

**Cultures representation in the
reading and CLIL sections of
four Vietnamese ELT textbooks**
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textbooks**

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Abstract

This study investigates how cultures are presented in the reading and the content-and-language-integrated (CLIL) sections in four officially-approved Vietnamese EFL textbooks for grade 10, namely Pearson's Global Success, Express Publishing's Bright, Pearson's English Discovery, and Oxford University Press' Global Friends. To be specific, the study examines firstly, the extent to which different types of cultures, namely the source, target, international and neutral cultures (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Rashidi & Meihami, 2016; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014), are featured in the four textbooks. Secondly, the study also investigates the representation of five dimensions of cultures, namely products, practices, perspectives, communities, persons (Moran, 2001) in these textbooks. It aims to discover the rationale behind the choice of sources and dimensions of cultures to be featured in these books. To achieve these goals, a qualitative approach to analyse the reading and CLIL sections was employed, followed by interviews conducted with four authors. Regarding the sources of cultures, three main trends were identified: the difference in focus between the locally published and locally adapted textbooks, the dominance of source culture in the CLIL section, and the supplementary role of the international culture in all textbooks. In terms of the dimensions of cultures, the study found three main patterns as follows: the dominance of the products and practices dimensions, the lack of depiction of persons and communities dimensions, and the moderate inclusion of the perspectives dimension. Such choice can be attributed to the vague and limited guidelines from the MOET and the limited power in revising and adapting of the textbook writers. Based on the findings, the study suggests that MOET should issue clearer guidelines for textbook writers; meanwhile teachers should play an active role in supplementing the weaknesses of different textbooks.

Key words: textbook analysis, reading, CLIL, EIL

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Abbreviations

EFL: English as a foreign language

EIL: English as an international language

CLIL: content and language integrated learning

MOET: Ministry of Education and Training

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research background

Language and culture hold an inseparable connection, so a language learner is also a learner of the culture of that language (Kramsch, 1993). In other words, the teaching and learning of a language entails the teaching and learning of its culture. In English language teaching (ELT) classrooms in Vietnam where English is only spoken as a foreign language, students are mainly introduced to the culture of English speaking countries via input from the teacher, teaching materials and class activities. Among these sources, the great importance of textbooks is widely recognised among teachers and researchers. Textbooks are heralded as the "visible heart of any ELT programme" (Sheldon, 1988, p.237). Not only do they shape students' learning experiences, but they also have significant impacts on students' perspectives and beliefs about themselves, surrounding people and the society (Ilieva, 2018; Ndura, 2004). From an English as an international language (EIL) viewpoint, textbooks play an important role in raising students' awareness of the situation of English, the multiple cultural viewpoints inherent within the language and how to survive in a multicultural and multilingual communication setting (Hu & McKay, 2014).

In the context of Vietnam, the importance of teaching and learning English has not received widespread attention until the economic reform in the late 1980s which laid the foundation for the flow of foreign interests in Vietnam (Le, 2011). English, during that period, was acknowledged as "the most important foreign language, which was chosen by most students" (Le, 2007, p.172). English teaching throughout this period focused mostly on rote learning and grammar rules memorization, with a standard process commencing with the teacher explaining, students then repeating and copying the linguistic models into their notebooks (Kennett & Knight, 1999; Pham, 2000). Teachers were found to put emphasis on knowledge reproduction and rules explanation in the first language instead of providing students with opportunities for using the target language in genuine communicative contexts (Le & Barnard, 2009). Despite the strong advocacy for the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), teachers demonstrated incapability and resistance to following this approach (Tomlinson & Dat, 2004; Le, 2002). In an attempt to raise the quality of teaching and learning English, the National Foreign Language Project 2020 (also known as Project 2020, now extended to Project 2025), which aims at promoting English language development as one of the driving forces behind national development, was introduced. As specified in the national curriculum published in 2018, English is a compulsory subject from Grade 3

(compared to Grade 6 previously) and is encouraged to be the medium of instruction at tertiary level of the education system (Le, Nguyen & Burns, 2017; Tran & Nguyen, 2018). Vietnamese learners are expected to become successful English users who can communicate effectively without linguistic and cultural difficulty (Le & Do, 2012). Students graduating from Grade 12 are expected to attain B1 level of English proficiency in the Vietnamese 6-level English proficiency framework which is developed based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment (CEFR).

In order to attain this target, not only a revised English curriculum has been published but also nearly a dozen new ELT textbooks have been approved. Since the 2022 - 2023 school year, as approved by the National Assembly of Vietnam in Resolution NQ88, the "One curriculum framework, multiple textbook sets" policy will be implemented. Vietnamese schools and teachers are now, for the first time, have the opportunities to select any textbook, among the approved ones, which align the most with the school's orientation, needs of students, and teachers' opinion (Renovation of General Education Project, 2020), to be used in their classes. This power of choice which was suddenly endowed to them pose a significant challenge to many teachers as well as school leaders as most of them are not trained as textbook evaluators. There is very limited officially-released information about the approved textbooks apart from descriptions of the publishers and training sessions (which are more like advertising sessions) conducted by representatives of the different textbook publishers. There are also rare research studies which compare the features of different approved textbooks. Particularly relevant to this study, there is a lack of research on what types of cultures are included in these textbooks as well as the various dimensions of cultures featured in them. This research seeks to investigate how cultures are represented in the Vietnamese EFL textbooks for 10th graders. The findings hope to contribute to helping teachers and school leaders make informed choices in selecting the most appropriate textbooks for their needs.

1.2. Research aims and research techniques

This study aims at investigating the representation of cultures in the reading and CLIL section of four Vietnamese EFL textbooks for Grade 10 which have been officially approved by MOET. It also explores the rationale behind the four publishers' breakdown of culture representation in terms of sources of cultures and dimensions of cultures.

To achieve these research objectives, the study adopts Cortazzi and Jin (1999)'s framework for different sources of cultural content which was later expanded by other authors (i.e., Rashidi & Meihami, 2016; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014). The four

textbooks' cultural content was analysed and categorised into four types, namely source, target, international and neutral cultures. Moran (2001)'s framework of cultural dimensions in textbooks has also been chosen to classify the cultural content into five dimensions, namely products, practices, perspectives, communities and persons. Following the qualitative analysis of the cultural content in the four textbooks, interviews with the four textbook designers were conducted to explore the philosophy and reasons behind the choices of cultural sources and dimensions.

1.3. Structure of the study

This dissertation consists of six chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction into the research topic, including the rationale for the research, its aims and research techniques. Chapter 2 provides an overview of key theoretical concepts, namely culture, cultural sources and dimensions featured in EFL textbooks. Related studies are reviewed before the gap in literature is identified which gives rise to this dissertation. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology, i.e. the research design, data analysis and ethical considerations. Findings from data analysis and discussions surrounding these results in relation to literature are then presented in chapter 5. Finally, chapter 6 will summarise the key findings, and conclude the study with suggestions for further study into this topic while highlighting the implications and acknowledging the limitations of this study.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the key concepts of culture and its representation in ELT textbooks. It first highlights the relationship between culture and language, before introducing the definition of culture. Framework of culture sources and dimensions are then introduced before theories associated with textbook analysis are presented, with relevant studies being discussed. Research gaps are identified, laying the foundation for the research questions.

2.1. The definition of culture

It is fundamental to have an understanding of the concept of culture before any discussion can be started about its place in language teaching. Culture is a difficult term to define, probably because of its interdisciplinary nature (Johnson & Rivoluceri, 2011). In the field of foreign language teaching specifically, culture has also been approached and defined from several perspectives and by different scholars such as Robinson (1985), Kramsch (1998). Traditionally, cultures are differentiated by nations, and cultural differences refer to differences between nations. However, this perspective has been deemed as outdated as countries are becoming more multicultural and not so homogenous in terms of cultures (Jandt, 2013). This situation has called for other ways of looking and defining cultures.

According to Huebener (1965), cultures can be defined from three main perspectives: the sociological, artistic and anthropological dimension of culture. While the first viewpoint covers areas such as history, geography or politics, the second one concerns more with literature, music or art. The anthropology oriented perspective pays particular attention to people's behavioural patterns such as daily life activities or religion. Culture can also be categorised into two major groups, namely the "large or capital-C culture" and the "small or small-C culture" (Chastain, 1976; p.338). The large C culture, also known as the objective culture, focuses on the tangible products of a country such as art, fashion, public figures, cuisine (Triandis, 1989). The small C culture, also referred to as subjective culture (Triandis, 1989), on the other hand, covers much broader grounds when it takes into account the more intangible aspects such as the way of life, customs and traditions, ways of thinking of members from the social group. Taking into account these two categorisations, it can be seen that while the sociological and artistic dimension lean more towards the big C culture, the anthropological dimension of culture might belong to the small C culture. To illustrate the fundamental differences between these two categories of cultures, or so-called, the tangible and less tangible elements of cultures more clearly, Hall (1976) referred to the image of an iceberg, which indicates that the largest part of culture is invisible. It is this invisible part that

serves as the foundation for cultural understanding. This analogy is important in the way that firstly, it denotes the importance of the intangible aspects of cultures as the driving force behind behaviours, and secondly, these invisible factors should be dealt with before they lead to cultural conflict (Dignen & Chamberlain, 2009).

Another point to note concerning culture is the status of culture. Culture in the earlier models (Brooks, 1975; Nostrand, 1974) is viewed as a fixed entity made up of recognisable, on the surface behaviours, so it would be possible to craft a standardised description of a specific community in a specific geographic location (Holliday, 1999). This viewpoint does not take into account the underlying way of thinking, values and beliefs, the varying behaviours performed by community members, the role of humans as an active contributor to culture and the interplay between culture and language during the meaning-making process (Moore, 1991). Latest models, on the other hand, view culture as more dynamic with more variety. Culture is a constant state of change and is not restricted by time or geographical locations. Members from the social groups display a variety of activities, with meaning continuously constructed through interaction and communication (Paige et al., 2003).

Taking into account the different definitions and perspectives, this dissertation adopts the definition of culture in the EIL paradigm by Cortazzi and Jin (1999). Culture is defined as “the framework of assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that are used to interpret other people’s actions, words, and patterns of thinking” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p.197). The reason for choosing such definition is that this type of culture, pattern of behaviour and pattern of thought, is identified as most appropriate for intercultural communication (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2007). Nowadays, intercultural communication is fundamental for English language users partly because English, at the moment, serves as an international language and is used by millions of non-native speakers for daily communication and information exchange. The discussion of EIL is provided in section 2.3.

2.2. The relationship between culture and language

The highly complex relationship between language and culture can be considered at various levels such as psychological, sociological and political dimensions (Byram, 1989). With regards to language teaching, many researchers (Jandt, 1998; Samovar et al., 2007) support the view that language and culture are inseparable.

In its most basic sense, language can be defined as a group of symbols and rules which guides the combination of the symbols that are used by a certain group of people (Samovar et al., 2007). As language is one of the main symbol systems through which people interpret the

world outside them, it is one component of culture. Therefore, the relation of language to culture, on the one hand, is that of part to whole. Language bonds people together, reflects how those people perceive the world, and then reflects the culture of its speakers. Byram (1989) concludes that analyzing a particular language point can tell about the culture of that specific social group, and the analyzing process of that meaning requires the analysis and understanding of that culture.

Culture and language are intertwined and shape each other. Thus, language learning cannot be detached from the cultural content it inherently carries to the language classrooms. Hence, there is a necessity to teach both language and culture in an integrated way in which the language is used as a medium for teaching and learning about the people and culture associated with it (Byram, 1989, p.51).

2.3. The status of English as an international language

It is reported that 80% of worldwide English communication happens between non-native speakers (Cogo, 2012; Sharifan, 2013). Such growth in the number of second language speakers of English has impacted that status of English in the world these days (McKay, 2003), turning English from an exclusive language in some countries to an international language. This EIL perspective embraces the norms of the English language learners (Philipson, 1997) and rejects the superiority of native speakers and their cultures. The change in paradigm has raised the question of what culture to teach, as culture and language are closely related.

Discussing this question, Matsuda (2012) suggested the inclusion of these three following groups in teaching materials. The first group is the global culture, which includes topics that are globally accepted and is relevant to the whole world such as world peace or environmental preservation. The second group to be included is the culture of the future interlocutors. This group is challenging by nature since who the target interlocutors might be unknown, and it might be impossible to cater for every single country and culture. This would require a large budget from the Ministry of Education and Training in the country or from ELT publishers. A solution to this problem is to diversify the teaching content in a strategic way so as to cover cultures and countries from around the world. The third potential source of culture in EIL materials is the learners' own culture.

These days, English is no longer limited to the United Kingdom and the United States and not merely a medium of accessing information and resources in that language. It is no longer limited to conversations between native and non-native speakers, and there should be

relationships based on equality and mutual respect. In this case, the ability to perceive and analyse cultures from the other's perspective is very important. Therefore, any materials that motivate students to explain and critically reflect on the local culture should be included in the EIL classroom.

2.4. Culture content in ELT

As McKay (2002) has pointed out, controversies exist around what kinds of cultural content should be included in the ELT classroom. According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999), there are three types of cultural information that can be used in language textbooks and materials. They are target culture materials (where the target language is used as the first language), source culture materials (which refers to the learners' own cultures), and international target culture materials which represents the remaining cultures. Compared to the categories proposed by Matsuda (2012), both frameworks acknowledge the importance of the local culture. However, the main difference lies in the classification of the sources of cultures. While Cortazzi & Jin (1999) focuses on the origin of different cultures, Matsuda (2012) seems to put all the remaining cultures under the tenet of future speakers.

Culture in language teaching, traditionally, concerns with providing students with information about the target culture (McKay, 2002). The main reason behind including the target culture is that since the acquisition of the target language communicative competence entails the integration of both language and its culture, learners should become familiar with the experience of another language, and a different way of coping with reality (Alptekin, 2002). In addition, it is generally more economical for publishers, and easier for textbook writers to develop textbooks, and materials about their own culture. However, such culture-bound nature of ELT materials are by no means neutral or value-free education aids and can lead to serious problems in the language classroom (Phillipson, 1992).

On the other hand, there are reasons for the inclusion of source culture in ELT. Firstly, many teachers believe that students will be more motivated, and more willing to learn English if the materials relate to their own lives. For example, it is based on such belief that "The Japanese Mind" has been published. It is a compilation of students-written essays and discussion prompts surrounding Japanese cultures, which aims at helping Japanese students "explain and discuss their native culture in English in order to participate effectively in an increasingly globalized world" (Davies & Ikeno, 2002, p. 3). Secondly, many research studies in the literature also support the use of students' own culture in English language classroom. It has been proved that students' comprehension of a second language is

facilitated when using the source culture materials (Anderson & Barnitz, 1984). Finally, source culture content provides students with an opportunity to learn more about their own culture as well as how to explain these cultural elements (McKay, 2002). It is of great importance, especially in intercultural communication when one side often needs the ability to explain ones' own culture for the other side to understand.

The main argument for the inclusion of international target culture materials is that English has developed into a lingua franca. Together with the spreading of English, the number of second language users of English is continuing to grow, outnumbering that of the English native speakers. It comes as no surprise to realize that in many EFL countries, learners of English use it to communicate more with other learners of English rather than with the native speakers. Therefore, as English has increasingly become a means of intercultural communication, if students only remember the information about the target culture or source culture, they may fail in communication with other non- native speakers of English. As McKay (2002) has pointed out, one value of international target culture material is that it can illustrate the diverse context in which English is used as an international language. It could also illustrate cross-cultural pragmatics in which the English language users defines the concept of appropriateness. In this way, such materials encourage students to reflect on their own local and global uses of EIL. Such fact leads to some suggestions that when teaching EIL, teachers' concerns should shift away from the native- speaker models (Harmer, 2005). Maybe, as Jenkins (2006) suggests, teachers of EIL should expose and motivate students to adapt to the different models of English instead of focusing on correcting students' developing classroom language. The core phonology should serve as the foundation for teaching rather than the unnecessary variations, and the teaching of idiomatic language should be avoided. On the one hand, such proposals are controversial, and careful considerations are needed before methodological and curriculum conclusions are made. On the other hand, it is apparent that using international target culture materials in teaching intercultural interaction competence in English may well be among the most significant undertakings of the future.

Each kind of cultural materials has its own advantages. Rather than trying to use them separately, teachers should develop a critical way of looking at the issue and avoid simplistic and extreme viewpoint. Depending on the context and the cultural background of both teachers and students, teachers can then decide for themselves which materials to be used and how to use such materials in ways that congruent with the local context. As in Prahbu's (1990) words, it is important for teachers to develop a global awareness coupled with local

knowledge, or “a sense of plausibility.” This does not mean it is up to the teachers to be solely responsible for teaching culture in the ELT classroom. Well-designed textbooks can expose students to cultural content of different types of cultures while encouraging students to think critically, reflect on their own culture in order to increase their awareness and tolerance towards different cultures.

2.5. Related studies, research gap and research questions

Studies into cultural content in ELT have been conducted in diverse contexts and have generated common notable findings. To be specific, studies into the locally produced ELT textbooks vary in terms of the prioritised sources of cultures. A continuous trend of prioritising the source culture at the expense of target and international culture has been found in a number of studies such as Khajavi and Abbasian (2011) in Iran, Schneer et al. (2007) in Japan, and Shreeb (2017) in Iraq. However, this pattern does not apply to all the locally produced textbooks. A balanced ratio between all sources of cultures was recorded in some studies (Kirkgoz & Agcam, 2011; Celik & Erbay, 2013; Silvia, 2015) while emphasis on the target culture in a local ELT textbook in China was reported by Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2012). While locally developed textbooks seem to favour the source culture, the global coursebooks tend to prioritise the target and international culture. Chao (2011) in Taiwan, Elyas (2011) in Saudi Arabia, Shin et al. (2011) in some Asian countries, Tajeddin and Teimourznezhad (2015) pointed out the imported global coursebooks made little reference to the learners’ own culture.

Studies into the Vietnamese EFL textbooks are rare. Dinh (2014), when analysing the old Vietnamese EFL textbook for grade 10 identified the dominance of Vietnamese culture. Dang & Seals (2016) evaluated the primary English textbooks considering the objectives of the National Foreign Language Project 2020, and found that English variations and cross-cultural knowledge were limited in the textbooks. Nguyen et al. (2019)’s study into a set of Vietnamese textbooks, on the other hand, found that these books tend to focus substantially on preparing students for communicating with Anglophone English users and fails to meet the learners’ multiple communicative needs. A more recent study by Kieu (2021) looked into whether the pilot English textbooks under Project 2025 can improve students’ intercultural communicative competence. Findings indicated that the universality across culture, which refers to the general knowledge that is not directly related to any culture holds the highest coverage ratio. Such varying results from the Vietnamese local textbooks calls for a more reliable and updated research into the following problem, especially when the release of the

new Curriculum for secondary and high school students starts to be brought into practice in 2022.

Chapter 2 has provided a general overview of the literature related to the study. It first presented different perspectives of culture, how it is linked to language learning. It then moved on to acknowledge the status of English as an international language (EIL), and listed out the requirements for the cultural content in ELT. Finally, some related studies were discussed to identify the gap in literature.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter first presents the research questions before providing an overview of the research participants. After describing the research instruments and analysis procedure, the chapter closes with a discussion of relevant ethical issues.

3.1. Research questions

The present research aims to answer the three following research questions:

1. To what extent are the sources of cultures (source, target, international, culture neutral) presented in the reading and CLIL section of four Vietnamese EFL textbooks for grade 10?
2. To what extent are the dimensions of cultures (products, practices, perspectives, communities, persons) presented in the reading and CLIL section of four Vietnamese EFL textbooks for grade 10?
3. What is the rationale behind the distribution of sources and dimensions of cultures presented in the reading and CLIL section of four Vietnamese EFL textbooks for grade 10?

3.2. Research methodology

To answer the three research questions, the textbook analysis method was applied in combination with the semi-structured interviews. Gray (2016) and Tomlinson (2012) distinguished between material analysis and material evaluation. The former refers to the use of a chosen analysis framework to examine and generate a description of the material. It can be used as a preliminary step towards materials evaluation. The latter is the examination of the material to generate a conclusion on its suitability for a particular teaching purpose or context. (Littlejohn, 2012). Within the focus of this study, material analysis is the focus.

Littlejohn (2012) divided material analysis into three main categories. The earliest one is the illustrative commentaries, which, for the most part, analyses teaching materials from a particular perspective, usually social commentary and highlights aspects for improvement. It claims to reveal a "hidden curriculum" within the language teaching curriculum. The second area is called theory-driven analyses, which, compared to the illustrative commentaries, provides a stronger foundation for analysis. This approach also gathers a range of examples instead of a particular text to support the examined theory. Finally, data-driven analysis aims to investigate the nature of the materials, through collecting data from materials in terms of categories in a certain framework. Compared to the aforementioned theory-driven analysis,

the data-driven one employs a simpler framework for data collection, and then decides on the categories for analysis based on what is found in the materials. Due to the limited time available for this research, the data-driven analysis approach was employed in this research.

3.3. Research data

Details regarding each examined textbook in this study are presented in the following table.

Table 1

Details of each textbook

No.	Textbook	Original publisher	Vietnamese publisher	Number of units	Components of each unit
1	Global Success	N/A (entirely written by Vietnamese authors and receive advice from Pearson)	Viet Nam Education Publishing House	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting started - Pronunciation - Vocabulary - Grammar - Reading - Listening - Speaking - Writing - Everyday English - Culture/CLIL - Project
2	English Discovery	Pearson	University of Education Publishing House	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vocabulary - Grammar - Listening - Reading - Grammar - Use of English - Writing - Speaking - Focus review
3	Friends Global	Express Publishing	Viet Nam Education Publishing House	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vocabulary - Grammar - Listening - Word skills

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading - Speaking - Writing - Culture
4	Bright	Oxford University Press	Hue University Publishing House	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vocabulary - Reading - Grammar - Listening - Speaking - Writing - Values - Culture Spot - Culture Corner / CLIL

3.4. Research design

There are two main phases in this study: textbook analysis and interview with textbook writers. While the textbook analysis was conducted to gain an overview of how cultures are presented in the chosen textbooks, interviews with the textbook writers were held with the hope to explore the rationale behind such choice of representation. Within the scope of this study, only the reading section and CLIL section were selected for analysis because the reading section is one of the main sources of input for students, whereas the CLIL section is one of the innovative points in the new set of textbooks.

In the first phase, four textbooks namely Global Success, English Discovery, Friends Global and Bright were selected for analysis. These four textbooks were chosen because firstly, they have all been approved by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) for use in the official curriculum (MOET, 2022) and secondly, these four series all have the reading and CLIL/Culture sections, the two main foci of this study. A brief description of the four books has been provided in section 3.3. In the first stage, two frameworks were adopted to evaluate textbooks in this study: Cortazzi and Jin (1999)'s three sources of cultures and Moran's (2001) model of five cultural dimensions. These two frameworks were then combined because they complement each other in terms of both aspects (sources) and depth (the dimensions of cultures).

The first framework to be adopted is from Cortazzi and Jin (1999), which categorises cultures based on their sources. It comprises three main groups: the source culture (which

refers to the learners' own culture), the target culture (where the target language is used as the first language), the international target culture that represents the remaining cultures. The other framework to be adopted is from Moran (2001), in which cultures are categorised into five following dimensions: products, practices, perspectives, communities and persons. Products are defined as the artefacts produced by members of the culture group, both tangible such as clothing or buildings, to more intangible concepts such as politics and education. Practices, on the other hand, represent the interactions and actions carried out by members of the community, which include different forms of communication, actions associated with social groups or interpretations of appropriateness and inappropriateness. Perspectives refer to the beliefs and values embedded in products and guide communities' practices. Communities signify the specific cultural contexts and cultural groups in which members hold cultural activities. Finally, persons represent the members or figures that represent their cultures and communities in different ways.

In the second phase, four textbook writers, one for each textbook mentioned above, were invited for a semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview was chosen because this type of interview allows for the beforehand preparation in terms of procedures, sequences and wording of the questions while still allowing for flexibility for the topics and questions through prompts and probes (Cohen et al., 2018). The interview questions were adapted from the interview prompt cards by Yildiz (2021) which looked into the production procedures for both locally and internationally published textbooks. Since this study only focuses on the production of the locally adapted textbooks, only some questions from Yildiz (2021) were included. Another point to note is that while Yildiz (2021) focuses on the general production process, this study puts more emphasis on the details of each textbook.

The interview schedule consists of two main parts. The first part consists of general questions about the general approach to the book design and how the book writers approached the textbooks. The second part concerns the reasons behind the distribution of each source and dimension of cultures, which were more tailored and specified to each of the books.

3.5.Procedure of data collection

Before data collection started, the two frameworks by Cortazzi & Jin (1999) and Moran (2001) had been combined into a checklist (Please refer to Appendix B for a sample of the checklist). This checklist was then piloted on the reading section of a book named Explore New Worlds, which is also one of the books approved by the MOET for the new school year.

After piloting, the culture neutral source was added to that of Cortazzi and Jin (1999), as suggested by Rashidi and Meihami (2016) to represent the cultural content that is universally shared and not exclusive to any specific group (i.e., source, target and international culture). Another rater who is a researcher with experience in teaching English as a second language took part in this analysis procedure. We worked together and analysed each section one by one, compared with each other, negotiated any differences and arrived at the final conclusion. Examples for each of the elements are provided below.

Table 2

Examples of the recorded elements

No.	Element	Location	Details
1	Source culture	Friends Global Unit 7 - Culture	Phu Quoc is a Vietnamese island in south Viet Nam. It has beautiful white beaches with lines of palm trees and modern hotel resorts that attract a lot of tourists.
2	Target culture	Bright Unit 2 - CLIL	Thousands of years before the Europeans came to America, the people now called Native Americans lived there.
3	International culture	English Discovery CLIL 5	The Euro is a new currency and many European countries use it.
4	Culture neutral	Global Success Unit 2 - Reading	Recycling as much as possible This prevents pollution because it reduces the need to collect new raw materials and protects natural resources such as water and trees.
5	Products	Global Success Unit 3 - CLIL	The main musical instruments used in <i>chau van</i> performance are the moon-shaped flute, bamboo clappers, drum and gong.
6	Practices	Friends Global Unit 3 - Reading	More than 70% of gamers play with a friend, and many take part in online games, like <i>Farmville</i> , with millions of other people.
7	Perspectives	Friends Global Unit 1 – Culture	What is a typical British person like? People who come to Britain from other countries

probably have a few expectations: British people are polite, rather reserved, and enjoy drinking tea and standing in queues!

8	Communities	Bright Unit 2 – CLIL	In the mountains of Northern Vietnam live in the Muong people, one of the largest ethnic groups in the country.
9	Persons	English Discovery CLIL 4	Alan Alexander Milne was born in 1882 in London, England.

After analysing the four textbooks, interviews with the textbook writers were conducted. All interviews were conducted online via Zoom platform, and followed the semi-structured interview procedure. A list of guiding questions were prepared and flexibly adjusted throughout the interview (Please refer to Appendix C for a full list of interview questions). Open-ended questions were asked and the interviewees were given several chances to further explain their answers. The interviews were then transcribed and sent to the participants for approval. All interviewees' names were pseudonymised. The transcripts were then inductively coded by me and another rater to ensure inter-rater reliability (Please refer to Appendix D for a sample of transcripts coding). Emerged themes in response to the research questions were generated.

3.6. Ethical considerations

All the ethical issues were taken into consideration and discussed with the academic supervisor before data collection started. All participants are authors of approved textbooks, and have been working as textbook writers and/or university lecturers for more than 10 years. They all voluntarily took part in the study, and were informed of the objectives of the research. Participants signed the consent form before the interviews were conducted (Please refer to Appendix A for the consent form). All the data remained confidential, and transcript of interviews were sent to the participants for their approval before excerpts from the interviews are included in this thesis. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time.

Chapter 3 described the methodology behind this research. It first listed out the three research questions, and described the research methodology behind this research. It also gave an outline of the research data, and described in details the two frameworks in this research:

Cortazzi and Jin (1999)'s sources of cultures and Moran (2001)'s dimensions of cultures as well as the process of data collection. Finally, all the ethical considerations were presented.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion surrounding the three research questions. The distribution of sources of cultures will be presented first, followed by the ratio for the five dimensions of cultures. Finally, rationale behind the choice of such distributions will be introduced.

4.1. Answer to research question 1

The first question concerns the frequency rate of four sources of cultures (source, target, international, neutral culture) in the reading and CLIL section of the four textbooks. From analyzing the four books, three following emerging trends can be recognized: the focus on the target culture in the reading section of the adapted textbooks compared to the emphasis on culture neutral elements in the locally written textbook, the dominance of the source culture in the CLIL section compared to the reading section, and the subordinating role of international culture.

4.1.1. Difference in focus between locally adapted and locally written textbooks

The following table illustrates the distribution ratio of the four sources of cultures in the four textbooks. In these books, the frequency of each source of cultures is measured in terms of units, so the statistics will be presented in the form of number of frequencies versus the total number of units. This number is then converted into percentage for ease in comparison since each book has a different number of units.

It should be noted that among the four textbooks, except for the Global Success which was written entirely by a group of Vietnamese authors, the remaining three are locally adapted from the other three internationally distributed textbooks.

Table 3

Distribution ratio of the four sources of cultures

Textbook	Sources of cultures (covered units/total number of units)			
	Source culture	Target culture	International culture	Culture neutral
Global Success	4/10 (40%)	2/10 (20%)	2/10 (20%)	7/10 (70%)
English Discovery	4/9 (44.4%)	7/9 (77.8%)	2/9 (22.2%)	5/9 (55.6%)

Friends Global	1/8 (12.5%)	7/8 (87.5%)	5/8 (62.5%)	4/8 (50%)
Bright	1/8 (12.5%)	3/8 (37.5%)	3/8 (37.5%)	6/8 (75%)

From the table, two main trends can be recognized. The first one is the dominance of the target culture, which refers to countries where English is used as the first language, in the two books namely English Discovery and Friends Global. The target culture, in these books, is present in more than two thirds of the total units. This source of culture is presented through the aspects presented in the following table.

Table 4

Aspects of the source culture

Unit	English Discovery	Friends Global
1	N/A	Life of Ashlyn Blocker who suffers from a rare medical condition
2	Thomas Edison and his invention, the light bulb	A nightmare holiday of two American brother and sister, Dan and Kate Suski
3	The Oscar award, American movies such as Captain America: Civil War	A report on the positive impacts of video games from American Psychologist
4	The condition of living underground in the desert of Southeast Australia	N/A
5	Neighbourhood cleaning up in Bournemouth	Andrew Johnson's unique job
6	American and British celebrities such as athlete Michael Phelps and actress Keira Knightley	Life of Aaron Levie, founder of Box
7	Housewarming party in the US	Journey to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia
8	N/A	The Telharmonium, the first electronic musical instrument invented in the United States

Such a dominant presence of the target culture seems to corroborate previous findings which highlight the prevalence of cultures from the inner circle countries, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States, in internationally distributed ELT materials since earlier research (Ilieva, 2000; Ndura, 2004) and can still be found in more recent research such as Shin, Elasmı and Chen (2011). Their examination of seven internationally distributed ELT textbooks indicated more extensive exposure to inner circle countries. Similar findings are also found in country-specific textbooks, such as the Pakistani EFL textbooks which enables more access to the target language culture than the illustration of their home countries (Ahmed & Nancy-Combes, 2011). Yuen’s (2011) study into EFL textbooks used in Hong Kong secondary schools also pointed towards an imbalance between the foreign cultures included: the English-speaking countries were more extensively depicted compared to the Asian and African cultures. Lee and Li (2020) also identified an exclusive focus on British cultural values in the New Standard English textbook used in China. Such findings seem to point to a conclusion that firstly, the internationally published textbooks still favour the source culture over others. Secondly, the locally adapted textbooks, despite being revised for the local market, still pay attention to introducing the target culture to students.

The second recognized trend in the reading section is the emphasis on the culture neutral elements. This pattern is clearly identified in the Global Success and Bright textbook, in which the culture neutral elements are present in more than two thirds of the total units. This source of culture is present through the following aspects, presented in the following table.

Table 5

Aspects of culture-neutral source

Unit	Global Success	Bright
1	Housework in the family	Robots help doing housework
2	Habits of a green lifestyle	N/A
3	N/A	UNICEF organization
4	N/A	Women doing unique jobs
5	Artificial Intelligence in the 21 st century	Plastic pollution
6	Gender equality	N/A
7	UNICEF organization	Apps of the future
8	Face-to-face learning vs online learning	Robots

Such varying degrees of attention to the coverage of the culture neutral patterns further advances the limited literature on culture neutral elements in EFL textbooks. A recent study by Zhang and Su (2021) into culture in four series of high school EFL textbooks in China and Germany also confirmed different amount of coverage of the culture neutral content. Among the four books included, while the English book pays special attention to the cultural neutral, this source of culture appears to play a subordinate role in Ying Yu, and further receives little attention in Green Line Transition and English G - band 6. In the context of Vietnam, the dominance of the culture neutral pattern confirms results from an earlier study by Kieu (2021) in which this source of culture was also found to dominate the Vietnamese pilot textbooks. This positive shift from a focus on preparing students for communicating solely with Anglophone English speakers (Nguyen et al., 2019) to a more extensive inclusion of the culture neutral patterns can be considered a positive trend in the way Vietnamese ELT textbooks are designed.

4.1.2. The dominance of source culture featured in the CLIL section

Another noticeable pattern in four books is a more generous inclusion of the source culture in the CLIL section compared to the reading one. Such frequency is depicted in the following section.

Table 6

The source culture in the reading and CLIL section

Textbook	Source culture (units covered/total units)	
	Reading	CLIL
Global Success	4/10 (40%)	4/10 (40%)
English Discovery	4/9 (44.44%)	2/5 (40%)
Friends Global	1/8 (12.5%)	3/8 (37.5%)
Bright	1/8 (12.5%)	4/8 (50%)

The source culture in the CLIL section, compared to the reading section, seems to follow a more moderate trend when it was covered in between a third (Friends Global) to a half of the

total number of units (Bright). On the other hand, in the reading section, the source culture received an equal amount of attention in Global Success and English Discovery, in comparison with Friends Global and Bright in which it is present in only 1 unit.

Such varying degree of attention adds up to the existing literature on the locally produced textbooks. For example, Majdzadeh (2002), when analysing a series of locally produced textbooks used in Iran, identified an exclusive focus on Iranian culture and religion. Lee & Li (2020), on the other hand, studied 2 textbooks used in China and Hong Kong and pointed out the difference between the New Standard English (used in China) and the Primary Longman Express (used in Hong Kong). While the former textbook pays close attention to depicting the local culture, the latter one attempts to balance the source culture with the target and international cultures.

Another point to note is the difference in the way the source culture is presented in the reading and the CLIL section. In these two sections, the source culture is presented in three main ways: as the main idea of the reading text, as in comparison with other sources of cultures and as an extension to a global issue. While the two sections both share the first approach to describing the source culture, the second approach is exclusive to the reading section and the third method is more common in the CLIL section than the reading one. An example of the second approach is in the reading section of unit 3 of Global Success, the source culture is represented through the Vietnam Idol competition, in comparison with American Idol depicting the target culture. Another case of the source culture being held in accompany with other sources of culture can be found in the reading section of unit 7 of Friends Global. This reading text contains three paragraphs, each paragraph depicting one source of culture. To be specific, the first paragraph talks about a trip to Guatemala (international culture), the second one mentions the Great Barrier Reef in Australia (target culture) and the third one about Cat Tien Sa, a famous tourist attraction in Vietnam (source culture). In terms of the source culture as an extension to a global issue, this approach can be found in the CLIL section of unit 7 of Global Success. This reading text starts off with a description of the history and goal of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) before describing in detail the work of FAO in Vietnam.

Different ways of describing the source culture illustrates different approach to describing cultures. Firstly, the source culture, when serving as the main idea of the reading text, serves a source of knowledge input and the foundation for the accompanying activities. In this way, this reading text provides students with a way to learn about their own culture and the language needed for describing these elements. Secondly, comparing the source

culture with other sources of culture seems to align with the goal of establishing a “sphere of interculturality” (Kramersch, 1993). This means that teaching culture is not merely transferring cultural information but also promoting learners’ reflection on one’s own culture in relation to the target one. Finally, when serving as an extension to a global issue, the source culture bridges the gap between the students’ background knowledge and an unfamiliar issue, which further motivates students to learn English and acquire the knowledge.

4.1.3. The subordinating role of the international culture

The final trend in both the reading and CLIL section of the four textbooks is the subordinating role of the international culture. The recorded frequency of the international culture is presented in the following table.

Table 7

The international culture in the reading and CLIL section

Textbook	International culture (units covered/total units)	
	Reading	CLIL
Global Success	2/10 (20%)	1/10 (10%)
English Discovery	2/9 (22.2%)	3/5 (60%)
Friends Global	5/8 (62.5%)	4/8 (50%)
Bright	3/8 (37.5)	2/8 (25%)

Generally speaking, in the majority of the analysed sections, the international culture is present in a modest number of units, only around one fourth of the examined units. Some exceptions are the CLIL section of English Discovery (60%) and the Friends Global when this source of culture is covered in a constant number of units. More detailed information on the countries from the international culture in the reading section is presented in the following table.

The modest inclusion of the international culture seems to be perpetuated among locally produced ELT textbooks. Such inclusion is also found in the revised edition of Side by Side and the World Link series, in which attempts have been made to include cultures from the outer circle despite the dominance of inner circle cultures (Shin, Eslami & Chen, 2011). Lee & Li (2020) indicated the mere inclusion of the international culture is at the expense of

target and source culture in the New Standard English, in contrast to the attempt to balance between all sources of cultures in the Primary Longman Express.

4.2. Answer to research question 2

The second question concerns the appearance frequency of the five dimensions of cultures (products, practices, perspectives, communities, persons) in the reading and CLIL section of the four books. Three main patterns can be recognized from analyzing these three books: the dominant presence of the products and perspectives dimensions, the lack of focus on the persons and communities dimension and the fluctuating change over the coverage of the perspectives dimension.

4.2.1. The dominant presence of the products and perspectives dimension

The products dimension, according to Moran (2001) is made up of four main aspects: artifacts which refers to the objects at cultural members' disposal, places that caters for both the physical settings, institutions that are the regulating system of the lives of the cultural members and art forms that concerns every creative form of manifestation such as literature, music or dance.

On the other hand, the practices dimension, according to Moran (2001) refers to the all the types of activities carried out by the members of that culture. These activities can be divided into four main aspects: operations which deals with the adoption and adaptation of cultural products, acts that focuses on the procedural communicative practices, scenarios that deals with more extended communicative practices and the lives that are the stories told by the members of the countries. The practices, as categorized, is closely connected to the products dimension, which may explain why the dominance of these two dimensions.

The appearance frequency of the products and perspectives dimension is illustrated in the following table.

Table 8.

The appearance frequency of the products and practices dimension

Textbook	The products dimension (units covered/total units)		The practices dimension (units covered/total units)	
	Reading section	CLIL section	Reading section	CLIL section
Global Success	10/10 (100%)	10/10 (100%)	10/10 (100%)	10/10 (100%)
English	9/9 (100%)	5/5 (100%)	9/9 (100%)	5/5 (100%)
Discovery	9/9 (100%)	5/5 (100%)	9/9 (100%)	5/5 (100%)

Friends Global	8/8 (100%)	8/8 (100%)	8/8 (100%)	7/8 (87.5%)
Bright	8/8 (100%)	8/8 (100%)	8/8 (100%)	8/8 (100%)

The dominant presence of the products dimensions confirms findings from previous studies. Lee and Li (2020)'s study into Hong Kong and China EFL textbooks indicates the most frequent appearance of the products aspect, with some of the examples being sightseeing places, food or native animals. Kim and Paek (2015), when analysing Korean EFL textbooks, also identified the same patterns with products being the most frequently used dimensions. Specifically, products related to entertainment and foods seem to be the most frequently mentioned. Such inclusion of the products seems to stem from the fact that products are the first things that captivate people's attention and interest (Moran, 2001). In other words, cultures in textbooks tend to be presented from a tourist's point of view, because sightseeing locations and cuisine are the most easily depicted and recognised artifacts (Paige et al., 2003). Another point that should be noted is that despite appearing in isolated forms, products are almost related to other products and other dimensions of culture (Moran, 2001).

On the other hand, regarding the practices dimension, it is safe to conclude that this dimension in the four analysed textbooks is presented in diverse ways, ranging from fixed activities to more updated issues, which adds to the literature on the varying degree of practices. Lee & Li (2020) found that compared to the products and persons dimensions, practices does not receive such attention in mainland China textbooks, while the pattern in Hong Kong textbooks follows quite a similar pattern to the four books in study. The lack of attention to practices was also recorded by Kim and Paek (2015), when the role of practices is recorded to be quite limited in terms of percentage.

4.2.2. The lack of depiction of the communities and persons dimension

The appearance frequency of the communities and persons dimensions is presented in the following table.

Table 9

The appearance frequency of the communities and persons dimension

Textbook	The communities dimension (units covered/total units)		The persons dimension (units covered/total units)	
	Reading section	CLIL section	Reading section	CLIL section
Global Success	6/10	8/10	0/10	0/10

	(60%)	(80%)	(0%)	(0%)
English	7/9	4/5	4/9	4/5
Discovery	(77.8%)	(80%)	(44.4%)	(80%)
Friends Global	5/8	4/8	6/8	2/8
	(62.5%)	(50%)	(75%)	(25%)
Bright	6/8	6/8	2/8	1/8
	(75%)	(75%)	(25%)	(12.5%)

The communities dimension, as explained by Moran (2001), refers to the more specific cultural groups in which members carry out their cultural practices. Communities can be categorised into two main groups namely national cultural community and the coexisting communities. The coexisting communities, as explained by Moran (2001) are usually associated with the social institutions and typically serve as a functioning body in this institution.

National cultural communities are not frequently mentioned in the reading and CLIL section. Some of its rare examples are the CLIL section in unit 1 of Friends Global, when communities are presented here as the British and foreign people apart from British. In this reading text, the foreigners are asked about their thoughts and personal views towards the British people. Another example that can be found is in the CLIL 1 of the English Discovery. This section introduces students to the history of flying in the world, with significant milestones occupies by different national groups such as the Chinese inventing the original kites, the French use of the hot air balloon and the invention of planes by the Americans.

Compared to the natural cultural communities, coexisting communities are depicted at a much higher frequency. For example, in the reading text of unit 4 in Global Success that discusses volunteering work, communities are characterised by the volunteer members, children at the orphanage and old people at community centres. Another example is women workers as a community in the reading section of unit 4 in Bright. Women in this text are depicted as exceptional women who do the “traditionally men” work.

Studies into the communities dimension have been rare since most studies left out this dimension among the five included. Such hesitance in analyzing this dimension might stem from the difficulty in defining and categorizing this dimension. So far, there has been research by Kim & Paek (2015) in which the perspectives dimension only accounted for 4% of the dimensions included.

On the other hand, the persons dimension, as defined by Moran (2001) represents individuals who are able to represent their cultures in unique ways. Among the four textbooks examined in this study, the ratio of persons coverage varies dramatically. Generally speaking, this dimension is not covered thoroughly in these textbooks, with the exception of the reading section in Friends Global and the CLIL section of the English Discovery book. Notably, the Global Success book, in both the reading and CLIL sections, does not cover the Persons dimension.

This dimension in these four books can be divided into two main categories. The first category is the Vietnamese national, which receives little attention. Figures belonging to this group are mostly imaginary or made up characters and are not the focal point of the text, as illustrated by the image of Pao in CLIL 3 of the English Discovery book. However, Pao is mentioned as the background to the situation, without digging deeper into further details. The second category is foreign figures, not limited to the source or international cultures only. This group contains diverse characters, ranging from famous figures in history such as Alan Alexander Milne, the creator of Winnie-the-Pooh, to modern figures such as Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop and contemporary ones like Michael Phelps, the swimming athlete.

The modest representation of persons in these four books contradict findings in the China mainland and Hong Kong EFL textbooks when the persons was frequently depicted (Lee & Li, 2020). These two categories of imaginary and real people represent different approaches to representation of people in EFL textbooks. While the utilization of imaginary characters resembles the use of fictional characters in the New Standard English, the inclusion of real characters is close to the presentation in Primary Longman Express. It should be noted that the use of remote and imagined characters is unlikely to increase students' cultural knowledge and understanding, while the use of real society will be closer to real culture and thus allow learners to acquire real culture (Lee & Li, 2020). However, this idea is criticised by Gomez Rodriguez (2015), who criticised this kind of learning as surface culture learning, as knowledge about these people only entails the static information.

4.2.3. Moderate inclusion of the perspectives dimension

The perspectives dimension, according to Moran (2001) concerns both the explicit and implicit set of meanings agreed upon by members of the communities, and expressed through the products and practices. It is these perspectives that reflect people's understanding about the world, their belief and the cultural norms. Perspectives can be divided into four main aspects namely perceptions (what members notice), beliefs (what is held to be true or untrue), values

(what is considered appropriate or inappropriate) and attitudes (our feelings and emotions associated with different products or practices). The recorded frequency of the perspectives dimension is presented in the following table.

Table 10.

The appearance frequency of the perspectives dimension

Textbook	The perspectives dimension	
	Reading (units covered/total units)	CLIL (units covered/total units)
Global Success	8/10 (80%)	9/10 (90%)
English Discovery	7/9 (77.8%)	1/5 (20%)
Friends Global	2/8 (25%)	6/8 (75%)
Bright	6/8 (75%)	6/8 (75%)

In the four examined textbooks, it can be seen that there have been attempts to include this challenging aspect into the text. To be specific, with the exception of the reading section in Friends Global and the CLIL section in the English Discovery, perspectives is covered to a large extent, with around 20% coverage. For example, in the CLIL section of unit 1 of Global Success, the text focuses on describing the British family values. It starts off with the beliefs on the importance of family values, before dwelling on the values that British families live by. Such efforts to include this aspect shows that the textbook writers attempt to introduce both the tangible and intangible aspects of cultures.

This finding depicts an improvement in the coverage of cultural dimensions, compared to previous findings on textbooks. Perspectives is typically found to be represented the least, as found by Lee & Li (2020) in textbooks in mainland China and Hong Kong. Kim and Paek (2015)'s research on Korean high school EFL textbooks, on the other hand, illustrating varying patterns in the coverage of the Perspectives dimension from around 45% to 20%.

4.3. Answer to research question 3

Research question 3 concerns with the rationale behind the chosen distribution of sources and dimensions of cultures. To answer the questions, interviews were conducted with authors of

the four textbooks series. After the interviews had been transcribed, qualitative data analysis revealed two emerging themes.

Theme 1: MOET’s guidance plays an important role in selecting cultural materials, but the guidance is vague and limited.

The first theme is that MOET’s official guidance plays an important role in shaping the choice of cultural materials to be included in the textbooks. In fact, all four interviewees emphasized the importance of strictly following MOET’s requirement in writing new textbooks (i.e., the Global Success series) and in revising textbooks previously published in other markets (i.e., English Discovery, Friends Global, Bright series). This leads to several shared features among the four textbook series. Firstly, because education is a means to instill cultural values to the young generations, while selecting materials to be included in the textbooks, the most important criterion mentioned by all interviewees is that the materials should not conflict or severely affect the Vietnamese traditional values and beliefs. One participant explained in the following quote.

As writers of textbooks which will be distributed to millions of young children throughout the country, we are cautioned against cultural imperialism. MOET official clearly instructs us to carefully examine any possible impact of reading materials about foreign cultures and nations before including them in the textbook. Sensitive topics, for example gay and lesbian families or extramarital relationship, are not encouraged.

Similarly, in the following quote, interviewee from the Bright series emphasized the importance of selecting culturally appropriate materials.

MOET’s curriculum policy will be the guidance for everything that we produce. So for example, like, we may find something strange and interesting in other countries, but if in Vietnam it is not an acceptable behaviour, we cannot put it in our book. And there is also age appropriacy as well, because we are writing books for public schools in the whole nation, so we have to be very careful about each image and each paragraph we decide to include in the textbook. We have to follow strictly the MOET policy.

Secondly, all interviewees acknowledged that there was vague instruction on what type of cultural sources or dimensions to be included in the textbook, since no acceptable ratio of allocation of the different sources or of the five dimensions has been prescribed by MOET. Instead, authors were only given the direction that they should prioritize incorporating cultural materials about Vietnam and target countries, the latter of which were described by interviewees as cultural materials from “inner circle countries.” International culture and

neutral cultures therefore were not a priority in the four textbook series. Interviewee from the Global Success series explained this in the following quote.

The choice of cultural topics to be included depends mostly on the theme/topic of the unit, and prioritises cultures of UK, US, and other inner circle countries. It is up to the teachers to expand the topic, to include cultural features of other Asian and Asean countries so as students, on their own, can make comparison with the Vietnamese and target countries' cultures.

Another example is that regarding the different cultural dimensions, MOET only provides guidance about the persons dimension. To be specific, as shared by all the participants, MOET imposes strict regulations on using public figures as a source of cultural representation. As explained by one participant, there are several factors to be considered when selecting a Vietnamese figure to be included in the textbooks.

If we choose a deceased person, that should be fine as their influence and achievements have already been recognized. However, if we choose a more recent and rising figure, who knows whether or not they may get into scandals in the future. Additionally, we also have to obtain their permission to be published.

Similarly, another interviewee also described her experience in details in the following quote.

It is not entirely "safe" to choose a Vietnamese person that is still alive. I was really frustrated at that time, since an alive public figure is so much closer to the students. However, if we choose a foreigner to be included, it is acceptable.

Theme 2: Textbook writers only had limited power and flexibility in revising previously published ones.

Another theme emerging from the interviews concerns the authors' seemingly lack of power and flexibility in selecting cultural sources or dimensions to be included in three of the four examined textbook series. For the Global Success series, which were completely written by Vietnamese ELT experts, the authors had absolute power relating to the choice of content for each units. The series authors explained the procedure of building the bookmap in the following quotes.

We base our book on the six-level Foreign Language Proficiency Framework and the Curriculum by the MOET to build our book map. We basically focus on the Vietnamese national curriculum guideline published in 2018. Based on that guideline, which specifies

themes and topics, grammatical and vocabulary items, we'll look for materials which the requirement of MOET.

In contrast, for the other three textbook series, the authors had much less authority in deciding the textbooks' content or outline. The degree of freedom in revising the textbooks also varies among the three series. For English Discovery, the interviewed authors explained that they wrote four new units (out of 9 units) to replace the original ones which were too difficult for Vietnamese students. For Friends Global, the changes made to the original textbooks were much less, and were mostly involved reducing the length of reading texts, replacing difficult vocabulary, or incorporating some elements of Vietnamese culture as explained in the following quote.

The original textbook was published some time ago, and it was a great success. The series are already very good as the authors of the original series are experts in the job. We just added some activities or updated the books with more up-to-date information to make it more interesting for students. We also reduced the length of the reading passage while keeping the original structure of the unit.

Similarly, the interviewed authors of the Bright series explained that they did not take into account the ratio behind the representation of different sources of cultures in the text books as "that ratio should have been decided by the authors of the [...] (original textbook), not us." The majority of their adaptation, therefore, involves simplifying and reducing the word count to match with the requirements from the MOET.

In summary, this chapter has presented major findings of the studies, as answers to the three research questions. The quantitative data analysis has revealed there are major differences in how different textbook series feature the four sources and five dimensions of cultures. Regarding the sources of cultures, some notable findings are as follows: the different approaches chosen by the locally written and locally adapted textbooks, a generous inclusion of the source culture in the CLIL section and the supporting role of the international culture in the four textbooks. In terms of the dimensions of cultures, three main patterns are identified: the dominant presence of the products and practices dimension, the negligence of the communities and persons dimension, and the moderate depiction of the perspectives dimension. The qualitative stage has pinpointed the cause of this phenomenon: a lack of official and detailed guideline from MOET, in addition to the limited power given to textbook writers while adapting internationally published textbooks to the Vietnamese context.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study investigated the representation of cultures in the reading and CLIL sections of the four Vietnamese EFL textbooks for 10th graders. This chapter summarises the main findings of the study, followed by pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research into this area.

There are two main stages in this study: document analysis and interviews. Document analysis utilised two main frameworks: the Cortazzi and Jin (1999)'s categorisation of sources of cultures and Moran (2001)'s dimensions of cultures. After the document analysis, interviews were then conducted to unravel the reasons behind such distribution of sources and dimensions.

Findings from the textbook analysis show that each source of culture receives a different coverage pattern depending on the books. However, some notable patterns are as follows. Firstly, the locally published and locally adapted textbooks focus on different sources of cultures. While the former emphasizes the culture-neutral elements, the latter covers the target culture more extensively, with the exception of the Bright textbook which places focus on the culture-neutral source. With regards to the five dimensions of cultures, the products and practices dimensions were recorded to be present in almost every unit. On the other hand, the communities and persons dimension received little attention from the writers. Surprisingly, the perspectives dimension was covered quite moderately. These choices in sources and dimensions of cultures can be attributed to two main reasons: the unclear guidelines from the MOET and the limited power of the textbook writers.

The emergence of English as international language in the age of globalization means that English has increasingly recognized as the means of interaction for speakers from a variety of cultures. Teaching English therefore must involve preparing students for encounters with different people with different cultural background. While teachers act as cultural workers, helping students developing intercultural communicative competence, the textbooks can be considered as an important site of cultural contact. For culture to be taught effectively in their classrooms, there must be concerted efforts and clear shared understanding between MOET, teacher training institutions, publishers, textbook writers, and teachers. If teachers are not informed of the textbooks' approach to teaching culture, or if they are still confused about different sources or dimensions of culture to be featured in their classroom, it is unlikely that they can help students develop the necessary cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes for communication with speakers with different cultural backgrounds.

The findings of this study, while illustrating the differences between textbooks, show MOET's efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning English in Vietnamese schools, as a step to meet the goal of Project 2025. Provided with more choices of textbooks to teach the language, schools and teachers have more power and leeway in shaping education in the way most suitable to their students. In this way, these textbooks can be considered agent of change. Regardless, textbooks are just one component of teaching and learning experience and can only function as a source of guidance for teachers in designing and delivering their lessons. For the textbook series to be improved in quality and used more effectively, which contributes to improving the quality of teaching and learning, this study proposes some following recommendations for MOET.

Firstly, teachers should be provided with more information about the differences between various textbook series. Publishers and textbook authors may organize information sessions or workshops to explain not only the organization of the textbook but also its philosophy, for example their approach to teaching culture. It is imperative that teachers be aware of the different sources and dimensions of cultures, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of their textbooks to prepare their lessons to scaffold students towards achieving intercultural communicative competence. Secondly, MOET and publishers should ask teachers and students to provide feedback about the textbooks, based on which further revisions can be made in future editions. Similarly, textbook authors should be given chances to observe classes and talk with teachers and students, so they can improve the textbooks or provide supplementary materials to make them more suitable for the local contexts. Thirdly, MOET and publishers should organize more professional development events, coaching teachers on how to exploit the textbooks effectively as well as how to go beyond them. Finally, MOET should develop and issue more detailed guidelines and policy regarding the textbook writing and textbook evaluation criteria. This will help textbook writers have more power in writing textbooks while making certain that newly written textbooks are of high quality and compatible to the philosophy of the national curriculum. Not only will it ensure quality in education, it will also reduce the confusion of teachers and schools during the process of reviewing and selecting textbooks for their teaching.

Some weaknesses of this research can be identified. The first weakness lies in the choice of textbooks and sections. Due to the scope of this study, only two sections and four textbooks were chosen. Future research can consider including more textbooks or analysing all the sections within a book to give a more comprehensive overview of these books. Another limitation is in the methodology itself since the study concerns only with material

analysis and has not evaluated the effectiveness of the books. Further studies can consider digging deep into a certain teaching and learning goal, for example, whether the book can provide students with enough opportunities to achieve intercultural communicative competence.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A. Consent form



The representation of cultures in four Vietnamese EFL textbooks

Dear participants,

I, ... am working on my research project on the representation of cultures in the reading and CLIL section of four Vietnamese EFL textbooks, grade 10. It would be my pleasure to have you take part in the interview stage of this research project.

Before agreeing to take part, please refer to this information sheet with caution and let me know if anything is unclear or more information is required.

- Regarding the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), please refer to this link: https://www.york.ac.uk/education/research/gdpr_information/

Purpose of the study

This research project aims at investigating the representation of cultures in the reading and CLIL section of four Vietnamese EFL textbooks grade 10. It will explore how cultures are presented in terms of sources of cultures: source, target, international (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999) and dimensions of cultures: products, practices, perspectives, communities, persons (Moran, 2001). It also seeks to unravel the reason for such choice and distribution between these elements through interviewing with the textbook writers. This study is conducted as a requirement for my MA degree in Applied Linguistics for Language Teaching at University of York under the supervision of ...

What would this mean for you

You will now take part in an online, semi-structured interview which should be around 30 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions to explore the reasons behind your choices of content and choices of distribution among different sources of cultures and different dimensions of cultures. No sensitive or disturbing questions are included. I am interested in your opinions and explanations, so I am looking for open and honest answers.

Participation is voluntary

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you accept to take part in this interview, you will be sent a copy of this information sheet and will be asked to fill in a participant consent form. If you are unwilling to join at any point during this research, you can withdraw your participation without providing any reason.

Anonymity and confidentiality

The collected data, i.e. recordings of the interview, will be protected by code number. Pseudonyms will be used and all identification information will be separated from the interviewing data and deleted as soon as the interviews are fully transcribed, approximately 4 weeks after the interview. The interview transcript will also be sent to you so you can make

any comment or correction within 2 weeks. You can withdraw your participation at any time during the interview and up to 2 weeks after your interview schedule through emailing the address provided below.

Storing and using your data

Your personal data and interview recordings will be protected with appropriate technical and organisational measures in a password-protected computer. After the interview transcription is completed, data will be completely anonymised.

All the data and information mentioned above will be destroyed after the Graduation.

The collected data, i.e. interview recordings, can be used **anonymously** in different ways. Please fill in the consent form with a tick if you agree to have this anonymised data used in these ways.

Please note: If any gathered information concerns you or the safety of other people, or the researcher identifies any potential concerns, this information may be passed on to another person.

This anonymised data may be included in future analysis and be distributed for academic purposes. If you are not comfortable with your data shared or included as a result of this research, please do not sign the consent form.

Questions or concerns

If you still need clarification regarding this participation information sheet or the processing procedure of data, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at ..., or the Chair of Ethics Committee via email education-research-admin@york.ac.uk. If you are still dissatisfied, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@york.ac.uk

I hope that you will be willing to participate. If you agree to take part, please fill in the attached form and return to me.

Please keep a copy of this information sheet for your own records.

Thank you for spending time reading this information.

Yours sincerely,

The representation of cultures in four Vietnamese EFL textbooks

Consent Form

Please [click] each box if you are happy to take part in this research.

Statement of consent	Tick each box
I confirm that I have read and understood the information given to me about the above-named research project and I understand that this will involve me taking part as described above.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that participation in this study is voluntary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my data will not be identifiable and the anonymous data may be used in publications, presentations and online.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I confirm that I have read the information about GDPR.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B. A sample of the analysis framework

TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

(adapted from Cortazzi & Jin (1999) and Moran (2001))

Textbook: **Global Success** Unit: **3 – Music** Section (page): **Reading – p.31**

Source of culture	Dimension of culture	Aspects of cultural dimension	Evidence from the section
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Source culture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Products	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Artefacts: objects created, adopted or adapted by members of culture 2. Places: the use or interpretation of the physical features of the natural environment 3. Institutions: formal, organised system that define and regulate the practice of culture 4. Art forms: complex products that pervade the culture and exist beyond institutions 	- Paragraph 4: Vietnam Idol
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Practices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operations: manipulation of products 2. Acts: ritualised communicative practices 3. Scenarios: extended communicative practices 4. Lives: stories of the members of the culture 	- Paragraph 4: how Vietnam Idol started and works
	<input type="checkbox"/> Perspectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perceptions: what we notice or disregard 2. Beliefs: what we hold to be true or untrue 3. Values: what we hold to be right/wrong, good/evil, etc. 	

		4. Attitudes: our mental or affective dispositions	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Communities	1. Social contexts 2. Circumstances 3. Social Groups	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Persons	Individual members who embody the culture and its communities in unique ways	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Target culture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Products	1. Artefacts: objects created, adopted or adapted by members of culture 2. Places: the use or interpretation of the physical features of the natural environment 3. Institutions: formal, organised system that define and regulate the practice of culture 4. Art forms: complex products that pervade the culture and exist beyond institutions	- Paragraph 1-3: American Idol - Paragraph 2: different regions of the United States
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Practices	1. Operations: manipulation of products 2. Acts: ritualised communicative practices 3. Scenarios: extended communicative practices 4. Lives: stories of the members of the culture	- Paragraph 1-3: how the American Idol competition started and works
	<input type="checkbox"/> Perspectives	1. Perceptions: what we notice or disregard 2. Beliefs: what we hold to be true or untrue	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Values: what we hold to be right/wrong, good/evil, etc. 4. Attitudes: our mental or affective dispositions 	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social contexts 2. Circumstances 3. Social Groups 	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Persons	Individual members who embody the culture and its communities in unique ways	
<input type="checkbox"/> International culture	<input type="checkbox"/> Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Artefacts: objects created, adopted or adapted by members of culture 2. Places: the use or interpretation of the physical features of the natural environment 3. Institutions: formal, organised system that define and regulate the practice of culture 4. Art forms: complex products that pervade the culture and exist beyond institutions 	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operations: manipulation of products 2. Acts: ritualised communicative practices 3. Scenarios: extended communicative practices 4. Lives: stories of the members of the culture 	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perceptions: what we notice or disregard 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Beliefs: what we hold to be true or untrue 3. Values: what we hold to be right/wrong, good/evil, etc. 4. Attitudes: our mental or affective dispositions 	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social contexts 2. Circumstances 3. Social Groups 	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Persons	Individual members who embody the culture and its communities in unique ways	
<input type="checkbox"/> Culture neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Artefacts: objects created, adopted or adapted by members of culture 2. Places: the use or interpretation of the physical features of the natural environment 3. Institutions: formal, organised system that define and regulate the practice of culture 4. Art forms: complex products that pervade the culture and exist beyond institutions 	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operations: manipulation of products 2. Acts: ritualised communicative practices 3. Scenarios: extended communicative practices 4. Lives: stories of the members of the culture 	

	<input type="checkbox"/> Perspectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perceptions: what we notice or disregard 2. Beliefs: what we hold to be true or untrue 3. Values: what we hold to be right/wrong, good/evil, etc. 4. Attitudes: our mental or affective dispositions 	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Communities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social contexts 2. Circumstances 3. Social Groups 	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Persons	Individual members who embody the culture and its communities in unique ways	

APPENDIX C. Sample interview questions

1. What approach to culture does this book follow?
2. What are the criteria for selecting content for the reading section?
3. What are the criteria for selecting content for the CLIL section?
4. How are different sources of cultures (source, target, international, culture neutral) distributed in the textbook in the reading section?
 - Source culture: students' native culture
 - Target culture: the English-speaking countries
 - International culture: other cultures
 - Culture neutral
5. How are different sources of cultures distributed in the textbook in the CLIL section?
6. What are the reasons for choosing this distribution ratio of different sources of cultures in the reading section?
 - Global Success: dominance of the culture neutral, followed by the source culture, and least and equal coverage of the target (America) and international culture (Asimo & Sophia robot, football in France, Netherlands, Asia, Zimbabwe)
7. What are the reasons for choosing this distribution ratio of different sources of cultures in the CLIL section?
 - Global Success: focus on the culture neutral, equal coverage of the source and target culture (Britain, Australia), least attention to international culture (sports in Fiji)
8. How are different dimensions of cultures (products, practices, perspectives, communities, persons) distributed in the textbook in the reading section?
 - Products: the artefacts produced by members of the culture group, both tangible such as clothing or buildings, to more intangible concepts such as politics and education
 - Practices: the interactions and actions carried out by members of the community, which include different forms of communication, actions associated with social groups or interpretations of appropriateness and inappropriateness
 - Perspectives: beliefs and values embedded in products and guide communities' practices
 - Communities: the specific cultural contexts and cultural groups in which members hold cultural activities
 - Persons: the members or figures that represent their cultures and communities in different ways

9. How are different dimensions of cultures (products, practices, perspectives, communities, persons) distributed in the textbook in the CLIL section?
10. What are the reasons for choosing this distribution ratio of different dimensions of cultures (products, practices, perspectives, communities, persons) in the reading section?
 - Global Success: equal distribution between the Products and Practices dimensions, followed by the Perspectives, then the Communities dimensions. It does not include the Persons dimensions.
11. What are the reasons for choosing this distribution ratio of different dimensions of cultures in the CLIL section?
 - Global Success: quite equal distribution among the four dimensions: Products = Practices, Perspectives and Communities, but least attention to Persons
12. When adapting this textbook, are there any contents that you choose to reduce, omit, delete?
13. How is this textbook different from the experimental textbook, and other newly approved textbooks?

APPENDIX D. A sample of the interview coding

Interview script	Emerging themes
Interviewer: Does this book follow any approach to culture?	
Interviewee: <i>So we call inner cultures and outer cultures.</i> So we're teaching English. So, the inner culture is going to be the cultures of the countries that you that originally come from by England or American or New Zealand. So, that inner culture, and outer culture is going to be cultures of the countries that use English as a second language or a foreign language. So, usually, we have a comparison between the inner culture or outer culture, let me give you one example. For example, if we talk about food, so the inner culture is going to be the food in America, like hamburgers or something like that, and then food in Vietnam. So, we have that those kinds of reading to compare the inner cultures and an outer cultures. Oh, so after the students study and study our book, and then they will be able to you know, talk about that topic, but they will, they will not only understand the cultures of the of the, the native countries, but they also understand the cultures of their nation, and they will be able to talk about that topic, food, for example, pacifically, but the Vietnamese food.	Reason behind the choice of sources of cultures
Interviewer: Thank you. So that is like the general approach to culture of this book. So did you have any, like specific criteria, when you choosing content for the reading or the culture section?	
Interviewee: I'm not actually. So the content will be, you know, various is can be any, any topic. <i>So we will basically focus on the Vietnamese curriculum, we have that guideline.</i> And based on that guideline, topic and	Guidelines from the MOET on the source

<p>theme, a theme and topics and then from that we'll look for lesson will look for, you know, the content to meet with that requirement, the MOET requirement. So, they may have some some some specific topic, like foods and health and you know, a lot of so we focus on that.</p>	<p>of culture to be included</p>
<p>Interviewer: Oh, all right, thank you. So now we'll move on to specifically the reading section. So in the reading and the culture section as well, but you can also separate it if they follow different approaches or different guidelines. So in in the reading section, did you follow any like specific distribution between the source the target international or the cultural neutral like the global topics?</p>	
<p>Interviewee: I don't actually understand this question.</p>	
<p>Interviewer: Yeah, I will rephrase it. So is there like a distribution ratio? For example, we have the target culture, which refers to the English-speaking countries and the source culture, that is students' own culture. There is also international culture, that is other countries that speak English and finally the culture neutral, elements that are not specific to any culture. When designing the reading section and the culture section, do you have any predetermined distribution ratio?</p>	
<p>Interviewee: <i>Usually don't usually, we don't</i> like I answered earlier. So we will, for example, with in Pacific topic. So we will pick out a because we cannot copy any reading, or we cannot reference any reading. We have to write on our own. So we do research about that. For example, let's let's take the first example I have in the first question you have we talked about food for example. Yes. So then we may we may write something about food in Italy, or something</p>	<p>Textbook writers are unaware of the distribution ratio of the sources of cultures</p>

<p>about food in in Japan or whatever. And then we have another writing another reading about food in Vietnam. So from that the student may have a simple comparison or just just widen their knowledge. What are their understanding about food in different countries? That's it. But we will take the inner cultures as a core, and then we'll expand that to other countries. [...]</p>	
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