

The Silent Curriculum: Ideologies in Chinese and Thai Primary English Textbooks

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: English language teaching (ELT) textbooks, as key instruments of instruction, can subtly yet powerfully shape students' self-perceptions and worldviews through the ideologies they embed, whether explicitly or implicitly. While existing research has frequently examined singular ideological dimensions within ELT materials, such as gender representation or cultural essentialism, comprehensive analyses exploring the interplay of multiple ideological constructs within the same textbook remain limited. This study addresses this gap by investigating the multifaceted ideological representations present in Grade 6 ELT textbooks used in China and Thailand. Specifically, it aims to identify and analyze the dominant ideologies conveyed in these textbooks and compare them in these two distinct socio-cultural contexts.

Methodology: This study employed a mixed-methods approach. Four textbooks were selected, two from each country, with one textbook in each context authored by local writers and the other by foreign authors. The analysis comprised a dual approach: (1) a qualitative analysis of visual representations of social actors, guided by Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic framework, and (2) a qualitative analysis of textual content across selected topics, informed by Kachru's (1992) World Englishes. Quantitative data, including frequency counts and keyness analysis, were utilized to triangulate and corroborate the qualitative findings.

Main Results: The findings indicate the presence of dominant ideologies, including unequal gender representation, a preference for Inner Circle countries, individualism and collectivism, and cosmopolitanism. Regarding gender, the textbooks reinforce male-dominant ideologies and traditional stereotypes, though some instances of counter-representations are present. Inner Circle preferences are pervasive, yet local contexts appear in textbooks by local authors, whereas foreign-authored textbooks largely exclude them. Individualism is particularly prominent in Chinese textbooks and one foreign-authored Thai textbook. Collectivist values, on the other hand, are depicted by portraying special occasions rather than everyday practices. The portrayal of cosmopolitanism varies; some textbooks emphasize global mobility and international exposure, while others adopt a more localized perspective.

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Discussions: The prevalence of male-dominant ideologies and gender stereotypes in the textbooks aligns with previous critiques of educational materials as reinforcing traditional gender roles. However, the presence of more equitable gender representations may indicate the increasing influence of global discourses on gender equality and a growing awareness of such discourses among textbook designers. The privileging of Inner Circle countries reflects linguistic imperialism, but the inclusion of ASEAN member countries in Thai-authored textbooks suggests that localized authorship has the potential to challenge such hegemonies. Similarly, the emphasis on individualism reflects global and neoliberal influences, but it contrasts with the collectivist values that remain central to Asian identities. Finally, the uneven representation of cosmopolitan ideals across the textbooks highlights discrepancies in how students are exposed to global perspectives.

Conclusions: The findings reveal both ideological commonalities and localized variations, underscoring the need for teaching materials that reflect the diverse linguistic and cultural realities of learners. These insights carry significant implications for educators, textbook developers, and policymakers, highlighting the importance of designing pedagogical materials that foster inclusivity and cultural awareness.

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Introduction

The increasing interconnectedness of nations in the era of globalization has amplified the importance of English literacy as a crucial skill for effective participation in the global community. Consequently, numerous countries, particularly those where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), have integrated English language instruction into their national curricula, often beginning at the primary school level. This trend underscores the perceived role of English proficiency in facilitating international communication and promoting socio-economic mobility.

Within educational contexts, English Language Teaching (ELT) frequently relies on textbooks as the primary pedagogical resource (Lopriore & Vettorel, 2015). However, textbooks are not neutral artifacts; they can reflect and perpetuate specific values, ideologies, and interests that potentially shape students' perceptions of themselves and the world (Qin, 2016; Wang, 2016). These ideological influences are often implicit and may be challenging to discern, especially for learners and educators lacking familiarity with the represented contexts. As a result, such ideologies may be unconsciously assimilated as normative, particularly when textbooks are positioned as authoritative sources of knowledge (Van Dijk, 2005). This necessitates a critical examination of the representations within ELT materials, especially in EFL settings where learners' exposure to diverse global perspectives may be primarily mediated through these resources.

Existing research has employed content analysis of both textual and visual elements to identify and elucidate the ideologies embedded within ELT textbooks. For example, Samadikhah and Shahrokhi (2015) investigated gender representation in two ELT textbooks using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Their

findings revealed gender inequality, with male actors overrepresented and occupying positions of authority compared to their female counterparts. Similarly, Esmaeili and Arabmofrad (2015) analyzed the social actors and the reading passages in a series of Western-authored ELT textbooks for primary school students. Applying Van Leeuwen's (1996) representation framework and Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) transitivity theory, they observed a higher frequency of male actors and the exclusion of female actors from business-related contexts.

Beyond gender, cultural representation has also been a significant focus of ELT textbook research. Qin (2016) utilized a semiotic approach and CDA to examine cultural representations in three ELT textbooks for junior high school students in China. The analysis revealed a bias towards Western and Chinese cultures, with limited representation of other cultures. A similar pattern of restricted cultural representation was observed by Jindapitak and Boonsuk (2018) in a locally published Thai primary education textbook, which privileged Western culture while marginalizing Thai and other cultural perspectives. Song (2019) explored cultural content in ELT textbooks used in cram schools in China from an intercultural perspective. Labtic and Teo (2020) examined the cultural content of ELT textbooks used at the secondary school level in Thailand and found that both Thai culture and the cultures of other foreign countries were marginalized in comparison to the dominant representation of American and British cultures. Mahbub et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review of ELT textbooks published in Asia between 2014 and 2023, revealing a persistent imbalance in cultural representation. Their findings indicate that most textbooks emphasize source culture or native-speaker cultures, while marginalizing local cultures and those of other non-Western contexts. However, they also noted a few rare cases where local culture was overrepresented. Saemee and Nomnian (2021) identified imbalanced and inappropriate representations of cultures in ELT textbooks used in multicultural schools. Wang, Weng, and Li (2019) examined language ideologies in young learner textbooks and found the emphasis on Standard English ideologies, neglecting the global spread of English as a lingua franca (ELF). Xiong and Hu (2022), through a critical discourse analysis of a textbook series used in China, highlighted the role of multimodal resources in constructing the social value of benevolence, emphasizing how visual and textual elements work together to shape ideological messages.

Continuing the focus on cultural ideologies, several studies have examined how ELT textbooks portray cultural content across different educational contexts. However, much of the existing research appears to focus on isolated ideological dimensions within individual textbooks. To broaden the scope of ideological analysis to encompass multiple dimensions, Joo, Chik, and Djonov (2019) investigated the representation of social actors in five locally published ELT textbooks in South Korea. Their study, employing Kachru's (1992) World Englishes model and Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic framework, explored the complex interplay of various ideological constructs. It was found that Westerners, who were often depicted in authoritative roles, while Korean people were shown in academic settings interacting primarily with Westerners, Japanese, and Chinese people. Other cultures were largely absent, and the textbooks failed to reflect the reality of present-day communication, where individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds interact.

To address the gap in existing research, which has often focused on singular ideological dimensions within individual textbooks, this study adopts an integrative analytical approach informed by the work of Joo et al. (2019). Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic framework of social actor representation provides an analytical tool for examining how individuals and groups are semiotically constructed within discourse. Central to this approach is Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic framework for analyzing the representation of social actors, which offers a robust tool for examining how individuals and groups are semiotically constructed within discourse. Crucially, Van Leeuwen argues that social actor representations are never neutral. Rather, they are shaped by underlying value systems and serve particular

ideological functions. Table 1 summarizes Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic framework as adopted in this study, and outlines the key processes used to analyze the representation of social actors.

Table 1. Van Leeuwen's Socio-Semantic Categories of Social Actor Representation

Strategy	Description
Inclusion/ Exclusion	Refers to whether social actors are present or omitted in the discourse. Exclusion may occur through suppression (complete absence) or backgrounding (partial omission where actors are implied but not explicitly mentioned).
Activation/ Passivation	Concerns the representation of social actors as active agents (activation) or as recipients of actions or experiences (passivation).
Role Allocation	Involves the functional roles assigned to social actors, such as agent, beneficiary, or role in relation to actions or processes.
Genericization/ Specification	Indicates whether social actors are portrayed as general categories or groups (genericization), or as specific identifiable individuals (specification).
Individualization/ Assimilation	Examines whether actors are represented as distinct individuals (individualization) or as part of a group (assimilation), which can take the form of aggregation (quantified groups) or collectivization (unquantified groups).
Nomination/ Categorization	Differentiates between actors identified by proper names or titles (nomination) and those labeled by social categories, roles, or functions (categorization).
Functionalization/ Identification	Refers to actors being represented in terms of what they do (e.g., "engineer"), while identification classifies them by what they are, including classification (e.g., nationality, age) and relational identification (e.g., "mother," "friend").
Personalization/ Impersonalization	Considers whether social actors are depicted as human beings (personalization) or as non-human abstractions, collectives, or institutions (impersonalization).
Appraisalment	Involves the evaluative positioning of social actors, which may be positive or negative, and often reflects the underlying ideological stance of the text.

Kachru's (1992) model of World Englishes offers a global sociolinguistic perspective for contextualizing how English and its speakers are ideologically positioned. The model's division of Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles, provides a framework for analyzing whose English(es) and whose cultural values are prioritized or marginalized in the textbooks. The integration of Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic framework with Kachru's model of World Englishes enables a multilayered ideological analysis. While Van Leeuwen's framework uncovers the micro-level strategies used in the representation of social actors, Kachru's model situates these representations within broader global macrostructures. Together, these frameworks allow for a comprehensive understanding of how ELT textbooks construct the roles of learners and others, and how such constructions reflect and perpetuate ideologies of identity, globalization, and linguistic authority.

Building on the preceding discussion, this study focuses on ELT textbooks used in China and Thailand. While both countries categorize English as a foreign language (EFL), the differences in their historical, political, and educational contexts can shape distinct approaches to English language education. A comparative analysis of textbooks from these settings offers insights into how global ideological pressures are locally negotiated and manifested. Furthermore, examining materials authored by both local and foreign writers may reveal how their cultural backgrounds influence the ideological orientations embedded in the textbooks. In

this regard, Kiczkowiak (2024) highlights a prevailing trend among major publishers to prioritize white native English speakers as coursebook authors, rather than non-native or non-white native speakers. This practice raises critical questions about whether such authors adequately incorporate local cultural content, and if they do, whether they do so with accuracy and cultural sensitivity.

The present study aims to examine how social actors are represented in primary ELT textbooks used in China and Thailand and to identify key similarities and differences in their representation across these contexts. To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are social actors represented in Chinese and Thai ELT textbooks for primary education?
2. What are the key similarities and differences in the representation of social actors across these Chinese and Thai ELT textbooks?

Method

Research design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, with an emphasis on qualitative analysis, supported by quantitative techniques. The qualitative component draws upon Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic framework to analyze the representation of social actors, complemented by Kachru's (1992) World Englishes model to investigate the sociolinguistic dimensions across Kachru's concentric circles. Quantitative data, including frequency counts and keyness analysis, serve to triangulate and strengthen the qualitative findings, ensuring a robust and nuanced interpretation of the data.

Textbook selection

The selection of textbooks for analysis was guided by specific criteria to ensure the relevance, authenticity, and comparability of the data. The textbooks selected for this study were required to: (1) be officially approved by the Ministry of Education in their respective countries (China and Thailand); (2) be designated for use at the primary school level (Grade 6); (3) be authored by either local or foreign (native English-speaking) writers; and (4) be in current use at the time of data collection. The focus on Ministry-approved textbooks stems from the assumption that such materials most accurately reflect national educational policies and the mainstream English language learning of young learners. Additionally, based on initial primary textbook content observations, it was assumed that ideological representations of social actors would be more salient in sixth-grade textbooks compared to those for earlier grades, which generally feature simpler content.

Four textbooks were selected for the study as they met the stated criteria. These include one used in China written by local authors (*LC*), one used in China written by foreign authors (*FC*), one used in Thailand written by local authors (*LT*), and one used in Thailand written by foreign authors (*FT*). This selection enabled a comparative analysis of potential ideological variations based on authors' cultural and linguistic backgrounds within each national context. The names of the textbooks have been withheld to ensure the anonymity of the authors and publishers, aligning with ethical research practices and focusing on general trends rather than individual cases. An overview of the selected textbooks is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptions of the Selected English Textbooks

Textbook Code	Year Published	Authorship Origin	Number of Units	Content Overview
LC	2013	Local (China)	6 Units	Visiting overseas, vacations, personal interests and hobbies, daily life activities, nature, and basic cultural awareness
FC	2013	Foreign (China)	8 Units	Good habits, health and safety, celebrations, vacations, countries, and daily life activities
LT	2017	Local (Thailand)	10 Units	Personal interests and hobbies, health and well-being, daily life activities, famous people, neighborhoods, countries, animals, and expressing desires
FT	2018	Foreign (Thailand)	6 Units	Personal interests and hobbies, future careers, health and safety, holidays, hobbies, and entertainment

Data

In this study, data refers to the selected textual and visual materials extracted from three recurring thematic units - countries, routine activities, and sports – found across the English textbooks used in Chinese and Thai primary schools. These topics were purposively selected based on their cross-textbook comparability, as they appear in both national textbook series. While often perceived as neutral or standard content, the selected topics in fact carry culturally and socially significant content, shaping children's understanding of social roles, national identity, and global perspectives. For instance, the topic of countries often connects to cultural representation and international hierarchy, potentially privileging certain nations and worldviews. Routine activities provide a lens through which norms related to gender, discipline, and social expectations are introduced and naturalized. Sports frequently reinforce ideals of competition and gendered participation. In the context of primary education, where learners are in a formative stage of developing their worldview, these topics are instrumental in constructing notions of self and other, global citizenship and cultural belonging.

The collected data were classified into two sets. The first set consisted entirely of illustrations of social actors depicted within the selected topics. These illustrations were categorized based on their respective textbook sources. The second set comprised textual data, including conversations, reading passages, and exercises related to the chosen topics. This textual data was compiled into four text files (.txt), each corresponding to a specific textbook source.

Data analysis

To address Research Question 1, a comprehensive analysis of both visual and textual data was conducted, drawing upon two theoretical frameworks: Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic approach and Kachru's (1992) model of World Englishes.

Van Leeuwen's framework served as an analytical lens for examining how social actors are represented within specific contexts, thereby uncovering the ways in which these representations construct and perpetuate underlying ideologies. In the visual analysis, the principal representational strategies from Van Leeuwen's socio-semantic framework were systematically applied to guide the coding process. Each illustration involving social actors was analyzed for its alignment with the specified strategies. When an image corresponded to a particular strategy, it was coded accordingly. In cases where multiple strategies were present within a single illustration, a multi-strategy analysis was conducted. Each instance was accompanied by detailed interpretation to account for the complex layering of ideological

meaning. Once all illustrations were coded, the data were organized into categories based on recurring patterns, and overarching themes were identified. This thematic synthesis enabled a deeper understanding of how ideologies are visually embedded and communicated through textbook imagery.

Kachru's model of World Englishes provided a framework for analyzing how social actors are positioned and how linguistic and cultural norms interact within the global English landscape. In analyzing the visual and textual content, Kachru's (1992) model was employed to identify and categorize cultural references according to the three concentric circles (i.e., Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles). Specific attention was paid to explicit mentions of countries, locations, or cultural symbols embedded in the texts. References to countries traditionally associated with the Inner Circle (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia) were coded accordingly, reflecting a focus on native English-speaking contexts. Likewise, mentions of countries aligned with the Outer Circle (e.g., India, Singapore) or the Expanding Circle (e.g., China, Thailand) were categorized based on their respective affiliations.

To ensure the rigor and credibility of the qualitative analysis, a two-stage process was implemented. First, intra-coder reliability was established through a coding and recoding procedure, where each coder independently analyzed the data and then re-analyzed a subset of the same data after a period of two weeks. This process allowed for the identification and resolution of any inconsistencies in individual coding. Second, inter-coder reliability was assessed through a pilot study. A subset of the data related to the representation of gender was independently coded by all three coders. Following the establishment of acceptable inter-coder reliability, the coders proceeded with the full dataset analysis.

To complement and strengthen the qualitative findings, frequency counts of relevant textual data were conducted using AntConc (Anthony, 2018). This quantitative analysis provided supporting evidence for the identified themes and patterns emerging from the qualitative analysis.

To analyze the similarities and differences in the representation of social actors across the Chinese and Thai textbooks in Research Question 2, keyness analysis was applied as a quantitative method to support and enhance the findings from the qualitative analysis. Keyness analysis, conducted using AntConc (Anthony, 2018), identified words or phrases that were statistically over-represented in each set of textbooks (Chinese vs. Thai). This allowed for the identification of salient differences in language use and thematic focus between the two contexts.

Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1: How are social actors represented in Chinese and Thai ELT textbooks for primary education?

Table 3 presents a detailed overview of the dataset analyzed in this study, outlining the number of visual elements (Illustrations) and the size of the textual corpus (in Tokens) extracted from each of the four primary school ELT textbooks. The total dataset comprises 355 illustrations and 10,973 textual tokens. Notably, the distribution of both illustrations and textual content varies across the textbooks, potentially reflecting different design conventions.

Table 3. Distribution of Illustrations and Tokens Across the Analyzed Textbooks

Textbook Code	Visual Elements	Textual Corpus
	Illustrations	Size (Tokens)
LC	100	1,754
FC	94	3,059
LT	71	2,403
FT	90	3,757
Total	355	10,973

Based on the analysis of both the visual and textual data detailed in Table 1, the representation of social actors in the selected textbooks revealed underlying ideologies across four key themes: gender ideology, cultural representation, individualism and collectivism, and the promotion of cosmopolitanism.

Gender Ideology

Gender ideology refers to the set of beliefs and assumptions about the appropriate roles, attributes, and behaviors of men and women within a society (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). In the analysis of social actors, gender ideology plays a critical role in shaping how individuals are represented or marginalized. The key findings related to gender ideology include male preferences and stereotypical gender roles.

1. Male preference

The visual analysis of social actors in the selected Chinese textbooks revealed an unequal representation, favoring male characters and reflecting underlying gender ideologies. In the *LC* textbook, this preference for male representation was particularly salient, exemplified by the prominent depiction of “Bill,” a male protagonist. Bill is portrayed as leaving his home country to reside with a host family in a Western context. This positioning of Bill as the central figure within the narrative symbolizes a broader ideological association of males with traits such as independence, resilience, and adaptability when navigating unfamiliar environments.

Further analysis reveals additional visual cues reinforcing male dominance. One image depicts a family celebrating the traditional Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival, with a grandfather seated at the head of the table, engaging in conversation with his children and grandchild. Another illustration portrays three Westerners celebrating Thanksgiving, where the eldest male figure occupies the head of the table, with a male and a female seated on either side. This consistent positioning of male figures at the head of the table, a position traditionally associated with authority and respect, signifies their centrality within familial hierarchies. These recurring seating arrangements reinforce unequal gender roles, perpetuating the notion of women as subordinate within social and familial domains.

In the *FC* textbook, female characters are predominantly depicted engaging in household chores and responsibilities, such as sweeping, watering plants, washing clothes, and doing dishes. One illustration portrays a woman single-handedly preparing a birthday party, with no visible assistance from other family members. These depictions reinforce the notion that women’s primary role is domestically oriented and that household labor is inherently feminine, while men are not expected to contribute.

While many illustrations in the Chinese textbooks reflect gender ideologies that privilege males, some depictions offer counter-narratives that challenge these traditional norms. For instance, one illustration portrays a family - including the father, mother, and son - sharing household chores in the kitchen. Another depicts boys engaged in domestic tasks such as doing dishes and making beds. However, the absence of fathers independently performing household chores remains notable. While the textbooks emphasize shared family participation or boys’

involvement in domestic tasks, the independent contribution of fathers is conspicuously absent, revealing a gap in representation.

Turning to the ELT textbooks used in Thailand, it is observed that while they do not overtly emphasize gender ideology, subtle representations of social actors may still influence students' perceptions of gender roles. For example, the *LT* textbook includes an illustration of a group of students crossing the road, where two boys are positioned at the front, leading the way, while the girls follow behind. This portrayal subtly reinforces traditional gender norms by associating boys with leadership and agency, while girls are depicted in a more passive or dependent role.

The analysis of gender representation across the four textbooks reveals a clear disparity in the frequency of male and female social actors, as summarized in Table 4. Male social actors are consistently depicted more frequently than their female counterparts across all textbooks. The *FC* textbook exhibits the largest difference, with 141 male actors compared to 77 female actors (a difference of 64). Similarly, the *LC* textbook demonstrates a significant imbalance, with 96 male actors and only 42 female actors (a difference of 54).

The Thai textbooks, *LT* and *FT*, also exhibit gender-based disparities. While the illustrations do not explicitly depict females in subservient positions, the quantitative differences suggest a pattern of male dominance. In the *LT* textbook, 89 male actors are represented compared to 62 female actors (a difference of 27). The *FT* textbook features 69 male actors and 39 female actors (a difference of 30).

These findings reveal a consistent pattern of male-dominant representation across all analyzed textbooks. Nevertheless, the comparatively smaller disparities observed in the Thai textbooks suggest variations in the degree of gender imbalance across the materials.

Table 4. Frequency of Male and Female Social Actor Representation in ELT Textbooks

Social Actor Category	LC	LC (%)	FC	FC (%)	LT	LT (%)	FT	FT (%)
Male actors	96	69.6%	141	64.7%	89	58.9%	69	63.9%
Female actors	42	30.4%	77	35.3%	62	41.1%	39	36.1%
Total actors	138	100%	218	100%	151	100%	108	100%

Table 5 presents the frequency counts of gender-related pronouns and possessive adjectives. Both Chinese textbooks exhibit a higher frequency of male-related pronouns and possessive adjectives (e.g., he, him, his) compared to their female counterparts (e.g., she, her, hers). In the *LC* textbook, male-related terms appear 55 times, while female-related terms are recorded 48 times, resulting in a Male:Female ratio of 1.15. This indicates a slight predominance of male-related terms. Similarly, in the *FC* textbook, male-related terms occur 43 times, whereas female-related terms are recorded only 18 times, yielding a Male:Female ratio of 2.39. This significantly higher ratio suggests a more pronounced gender imbalance in the *FC* textbook compared to the *LC* textbook. These quantitative findings from the *LC* and *FC* textbooks corroborate the visual analysis, further highlighting the underrepresentation of female characters.

In contrast, the findings from the Thai textbooks suggest a more balanced representation of gender-related pronouns and possessive adjectives. The *LT* textbook features 20 instances of male-associated terms and 19 instances of female-associated terms, resulting in a Male:Female ratio of 1.05. This ratio being close to 1 suggests a relatively balanced representation of male and female terms. The *FT* textbook includes 39 occurrences of male-associated terms and 41 occurrences of female-associated terms, leading to a Male:Female ratio of 0.95. This ratio, which is less than 1, indicates slightly more female related terms. These frequency counts, considered alongside the visual representations in the Thai textbooks,

challenge the notion of a male-dominant discourse observed in the Chinese textbooks. These results indicate a more equitable portrayal of genders within these educational materials.

Table 5. Frequency of Gender-Related Pronouns and Possessive Adjectives

	Male Pronouns & Possessives					Female Pronouns & Possessives					Male:Female Ratio
	He	Him	His	His	Total	She	Her	Her	Hers	Total	
LC	28	3	24	0	55	13	18	17	0	48	1.15
FC	29	0	14	0	43	12	3	3	0	18	2.39
LT	17	0	3	0	20	14	2	3	0	19	1.05
FT	28	3	8	0	39	31	5	5	0	41	0.95

The findings from the visual and textual analysis of the selected textbooks reveal a persistent male-dominant ideology, particularly evident in the Chinese textbooks. These results align with previous research by Esmaceli and Arabmofrad (2015) and Samadikhah and Shahrokhi (2015), which demonstrated a recurring emphasis on male dominance and independence, coupled with the exclusion of women from prominent and authoritative roles. The prevailing visibility and perception of leadership attributed to male social actors in the present study risks reinforcing the notion that men inherently hold greater authority and social value than women. This embedded ideology may shape young learners' perceptions of gender roles, limiting girls' aspirations and subtly reinforcing the expectation that women should occupy subordinate positions in relation to their male counterparts.

When the contexts of China and Thailand are compared, the results reveal that the Chinese textbooks overtly promote patriarchal ideologies. This is evidenced by both the narrative focus, which consistently centers male figures, and the quantitative imbalance between male and female actors. Men are predominantly portrayed as central characters, associated with leadership in familial and societal contexts, as well as with resilience and adaptability.

In contrast, the Thai textbooks demonstrate a more balanced representation of gender. While the frequency of male actors and pronouns remains slightly higher than that of their female counterparts, the differences are considerably less pronounced compared to the Chinese textbooks. However, subtle ideological cues persist. Male characters are still frequently depicted in leadership roles, implicitly reinforcing traditional hierarchies. For instance, scenes portraying boys leading while girls follow suggest an underlying association between masculinity and authority.

While some progress is evident in the Thai textbooks, the subtle ideological undertones indicate that further effort is needed to challenge entrenched gender norms. A proactive approach to textbook design, incorporating equitable representation and diverse portrayals of social actors, could foster more inclusive perceptions of gender.

2. Stereotypical gender roles

The analysis of social actors reveals distinct patterns of stereotypical gender roles within the selected textbooks. These portrayals strengthen traditional gender norms by associating specific activities, interests, and intellectual abilities with either boys or girls. In the *LC* textbook, a wide range of male actors are depicted engaging in activities such as skiing, playing hockey, watching TV, building model planes, swimming, playing baseball, jogging, and playing football. In contrast, female actors are depicted in a significantly more limited range of activities.

In the *FC* textbook, boys are predominantly depicted engaging in masculine activities, such as playing with toy trains, baseball, and computer games. In contrast, girls are engaged in more stereotypically feminine pursuits, such as playing with dolls and participating in indoor activities like ballet and playing the piano. Furthermore, the textbook associates intellectual

abilities with gender, illustrating male characters as more interested and proficient in science and technology, while female characters are depicted as excelling in the arts.

In Thailand, while the *LT* textbook depicts stereotypical gender roles, such as girls engaging in activities like aerobic dance and yoga, the *FT* textbook offers counter-stereotypical portrayals, reflecting a more progressive approach to gender representation compared to the more traditional depictions discussed earlier. Female characters are occasionally shown participating in traditionally male-associated activities, such as playing games, pursuing adventurous endeavors like skating and climbing, and engaging in mathematics and science. In one instance, a female character is portrayed as winning first place in a competition. These counter-stereotypical depictions challenge the belief that activities involving competition or intellectual rigor are the exclusive domain of males, while encouraging female characters to embrace a broader range of interests and abilities.

The analysis of the selected textbooks reveals a persistent association between intellectual abilities and specific genders, particularly in the Chinese textbooks. Such representations reflect and reinforce traditional gender roles, profoundly shaping students' perceptions of their identities and social roles. By normalizing these constructs, repeated exposure to gendered stereotypes risks pressuring students to conform to socially imposed expectations, potentially limiting their opportunities for self-expression and personal growth. These findings align with previous studies (Esmaceli & Arabmofrad, 2015; Samadikhah & Shahrokhi, 2015) that demonstrate the continued emphasis on male dominance and independence while marginalizing female agency and leadership. This gendering of interests and abilities within the textbooks constrains students' self-concept, dictating what they may believe they can or should pursue based on their gender, rather than their individual talents. Consequently, such representations fail to reflect real-world diversity and hinder efforts to overcome restrictive gender stereotypes.

However, there is evidence of progress in gender representation in some textbooks, particularly those used in Thailand. While the *LT* textbook still exhibits stereotypical portrayals, the *FT* textbook offers counter-stereotypical depictions, such as girls excelling in traditionally male-dominated domains like mathematics, science, and competitive activities. These portrayals challenge long-standing gendered hierarchies and encourage female characters to engage in a wider range of interests and abilities.

Cultural representation

Cultural representation focuses on how various cultures are depicted, included, or excluded in the illustrations and texts. In ELT textbooks, cultural representation shapes learners' understanding of themselves and others by selectively highlighting or omitting particular cultural practices, values, and perspectives (Gray, 2010).

The analysis of cultural representation in the textbooks reveals a strong preference for Western culture, with limited inclusion of others. In the *LC* textbook, the central character, "Bill," is portrayed as residing in a Western country with a host family. This narrative positions the storyline within an Inner Circle cultural context, emphasizing the prominence of Western culture throughout the textbook. The inclusion of Western traditions, such as Halloween with pumpkin lanterns, further illustrates the textbook's alignment with Inner Circle cultural norms. Despite the dominance of Western culture, the textbook attempts to incorporate local cultural values such as authority and seniority. For example, an illustration shows Bill standing humbly with his teacher, and other images depict the eldest family member occupying the head of the table during family gatherings. The *FC* textbook also features a Western-style party, complete with a clown, an element not traditionally associated with Asian festivities.

In the *LT* textbook, Western sports and activities such as surfing, skiing, hockey, ballet, and skating are prominently featured, while traditional Thai sports are noticeably absent. The

FT textbook includes an illustration of a group enjoying a picnic with sandwiches, apples, and oranges, portraying a Westernized concept of outdoor dining that contrasts with traditional Thai picnics. This depiction reflects the textbook's alignment with Inner Circle cultural norms, leaving local traditions and culinary practices underrepresented. Conversely, the *LT* textbook features illustrations of dining tables with typical Thai dishes, such as fried rice and fried fish, alongside fruits like mangosteen, jackfruit, and star fruit.

Table 6 demonstrates frequency counts of cultural references based on Kachru's model of World Englishes. Inner Circle countries are prominently featured across the textbooks used in China. The *LC* textbook exhibits the highest frequency, with 41 instances, representing 52.6% of its total cultural references. Canada dominates, mentioned 20 times, accounting for 48.8% of the Inner Circle references in this textbook. The *FC* textbook follows with 23 references to Inner Circle cultures, representing 74.2% of its total. Here, Australia and Australian appear a combined 15 times (13 and 2, respectively), making up 65.2% of the Inner Circle mentions in the *FC* textbook. In contrast, the textbooks used in Thailand (*LT* and *FT*) include significantly fewer references to Inner Circle countries. The *LT* textbook has only 9 mentions (8.0% of its total), while the *FT* textbook has 12 (92.3% of its total), reflecting a comparatively diminished focus on this cultural category.

Interestingly, the *LT* textbook is the only one to incorporate Outer Circle cultures, mentioning Singapore 20 times and the Philippines 10 times, accounting for 26.5% of its total references. Other textbooks exclude countries from this category entirely. The *LT* textbook also places significant emphasis on Expanding Circle cultures, with 74 mentions, representing 65.5% of its total references. This includes 14 references to Thailand, its country of origin. Other ASEAN countries contribute the remaining mentions. This distinctive approach sets *LT* apart as a textbook that emphasizes regional identity and cooperation rather than prioritizing Inner Circle cultures.

In sharp contrast to *LT*'s emphasis on localized and regional identities, the *FT* textbook makes no reference to Thailand, despite its use within the Thai educational context. This omission likely stems from the fact that the textbook is authored by non-local writers who may lack the contextual awareness or intentionality to incorporate national or regional cultural elements. Such exclusion is not a neutral oversight; it reinforces the marginalization of local voices and fosters an ideology in which English language education is decoupled from learners' sociocultural realities. By failing to represent Thailand, the *FT* textbook risks positioning Thai learners as passive recipients of global content rather than active participants or contributors. This undermines the development of cultural self-awareness and relegates Thai students to a peripheral "third space" in the global communicative landscape, rather than fostering empowered global citizenship. Moreover, the *FT* textbook includes only a single reference to China, which accounts for only 7.7% of the total cultural references. This minimal representation of the Expanding Circle stands in marked contrast to the overwhelming emphasis on Inner Circle cultures. Such disproportionate focus may stem from the fact that the textbook authors are native English speakers, potentially leading to an unconscious prioritization of their own cultural perspectives.

The overall findings indicate that, except for the *LT* textbook, other materials largely overlook Outer and Expanding Circle countries, maintaining an imbalanced emphasis on Inner Circle representation.

Table 6. Frequency of Cultural References in ELT Textbooks Based on Kachru's WE.

		LC	FC	LT	FT
Inner Circle culture	Australia	1	13	5	4
	Canada	20	1	1	1
	London	3	7	0	7
	English	9	0	4	0
	Australian	8	2	0	0
	Total	41 (52.6%)	23 (74.2%)	9 (8.0%)	12 (92.3%)
Outer Circle culture	Singapore	0	0	20	0
	the Philippines	0	0	10	0
	Total	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	30 (26.5%)	0 (0%)
Expanding Circle culture	Beijing	12	8	0	0
	China	14	0	1	1
	Thailand	0	0	14	0
	Chinese	11	0	1	0
	Myanmar	0	0	9	0
	Cambodia	0	0	9	0
	Indonesia	0	0	9	0
	Brunei	0	0	8	0
	Laos	0	0	8	0
	Vietnam	0	0	8	0
	Malaysia	0	0	7	0
	Total	37 (47.4%)	8 (25.8%)	74 (65.5%)	1 (7.7%)
	Overall total	78 (100%)	31 (100%)	113 (100%)	13 (100%)

Despite the dominance of Western cultural elements, the textbooks attempt to incorporate local cultural values. For example, the *LC* textbook features an illustration of Bill standing respectfully while listening to his teacher, emphasizing the importance of respect for authority, a core cultural value in China. Furthermore, the textbook includes scenes where the eldest family member occupies the head of the table during family gatherings, reflecting the hierarchical structure prevalent in Chinese society, where seniority is highly regarded.

The analysis reveals a clear preference for Western cultural norms in the Chinese ELT textbooks, with limited inclusion of local or other cultural contexts. This aligns with findings by Qin (2016), Wang, Weng, and Li (2021) and Song (2019), who highlight the predominance of Western cultural content in Chinese ELT textbooks and the marginalization of diverse cultural perspectives. Such an imbalance restricts opportunities for students to develop intercultural competence and cultural sensitivity - skills essential for effective communication in today's multicultural world. Furthermore, the recurring absence of diverse cultural integration perpetuates a narrow worldview, which may inadvertently reinforce the notion of Western cultural superiority.

In contrast, the Thai ELT textbooks demonstrate a dual narrative. Foreign-authored Thai textbooks continue to prioritize Western culture while neglecting other cultural representations, reinforcing patterns of Western cultural dominance identified in prior studies (e.g., Jindapitak & Boonsuk, 2018; Labtic & Teo, 2020; Muhbub et al., 2024; Saemee & Nomnian, 2021). However, the locally authored Thai textbook offers a more inclusive perspective by emphasizing ASEAN cultures within the Outer and Expanding Circles. This approach reflects a deliberate effort to adapt to the evolving sociocultural and geopolitical realities of the ASEAN region. The focus on regional identity and cooperation aligns with educational policies aimed at equipping students to navigate the ASEAN community, where English functions as a lingua franca for intercultural communication. By incorporating a wider range of cultural contexts, the locally authored textbook provides learners with a more relatable cultural framework.

The findings underscore the pivotal role of textbooks in shaping students' cultural and linguistic understanding. An overemphasis on Western culture, as seen in the selected textbooks except the *LT*, risks alienating students by failing to connect the language with their own sociocultural realities. This disconnection may hinder their motivation to learn English and limit their ability to see the language as a tool for engaging with diverse global contexts. In contrast, efforts to integrate local and regional cultures into ELT materials, as seen in the locally authored Thai textbook, offer a more nuanced approach that fosters both cultural relevance and global awareness.

Individualism and Collectivism

The analysis of the selected textbooks reveals ideological dimensions of individualism and collectivism. Individualism and collectivism are situated at opposite poles. Individualism refers to contexts where individual ties are loose, emphasizing autonomy, personal agency, self-achievement, and one's immediate family only. Meanwhile, collectivism refers to contexts where individuals are integrated in groups, prioritizing social harmony, interdependence, group affiliation, and extended families. These ideological orientations often manifest implicitly in ELT materials, which may reflect the values of their authors, institutions, and target audiences (Pennycook, 2013).

Visual analysis of the *LC* textbook reveals depictions of Chinese families coming together in various contexts, such as during Thanksgiving, the Mid-Autumn Festival, and family picnics. Conversely, the textbook also portrays social actors engaging in solitary activities, such as making models, watching movies, and exercising. The combination of these depictions contributes to the construction of both collectivist and individualist ideologies, suggesting that there are times when individuals must act independently, while special occasions are reserved for family. Additionally, the textbook includes an illustration of people from different nationalities working together. This depiction implies the collaboration of individuals from diverse parts of the world, potentially promoting collectivist ideology.

In the *FC* textbook, most depictions within the selected topics are embedded with individualist ideology. This is evident in the portrayal of social actors engaging in activities alone, rather than collectively.

The theme of togetherness is also present in the *LT* textbook. One depiction shows a nuclear family, comprising parents and a daughter, going on a picnic together. Another illustration supporting collectivism features people gathered around a dining table, preparing to share a meal. All individuals depicted appear to be of Asian nationalities, based on their hair color, clothing, and food, which is consistent with Southeast Asian cultural norms. The social actors are shown with black hair and attire suited to the tropical climate of the region, and one of them wears Muslim clothing. This representation may intentionally align with ASEAN integration, preparing students to become part of the ASEAN community. Additionally, another depiction from the same textbook shows a diverse group of people from different nationalities standing together, stating, "We are friends." This could be interpreted as an attempt to expose students to a global community, beyond just the ASEAN context. Nevertheless, some depictions in the textbook show social actors engaging in solitary activities, such as getting up, having meals, and cooking, which emphasizes individualism in certain contexts.

The *FT* textbook, on the other hand, does not incorporate a collectivist ideology, instead, it emphasizes individualism. The content predominantly features social actors engaging in solitary activities, such as riding a motorcycle in a motocross competition, skiing, and bowling. There is no representation of collectivist values, particularly the family-oriented themes that are deeply embedded in Thai culture. This absence highlights a focus on individual

achievement and recreational pursuits, which contrasts with the communal and familial values prevalent in Thai society.

The textual analysis of pronoun use reveals that all the selected textbooks lean toward individualism. Table 7 illustrates the distribution of pronoun usage across the textbooks. The analysis indicates that the pronouns “I” and “you”, which emphasize individuality, appear more frequently than “we” and “they”, which align with collectivist perspectives. This imbalance suggests a stronger focus on individual identity and personal agency over collective or group-oriented values within the analyzed teaching materials.

Table 7. Individualism and Collectivism Pronoun Counts

	I	you	Individualism Total	we	they	Collectivism Total	Totals
FC	57	41	98 (76.0%)	21	10	31 (24.0%)	129 (100%)
LC	88	48	136 (69.0%)	19	42	61 (31.0%)	197 (100%)
FT	162	168	330 (87.3%)	31	17	48 (12.7%)	378 (100%)
LT	60	68	128 (70.3%)	24	30	54 (29.7%)	182 (100%)

The quantitative evidence from the foreign-authored textbooks used in both China and Thailand supports the qualitative findings from the visual analysis of social actors, indicating a predominant emphasis on individualism over collectivism. For instance, in the *FC* textbook, the pronoun “I” appears 57 times, and “you” (referring to a singular individual) appears 41 times, totaling 98 instances, representing 76.0% of the total pronoun usage. In contrast, the pronoun “we” is used 21 times, and “they” appears 10 times, totaling only 31 occurrences, representing 24.0% of the total pronoun usage. Similarly, in the *FT* textbook used in Thailand, “I” occurs 162 times, and “you” (referring to a singular individual) 168 times, totaling 330 instances, representing 87.3% of the total pronoun usage, while “we” and “they” are used only 31 and 17 times respectively, totaling 48 mentions, representing 12.7% of the total pronoun usage.

However, in the *LC* and *LT* textbooks, the frequency of individualist and collectivist pronouns contrasts with the findings from the visual analysis. While the visual analysis highlighted support for collectivist ideology, the textual analysis indicates a higher occurrence of the pronouns “I” and “you” (referring to a singular individual), which are associated with individualism. In the *LC* textbook, individualistic pronouns comprise 69.0% of the total pronoun usage, while in the *LT* textbook, they comprise 70.3%.

The representation of individualism and collectivism in ELT textbooks reveals significant insights into how cultural ideologies are embedded within teaching materials. Locally authored textbooks often reflect culturally specific values, particularly those tied to collectivism and family-oriented ideologies. This is evident in the Chinese and Thai textbooks, where visual depictions emphasize family gatherings, shared meals, and collaboration, aligning with the collectivist traditions deeply rooted in these cultures. Such representations may serve to affirm students’ cultural identity while preparing them to engage with both local and regional (e.g., ASEAN) communities. Interestingly, collectivist themes such as family gatherings and multicultural collaboration coexist with individualist representations, such as solitary activities as found in the *LC* and *LT* textbooks. This duality might expose students to a broader range of cultural ideologies. However, the predominance of individualistic pronouns in the textual content of these textbooks raises questions about whether the balance between individualism and collectivism is adequately maintained.

In contrast, foreign-authored textbooks, especially those with Western origins, appear to place a stronger emphasis on individualism. This is evident not only in visual portrayals of solitary activities, such as skiing, bowling, or individual competitions, but also in the textual analysis, which highlights a higher frequency of pronouns like “I” and “you” compared to “we”

and “they”. This imbalance suggests a focus on personal agency and individual achievement over group-oriented values.

Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism is related to people’s belonging to a single community based on shared morality, mutual respect, and global citizenship. Cosmopolitanism in ELT textbooks appears through such mechanisms as the promotion of global interconnectedness, travel, cross-cultural communication, and the celebration of diversity.

Two of the selected textbooks demonstrate a tendency to promote cosmopolitan ideals, particularly emphasizing global mobility, travel, and the consumption of international goods and experiences. In the *LC* textbook, the character Bill is portrayed as studying abroad, highlighting themes of individual mobility and global interconnectedness. Similarly, the *FT* textbook features illustrations of passports, suitcases, airplanes, and iconic international landmarks, symbolizing the ease of traveling abroad for holidays or other purposes. The remaining textbooks, however, lack representations of cosmopolitan ideology in the analyzed topics.

The selected textbooks are embedded with cosmopolitan ideology, particularly through their emphasis on symbols of global mobility and travel. By foregrounding experiences such as studying abroad, traveling for holidays, and interacting with iconic international landmarks, these materials appear to promote a vision of personal success and fulfillment tied to global opportunities and consumption. Embracing a cosmopolitan perspective can inspire learners to move beyond viewing English as a subject, fostering deeper engagement with the world. (Rizvi & Choo, 2020; Ruane, 2022).

However, such representations may risk marginalizing local cultures and values, implicitly suggesting that global engagement is more desirable or prestigious than maintaining connections to one’s cultural heritage. Moreover, the emphasis on global mobility and cosmopolitan consumerism creates potential accessibility challenges for students from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. For many learners, the financial means required to participate in studying abroad or international travel may be unattainable, rendering these ideals aspirational but out of reach. This disconnect between the textbooks’ portrayal of desirable lifestyles and the lived realities of students could exacerbate feelings of exclusion or inadequacy, further reinforcing systemic inequalities within educational contexts.

Research Question 2: What are the key similarities and differences in the representation of social actors across these Chinese and Thai ELT textbooks?

A keyness analysis was conducted to identify statistically significant differences in word frequencies between the Chinese textbooks (target corpus) and the Thai textbooks (reference corpus). The analysis focused on lexical items, particularly nouns and verbs, as these are central to understanding the representation and actions of social actors. Grammatical items (e.g., ’s, of, the) were excluded using a stoplist to ensure the findings directly addressed the ideological patterns embedded within the textual representations.

Table 8 presents the top 10 keywords, their frequencies in both the Chinese and Thai corpora, and their corresponding log-likelihood values and keyness effect sizes. Among these 10 keywords, six are proper nouns. The most frequent keywords, Bill and Ted, both Western names, appear 54 and 32 times, respectively, in the *LC* textbook, with log-likelihood values of 64.816 and 52.863, and keyness effect sizes of 0.022 and 0.013. In contrast, the Chinese names Tao and Liu appear 17 times each, with a log-likelihood of 28.054 and an effect size of 0.007, originating from the *FC* textbook. This disparity reveals shifting cultural orientations within textbooks used in the same national context (China). The dominance of Western names in the *LC* textbook may unintentionally reinforce the centrality of Western identities, while the

inclusion of Chinese names in the *FC* textbook, though less frequent, reflects an attempt to localize content. This aligns with Jindapitak and Boonsuk (2018), who observed that even textbooks authored by local writers may prioritize Western cultural norms over representations of local identities and other diverse cultures.

The remaining proper nouns, Beijing and Canada, function as settings within the analyzed texts. Beijing appears 20 times with a log-likelihood of 33.011 and an effect size of 0.008, while Canada occurs 21 times with a log-likelihood of 23.376 and an effect size of 0.009. The keyword ‘pulled’ found 21 times in the Chinese corpus, stems from its repeated use as the central verb in a specific story and likely carries no ideology. Similarly, the verb ‘going’ is a high-frequency verb in general English usage, so its presence is unremarkable from an ideological standpoint.

Although the log-likelihood values reveal statistically significant differences in keyword prominence between the corpora, the small effect sizes suggest that these differences may not translate into substantial impact. Nonetheless, the keyword patterns reflect broader tendencies in how cultural and ideological constructs are textually embedded. The overrepresentation of Western names and settings signals a potential bias in cultural visibility.

Table 8. Keyness Analysis of Chinese vs. Thai Textbook Corpora

Keyword	Frequency (Chinese Corpus)	Frequency (Thai Corpus)	Log-Likelihood	Keyness Effect Size
Bill	54	4	64.816	0.022
Ted	32	0	52.863	0.013
pulled	21	0	34.664	0.009
Beijing	20	0	33.011	0.008
clubs	18	0	29.706	0.007
going	55	19	28.476	0.023
tao	17	0	28.054	0.007
Liu	17	0	28.054	0.007
farmer	15	0	24.075	0.006
Canada	21	2	23.376	0.009

The comparison of the Thai (target corpus) and the Chinese (reference corpus) textbook corpora reveals distinctions in keywords. As shown in Table 9, the verb “wear” occurs 24 times in the Thai corpus but is entirely absent in the Chinese corpus (log-likelihood: 27.754; effect size: 0.008). This is followed by the proper noun “Singapore,” which appears 20 times in the Thai corpus (log-likelihood: 23.123; effect size: 0.006). Interestingly, while the Chinese textbooks reflect domestic and international settings (e.g., Beijing and Canada), the Thai textbooks do not include words that significantly represent local context.

The pronoun “you” occurs 182 times in the Thai corpus compared to 78 times in the Chinese corpus (log-likelihood: 21.546; effect size: 0.057). The possessive determiner “your” appears 54 times in the Thai corpus and 11 times in the Chinese corpus (log-likelihood: 21.493; effect size: 0.017). These findings indicate that “you” and “your” are more commonly used in the Thai textbooks, whereas the Chinese textbooks emphasize proper nouns, such as Bill, Ted, Tao, and Liu. Similar to the findings when the Chinese corpus was analyzed as the target, despite the statistical significance of log-likelihood scores, the relatively small effect sizes suggest limited practical significance, indicating slight variations in keyword prominence between the two corpora.

Table 9. Keyness Analysis of Thai vs. Chinese Textbook Corpora

Keyword	Frequency (Thai Corpus)	Frequency (Chinese Corpus)	Log-Likelihood	Keyness Effect Size
wear	24	0	27.754	0.008
Singapore	20	0	23.123	0.006
you	182	78	21.546	0.057
your	54	11	21.493	0.017

The findings from keyness analysis revealed notable differences in keyword prominence between the Thai and Chinese ELT textbook corpora. The Thai textbooks exhibited a higher frequency of the proper noun “Singapore,” and the pronouns “you” and “your.” These findings suggest a potential emphasis on regional awareness, and direct address in the Thai materials. Conversely, the Chinese textbooks featured a greater prevalence of Western and Chinese proper nouns, indicating a focus on specific cultural figures and settings. These keyword distinctions align with the broader themes of cultural representation explored in this study. The Thai textbooks’ emphasis on “Singapore” may reflect a pedagogical approach that prioritizes regional integration. This contrasts with the Chinese textbooks, which seem to emphasize specific individuals and settings, potentially reflecting a different approach to cultural representation.

While the log-likelihood scores indicated statistical significance, the relatively small effect sizes suggest that the variations in keyword prominence are subtle. Nevertheless, these subtle differences can still offer valuable insights into the cultural and ideological nuances embedded within the textbooks. The absence of local context words in the Thai textbooks, despite their focus on regional integration, raises questions about the textbooks’ connection to students’ immediate cultural environment. This disconnection may hinder students’ ability to relate language learning to their lived experiences, which may weaken the relevance and effectiveness of the materials. Moreover, it reflects a missed opportunity to foster cultural awareness and identity formation through localized content.

Implications

The findings of this study contribute to several key implications for English language pedagogy. First, fostering teachers’ awareness of embedded ideologies in teaching materials is essential. As educators serve as mediators between textbook content and students’ understanding of the world, they should not limit their role to delivering content but should actively facilitate critical engagement. This includes helping students recognize and question stereotypes and cultural biases present in the textbooks. For instance, teachers could incorporate supplementary depictions or examples to counterbalance dominant ideologies, such as integrating local cultural elements into classroom discussions and activities. Moreover, professional development programs aimed at equipping teachers with the skills to identify and critically address the underlying ideologies in textbooks can enhance their ability to create a more equitable and inclusive learning environment.

Secondly, textbook designers should consider developing more inclusive and balanced representations that align with the realities of today’s diverse and interconnected world. This entails addressing issues such as gender equality, cultural diversity, and the varied lived experiences of individuals across different contexts. By adopting this approach, textbooks can move beyond promoting stereotypes to fostering critical thinking, cultural awareness, and inclusivity among learners. Collaborative efforts with educators and teachers can further enhance the pedagogical soundness and cultural sensitivity of textbook content, ensuring that it meets both educational objectives and the needs of diverse student populations.

Lastly, textbooks are often constructed in direct response to curriculum requirements. If a curriculum perpetuates ideologies such as a preference for native-speaker norms or reinforces

traditional gender roles, textbooks will inevitably mirror these biases. It is, therefore, essential for curriculum developers to engage in a critical examination of the implicit ideologies embedded within the curriculum. By moving away from narrow, exclusionary ideologies and embracing a more inclusive, culturally diverse representation of English, curriculum developers can better equip students to navigate a world where English functions as a lingua franca. This shift is key to fostering a pedagogy that empowers students to critically engage with language, rather than passively accepting reductive, dominant narratives.

Conclusion

This study investigated the embedded ideologies represented through social actors in ELT textbooks for Grade Six students used in China and Thailand, employing Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic framework, Kachru's (1992) model of World Englishes (WE), and keyness analysis. The findings corroborate previous research, confirming that ELT textbooks exhibit gender and cultural inequalities in representation. Furthermore, the present study revealed the presentation of individualism, collectivism, and cosmopolitanism.

One notable limitation of this study is its restricted scope of analysis, which focused on only three units from each textbook and two textbooks per country. The confinement to a specific portion of the textbooks potentially impacts the comprehensiveness of the findings. However, the presence of embedded ideologies within the examined content was clearly demonstrated.

The findings suggest several crucial implications for stakeholders in ELT education. For teachers, there is a need to be cognizant of the ideologies presented in textbooks. Teachers hold a pivotal position to address and counter any biases found in the textbooks, fostering more equitable ideological perceptions among students. Textbook designers are encouraged to consider contemporary global contexts when developing educational materials. Textbooks should strive to present a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of diverse cultures and gender roles. Curriculum developers play a significant role in ensuring that the ELT curriculum supports a more balanced and equitable worldview. Therefore, it is essential for curricula to move beyond traditional native-speaker norms and embrace a more inclusive perspective that reflects the diversity of today's global society. Addressing imbalanced ideologies is a way to prepare students to engage with the diverse and interconnected world they will encounter.

This study also contributes to the growing body of research in the field by examining how ELT textbooks, as cultural artifacts, can perpetuate and reinforce dominant ideologies. Future research could expand upon these findings by: (1) investigating the impact of these embedded ideologies on student attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors; and (2) exploring the role of teacher education programs in preparing teachers to critically analyze and address the ideological underpinnings of ELT materials.

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