have bread and salad. After lunch, I always have coffee.
We usually have dinner at 7 or 8 o'clock. We don't have a big dinner. I often have soup, pasta or salad.
See you soon!

Figure 8. A1 Level, Lesson 5C, page 100.



Figure 9. A1 Level, Lesson 8B page 64.

Therefore, the sign which is the text is not directly related to the objects (photos) and might be confusing for them. Thus, the teacher helps them and provides a clear illustration for basic-level students.

4.2. The Teachers' Views of the Cultural Concept in ELT Textbooks

To answer the second and third research questions: To what extent are Road Map Series suitable and reflect different

cultures according to teachers' perspectives? To what extent are these series designed to be adaptable to different cultures and teaching contexts? The results of the Semi-structured interviews are mentioned. Next, teachers' views of the cultural content in ELT textbooks are analyzed.

A Semi-structured interview with ten EFL teachers out of forty who are teaching the roadmap textbooks at the present time at CIU prep school was conducted to elicit their ideas about cultural content in these textbooks. Then teachers' views of the cultural content in ELT textbooks were analyzed to identify some key cultural themes of ELT textbooks; after collecting data from the teachers, their answers have been categorized into different themes that include: individualism, westernization, globalization, traditional gender roles and Family values through providing their meaning by giving some examples from the books to make it clear. By adopting a Semio-cultural conceptualization perspective we will be able to uncover hidden clues in the textbooks about people lifestyles, the way people think, behave, speak in English cultures. The following are some examples of cultural conceptualization themes used in the Road maps English textbooks.

4.2.1. Cultural Conceptualization and Categories Used in the Roadmap ELT Series According to the Teacher's View

a. Conceptualization (Cultural category): Individualism

Meaning: Emphasis on the importance of personal and individual achievements, self-confidence and self-expression as a means of communication, setting individual objectives and pursuing the goals, and facilitating autonomous learning.

In other words:

- 1) Instead of We (collective) the focus is on I (individual perspectives).
- 2) Emphasis on Individual success and personal accomplishment.
- 3) Students are expected to express their own ideas and personal experiences.

b. Conceptualization: Westernization

Meaning: to present and depict Western culture by using real examples and sources that might be unfamiliar to those who are not from Western cultural backgrounds.

- 1) Focus on Western cultural superiority for non-Western culture students.
- 2) Can result in a limited and narrow perception of the world.

c. Conceptualization: Globalization

Meaning: depicts aspects of tolerance towards other cultures by connected people from all over the world in different aspects such as ideas, technological, social and cultural.

- 1) the spread of cultural ideas, norms and other aspects across nations. For example: languages, traditions, art, music, films. (cultural globalization)
- 2) the spread of technology and information across the world. For example, digital technology and information sharing. (technological globalization)
- 3) the spread of social movements and environmental issues. For example, human rights, gender equality, voluntary activities.

d. Conceptualization: Family Values

Meaning: a set of beliefs and moral principles that are considered family values. In Western societies family values include:

- 1) Importance of independence and privacy.
- 2) Acceptance of nuclear family rather than diversity in family structure.
- 3) Belief in freedom, equality and justice.

e. Conceptualization: Traditional Gender Roles

Meaning: Males have dominant roles and female char-

acters in passive roles; subordinate roles can maintain gender stereotypes.

- 1) May reinforce traditional gender stereotypes (active men, passive women)
- 2) Can limit understanding of different gender identities
- 3) May affect students' attitudes and behaviors regarding gender roles

5. Conclusions

In this study we have introduced a new analytical Semio-cultural conceptualization framework to interpret the meaning potential in EFL content. The focus in semiotic analysis is on two main points: 1) the process of making meaning from text and image was indirect and this connotational relationship couldn't develop students' perception of the task clearly; therefore, teacher acts as facilitator through semiosis and guides them to understand the meaning; 2) texts and images are linked directly in denotational manner. The importance of this study lies in the relationship between text and visual elements in ELT materials. Regarding cultural content and reflection of Western culture, the study perceived cultural features in the Road Map ELT books that were embedded within the activities. The study finds that Western cultural elements are embedded in the Road Map ELT textbook series effectively whether in denotational or connotational manner. Besides, teachers' viewpoints through semi-structured interviews were categorized into some themes to highlight how teachers perceive cultural content in their classroom to expand students' comprehension. The findings indicated.

The implications of the study on the Road Map ELT textbook series are significant for teachers, instructors, policymakers of education, curriculum and textbook writers, since they need to incorporate cultural diversity and culture as a dynamic concept in the contents of textbooks to promote their cultural awareness. Teachers also need to be aware of cultural elements and try to integrate them into their ELT strategies. And encourage students to consider these conceptualizations as they maintain their own cultural identity. However, the concept of culture is elusive and complex^[31]. Applying our new analytical Semio-cultural conceptualization framework allows comprehensive and specific analysis of cultural conceptualizations that are embedded in both texts and visuals rather than discovering culture as a whole. This

study is the first of this kind to examine how the new semi-otics framework can be applied to interpret culture in ELT content within texts and images.

There are limitations to this study that should be considered in future research.

First, this research has been done in a qualitative method, but it can be done in mix method, for the quantitate part a group of prep school students who are studying these textbook series can answer a questionnaire to examine students' perspective to cultural conceptualization in Road map ELT textbooks and examine how students engage and perceive culture in textbook. So, in the future studies, both teachers and students could elaborate on cultural conceptualizations in detail. Second, this study just focused on the texts and images, future studies can focus deeply on cultural content in ELT textbooks and its effect on students' language skills as well as other factors and add other variations like students' motivational factors, students' cultural awareness, cultural competence, their performance and proficiency, motivational factors, cultural diversity in ELT and so on. Since the new Analytical frameworks that were introduced in this study can be applied in other research including, Intercultural competence, Cross-Cultural Communication, and Intercultural Pragmatics.

Author Contributions

Methodology: S.M., E.D.; Resources: S.M., E.D.; review and editing: E.D.; visualization: S.M., E.D.; supervision: E.D.; project administration: S.M., E.D. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The participants' identity and personal information will remain confidential throughout the research process; each participant is given a different and special code. Besides, the process of data collection is safe and secure purpose of the study.

Informed Consent Statement

Patient consent was waived due to my research was qualitative not quantitative and my materials are textbook and pictures not humans. so, I was exempt by university to ask for consent but the teachers are informed that their identity will be safe during the interview in a written form and they have signed it.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

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