

Exploring Cultural Diversity Portrayed in ELT Textbooks for Public Secondary Schools in Chiang Mai, Thailand

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Article information	Abstract
Article history: Received: 30 Jan 2024 Accepted: 8 Aug 2025 Available online: 20 Aug 2025	<i>Globalization has elevated the status of English worldwide, prompting significant shifts in English Language Teaching (ELT). This study examines the representation of cultural diversity in ELT textbooks used in Thai public secondary schools, emphasizing the growing importance of culturally inclusive content. Specifically, it analyzes four key components—pictures, reading passages, communicative activities, and grammar practices—to evaluate how cultural diversity is portrayed and whether such content supports integration into English classrooms. The sample includes three Ministry-approved textbooks: New Frontiers 1, Spark 1, and New World 1. Findings reveal that content from non-native English-speaking contexts is prominently featured, offering substantial exposure to global cultures. Some materials also incorporate elements of Thai culture, particularly in reading passages and communicative tasks. However, the move toward fully embracing intercultural and multicultural perspectives across all textbook components remains inconsistent.</i>
Keywords: English language teaching Cultural diversity ELT textbook analysis Secondary education	

INTRODUCTION

The global expansion of English Language Teaching (ELT) has intensified scholarly debates on the standardization of ELT textbooks, particularly regarding their cultural relevance and pedagogical diversity (Galloway & Rose, 2021; Hanashiro, 2016; Melliti, 2013; Sherman, 2010; Vettorel & Lopriore, 2013). Despite these concerns, textbooks remain essential resources, valued for their structured content and accessible frameworks that shape English teaching and learning cross diverse contexts. In this context of English as global Englishes (Galloway & Rose, 2021), ELT textbooks present worldwide themes in everyday life, including cuisine, attractions, and traditions. As a result of a paradigm shift in the teaching of English as an International Language (EIL) (Farzaneh et al., 2014), the EIL model has broadened to encompass many cultural and ethnic groups (Baxter, 1980; Smith, 1983; Stern, 1992). This ELT pedagogy, which honors learners' individuality and socio-cultural values, not only enhances language acquisition but also embraces linguistic and cultural diversity, thereby fostering greater mutual understanding and appreciation among nations (Nguyen, 2011). The justification for choosing cultural content, especially regional characteristics and topics that represent learners' own cultures, is to foster identity awareness among students from varied backgrounds (Alyan,

2011) and to promote their intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997). In light of the textbook policy prioritizing cultural inclusivity and ELT in globalized and multilingual settings, ELT textbooks ought to highlight both source cultures and the cultures of learners, affirming local varieties of English, valuing local languages, and enabling learners to achieve proficiency as multilingual speakers (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Despite the goal of connecting with learners' identities, students often feel disconnected from the learning process of ELT textbooks. Because some components of native speakers' culture are irrelevant to learners' daily lives, their perception of the benefits of learning English thus becomes superficial (Melliti, 2013), and global communication is neither promoted nor developed (Goldstein, 2008). Furthermore, when ELT textbooks inclusively emphasize native speakers' cultures, they fail to promote local discourses or recognize English as a globally utilized language within the paradigm of global Englishes (Galloway & Rose, 2018, 2021). Regrettably, in Thai multilingual contexts, the aspect of multicultural education has not been integrated into English language instruction, with the primary emphasis instead placed on repetitive practice and the enhancement of communicative linguistic skills (Tangkitjaroenkun et al., 2022). Thai educational contexts have demonstrated deficiencies in culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and insufficient cultural responsiveness to local cultural variety as represented in ELT textbooks (Thumvichit, 2018).

According to Kaur et al. (2016), Thailand's 2008 Basic Education Core Curriculum (BECC) intends to equip learners for swift alterations in the global economy, technology, and society. The BECC aims to raise students' knowledge of cultural diversity and the need for cross-cultural communication, with the goal of preparing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and students to meet the demands of globalization. However, a policy prioritizing the promotion of native-born interests and ideas within the EFL framework takes precedence over the significance of EIL. Furthermore, ELT textbooks in Thai public secondary schools tend to neglect content that reflects local settings. Consequently, both language teachers and students in Thailand are likely to face culturally-biased ELT textbooks. This study therefore aims to examine whether the officially approved ELT textbooks for public secondary schools provide sufficient cultural content to facilitate intercultural communication and promote multicultural awareness among students from diverse backgrounds.

This study analyzes ELT textbooks, emphasizing the significance of integrating cultural content into English classrooms, beginning with those used in public secondary schools in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Attention should be given to the cultural content and diverse local or ethnic features depicted in the textbooks to ensure the enhancement of both English efficiency and intercultural communicative competency as a critical component of English classrooms. The study topic examined is "To what extent is cultural diversity represented in ELT textbooks used in Thai public secondary schools?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

ELT models: ESL /EFL /EIL in educational contexts

The differentiation of each term in English language teaching, specifically EFL or ESL, has been regarded as a crucial aspect of language pedagogy for years, given that the teaching context is highly varied and necessitates distinct materials, diverse curricula, and contrasting teaching strategies and methods (Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017). In addition to EFL and ESL, the notion of EIL is distinct, emphasizing the education of local individuals to engage with foreign natives (Farzaneh et al., 2014), as well as facilitating communication between local natives, thereby empowering them to converse amongst themselves (Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017).

Exploring ELT models for global competence and intercultural awareness

Increasing globalization has facilitated connections among varied communities, transcending geological remoteness and culturally-linguistically differences (Alyan, 2011; Galloway & Rose, 2021). Thus, a method of language instruction that fosters both linguistic competence and the ability to interact with peers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds has been advocated. This method is unequivocally identified as the intercultural approach to language teaching.

Intercultural approach to language teaching

Emerging in the late 19th century within the context of ELT, the intercultural approach, also referred to as the intercultural dimension in language instruction, is now more aligned with the growing prevalence of intercultural communication in the 21st century than Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Alptekin, 2002; Byram, 1997, 2009; Byram et al., 2002; Corbett, 2003; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Due to the interplay between language and culture, numerous scholars in applied linguistics and second or foreign language education (e.g., Byram, 1997, 2009; Byram et al., 2002; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013) have advocated for the incorporation of cultural instruction into language studies, leading to the recognition of a “cultural dimension” or “cultural aspects” in ESL and EFL pedagogy.

The cultural dimension in language instruction is characterized as “the teaching of language that incorporates cultural elements of the target language, the learners’ native language, or other languages” (Baker, 2012, p. 62). Alyan (2011, p. 33) explains that incorporating culture into language courses can enhance learners’ awareness of their own culture, asserting that “culture typically functions at a subconscious level, making it challenging to recognize one’s own culture despite exposure to other cultures.”

This highlights the necessity for the cultural aspect of language instruction to expand beyond the target language’s culture (e.g., literature, arts, customs, and habits) to include other cultures, especially those of the learners (Baker, 2012; Byram et al., 2002; Kramsch, 1998; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). In addition to focusing on grammar and vocabulary proficiency, language educators should prioritize preparing learners for effective and appropriate interactions with individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Alyan, 2011).

Intercultural communicative competence

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) refers to the ability to engage and interact appropriately and effectively with individuals who possess a different language and culture than one's own (Byram, 2002; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006). The intercultural communicative competence of learners can be cultivated through an intercultural approach to language instruction, which is an extension of communicative language teaching, and is particularly pertinent to the current study.

Byram (1997) formulates a comprehensive model of intercultural communicative competence that underpins the intercultural approach to language instruction. This model seeks to develop language learners into intercultural speakers and provides language educators with recommendations for incorporating intercultural elements into their language instruction.

Byram's approach posits that applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, social identity theory, cross-cultural communication, and social and cultural capitals are the foundational elements of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, 2009). The 2009 iteration of the ICC model illustrates the three fundamental components of communicative competence: linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence. Byram's ICC model can be seen as a mix of language instruction and intercultural communication, although intercultural communication is sometimes regarded as non-linguistic. Its five components of ICC can significantly influence both intracultural and intercultural interactions (Piatkowska, 2015).

Byram (1997) delineates three essential elements of his ICC Model: 1) the model delineates the attainable goal of cultivating intercultural speakers; 2) the model, conceived from a linguistic pedagogical perspective, is relevant to educational contexts; and 3) the model addresses learning environments and elucidates the functions of both educators and learners.

English language and cultural content in ELT textbooks

A paradigm shift in the instruction of EIL (Farzaneh et al., 2014) has led to an expansion of the ELT model to include a broader array of cultural and ethnic groups (Baxter, 1980; Smith, 1983; Stern, 1992), hence making it more universal (Crystal, 1992). Globalization has profoundly influenced the design of ELT materials (Galloway & Rose, 2018), with English content in textbooks promoting cross-cultural communication. This perspective aligns with Vygotsky (1986) who posits that language and culture are interconnected.

As Thailand is classified within the Expanding Circle of Kachru's Concentric Circles model (1992), English textbooks in the country should be designed to emphasize intercultural communication, local contexts, and learner identity within a wider cultural diversity. Furthermore, they could be made to enhance non-native speakers' multicultural communication competencies through communicative learning methodologies (Matsuda, 2012). Although suitable for EFL contexts in Thailand, ELT textbooks utilized in the country typically neglect multicultural themes and predominantly endorse the culture of native speakers. This nativism leads to students' alienation from the educational process and the significance of learning (Melliti, 2013).

Educators and textbook content developers often fail to integrate reading materials, activities, content, teaching tools, or assessment methods that are suitable for Thai contexts and the diverse ethnic cultures. ELT textbooks sanctioned by the Ministry of Education include a limited representation of specific aspects of Thai society (Thumvichit, 2018). Moreover, the issue of inadequate Thai cultural content is compounded by textbooks utilized in Thai public schools, which often present material from a monocultural viewpoint that perceives Thai identity as a homogeneous construct. Furthermore, ELT textbooks never address or presume the existence of regional Thai or ethnic cultures, each encompassing diverse language and cultural heritages. Consequently, the cultures of several ethnic groups and indigenous Thai communities are often overlooked. Over the past two decades, only a limited number of disciplines, particularly those in sociocultural fields, have orientated their pedagogical approaches towards multilingual environments (Arphattananon, 2012).

Roles of textbooks in ELT

The crucial function of textbooks in ELT enhances students' awareness during the language acquisition process through clear and methodical approaches (Ansary & Babaii, 2002). Besides benefiting students, textbooks assist teachers by conserving time in the development of instructional materials (Garinger, 2002). Textbooks serve to shape worldviews and facilitate classroom instruction and authoritative discourse (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999), rendering them invaluable for the development of educational resources. Numerous experts advocate for textbooks, asserting that well-crafted, adaptable texts are advantageous. This claim is substantiated by the remarkable expansion of the textbook industry in recent decades, driven by the accessibility of diverse textbooks that address various skill levels and institutional needs (Thumvichit, 2018). Nonetheless, comprehensive criteria are still necessary to aid language educators in selecting textbooks that align with diverse learning styles, areas of interest, and language acquisition objectives across various contexts.

Cultural content in ELT textbooks

Textbooks are recognized for enhancing learning by increasing students' awareness of language and culture, especially in Thai settings where opportunities for daily English usage are limited both inside and outside the classroom. Consequently, ELT textbooks serve as a crucial fundamental resource for learning foreign languages and cultures, influenced by the dynamics of globalization (Bardovi-Harling, 1996). Under these circumstances, ELT textbooks seek to promote intercultural communication while encouraging students to perceive English as a global language and recognize variety. Monfared et al. (2016) assert that ELT materials must acknowledge that language learners need to be assimilated into the English-speaking world and establish linkages between the varied cultures shown in textbooks and their own.

Moreover, when developing ELT textbooks, it is imperative in order to consider cultural diversity to enhance students' understanding of the importance of culture in the English-speaking realm. Matsuda (2012) asserts that to promote acceptable diversity in multicultural classrooms, ELT textbooks must integrate a range of cultural knowledge sourced from various origins. Discussion sections in ELT textbooks should encompass a range of cultural topics, including global historical

sites, cultural diversity, and international cuisines. Such textbooks can integrate issues pertinent to students' real-world experiences into the classroom, thereby enhancing students' knowledge of cultural variety. ELT textbooks should include three categories of culture: source culture, target culture, and international culture, as stated below.

The "source culture" refers to the fundamental culture of English language learners. In the context of ELT textbooks, source cultures are more effective in recognizing and appreciating the distinct identity of learners than target cultures, which refer to the cultures of native speakers. Textbooks that emphasize source cultures include *Spotlight on English* (Turkey), and *Comet English Communication* (Japan) (Thumvichit, 2018). Secondly, the "target culture" typically refers to English or American culture. Most ELT textbooks predominantly focus on and prioritize these two cultures, neglecting native and regional cultural elements, as well as the representation or advancement of global diversity and global Englishes (Galloway & Rose, 2018, 2021; Goldstein, 2008). Third, the "international culture" refers to a diverse array of cultures worldwide, illustrating global characteristics and engaging with the global target culture (Siddiqie, 2011). These ELT textbooks promote global communication and facilitate the use of the English language across many settings while exposing students to a multitude of cultures.

Ultimately, textbook policy should prioritize cultural inclusivity in ELT within globalized and multilingual contexts, ensuring that cultural variety is represented both implicitly and explicitly in ELT textbooks. To enhance students' capacity for global interaction and application of English language skills across diverse cultural contexts, textbook developers, educators, and instructors incorporate a range of cultural topics within ELT pedagogy into ELT textbooks, thereby exposing students to the varied cultures of individuals from different backgrounds in English-language learning settings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, comprising two components: 1) an analysis of selected ELT textbooks from cultural perspectives, focusing on frequency and percentage; and 2) a constant comparative analysis to examine cultural representation in ELT textbooks and the potential for integrating cultural content into ELT pedagogy in English classes.

Participants

A sample of 10 participants was chosen using purposive and convenience sampling as experts in the TESOL group for a mixed-methods quantitative and qualitative content study of ELT textbooks. This group consisted of English lecturers in universities, English teachers, and English mentors in schools within the study context. The participants were chosen due to a variety of factors, including: 1) their expertise in English and multicultural education, 2) possessing an M.A. in TESOL or a related field, 3) more than five years' teaching experience, and 4) having researched English teaching and learning.

Research instruments

ELT textbooks

This study selected three out of five textbooks commonly utilized in ELT in Chiang Mai, which were sanctioned by the Thai Ministry of Education, specifically designed for the EFL context, and chosen based on their accessibility and diverse applicability in the study area (see Table 1).

Table 1
Grade 7 ELT textbooks based on actual usage in 34 schools throughout 25 districts
in the province of Chiang Mai

Textbook Title	Author /Publisher	Names of public secondary schools in Chiang Mai Province used the textbooks (N = 34)
<i>New Frontiers 1</i> (61.77%)	Thomas Hong & Gareth Powell / Patanakhunnabawichakarn (PW.) International, Co. Ltd.	(N = 21) Arunothai School, Bankadwittayakom School, Chai Prakan School, Chiang Dao Wittayakhom School, Debsirin Chiang Mai School, Doi Tao Wittayakhom School, Fangchanupathum School, Mae Rim Wittayakhom School, Mae Taeng High School, Mae Tuen Wittayakhom School, Navamintrachinutit Payap School, Omkoi Wittayakom School, Phrao Wittayakhom School, Samoeng Pittayakhom School, San Pa Tong Wittayakhom School, San Pa Yang Wittayakhom School, Santisuk School, San Sai Wittayakhom School, Saraphi Pittayakhom School, Wattanothai Payap School, Wiangheng Wittayakom School
<i>Spark 1</i> (20.59%)	Virginia Evans & Jenny Dooley / Aksorn Charoenthat, Co. Ltd.	(N = 7) Doi Saket Wittayakhom School, Hangdongrathrathupatham, Hod Pittayakhom School, Horpra School, Maeon Wittayalai School, San Kamphaeng School, Song Khwae Wittayakhom School
<i>New World 1</i> (8.82%)	Manuel Dos Santos / McGraw Hill Education National Geographic /Heinle	(N = 3) Chomthong School, Mae Ho Pra Wittayakhom School, Mattayom Galayanivadhana Chalermprakiat
<i>Access 1</i> (5.88%)	Virginia Evans & Jenny Dooley / Aksorn Charoenthat, Co. Ltd.	(N = 2) Kawila Wittayalai School, Mae Chaem School
<i>Go Beyond</i> (2.94%)	Robert Campbell, Rob Metcalf & Rebecca Robb Benne / Macmillan Education	(N = 1) Yupparaj Wittayalai School

The textbooks analyzed in this study included *New Frontiers 1*, *Spark 1*, and *New World 1*. Their cultural perspectives were examined using a cultural content analysis checklist, focusing on pictures, reading passages, communicative activities, and grammar exercises.

The preliminary examination of the three chosen textbooks indicates that the allusions in the cartoon images lack sufficient depth for the researcher and TESOL experts to recognize them as cultural references. In other words, not every cartoon can be unequivocally categorized within every cultural reference. In this context, the sole pictures utilized for analysis comprised photographs or portraits; specifically, authentic representations of individuals, animals, and

objects from the textbooks. The annotations of names or nationalities adjacent to the photos were employed to facilitate interpretation.

Twenty-eight reading passages were analyzed and extracted from the three textbooks. A diverse array of reading formats was employed for reading-centric projects, encompassing narrative and instructional texts, postcards, emails, and advertising. Moreover, in *Spark 1*, specific reading styles were replaced with “ASIAN Corners” instead of other English reading passages for the reading objectives. A variety of tasks, including simple question answering, paragraph matching, reflective reading, and true-false identification, were utilized with reading passages. Reading passages were frequently included in the unit’s reading sections; however, they were occasionally utilized as supplementary material presented in other segments. For instance, *New World 1* offered supplementary readings in the sections dedicated to reading beyond the text, which included a summary of each of the three chapters.

This study employed communicative activities to extract distinctive cultural content from the speaking and listening components of the dialogue sections in the textbook samples. Characters, traditions, locations, terminology, and expressions referencing specific cultures served as indicators of cultural identification in the communication activities. The methods employed in listening and speaking exercises during dialogues varied according to distinct objectives, such as tone practice, true-false enquiries, expression alignment, and situational response.

Each part of the textbook samples included grammar exercises to enable students to refine their writing skills and produce sentences with correct syntax. Students’ cultural awareness can be effectively stimulated by recognizing certain cultural references and terminology that denote cultural content in the textbook excerpts, especially within the contextual clues. The individuals, traditions, locations, and linguistic phrases associated with a particular culture serve as indicators of cultural identification in grammatical usage. The application of writing skill-focused tasks, including word completion, multiple-choice questions, structured responses, and true-false selections, was frequently referenced and utilized in diverse manners to improve grammar.

A textbook content analysis checklist

A checklist for textbook content analysis, adapted from Cortazzi and Jin’s (1999) study and Kachru’s Three Concentric Circles framework (1992), was developed as the research instrument to examine the cultural variety depicted in the three ELT textbooks. This tool emphasizes diverse cultural material types represented through pictures, reading passages, communicative activities, and grammar practices. These cultural content types are characterized as target culture, source culture, international culture, and culture-free.

The researcher performed multiple sessions to classify the cultural content in each picture, reading passage, communicative activity, and grammar practice to validate the coding. An interrater reliability test was conducted to assess the agreement among individual raters by soliciting an external rater with competence in English language instruction and textbook evaluation to evaluate the content identifications. A random sample representing 25% of the total cultural viewpoints was sent to the second coder for independent analysis.

The level of agreement between raters was then determined by calculating *Cohen's Kappa*, k , and percentage of agreement, considering the categorical variables of the cultural contents. Within a given standard deviation value, the k value assists in determining the degree of confidence in the data points (Fleiss, 1981). A value of k ranging from 0 to 1 indicates that coders agree on every decision, whereas a value of $k = 0$ implies a complete lack of consensus.

For this study, the results for grammar practices and reading passages indicated k values of 0.802 and 0.782, respectively, which denoted "excellent" agreement based on the criteria established by Fleiss. The results for pictures and communicative activities indicated 0.647 and 0.634, respectively, which signified "good" agreement (see Table 2). These numbers therefore suggested that the coding systems were reliable.

Table 2
Results of interrater reliability tests

	<i>K</i>	Percent of agreement
Pictures	0.647	94.71
Reading passages	0.782	95.83
Communicative activities	0.634	92.73
Grammar practices	0.802	97.06

Data analysis

The quantitative data from frequency and percentage counts were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The acquired quantitative data was further analyzed to determine the descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage of each cultural diversity material depicted in pictures, reading passages, communicative activities, and grammar practices within the selected ELT textbooks. The qualitative results from the textbook content analysis checklist were subjected to continual comparison analysis and categorized according to reoccurring themes (Merriam, 2009) to examine cultural representation in ELT textbooks and the potential for integrating cultural content into ELT pedagogy in English classes.

FINDINGS

To what extent is cultural diversity represented in the ELT textbooks used in secondary schools in Chiang Mai?

Cultural content analysis of textbooks

Four distinct domains were investigated to address the cultural content analysis: 1) pictures, 2) reading passages, 3) communicative activities, and 4) grammar practices, which were examined on each page of the chosen ELT textbooks.

(1) Cultural content in pictures

As coding proceeded, pictures were utilized not merely as decorations or space-fillers (Hill, 2013) but as pedagogical tasks, for example, asking students to match pictures with vocabulary, or to read stories accompanied by illustrations.

Picture with Cultural Free Reference (PCFR), refers to images that contain no cultural elements. These were common in the textbooks, especially in *New Frontiers 1* and *Spark 1*, where they occurred at frequencies of 34.05% and 32.17%, respectively, as shown in Figure 1. These pictures depict universally recognized items, including food, activities, household areas, classroom objects, educational supplies, and modes of transportation. They are typically used to familiarize students with common English vocabulary, expressions, and sentences relevant to their daily experiences.

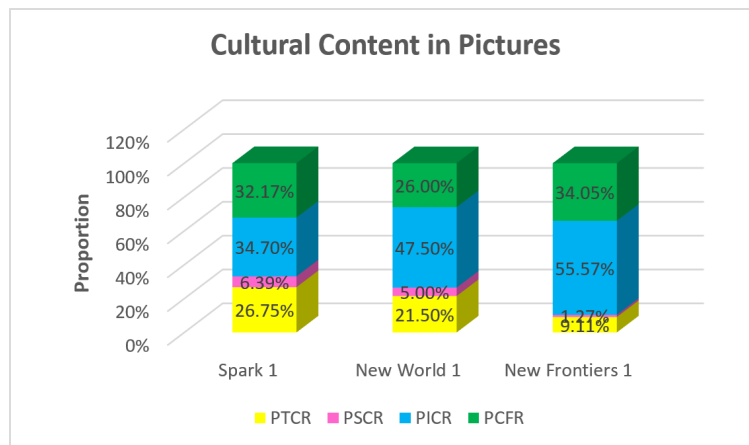
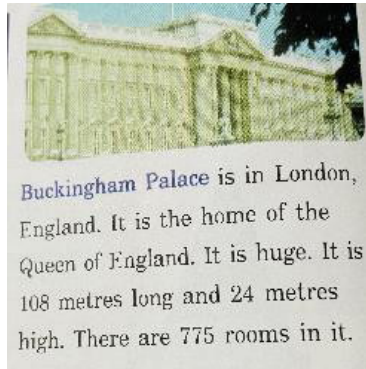


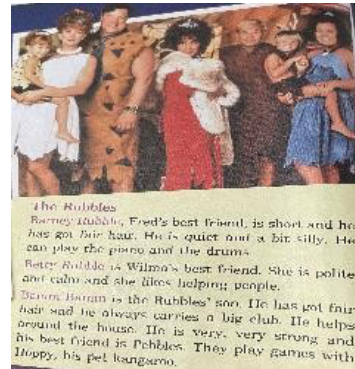
Figure 1 Proportion of cultural content in pictures

Note: *Picture with Target Culture Reference* (PTCR); *Picture with Source Culture Reference* (PSCR); *Picture with International Culture Reference* (PICR); and *Picture with Cultural Free Reference* (PCFR)

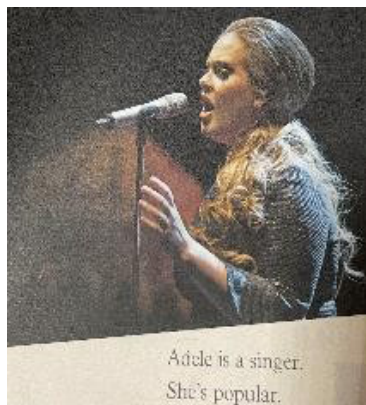
According to the target culture, pictures featuring the civilizations of the Inner Circle nations, i.e., the USA, England, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (as defined by Kachru, 1992), were common in *Spark 1* (26.67%) and *New World 1* (21.50%), as shown in Figure 1. This generated concerns that these pictures appeared to prioritize the cultural identities of native speakers over other cultural identities. These textbooks employed numerous references to prominent individuals and sports from several native English-speaking nations, along with particular cultural references, locales, and cultural events. In certain instances, pictures of specific items (such as national symbols like the American school bus and the London double-decker bus) referenced the cultures of native speakers. Additionally, animals such as the “Australian kangaroo” or the “American bald eagle” are referred to as national symbols (see Figure 2). However, these references only accounted for 9.11% of the total pictures in *New Frontiers 1*.



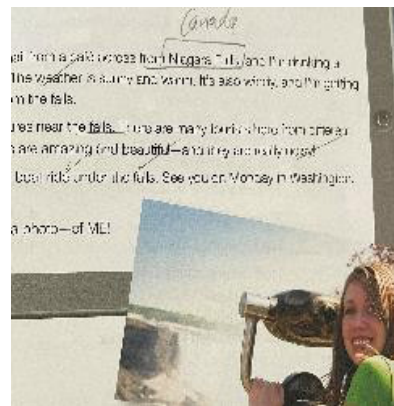
(Buckingham Palace: Landmarks, Spark 1, p. 40)



(The Flintstones' Friends, Spark 1, p. 46)



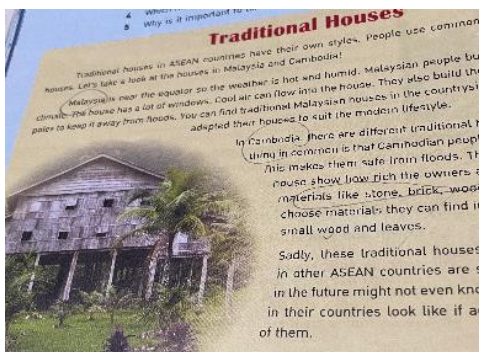
(Adele, a British singer, New World 1, p. 26)



(Niagara Falls, New World 1, p. 67)

Figure 2 Pictures from textbooks illustrating Target Culture Reference (PTCR)

On the other hand, *Picture with International Culture Reference* (PICR), was identified more frequently: 55.57% of occurrences in *New Frontiers 1*, 47.50% in *New World 1*, and 34.70% in *Spark 1* (see Figure 1). The pictures in these textbooks intentionally emphasized a broader range of nationalities. The pictures highlighted cultural diversity by presenting students with different global locations (see Figure 3). The “Great Wall of China” and the “Eiffel Tower” exemplify renowned sites in Outer and Expanding Circles countries, intended to convey authentic sentiments of globalization to students. Furthermore, pictures of common places, objects, and animals were included to enhance students’ comprehension of and appreciation for diverse cultural perspectives. These encompassed instances of traditional residences in Malaysia and Cambodia constructed with indigenous materials, artisanal crafts, and local products from the Philippines and Vietnam, as well as regional cuisines such as ceviche in Peru.



(Traditional houses in Malaysia and Cambodia:
Traditional Houses, Spark 1, p. 42)



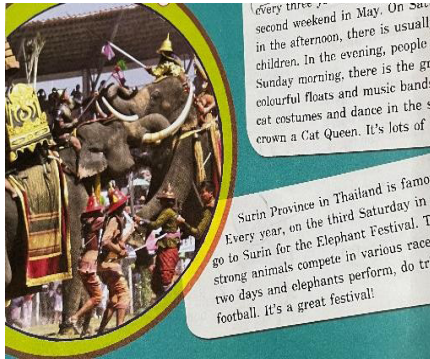
(Eiffel Tower in France and Sagrada Familia
in Spain: *Friends Everywhere, New World 1, p. 24*)



(Ceviche, the classic food of Peru: *Street Food, New Frontiers 1, p. 89*)

Figure 3 Pictures from textbooks illustrating International Culture Reference (PICR)

Pictures depicting Thai culture were rather limited, with only 1.27% of occurrences in *New Frontiers 1*, 5% in *New World 1*, and 6.39% in *Spark 1*. The pictures depicted a woman in traditional Thai attire performing the customary *Wai* greeting, Thai elephants at the Elephant Festival in *Surin*, a schoolboy named *Suchart* in uniform, a Thai foreign exchange student with her host family, and a police officer on the street amidst a flood in Bangkok, Thailand (see Figure 4). These pictures aimed to stimulate students' attention by connecting with their cultural identities.



(Thai elephants in the Elephant Festival in Surin, Thailand, *Spark 1*, p. 62)



(An officer standing on the street in a food situation in Bangkok, Thailand, *New World 1*, p. 73)



(A boy in Thai clothing giving a Wai, *New Frontiers 1*, p. 77)

Figure 4 Pictures from textbooks illustrating Source Culture Reference (PSCR)

The following table outlines the similarities, differences, and key features of the cultural diversity depicted in the three textbooks utilized in Chiang Mai schools, based on four distinct styles of pictorial illustrations.

Table 3
A summary of pictures representing cultural diversity found in the 3 textbooks

Cultural content types	Similarities of cultural diversity	Differences of cultural diversity	Highlights of cultural diversity
PCFR (Picture with Cultural Free Reference)	PCFR are perfect examples in all textbook samples	-	Initially, all textbooks featured pictures of familiar foods, fruits, activities, individuals, and objects from students' daily lives to facilitate their acclimatization to English vocabulary, phrases, and sentences.
PTCR (Picture with Target Culture Reference)	The frequency of PTCR in <i>Spark 1</i> (26.67%) and <i>New World 1</i> (21.50%) was much higher.	PTCR in <i>New Frontiers 1</i> (9.11%) was the least common out of the 3 textbook samples.	The ELT textbooks utilized pictures that resonated with the cultural identities of native speakers to represent the English language and cultures of the USA, England, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Cultural content types	Similarities of cultural diversity	Differences of cultural diversity	Highlights of cultural diversity
PICR (Picture with International Culture Reference)	PICR in <i>New Frontiers 1</i> were detected the most frequently (55.57%), and they were presented more often in <i>New World 1</i> and <i>Spark 1</i> .	-	The pictures in the ELT textbooks presented a diverse array of cultural content, exposing students to global cultural diversity.
PSCR (Picture with Source Culture Reference)	PSCR in <i>Spark 1</i> and <i>New World 1</i> were identified infrequently with counts of 6% and 5% respectively.	PSCR in <i>New Frontiers 1</i> were offered the least frequently with only 1.27% of counts.	The inclusion of Thai cultural references suggests possible input from local educators or cultural consultants.

(2) Cultural content in reading passages

The data were categorized into four types: 1) *Reading passage with Target Culture Content (RTCC)*; 2) *Reading passage with Source Culture Content (RSCC)*; 3) *Reading passage with International Culture Content (RICC)*; and 4) *Reading passage with Free Cultural Content (RFCC)*.

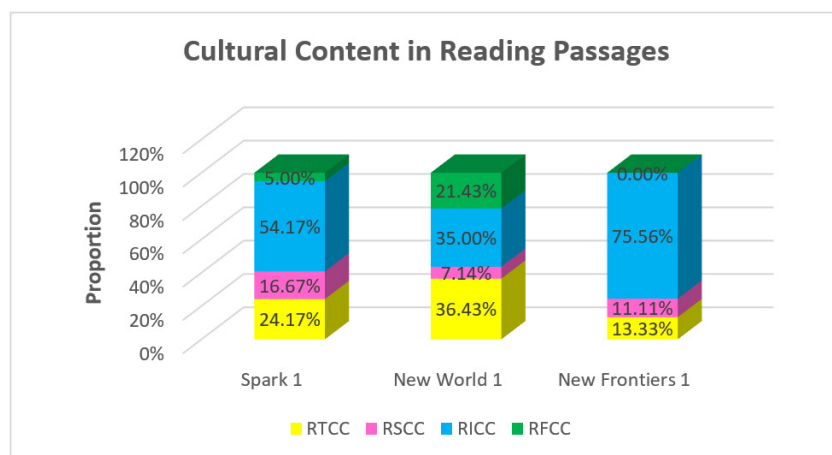


Figure 5 Proportion of cultural content in reading passages

Note: *Reading passage with Target Culture Content (RTCC)*; *Reading passage with Source Culture Content (RSCC)*; *Reading passage with International Culture Content (RICC)*; and *Reading passage with Free Cultural Content (RFCC)*

Reading passage with Free Cultural Content (RFCC), were infrequently detected in *Spark 1* (5% of instances), whereas it was completely absent in *New Frontiers 1* (0%). Conversely, 21.43% of the reading passages in *New World 1* contained no explicit cultural connection (see Figure 5). For example, an excerpt from *New World 1*, p. 37, entitled “Smart Animals,” merely addresses how intelligent dogs serve as excellent companions for humans, without referencing any specific culture.

Reading passage with Target Culture Content (RTCC) constituted the second most prevalent category accounting for 36.43% of instances in *New World 1* and 24.17% in *Spark 1* (see Figure 5). These excerpts illustrated native English speakers and their culture concerning landmarks

and national fauna. Examples include *Spark 1* (p. 40), titled “Buckingham Palace,” and p. 64, titled “The Kangaroo.”

The UK

Buckingham Palace is in **London, England**. It is the home of **the Queen of England**. It is huge. It is 108 metres long and 24 metres high. There are 775 rooms in it.

(*Spark 1*, p. 40)

Australia

The kangaroo is **the national animal of Australia**. **Kangaroos** have got long ears, long thick tails and short arms. They have also got strong legs and big feet. They can hop very fast and kick really hard. They live in forests and grasslands and they eat plants.

(*Spark 1*, p. 64)

Notwithstanding the considerable number of cultural references, the majority of reading passages in the textbook encompassed various forms of cultural value. The frequency counts align closely with previous findings on the cultural content of the pictures. Figure 5 illustrates that incidences of *Reading passage with International Culture Content* (RICC) in *Spark 1* were five times greater than those of RTCC. This suggests that the authors of *Spark 1* and *New Frontiers 1* possess a greater awareness of intercultural communication in the classroom and were more predisposed to including cultural variety in the curriculum. For example, the developers of the *Spark 1* noted that “Festive Days in Ireland, such as St. Patrick’s Day,” provides a detailed description of the event to enhance students’ understanding of the festival’s celebration in Ireland.

St. Patrick’s Day is on 17th March. It is **a religious and national feast** that celebrates St. Patrick, **the patron saint of Ireland**. There are big parades in every town. People pin a **shamrock** on their clothes and some kids paint shamrocks on their faces. There are marching bands, dances and all sorts of floats. People on the floats throw sweets to the crowds. Later, people eat **Irish stew**, a dish of lamb or beef with vegetables. Yummy! In the evening there are **Irish music concerts** and fireworks displays.

(*Spark 1*, p. 88)

The reading topics in *Spark 1* covered a diverse range of global issues, particularly the cultures of Asian countries, as illustrated in the sections named “Across Cultures” and “Asian Corner.” These topics provided students with insight into the global use of English for expressing diverse cultural identities and encouraged them to explore cultural diversity while improving their reading comprehension skills. Regardless of cultural background, reading activities that expose learners to diverse cultures support the development of intercultural communication.

Moreover, the reading passages in the “Asian Corner” of *Spark 1* consistently included references to Thai source cultures. Passages classified as Reading passage with Source Culture Content (RSCC) prominently featured Thai culture, suggesting that Thai individuals contributed to the textbook development process and /or that the developers prioritized Thai culture and the identities of Thai students. The excerpts below, entitled “Festive Time” and “Asian Food,” from *Spark 1*, (p. 62 and 90) serve as pertinent examples.

Festive Time

Surin Province in Thailand is famous for elephants. Every year, on the third Saturday in November, people go to *Surin* for **the Elephant Festival**. They go to see these strong animals compete in various races. The festival lasts two days and elephants perform, do tricks and even play football. It's a great festival!

(Spark 1, p. 62)

Asian Food

Apart from the beautiful geography and wonderful cultures of Asia, the region is also well known for its foods. **Asian food** has become the fastest growing food in the world...

Another example is **Thai Larb** is spicy minced pork salad. Its ingredients are minced pork, fresh and dried chillis, spring onions, red onions, toasted rice and herbs such as mint and coriander. **Thai people** normally serve the salad with cabbage, yard-long beans and cucumbers.

(Spark 1, p. 90)

In summary, Table 4 provides an examination of the similarities, differences, and highlights or notable characteristics of the cultural variety depicted in the reading passages from the three textbooks employed in public secondary schools in Chiang Mai.

Table 4

A summary of reading passages representing cultural diversity found in the 3 textbooks

Cultural content types	Similarities of cultural diversity	Differences of cultural diversity	Highlights of cultural diversity
RFCC (Reading passage with Free Cultural Content)	Only 5 percent of instances in <i>Spark 1</i> included RFCC, while in <i>New Frontiers 1</i> , RFCC were nonexistent.	In 21.43% of the reading sections in <i>New World 1</i> , the RFCC made no mention of culture.	Free cultural content reading passages were designed to convey a general story devoid of specific cultural elements.
RTCC (Reading passage with Target Culture Content)	<i>New World 1</i> (36.43%) and <i>Spark 1</i> (24.17%) both had a high frequency of reading passages that represented the cultural content of the Inner Circle countries (USA, England, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand).	RTCC in <i>New Frontiers 1</i> (13.33%) were presented the least frequently among the three textbook samples.	The textbook authors intentionally incorporated national animals, landmarks, lifestyles, dress, and cuisine from native English-speaking countries in the reading sections, as these features functioned as icons of those nations.
RICC (Reading passage with International Culture Content)	RICC was found in descriptive and educational reading passages that mostly represented international countries worldwide in <i>New Frontiers 1</i> (75.56%) and <i>New World 1</i> (35%).	Every <i>Spark 1</i> lesson included a reading part called "ASIAN Corner," which focused mostly on cross-cultural topics among Asian nations.	To assist students in perceiving the world from a global viewpoint and to instruct them in conveying diverse cultural identities through English, the three ELT textbooks promoted an array of international topics encompassing cultures globally, particularly emphasizing cultures in Asian countries.

Cultural content types	Similarities of cultural diversity	Differences of cultural diversity	Highlights of cultural diversity
RSCC (Reading passage with Source Culture Content)	RSCC in <i>New Frontiers 1</i> (11.11%) and <i>New World 1</i> (7.14%) were used to identify character names, Thai holidays, Thai provinces, and regional Thai cuisine.	Through the reading passages in the “ASIAN Corner” segment, 16.67% of the RSCC in <i>Spark 1</i> with references to Thai culture were provided.	The textbook authors highlighted the significance of Thai students’ identities and prioritized their Thai nationality.

(3) Cultural content in communicative activities

Communicative activities were employed in this study to gather cultural content from the listening and speaking activities available in the dialogue or conversation sections of each unit of the textbook samples. The cultural content was categorized into: 1) *Communicative Activity with Target Culture Content (CATCC)*; 2) *Communicative Activity with Source Culture Content (CASCC)*; 3) *Communicative Activity with International Culture Content (CAICC)*; and 4) *Communicative Activity with Free Cultural Content (CAFCC)*.

Unlike the findings of cultural content in the reading passages described above, the communicative activities that were found to indicate no particular culture (CAFCC) occurred at the following frequencies: 52.92% in *New Frontiers 1*, 30% in *New World 1*, and 24.21% in *Spark 1*, as shown in Figure 6. The example activity labelled “Supply List: Back to School” was extracted from *New Frontiers 1*, pages 21–22. There was no mention of any specific culture in the descriptions of the school, people, objects, or school supplies as educational resources, and moreover, facilities are not considered cultural indicators in this sense.

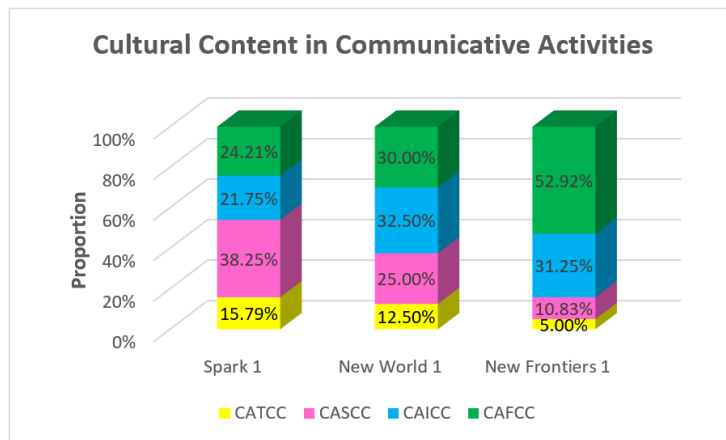


Figure 6 Proportion of cultural content in communicative activities

Note: *Communicative Activity with Target Culture Content (CATCC)*; *Communicative Activity with Source Culture Content (CASCC)*; *Communicative Activity with International Culture Content (CAICC)*; and *Communicative Activity with Free Cultural Content (CAFCC)*

In contrast, the textbooks hardly incorporated CATCC; Communicative Activity with Target Culture Content (CATCC) in *New Frontiers 1*, exhibiting the lowest frequency at 5% whereas *New World 1* and *Spark 1* recorded higher frequencies of 12.50% and 15.79%, respectively (see Figure 6). Target culture content, which received the lowest ranking among all cultural content types, was not prioritized in the communicative activities of these textbooks.

Conversely, the communicative activities in *New World 1* emphasized and presented the frequency counts of international cultural content. The percentage of CAICC is 32.5%, as shown in Figure 6. This likely reflects the developers' prioritization of fostering students' intercultural communicative competencies. An excerpt from *New World 1* (pp. 8–12) entitled “Where are you from?” exemplifies CAICC, with cultural markers including the names of nations and their capital cities, as well as representations of characters from diverse backgrounds.

***Listening-focused Activities: New Language**

- (1) Listen and answer (matching/filling in vocabulary about countries and cities of the backpackers' hometown)
- (2) Listen and repeat (pronouncing names of countries, capital cities, and nationalities)
- (3) Listen and check (choosing true or false after listening to personal information)
- (4) Listen and complete (filling in personal information)

***Speaking-focused Activities: Practice**

- (1) Ask and answer (with A&B situations about country, capital, and nationality)
- (2) Give personal information (name, hometown, age, and contact number)

(*New World 1*, pp. 8-12)

The authors of *Spark 1* significantly emphasize students' home cultures by frequently incorporating them into *Communicative Activity with Source Culture Content* (CASCC), which constitutes 38.25% (see Figure 6), the greatest proportion of cultural content in the communicative activities. Authentic Thai names (*Prayoon*, *Thonjon*, and *Kheng*), a traditional Thai dish (*Larb*, a regional dish), and its ingredients were all featured in the dialogues and talks. An illustrative instance of a communicative activity pertaining to Thai culture, is designated as “Asian Food” in *Spark 1*, p. 90:

***Asian Corner 7: Read the passage “ASIAN Food”**

- (1) Work in pairs. Discuss why we should eat less fast food such as hamburgers and pizza, and eat more healthy local food instead.
- (2) Write about the ingredients and how to cook your favorite local dish that uses herbs (not Thai *Larb*). Decorate your recipe with pictures of the ingredients you have included.

(*Spark 1*, p. 90)

The necessity for students to engage in language exercises and investigate diverse local culture content clearly illustrates the presence of source cultural content in the two aforementioned activities. Consequently, phrases such as “herbal ingredients” and “local dish,” which function as cultural markers, enhance students' comprehension and acknowledgement of local culture

in the target language. The developers of *Spark 1* seemingly prioritized Thai culture over other Asian cultures, likely due to their Thai nationality or their perception that Thai culture is particularly intriguing.

The similarities, differences, and highlights or key features of each ELT textbook were employed to encapsulate the cultural variation reflected in the communicative activities across the three textbooks utilized in public secondary schools in Chiang Mai, as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5
A summary of communicative activities presenting cultural diversity in the 3 textbooks

Cultural content types	Similarities of cultural diversity	Differences of cultural diversity	Highlights of cultural diversity
CAFCC (Communicative Activity with Free Cultural Content)	CAFCC was regularly provided without any indication of the specific culture in the speaking and listening-focused exercises seen in all textbook samples.	-	To promote language skill practice among students through activities broadly, communicative exercises in general ELT textbooks were designed with unrestricted cultural material.
CATCC (Communicative Activity with Target Culture Content)	Communicative activities expressing cultural content in the Inner Circle or native speaking countries were less common in all textbook samples: <i>New Frontiers 1</i> (5%), <i>New World 1</i> (12.50%), and <i>Spark 1</i> (15.79%).	-	The communicative activities in the textbooks were designed with minimal regard for the cultures of native speakers, as the terminology included in the discussions was typical of everyday usage.
CAICC (Communicative Activity with International Culture Content)	-	The identification of CAICC was more common in <i>New World 1</i> (32.50%) than in other textbooks, the majority of which represented multinational cultures in various nations worldwide.	The authors of the <i>New World 1</i> textbook emphasized the development of multicultural communication skills for students.
CASCC (Communicative Activity with Source Culture Content)	-	CASCC were commonly (38.25%) displayed in <i>Spark 1</i> when using genuine Thai names for the characters and scenarios that took place in Thai contexts.	The authors of the <i>Spark 1</i> textbook, who were either Thai or found Thai culture particularly intriguing, prioritized Thai culture over other Asian civilizations.

(4) Cultural content in grammar practices

Grammar practices available in each unit of the textbooks were designed for practicing writing skills and making sentences correctly. The indicators of cultural identification in grammar practices consisted of characters, customs, places, and terms depicting certain cultures. The data were categorized into 1) *Grammar Practice with Target Culture Content (GPTCC)*; 2) *Grammar Practice with Source Culture Content (GPSCC)*; 3) *Grammar Practice with*

International Culture Content (GPICC); and 4) *Grammar Practice with Free Cultural Content (GPFCC)*.

Concerning *Grammar Practice with Free Cultural Content (GPFCC)*, *Spark 1* and *New World 1* had the highest frequency (see Figure 7), with almost half of the cultural content in the grammar exercises being GPFCC.

Grammar Practice with International Culture Content (GPICC) was introduced in *Spark 1* (21.11%) and *New World 1* (36.55%), accounting for the second highest percentages of cultural content in the grammar practices identified in the textbooks (see Figure 7). The reason for this could be that the authors of the textbooks (Manuel dos Santos for *New World 1*, and Virginia Evans and Jenny Dooley for *Spark 1*) prioritized cultural diversity in the classroom by incorporating terms and topics indicating cultural content into their grammar drills. These examples are shown in the sentence completion activities utilizing the verb “to be” with the correct subject agreement. References to global cultures, such as ethnicities of individuals, could be found in the sentences with certain words emphasized. Phrases indicating cultural content or context clues had been added to raise students’ cultural awareness. As such, the verb “to be” can serve cultural awareness when used to describe individuals’ nationalities, capital cities, and places of origin.

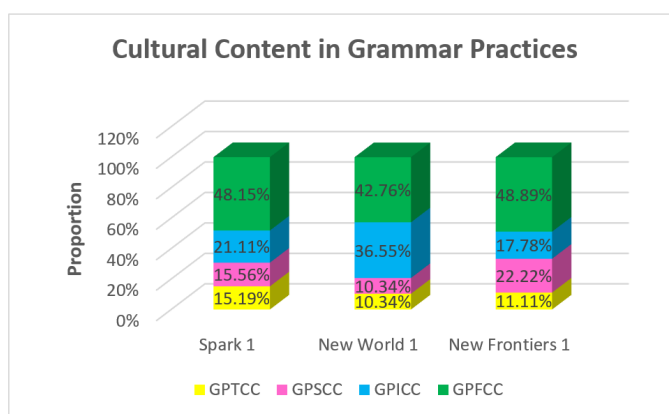


Figure 7 Proportion of cultural content in grammar practices

Note: *Grammar Practice with Target Culture Content (GPTCC)*; *Grammar Practice with Source Culture Content (GPSCC)*; *Grammar Practice with International Culture Content (GPICC)*; and *Grammar Practice with Free Cultural Content (GPFCC)*

In contrast to the cultural content seen in pictures, reading passages, and communicative activities, which predominantly featured Inner Circle countries, *Grammar Practice with Target Culture Content (GPTCC)* was represented in minimal quantities in *Spark 1* (15.19%) and *New World 1* (10.34%; see Figure 7). It seems that the developers of the ELT textbook prioritized the precision of English language usage over the cultural nuances of native-speaking countries in their grammatical exercises.

Unexpectedly, the frequency counts of cultural content in the grammar practice sections of *New Frontiers 1*, *Spark 1*, and *New World 1* for *Grammar Practice with Source Culture Content* (GPSCC) were observed to be nearly equivalent to those of GPTCC (*New Frontiers 1*, 22.22%; *Spark 1*, 15.56%; *New World 1*, 10.34%; see Figure 7). The grammar practices in *New Frontiers 1* and the writing exercises in *New World 1* and *Spark 1* required students to use grammatical structures to create original sentences about themselves, illustrating how these tasks reflect both their own cultural context and that of target culture countries. Students may feel more at ease expressing themselves in English when the language is introduced in contexts similar to their own experiences. Below are examples of the grammar drills and writing activities.

***An example of a grammar practice in reading a text and circling all the adverbs of frequency in a passage about a character with a Thai name and her free time activity.**

“Hello! My name is Sopa and I’m from Thailand. In my free time, I play kabaddi. It’s a team sport from India. You try to touch members of other teams before they catch you. I always play kabaddi after school with my sister and friends. It’s difficult but fun and good exercise.”

(*New Frontiers 1*, p. 61)

This excerpt from a reading passage in *New Frontiers 1* instructed students to read the text and identify adverbs of frequency by circling them. The passage also contains cultural references, including a Thai name (Sopa), a nation of Thailand, a sport originating from India (kabaddi), and a typical Thai activity (playing kabaddi after school with friends).

***An example of a grammar practice in the writing activity, illustrating the source cultural content of the students’ family lifestyles, and their daily life routines compared with the lifestyles of other people around the world**

“Write sentences to tell your partner what you and your family usually do in the evening, and what you and the members of your family are doing now (with the use of “the present simple or the present continuous”).”

(*Spark 1*, p. 73)

This excerpt from a writing assignment instructs students to compose a paragraph utilizing the present simple or present continuous verb forms to depict typical evening family activities in Thailand, such as preparing Thai dishes like *Larb*, *Tomyam Kai*, and *Pak Kad Jor*, and dining together while viewing television programs, including evening soap operas or news broadcasts about royal ceremonies. It seems that the textbook developers prioritized Thai students by emphasizing grammar features that enable learners to construct personal sentences and by presenting English in circumstances that facilitate comfortable self-expression.

Table 6 delineates the cultural diversity shown in grammatical practices among three textbooks utilized in public secondary schools in Chiang Mai, including their similarities, differences, and highlights or notable features.

Table 6

A summary of grammar practices representing cultural diversity found in the 3 textbooks

Cultural content types	Similarities of cultural diversity	Differences of cultural diversity	Highlights of cultural diversity
GP FCC (Grammar Practice with Free Cultural Content)	GP FCC accounted for around half of the cultural material found in grammar practices across all textbooks.	-	The provided English phrases, intended for completion with grammatically conventional structures, were utilized to create grammar exercises using freely available cultural resources. The objective of these drills was to practice proper grammar usage; hence, no particular cultural element was incorporated.
GPTCC (Grammar Practice with Target Culture Content)	Grammar practices representing cultural contents in the Inner Circle countries (USA, England, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) were less common identified in <i>New World 1</i> (10.34%), <i>New Frontiers 1</i> (11.11%), and <i>Spark 1</i> (15.19%).	-	The grammar exercises in ELT textbooks were created with minimal consideration for the cultures of native English-speaking countries, due to their main emphasis on accurate English usage rather than linguistic appropriateness in everyday contexts.
GP ICC (Grammar Practice with International Culture Content)	GP ICC in <i>New World 1</i> (36.55%), <i>Spark 1</i> (21.11%), and <i>New Frontiers 1</i> (17.78%) was found when the grammar rule was completed with phrases that indicated the cultural content of many nations worldwide.	-	The ELT textbook developers prioritized the promotion of cultural diversity in the classroom by incorporating grammar problems that feature diverse cultural context signals to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of cultures among students.
GP SCC (Grammar Practice with Source Culture Content)	GP SCC in <i>New World 1</i> (10.34%) and <i>Spark 1</i> (15.56%) was not frequently identified.	The grammar drills in the writing activities in GP SCC in <i>New Frontiers 1</i> with Thai cultures were frequently presented (22.22%) through the use of specific grammar structures to illustrate the source cultural content of students' lifestyles and daily routines in comparison with those of other people worldwide.	The authors of <i>New Frontiers 1</i> provided Thai students with additional practice in applying grammatical principles to formulate original words about themselves and to convey the language in contexts where they would feel comfortable using it.

Situating findings of cultural diversity represented in the ELT textbooks used within Chiang Mai educational context

The analysis of cultural diversity revealed that non-native speaker contexts were primarily represented throughout the textbooks, creating numerous opportunities for non-native speakers to learn about and interact with diverse cultures via ELT textbooks and pedagogy, especially for students in Chiang Mai ELT settings. In Chiang Mai public secondary schools, English is the most often taught foreign language and a compulsory subject at all grade levels in schools and at the tertiary level in universities. Fortunately, the approved textbooks utilized in educational institutions or study settings are unlikely to focus only on Western traditions, festivals, events, and civilizations. Specific cultural elements, depicted in pictures, reading passages, communicative activities, and grammar practices throughout each unit in the three textbooks (*New Frontiers 1*, *Spark 1*, and *New World 1*), emphasized and integrated EIL contexts pertinent to both international and Thai cultures (refer to Figures 1–7 and Tables 4–6).

Given Chiang Mai's distinct classroom settings, the presence of both native and ethnic minority students alongside English teachers underscores the importance of contextualizing textbook content. This study supports the inclusion of diverse cultural content among language learners and teachers in English classrooms, highlighting the inseparable relationship between language and culture, as posited by numerous scholars in the previously reviewed section. Furthermore, the conviction that cultural knowledge and awareness can enhance language learners' competence and success as speakers of the foreign language they have acquired is widely held. This is directly associated with the analogous assertions stated by Nault (2006, as referenced cited in Alyan, 2011) and Bennett et al. (2003) that cultural information facilitates successful utilization of the target language by learners.

The transition to culturally diversified and regionally pertinent textbooks that acknowledge the multilingual and multicultural dimensions of ELT in Chiang Mai public secondary schools was neglected. The findings underscore the necessity for the cultural components in ELT textbooks and materials to be pertinent to the contexts of non-native English speakers, particularly Thai students, local students in northern Thailand, and ethnic students relevant to the current study. It is hoped that these findings will influence national curriculum policies and school administrators to select textbooks and materials that incorporate diverse cultural content, thereby accommodating the varied backgrounds of learners and ensuring their success in language skills and intercultural communicative competence. Ultimately, these findings may be recognized, acknowledged, elucidated, and generalized to analogous scenarios across the four educational zones of Thailand.

DISCUSSION

In response to the research question, examining how cultural content is represented in three ELT textbooks approved for use in public secondary schools, including pictures, reading passages, communicative activities, and grammar practices, the following notable findings emerged.

Contributions to the representation of international and source cultures in ELT textbooks used in Chiang Mai secondary schools

The findings reveal that the textbooks acknowledged both international and Thai cultural content, rather than solely the cultural content of native English speakers. The equal representation of cultural elements in the study textbooks facilitated a finding that contradicts Thumvichit's (2018) study, which found the source culture, or Thai culture, to be nearly absent from coursebooks. Consequently, the insights gained from language acquisition in a globalized context may impact textbook developers, encouraging the incorporation of diverse cultural topics, thereby providing students the opportunity to learn about and interact with various cultures through English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks and pedagogy.

The current study has clearly demonstrated that the culture of native English speakers is no longer prioritized over that of non-native speakers. Melliti (2013) argues that nativism may lead students to disengage from instruction and learning activities, diminishing appreciation of the value of learning, as it implies that native speaker cultures neither endorse local discourses nor recognize English as a global language. Advocates of globalized materials suggest that the cultural elements in ELT textbooks should be balanced to ensure diversified content, supporting the notion that the distinct culture of one nation should not be esteemed over those of others (Alptekin, 2002; Kramsch, 1993; McKay, 2002; Nault, 2006; Shin et al., 2011).

Apparently, the findings indicate that two textbooks employed in this study, *New World 1* and *Spark 1*, consistently recognized and depicted the cultures of many countries. It appears that *Spark 1* challenges traditional nativism by diversifying its cultural content, facilitating students' engagement with English across various contexts. Students are more inclined to explore cultural diversity in many countries. Through reading selections in the sections "Across Cultures" and "Asian Corner," students are exposed to both international and Asian themes. These experiences are likely to shape students' perceptions of the world and the English language while offering a global perspective on how English conveys diverse cultural identities. The findings align with Monfared et al. (2016), who also proposed that ELT textbooks should teach language learners about the English-speaking world, encouraging their integration and the establishment of connections between the cultures depicted in the textbooks and their local contexts.

Moreover, when developing ELT textbooks, it is imperative to carefully consider cultural variety to enhance students' understanding of the significance of culture within the English language context. The results of this study corroborate Matsuda's (2012) assertion that to promote acceptable diversity in multicultural classrooms, general ELT textbooks must integrate diverse cultural content sourced from multiple origins. Siddiqie (2011) asserts that ELT textbooks can enhance learners' competence in intercultural communication by featuring global characters and addressing the global target culture. Cultural knowledge, especially of foreign cultures, is essential for facilitating communication that is rooted in cultural contexts, conforms to cultural norms, and acknowledges both similarities and distinctions among cultures (Karabinar & Guler, 2013).

The findings of the current study indicate that textbook developers have prioritized the representation of Thai culture and identity in learning materials for Asian and Thai students in EFL settings. This supports the findings of the previous studies indicating that the main reason for selecting local content is to enhance learners' awareness across diverse backgrounds. By contextualizing English within the framework of students' home language, students may experience increased comfort with self-presentation and English articulation (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Sherman, 2010). Moreover, opportunities for self-expression are more effective when students' identities are reflected in representations of local cultures within ELT textbooks, as such content often better recognizes and values learners' different cultural identities than content focused on native-speaker cultures (Sherman, 2010).

The textbooks analyzed in this study included numerous pictures, images, excerpts, activities, and descriptions reflecting students' cultures, such as local landmarks, traditional foods, and other relevant topics. The focus is on Thai cultural distinctiveness aligns with the view that English textbooks should highlight the importance of local contexts and learner identity while also enhancing the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among non-native speakers through communicative learning methods suitable for EFL environments in Chiang Mai. Comparable results were observed in many ELT textbooks in other nations, including *"Spotlight on English"* (Turkey), *"El Libro de Ingles"* (Venezuela), and *"Comet English Communication"* (Japan), which focus on the cultures of their learners, referred to as "source culture" (Thumvichit, 2018).

According to the researcher's best knowledge, an adequate selection of textbook series is readily available in the national education market, facilitating students' comprehension of the advantages of international learning while simultaneously linking to their identities and local experiences. It is evident that numerous publishers presently prioritize Asian and foreign cultures to a greater extent. This shift may be attributed to the involvement of a greater number of Asian or Thai instructors in textbook development. The substantial growth of the textbook industry in recent decades, driven by the availability of diverse materials catering to various institutional requirements and learner proficiency levels, supports prior research findings (Thumvichit, 2018; Vettorel et al., 2013). Such developments represent a promising step toward facilitating cultural integration in English classes through learning resources, textbooks, and pedagogical approaches.

Critiques on the ELT textbooks used within Chiang Mai educational contexts

The centralized nature of textbook approval used within Chiang Mai educational contexts

This section examines the critical issues concerning cultural content in ELT textbooks, as outlined in Thailand's 2008 Basic Education Core Curriculum by OBEC (2008), and its pedagogical implications for Thai English teachers. The objective is to enhance students' understanding of cultural diversity and the necessity for inter-, cross-, and multi-cultural communication in the context of globalization. In Thai educational settings, English is neither the official language nor a lingua franca among speakers of various linguistic backgrounds, as dictated by national-level curricular policies. This led to all textbooks utilized in Chiang Mai public schools

exclusively presenting content and learning activities based on a mono-cultural perspective that perceives Thai identity as a singular global entity. Regrettably, the local Thai cultures and ethnic backgrounds of students from varied origins were entirely omitted from the ELT textbooks utilized in Thai schools, especially on the topic of ethnic cultures.

The educational circumstances for ethnic minority language learners in Chiang Mai, located in northern Thailand, substantially influence the challenges of multicultural education within an ethnically varied society. This assertion is substantiated by the objectives of instructors, educators, schools, and stakeholders to provide students with the information and skills necessary for the rapidly changing social, technological, economic, and cultural environment (Kaur et al., 2016).

These challenges include enhancing English instructors' awareness of EIL, ICC, and multicultural education. The EFL paradigm under Thai educational policy is deemed incompatible with the communicative demands of a globalized culture, whereas the EIL paradigm is suggested to enhance ELT in Thailand across all educational levels (Boriboon, 2011). The EIL context may reduce the dichotomy between native and non-native speakers by enhancing learners' awareness of English within a global framework through critical pedagogy, which involves discussing the prevalence of English in Thailand's socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions (Jindapitak & Teo, 2011).

To achieve the goal of the EIL paradigm, non-native speakers, specifically Thai students should be supported through communicative learning methods. Individuals engaged in material design, including educators and material developers, ought to create or select resources that are not only appropriate for EFL contexts such as Chiang Mai but also enhance learners' intercultural and multicultural communication competencies and the quality of language pedagogy (Matsuda, 2012).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The research question aims to investigate how cultural content is depicted in pictures, reading passages, communicative activities, and grammar practices within the three ELT textbooks sanctioned for public secondary schools, with a primary emphasis on cultural content beyond that of native English speakers. The primary findings of the study predominantly acknowledge international cultural content and Thai source culture. In these textbooks, the culture of native English speakers was not prioritized over that of non-native speakers. These findings align with Melliti's argument (2013) that an exclusive focus on the culture of native English speakers often causes students to neglect the significance of acquiring international languages. The acknowledgement of the importance of depicting non-native cultures and source culture in ELT textbooks highlights the necessity of incorporating both cultural elements into EFL and EIL contexts, which may enhance students' curiosity for language acquisition and bolster their linguistic proficiency. This corresponds with Vygotsky's (1986) idea that the language and culture are interconnected, a connection facilitated by local discourses and the recognition of English as a worldwide lingua franca and as part of global Englishes (Galloway & Rose, 2021).

In conclusion, to achieve the objectives of “Language and Culture,” as outlined in B.E. 2551 of the Basic Education Core Curriculum (2008, revised in 2017), which aims to enhance language acquisition, it is imperative for learners, educators, and school administrators to comprehend and apply the underlying philosophy and rationale. They must be knowledgeable about how to implement pedagogy that facilitates language attainment for all learners, regardless of their socio-linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Nomnian (2013) recommends that the Ministry of Education mandate several practices: 1) the education and training of Thai English teachers to enhance their pedagogical and professional development, particularly in inter, cross, and multi-cultural education; 2) allocating adequate budgets to schools to support the education of diverse learners; and 3) funding research and development in English language instruction within a multilingual educational context.

The researcher posits that cultural knowledge in ELT textbooks and pedagogical approaches should encompass not only language skills and the culture of native speakers but also incorporate both the source culture (i.e., the students’ own cultural backgrounds) and international culture (i.e., the cultures of diverse global communities). Greater inclusion of cultures with which learners can resonate may promote foreign language acquisition and proficiency, appreciation for other cultures, and affirm the relevance of learners’ own culture within a multicultural framework.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is confined to the evaluation of three ELT textbooks chosen for their incorporation of cultural content, with less emphasis on critically analyzing the textbooks; overall content. Future research could benefit from employing frameworks that critically evaluate textbook content and its implications for cultural representation, potentially offering more significant contributions and novel theoretical insights.

Other future research possibilities include examining supplementary published resources and textbooks used by educators in EFL settings, as well as investigating teachers’ and students’ perspectives on cultural materials and their approaches to adapting cultural content. Such studies would enhance textbook evaluation research by providing insights into intercultural and multicultural awareness among educators and learners. Further classroom-based investigations of textbook utilization are also recommended.

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