EFL TEXTBOOK, CULTURE AND POWER: A CRITICAL CONTENT ANALYSIS OF EFL TEXTBOOKS FOR THAILAND STUDENTS

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement
for Gaining
The Degree of Education in English Education

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improve this work. May this thesis be beneficial for readers, especially for those who are concerned with English Language Education, textbook studies, and critical pedagogy.

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ABSTRACT

Miss Tasnim Jeharwae, EFL TEXTBOOKS, CULTURE AND POWER: A CRITICAL CONTENT ANALYSIS OF EFL TEXTBOOKS FOR THAILAND STUDENTS. Thesis. Englis Department program, Education and Teacher Training Faculty, Walisongo State Islamic University of Semarang (UIN). Advisor: Dr. Hj. Siti Mariam, M. Pd.

This research offers a critical exploration of cultural depictions and implicit power structures embedded within the Student's Book SPARK 2 (2008), an EFL textbook widely adopted in Thai lower secondary education. Applying Critical Content Analysis (CCA) as the core methodology, the study investigates how cultural narratives—particularly those related to Western and non-Western societies—are constructed through both textual and visual modes, with a focus on whether Thai cultural elements are meaningfully represented. The analysis reveals a strong Western-oriented bias, prominently featuring American, British, and other Anglophone cultural contexts, while representations of Thai culture are minimal or absent. Beyond the explicit cultural references, the textbook communicates subtle ideological themes related to obedience, environmental responsibility, and social norms, reflecting a form of "hidden curriculum" that shapes students' perceptions of identity, authority, and global cultural hierarchies. Furthermore, the emphasis on individual action in addressing global challenges, alongside the prioritization of Western literary and cultural models, reinforces patterns of cultural and linguistic dominance. The findings underscore the necessity of evaluating EFL textbooks not only for their pedagogical and linguistic value but also for the cultural and ideological frameworks they promote. The study advocates for the inclusion of more diverse, inclusive, and locally resonant cultural perspectives to enhance students' intercultural communicative competence and support more equitable English language education in Thailand's culturally pluralistic society.

Keyword*: EFL textbooks, critical content analysis, cultural representation, power dynamics, Thailand.*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the research, including its background, research questions, objectives, limitations, and significance.

A. Background of the Research

English has emerged as a global lingua franca, serving as a vital communication tool across nations. Proficiency in English facilitates international discourse, expands networking opportunities, and provides access to a vast repository of information, particularly in science, technology, and commerce. In this era of globalization, the use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) necessitates not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural understanding and intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

According to Jindapitak & Boonsuk, (2018), ICC encompasses three key competence: (1) understanding diverse communication styles across sociocultural contexts; (2) applying cultural knowledge effectively in real-world communication; and (3) maintaining attitudes that allow foe the relativization of one's own cultural values, beliefs, and expectations. Despite its global importance, English proficiency remains a challenge in Thailand, largely due to its limited use within school and university environments.

As an English International Language (EIL), English now serves as the primary for cross-cultural communication between both native speakers (Labtic & Teo, 2020). Consequently, cultural representations in English Language Teaching (ELT) materials have become a significant point of discussion, particularly regarding diversity, students' cultural backgrounds, and the balance published ELT materials has been derived from native-speaking countries like the United States and the United Kingdom.

This often results in a scarcity of non-native information that resonates with students' sociocultural backgrounds (Saemee & Nomnian, 2021). While this research does not specifically examine student activity books that complement core textbooks, it acknowledges their crucial role in reinforcing and solidifying students' understanding of classroom material, underscoring the importance of their evaluation for effective English teaching and learning.

Specifically, textbooks can serve as a primary source of cultural knowledge, introducing students to the customs and cultures of people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Their significant impact on students' perceptions of English stems from the integration of cultural knowledge in various forms, including exercises, writing assignments, dialogues, descriptive texts, and visuals.

However, it is crucial to recognize that while textbooks are valuable tools for disseminating cultural information, they can also inadvertently promote specific cultural values, a phenomenon known as a "hidden agenda" in the curriculum (Cunningsworth, 1995). Therefore, understanding how and in what manner a specific culture is imposed upon teachers and students becomes paramount (Jindapitak & Boonsuk, 2018). This research critically examines how cultures are ideologically portrayed in ELT textbooks and appropriated by teachers in the classroom.

Considering these dynamics, the objective of English language study has evolved beyond a mere focus on discourse and grammar to a broader cultural awareness aimed at facilitating communication and fostering relationships. It is essential to instill in English language learners the value of cultivating global connections and equip them with appropriate methods for interacting with individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

As language and culture are intrinsically linked, language learners naturally acquire cultural understanding through language acquisition. Consequently, cultural information should be imparted to students to enable them to appreciate cultural diversity and become aware of both their own and others cultures Labtic & Teo, (2020). This thesis not only

explores cultural values but also seeks to empower the community to integrate English into their environment.

The Ministry of Education (2008) in Thailand has established policies emphasizing that English instruction should enhance students' awareness of both their national culture and other cultures. This includes appreciating the similarities and differences between languages and cultures, and applying this understanding in various community and global settings.

The aim is to prepare Thai students for more fluent English communication in international contexts. Furthermore, as a founding member of ASEAN, and with English serving as a medium for both official and informal communication within the bloc, Kirkpatrick (2010) recommended promoting a new curriculum that reflects ASEAN community cultures.

This curriculum should emphasize English language instruction that prioritizes respecting cultural diversity, fostering unity, and deepening understanding of other ASEAN nations cultures (Labtic & Teo, 2020).

Regarding the use of English textbooks in Thailand, a study by Ulla (2019) involving semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaires revealed divided opinions among instructors. While some educators viewed English textbooks as a waste of time due to perceived lack of language-focused points, failure to meet learner needs, and

assumptions about students limited English comprehension, others considered them indispensable for effective English teaching in Thailand.

Nevertheless, educators concurred that textbooks should be supplemented with additional instructional resources to meet student needs. This highlights a need for more in-depth research on effective texts and field studies to align with current standards and advancements.

Moreover, from an Islamic perspective, language and cultural learning must adhere to the principles of justice, appreciation for diversity, and avoidance of discrimination against local cultural identities. Allah SWT states in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13:

Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 13

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

> *"O mankind! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted."*

This verse emphasizes the importance of mutual understanding and respect for cultural differences as part of the process of learning and interaction among nations. Therefore, English language teaching materials should not exclusively feature Western cultures but also provide equitable

space for local and other cultures, thereby fostering mutual respect and strengthening students' identities as part of the global community and the Muslim Ummah.

This evolving landscape underscores the imperative for a critical examination of ELT textbooks to ensure they effectively prepare students for a globally interconnected world while upholding principles of cultural equity and mutual understanding.

B. Research Question

This research aims to answer the following research question:

1. Which countries' cultures are represented in the grade 8 (second year of junior high) EFL textbooks used by Thai students?
2. How is the Thai culture portrayed in the existing EFL textbook?
3. What power relations can be identified though the cultural representation in the EFL textbook?

C. Objective of the Research

The objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To identify and describe the cultural content of various countries represented in the Grade 8 EFL textbooks used by Thai students.
2. To analyze the portrayal of Thai culture, if any, within the existing EFL textbook.

3. To uncover and explain the underlying ideologies and power relations embedded within the cultural representations in the EFL textbook.

D. Limitation of the Research

To maintain focus on its primary objectives, this study has the following limitations:

1. This study does not explore aspects of gender and age within the context of the textbook.
2. This research is based solely on critical content analysis and does not incorporate any fieldwork or empirical data collection methods.

E. Significance of the study

This study is expected to provide benefits to the following:

1. Guiding Textbook Selection

The findings can assist teachers and educational institutions in selecting textbooks that not only meet educational standards but also promote a balanced view of culture, thereby fostering critical thinking among students.

2. Informing Policy Development

The research may inform policymakers regarding the need for guidelines or frameworks that ensure EFL textbooks are culturally relevant and inclusive, reflecting the diverse backgrounds of students in Thailand.

3. Supporting Teacher Training

By highlighting the importance of cultural content in language learning, the study can contribute to teacher training programs, equipping educators with the knowledge to critically evaluate textbooks and integrate cultural discussions into their teaching practices.

4. Future researcher

This study may inspire additional research by highlighting gaps or areas needing further investigation within the field of EFL education, particularly concerning the impact of cultural representations on student outcomes.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the topic of EFL textbooks, culture, and power. It also includes a discussion of previous studies related to this research.

A. Theoretical review

1. EFL Textbook

a. The definition and characteristic of EFL Textbook

The ELT textbooks were chosen from universities in Thailand that appeared in the 2020 Asia University Rankings published by Times Higher Education. These rankings evaluate universities based on five key criteria: teaching quality, research output, citation impact, international outlook, and income from industry. Times Higher Education gathers academic publications from a wide range of disciplines, covering both the arts and sciences.

The fields included span biological sciences, sports science, psychology, chemistry, physics and astronomy, general engineering, geology, environmental and marine sciences, geography, mathematics and statistics, civil engineering, computer science, sociology, economics and econometrics, politics and international studies, law, business and management, language, literature and

linguistics, history, philosophy and theology, art, performing arts and design, education, mechanical and aerospace engineering, accounting and finance, communication and media studies, veterinary science, agriculture and forestry, archaeology, architecture, electrical and electronic engineering, chemical engineering, as well as medicine and dentistry.

Consequently, there was no issue concerning the representation or balance between arts and science disciplines within the rankings, as both were sufficiently included (Rattanawong et al, 2022).

English textbooks hold a significant position in English language teaching (ELT) classrooms (Litz, 2005). They serve as essential tools that help learners develop their language proficiency and communication skills (Tomlinson, 2003). Additionally, textbooks are vital instructional resources for delivering curriculum content and facilitating students' comprehension of the subject matter (Drendrinos, 1992).

According to Baker (2008) and Cook (1999), the language materials provided to learners should accurately represent and support their practical, real-world communication needs (Panyang & Phusawisot, 2023). EFL, or **English as a Foreign Language**, refers to the study and use of English by individuals whose first language is not

English, especially in countries where English is not widely spoken. It encompasses various teaching methods designed to help learners improve their skills in speaking, reading, writing, and listening in English.

Instruction in EFL context is predominantly delivered in countries where English does not serve as the primary societal language, occurring within both formal education systems—such as schools and universities—and through informal avenues like specialized language courses and independent self-study programs. The overarching objective of EFL instruction is to equip learners with the necessary skills to communicate effectively and confidently in English for diverse practical purposes, including international travel, professional engagements, and academic pursuits.

Teaching methodologies employed in EFL are remarkably varied, ranging from time-honored approaches like the Grammar-Translation Method, which emphasizes explicit rule learning, to innovative contemporary techniques that prioritize immersive communication and practical language use. This inherent flexibility allows EFL programs to be meticulously adapted to accommodate the unique learning needs and specific contextual environments of diverse student populations.

More recently, Juntanee (2019) conducted an examination of the global English perspective embedded

within four distinct EFL textbook series widely used for grades 10-12 (Mattayomsuksa 4-6). Building upon this foundation work, (Wuttisrisiriporn, Vinichevit, et al., 2020) Attempt to explore the nuanced processes of how EFL textbooks are selected in Thai public schools, thereby shedding light on current textbook selection practices and their significant, far-reaching impact on English language teaching and subsequent learning outcomes.

It is important to note that EFL textbooks are extensively utilized across schools in Thailand as a primary resource to enhance English language education nationwide.

b. The role of EFL Textbook

The role of English textbooks in classroom teaching is both complex and fundamentally essential for language education across the globe (Afersa, 2020). Over time, English textbooks have undergone a significant evolution, developing in tandem with transformative changes in language teaching methods.

This progression has seen them move decisively from rigid grammar-translation approaches, which prioritized explicit rule learning, towards more dynamic communicative methods that emphasize practical language use and interaction (Allwright, 1978). Although textbooks undeniably occupy a central position in education, their ultimate success and impact largely hinge on the

proficiency and pedagogical approaches with which teachers utilize them, thereby underscoring the critical importance of recognizing both their inherent advantages and their limitations (Brown, 1994).

These textbooks function as remarkably flexible tools that provide structured and organized learning pathways, offering abundant opportunities for students to practice and refine various language skills comprehensively (Cunningsworth, 1995). Even with theincreasing availability of diverse alternative educational resources, traditional printed textbooks continue to be extensively used worldwide due to their proven dependability and easy accessibility (Richards, 2001).

Teachers heavily rely on textbooks to meticulously structure their lesson plans, maintain consistent teaching frameworks that ensure continuity in learning, and actively encourage meaningful student engagement with the course material (Vettorel & Lopriore, 2013). Simsek (2017) provides insightful exploration into how student teachers prefer to adapt various learning materials, emphatically stressing the crucial need to consider the cultural elements embedded within English coursebooks.

This highlights the paramount importance of meticulously tailoring materials to accurately fit learners' unique sociocultural contexts, specific interests, and

distinct ways of life. Despite these concerted efforts to adapt and localize materials, ongoing academic discussions continue to question the inherent effectiveness and potential limitations of such adaptations, thereby pointing to the persistent necessity for further dedicated study and continuous modification to more comprehensively address the complexities of diverse classroom environments and the evolving requirements of students.

Consequently, textbooks not only serve as a foundational support for language development but also play a significant role in fostering cultural understanding, which in turn subtly shapes students' attitudes and behaviors. In summary, this review unequivocally underscores the profound and far-reaching impact of English textbooks on both teaching methodologies and the holistic educational experiences of learners (Noppiboon & Sukying, 2024).

Textbooks are undeniably fundamental to English language teaching (ELT) in Thailand, especially within the established English as a Foreign Language (EFL) framework. These educational resources are meticulously designed to align with and meet the curriculum goals meticulously set by the Ministry of Education (MOE), which robustly emphasizes outcomes based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

They provide structured content that seamlessly integrates essential language skills, encompassing grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing proficiency, speaking fluency, and active listening.

As a prime example, the widely adopted "New Say Hello" series has garnered commendation for its systematic progression of English skills and its array of interactive resources, which are thoughtfully tailored to cater to diverse learning styles among Thai students. Beyond linguistic development, textbooks also play a significant and proactive role in promoting intercultural competence by judiciously incorporating both Thai and international cultural elements, thereby fostering a sense of global citizenship among learners.

However, existing research has consistently highlighted notable imbalances in cultural representation within textbooks used in multicultural classrooms, pointing to an imperative need for greater inclusivity and equitable portrayal of cultures. Teachers heavily rely on textbooks for meticulous lesson planning and for successfully achieving predetermined learning outcomes, often supported by localized evaluation checklists that ensure materials are highly relevant to the specific needs of Thai learners.

Despite their undeniable importance, textbooks alone cannot guarantee optimal learning outcomes; their effective implementation crucially requires supplementary teaching methods, ample real-life language practice opportunities, and ongoing professional development through teacher training.

As Thailand actively integrates into ASEAN community and continually adapts to the accelerating forces of globalization, ELT textbooks increasingly emphasize communicative approaches that prioritize practical, real-world language use over rote memorization and mechanical drills (Noppiboon & Sukying, 2024).

While persistent challenges, such as insufficient cultural inclusivity and occasional reliance on outdate content, well-designed and thoughtfully implemented textbooks continue to be an indispensable resource for substantially improving language education outcomes and effectively preparing students for the demands of economic and technological advancements in a rapidly changing world.

It is also important to recognize that foreign language textbooks do not rely solely on written text to convey meaning. When visual communication is intentionally incorporated, researchers meticulously focus on analyzing the semiotic resources available, understanding precisely

how they are utilized, and examining the specific methods of their application to convey meaning effectively (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

In context of traditional printed textbooks, these crucial semiotic resources primarily consist of both textual content and accompanying images. Chapelle (2016) has adeptly identified five key functions that images serve in foreign language textbooks: being essential to tasks (where the image is indispensable for task completion), enhancing the text (providing supplementary information or context), providing general orientation (setting the scene or mood), building themes (contributing to recurring concepts), and functioning independently (conveying meaning without direct textual support).

Moreover, images, by their very nature, can powerfully convey spatial and political meanings on their own, and the deliberate inclusion of visual elements significantly contributes to the overall communication of meaning within the learning material (Stocchetti, 2011). Consequently, comprehensive studies on textbooks should emphatically emphasize the multimodal aspects intrinsically related to culture and critically recognize the profound impact and inherent complexity of visual components in shaping learners' understanding (Z. Li et al., 2023).

In summary, textbooks are essential in Thailand's EFL environment because they offer crucial structure, actively promote cultural sensitivity, and provide invaluable assistance to both teachers and students in the language learning journey. However, their efficacy is contingent upon careful planning, consistent cultural sensitivity in their design and application, and appropriate execution in conjunction with innovative and creative teaching methods.

2. English Education in Thailand

a. Policy of English Education in Thailand

English has cemented its position as a global lingua franca within Thailand, serving as a critical bridge connecting individuals to the international sphere and unlocking a myriad of opportunities. Recognizing this profound importance, Thailand has strategically integrated English language courses into its fundamental education curriculum, spanning from early childhood (kindergarten) through higher education. Despite these extensive education efforts, the English language proficiency of the Thai populace remains a persistent and significant concern.

Interestingly, there exists a notable contradiction between the considerable hours dedicated to English learning within the curriculum and the actual “English language skills” demonstrated by Thai people. The English communication skills ranking by EF (Education First), a

globally recognized language school, starkly illustrated this point by placing Thailand 97th out of 111 countries worldwide for English communication skills in 2022.

This ranking positioned Thailand just above Cambodia and Myanmar, reflecting a consistent pattern of low performance compared to previous years. Numerous other surveys similarly categorize Thailand as a nation with significantly low English proficiency.

A pervasive challenge stems from the majority of schools continuing to employ traditional teaching methods, where students are primarily positioned as passive recipients of information rather than active participants in constructing their own understanding. Knowledge acquisition in these environments is typically confined to what is explicitly outlined in the national curriculum and subsequently assessed by national examinations.

Consequently, teachers often provide minimal support in cultivating students' critical thinking abilities or encouraging the development of skills essential for broader social engagement and interaction (Arphattananon, 2018). Furthermore, while the overarching education policy aims to be sensitive to students' diverse cultural backgrounds, this study illuminates variations in how this policy applied across different schools.

In regions characterized by strong cultural politics, particularly the southernmost provinces, many schools have proactively adopted culturally relevant practices that acknowledge and integrate local identities. Conversely, in provinces where cultural politics are less prominent, schools tend to embrace so-called 'neutral' practices that inadvertently overlook or marginalize the distinct cultural identities of minority students.

Recognizing the pivotal role of cultural knowledge in achieving effective intercultural communication and to provide learners with optimal exposure to the target culture, researchers have developed and utilized a range of comprehensive checklists and questionnaires to systematically evaluate the cultural content embedded within EFL textbooks (Byram & Escart-Sarries, 1991; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Hatoss, 2004; Kılıçkaya, 2004). For instance, Kılıçkaya (2004) proposed a set of 15 pertinent questions that specifically address various cultural aspects, serving as a robust framework for reviewing a textbook.

These questions delve into areas such as the evaluation of cultural content through visual materials, the judicious integration of cultural elements, careful consideration of learners' existing backgrounds, the dynamic role of teachers in mediating cultural content, the specific types of culture presented (e.g., Big 'C' or little 'c'), the thematic topics

included, the representation of diverse social groups, and crucially, the presence or absence of stereotypes (Sadeghi & Sepahi, 2018).

Moreover, the demographic presence of minority students, coupled with the perspectives of school administrators and staff regarding cultural diversity, significantly shaped the approaches schools adopted in implementing multicultural practices.

b. English Teaching in Thailand

In the multifaceted landscape of Thailand, English has been widely adopted and adapted by individuals from diverse social, historical, religious, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. It functions as a flexible tool for communication within their local communities and extends its reach to global interactions across various aspects of life, from commerce to education.

At present, Thailand stands out as one of the most compelling and dynamic settings for English usage within Southeast Asia, exhibiting unique sociolinguistic phenomena (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2020). In the current international and intercultural contexts, English communication is increasingly characterized by its forms as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) or English as an International Language (EIL).

When individuals who do not share a common native language engage in discourse, English frequently emerges as their preferred and most effective means of interaction. Given its pervasive global presence, English has become the undisputed common language in international communication. Within this intricate context, ensuring mutual intelligibility among ELF or EIL users becomes absolutely essential for successful cross-cultural exchanges (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2020).

As English continues to diversify and evolve worldwide, a certain degree of linguistic adaptation is inherently necessary to facilitate truly effective communication. Across Thailand's varied regions, people from an array of social, historical, religious, cultural, and linguistic origins have not only embraced English but have also seamlessly integrated it into their daily lives, actively utilizing it for both localized interactions and broader global engagements across numerous fields.

Thailand, indeed, represents one of the most compelling environments for English usage in Southeast Asia (D'Angelo, 2012). This vibrancy is largely attributable to a confluence of practical factors—including social, cultural, economic, and political elements—that collectively contribute to English being actively used, adapted, and reshaped, thereby reflecting a profound sense of linguistic

"ownership" among its speakers. Individuals within Thailand's diverse linguistic landscape adeptly modify and reshape English, collaboratively generating unique ELF expressions that are highly effective for their specific communication needs, leading to the organic emergence and widespread acceptance of new forms of the language.(Boonsuk & Ambele, 2020).

Significant initiatives, such as the Regional English Education Centers project, have been launched as part of comprehensive efforts to enhance English education across the country. These projects specifically aim to replace traditional grammar-based instruction with more dynamic and learner-centered communicative approaches. As a direct consequence of these reforms, thousands of teachers have successfully strengthened their pedagogical skills, which in turn has fostered the creation of more engaging and vibrant learning environments.

However, a persistent challenge remains: the widespread acceptance of regional or non-native forms of English is often hindered by deeply ingrained preferences for native-speaker norms, particularly American or British English. This prevailing preference frequently leads to a reluctance among the populace to fully embrace linguistic variety and can unfortunately result in unfavorable opinions regarding non-native accents.

c. English EFL Textbook student profile in Thailand

The Thai education system presents a multifaceted and dynamic environment, profoundly shaped by an intricate blend of both enduring challenges and burgeoning opportunities.

Formal education within Thailand typically commences at the tender age of six, initiating with a six-year period of primary schooling, which is then sequentially followed by three years each of lower and upper secondary education. Upon successful completion of their secondary schooling, students are afforded the flexibility to pursue either general academic tracks or more specialized vocational pathways, depending on their interests and career aspirations.

While primary education boasts near-universal enrollment rates, a concerning trend emerges as completion rates significantly decline at higher educational levels, with only approximately 47% of students successfully finishing upper secondary education. Academic performance consistently remains a significant area of concern, notably highlighted by Thai students scoring below the OECD average in the 2022 PISA assessment across key domains of mathematics, science, and reading.

Socioeconomic disparities further exacerbate these existing challenges, as students from more affluent

backgrounds consistently outperform their less advantaged peers, underscoring systemic inequities. In response to these pressing issues, concerted efforts are underway, including the implementation of the "Big 5 Model," an educational framework that places strong emphasis on cultivating personal development traits such as empathy, critical thinking, and self-discipline, alongside academic competencies. Furthermore, observable gender differences continue to influence participation rates in STEM fields, necessitating targeted interventions and policy adjustments to actively promote greater equity and inclusion.

While vocational training offers a viable alternative pathway for acquiring specialized skills and practical expertise, employers frequently prioritize formal educational qualifications, which can pose a barrier for vocational graduates entering the workforce.

Additionally, a significant challenge within the Thai educational landscape is the substantial barriers faced by rural and economically disadvantaged students in accessing quality education, which unequivocally underscores the critical need for comprehensive systemic reforms aimed at ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all.

To methodically identify empirical studies pertaining to Data-Driven Learning (DDL) and the application of corpora in diverse language learning contexts spanning from 2011

to 2024, the dedicated research team meticulously searched four highly reliable academic databases: ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Wiley Online Library, and the Web of Science (D. Li et al, 2025). Interestingly, research indicates that Thai students consistently express a strong desire for their teachers to possess a deep understanding of their thoughts, feelings, and individual language abilities (Chen, 2012).

Recognizing students' emotions and thoughts was widely regarded as a fundamental skill for Thai teachers and was similarly expected from foreign educators (Adamson, 2004). In stark contrast, male students from Slovakia, for example, did not deem it particularly important for teachers to comprehend specific learning difficulties that students might encounter (Metruk, 2021).

This divergence in perspective highlights a cultural difference, as some Thai students specifically desired teachers to be acutely mindful of the individual differences among students and tailor their approach accordingly (Quieti & Nanni, 2022). To meticulously standardize the selection process for this study and proactively minimize any potential research bias, a rigorous and entirely unbiased approach was thoughtfully developed.

This comprehensive search strategy ultimately yielded a substantial number of relevant scholarly papers, which

were subsequently sorted with precision based on a meticulously defined variety of inclusion and exclusion criteria, ensuring the relevance and quality of the literature review.

3. Intercultural communicative competence

a. The definition of culture

Culture is a complex and dynamic construct that encompasses the shared beliefs, practices, values, and artifacts of a group or society. It plays a crucial role in shaping individual identities and social interactions. Mabawonku (2003) describes culture as a set of "definitive, dynamic purposes and tools" that are fundamental for achieving collective group goals. This definition highlights culture's functionality in coordinating efforts within a community, aligning closely with Nkonge's (2005) assertion that cultural knowledge systems influence individuals' understanding of themselves and their world, illustrating the broader impact of cultural context on educational outcomes.

Further explorations into the definition of culture illustrate its multifaceted nature. Wan et al. (2007) emphasize that culture consists of the shared behaviors, values, and beliefs that characterize a group of people, while also acknowledging Geertz's (1973) examination of culture as symbolic representation. This notion of shared representation is echoed in the work of (Wan, 2015), who

argues that a culture's intersubjective representations enable individuals to develop a sense of identification with their cultural group. Such intersubjective dynamics become essential in understanding how cultural narratives are formed and transmitted across generations.

Moreover, bridging these perspectives, Ehlers (2009) discusses quality culture in the context of education, positing that culture serves as a backdrop for shaping quality assurance processes that reflect collective values and sociocultural expectations in educational settings. This further delineates the interplay between shared cultural frameworks and institutional practices, reinforcing the idea that culture is not static but rather a living practice influenced by continuous interactions and societal changes.

As we examine the implications of culture in various domains, Leydner and Kayworth (2006) highlight the critical role of understanding culture in information systems research. They note that cultural variations can impact the adoption and effectiveness of information technologies, suggesting that culture acts as a lens through which technological interactions are interpreted. This variability in cultural expression extends to responses to learning and instruction as highlighted by (Kinuthia, 2007), who asserts that cultural contexts shape individuals' receptiveness to educational technologies.

In conclusion, culture is a composite of shared experiences, practices, symbolic representations, and dynamic interactions that foster group solidarity and individual identity. It encompasses both the tangible aspects of life (such as art and traditions) and the intangible elements (like beliefs and values) that are deeply woven into a society's fabric.

b. Assumptions or Hypotheses Descriptive of culture

In the context of this research on EFL textbooks, culture, and power, several hypotheses and assumptions regarding culture can be examined through various scholarly works. Here are some relevant insights from selected articles:

- Cultural Learning as a Process of Discovery: (Allen, 2004) emphasizes that culture learning is a process of discovery involving the critical evaluation of stereotypes. This suggests that a descriptive assumption about culture is that it is fluid and subject to change based on the individual's exploration and understanding of various cultural contexts. When students engage in constructivist approaches, they compile knowledge that reflects their evolving perceptions about cultures rather than static or stereotypical notions (Allen, 2004).

- Integration of Intercultural Competence (ICC): (Mede & Gunes, 2019) explore how integrating intercultural communicative competence (ICC) into EFL courses influences students and teachers. This study indicates that awareness of cultural diversity fosters a more profound interest in cultural aspects, supporting the hypothesis that exposure to multiple cultures in EFL settings enhances learners' abilities to navigate intercultural interactions effectively (Mede & Gunes, 2019). This reinforces the notion that culture is not only a background context but an active component of language learning.
- Cultural Representation in Textbooks: (Hermawan & Lia, 2012) investigate how cultures are represented in English textbooks for primary education. They argue that textbooks serve not only as educational resources but also as cultural transmitters, shaping students' cultural awareness and identity. Their findings support the hypothesis that the inclusion of diverse cultures in educational materials is crucial for promoting cultural understanding among learners (Hermawan & Lia, 2012). This highlights the importance of localized cultural inclusion in EFL materials for students.
- Cross-Cultural Practices in EFL Teaching: (Wu & Shafait, 2024) discuss the challenges that EFL teachers face in promoting culturally responsive teaching and developing

intercultural competence amongst students. Their findings suggest that cultural norms significantly influence teaching methodologies and student outcomes, supporting the assumption that culture impacts classroom dynamics and learner engagement (Wu & Shafait, 2024). The study reveals that specific cultural biases and methodologies can either hinder or facilitate the learning process.

- Cultural Dimensions and Teaching Practices: Taşdemir and Gürbüz (2021) describe how instructors perceive culture in their EFL classrooms, emphasizing the distinction between modern (big C) and everyday (little c) cultural elements. Their work indicates the prevalent professional belief among instructors that teaching culture should include both canonical and everyday aspects of culture, supporting the assumption that a comprehensive cultural framework yields better learner engagement and understanding in EFL contexts (Taşdemir & Gürbüz, 2021).

c. Concep of intercultural

The concept of intercultural education is increasingly recognized for its importance in promoting understanding and cooperation among diverse cultural groups. Intercultural education aims to cultivate students' intercultural competence, which involves the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts. This competence includes the integration

of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that facilitate interactions across cultural boundaries Idris (2021).

In contemporary educational settings, particularly at the higher education level, there is a growing emphasis on developing intercultural understanding. According to (Liu & Yang, 2023), integrating intercultural elements into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education fosters a deeper appreciation of cultural differences and similarities, which is crucial for effective communication in an increasingly interconnected world.

Their findings suggest that such integration not only enhances language proficiency but also enriches students' cultural awareness, promoting critical thinking and the ability to navigate multicultural environments successfully (Liu & Yang, 2023).

To effectively implement intercultural education, educators must employ various methodological frameworks and pedagogical strategies that resonate with learners' cultural backgrounds. Aulia's (2022) work highlights the importance of teachers' intercultural profiles, suggesting that educators who are aware of their own cultural contexts and biases can create more inclusive learning environments (Aulia, 2022). This requires significant adaptation in educator training and curriculum design to effectively

incorporate intercultural education into existing frameworks.

Research by (Sofi, 2022) demonstrates that narratives and personal experiences can serve as effective tools in enabling intercultural understanding among students. By incorporating real-world scenarios and cultural narratives into EFL programs, educators can create more engaging and meaningful learning experiences (Sofi, 2022). Furthermore, the assessment of intercultural competence in EFL learners is essential in understanding and enhancing their ability to communicate across cultures, thus underscoring the importance of evaluation methodologies that focus on knowledge, skills, awareness, and attitudes (Vajak et al., 2021). Additionally, the socio-political backdrop of educational systems plays a pivotal role in shaping intercultural education. Ogrodzka-Mazur (2018) emphasizes that local cultural contexts, historical experiences, and existing socio-political structures significantly influence the pedagogical approaches taken toward intercultural education (Susilo et al., 2019). This underscores the need for a responsive educational framework that adapts to the unique cultural dynamics of each educational setting.

In conclusion, intercultural education embodies a critical approach that not only enhances awareness and

understanding of diverse cultural perspectives but also seeks to empower learners to engage meaningfully in a multicultural world. By focusing on the development of intercultural competence and integrating culturally responsive pedagogies within EFL frameworks, educational institutions can cultivate globally competent individuals who respect and understand cultural differences, preparing them to thrive in an interconnected and diverse society.

4. Power dynamics

a. Impact on Cultural Diversity

Thailand's rich cultural diversity is a profound outcome shaped by a complex interplay of historical, political, and socioeconomic factors. For over a century, the government implemented assimilation programs primarily designed to foster a singular Thai national identity, which often inadvertently restricted ethnic minorities from openly expressing their distinctive customs and traditions.

However, more recent political reforms and significant economic expansion, particularly catalyzed by the 1997 Constitution which provided explicit legal rights for cultural preservation, have empowered these diverse communities to reclaim and revitalize their cultural legacy.

The pervasive force of globalization has further impacted identity formation within Thailand, encouraging local communities to strategically leverage their unique

cultural resources for economic growth, while simultaneously adapting to evolving international trends and demands. Furthermore, local administrations are increasingly recognizing the intrinsic value of cultural heritage and are actively embracing it in their efforts to promote both tourism and sustainable development (Jory, 2000).

In regions characterized by rich biodiversity, ethnic communities play an especially crucial role in bridging the often-present gap between environmental sustainability goals and the preservation of cultural diversity. Despite Thailand's long-standing reputation for tolerance and hospitality, marginalized groups regrettably continue to encounter persistent obstacles in terms of full social acceptance, robust legal protections, and equitable employment opportunities.

Compounding these challenges, periods of political conservatism, particularly during military administrations, have unfortunately impeded the capacity of minorities to effectively advocate for increased representation and recognition within the broader society. Beyond the dominant Thai culture, the nation is home to a rich tapestry of other cultural groups, including Thai Muslims, who are generally well integrated into society, with the notable exception of the country's troubled Deep South, where

Muslim insurgents have been engaged in prolonged independence conflicts.

Additionally, significant Mon ethnic groups reside in the central region, diverse highland communities inhabit the north, and various sea nomads populate the southern coastal areas. The I-san people of Northeast Thailand, while not an ethnic group per se, are primarily rural and speak a dialect closely related to Lao, which many residents of Bangkok often find challenging to understand.

Each of these distinct ethnic, regional, and religious groups possesses unique cultural traits and identities vibrant cultural environment represents a complex synthesis of dynamic grassroots activism, deeply rooted historical integration processes, and the transformative pressures of contemporary globalization, with ongoing issues related to diversity and equitable representation continuing to temper contribute to the nation's rich heritage (Pechapan-Hammond, 2020).

In today’s increasingly globalized world, a country's ability to thrive internationally cannot solely depend on the command of a single common language. Consequently, English has undeniably become an indispensable communication tool, particularly within Thailand’s burgeoning business and professional sectors, where international interactions are commonplace.

While the paramount importance of English in both education and trade is unequivocally clear, it is also noteworthy that the substantial growth of Thailand's private healthcare industry has strategically positioned Bangkok as a leading provider of advanced medical services to a highly diverse and affluent clientele.

This clientele includes wealthy individuals from across Southeast Asia, as well as European and American expatriates, Middle Easterners, and prosperous Thais themselves (Pechapan-Hammond, 2020). These unique societal and economic factors contribute significantly to Thailand's distinct sociolinguistic background. Furthermore, it is crucial to emphasize that the usage of English in Thailand should not be directly compared to its established role in other Southeast Asian nations, particularly former Anglophone colonies such as India, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines.

In these latter countries, English has deeply ingrained itself in various Outer Circle contexts, serving as an official or widely used second language in government, education, and daily life (Pechapan-Hammond, 2020). This distinction is vital because, unlike the aforementioned nations, Thailand was never subjected to British colonial rule; consequently, English never attained the status of an official language or a commonly used second language within its

governmental structures, educational institutions, or daily societal interactions.

Instead, English is far more frequently taught and utilized as a foreign language (EFL) in Thailand, rather than serving as an integral component of the community's linguistic identity.

B. Previous research

This section reviews selected literature relevant to the present study.

1. Thithimadee Arphattanano, "*Multicultural Education in Thailand"* This research investigates the implementation of multicultural education policies in Thai elementary schools serving culturally diverse student populations, including Muslim, Buddhist, Burmese, Cambodian, and Thai communities. Employing a qualitative approach (interviews, observations, document analysis) and multicultural education theory as its framework, the study found that existing policies facilitate migrant students' access to public education and allow schools to adopt regulations reflecting student diversity.

   The curriculum includes cultural references, textbooks promote harmonious living, and some institutions offer bilingual programs. However, a deeper analysis revealed that the acceptance of cultural diversity often leads to assimilation, preserving the characteristics of "Thai-

ness" and not significantly altering power dynamics between dominant and minority groups.

Ultimately, while policies permit cultural diversity, actual practices tend to favor assimilation over genuine acceptance, highlighting challenges in establishing an inclusive educational environment (Arphattananon, 2018). The similarity between the author's thesis and this thesis lies in the implementation of English. The difference is that the author's thesis applies an EFL textbook specifically designed for students in Thailand.

2. Niwat Wuttisrisiriporn, Napanit Vinichevit, and Siriluck Usaha "*A Situational Analysis of EFL Textbook Selection in Thai Public Schools".* This study analyzed the process of selecting English as a Foreign Language (EFL), textbooks in Thai public schools using a mixed-method approach (open-ended online questionnaire and interviews) involving 30 English teachers from seven provinces.

   The findings identified five main selection criteria: alignment with Thailand's Basic Education Core Curriculum, content suitability for student proficiency, Ministry of Education approval, alignment with the Distance Learning Television (DLTV) program, and affordability with publisher-provided additional activities. The study noted a lack of systematic

evaluation prior to use, potentially leading to suboptimal textbook quality.

The authors recommend a more systematic EFL textbook evaluation checklist tailored to the Thai context, suggesting a three-stage evaluation (pre-use, in-use, post-use) to assess strengths and limitations relative to course requirements and identify supplementary materials (Wuttisrisiriporn, Vinitchevit, et al., 2020).

The similarity to current research to both studies address the use and selection of EFL textbooks in Thailand. Than the difference from current research is Wuttisrisiriporn etal. focus on the process and criteria of textbook selection, while the current study conducts a critical content analysis of the cultural and power representations within the selected textbooks.

3. Zuoteng Li, Jiayan Zeng, and Benjamin H. Nam. "*A Comparative Analysis of Multimodal Native Cultural Content in English-Language Textbooks in China and Mongolia".* This research aimed to analyze and compare the representation of multimodal native cultural content in English-language textbooks used in junior high schools in China and Mongolia. It focused on the distribution and structure of cultural categories using an adapted analytical framework and quantitative analysis

of multimodal cultural elements across textbooks for grades six to nine.

The findings revealed diverse cultural content but highlighted significant imbalances between "Big C" (high culture) and "Small c" (everyday culture) categories, and differing emphases between the two countries' textbooks. These disparities were suggested to potentially influence students' intercultural communicative competence, leading to recommendations for more balanced textbook design and further exploration of teacher and student perceptions.(Li et al., 2023). On the other hand, this study employs a critical content analysis technique and concentrates exclusively on Thailand.

Instead of a quantitative evaluation of indigenous cultural components, this calls for a more thorough investigation of the cultural values, ideologies, and possible power dynamics ingrained in textbook content. Thus, while both studies look at cultural content in EFL textbooks, they are very different in terms of their methodological approach (quantitative vs. critical), geographic scope, cultural focus (indigenous vs. wider cultural influences), and main analytical goal (comparing representation vs. revealing power dynamics).

4. Ivan Lasan, "*Salience in EFL speakers' perceptions of formality: (In)formal Greetings and Address Forms combined with (in)formal Nouns, Verbs, and Adjectives"*. Lasan's study examined whether native English (ED) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speakers perceive formality similarly in email communication, focusing on greetings, address forms, nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

   Through evaluating 20 email samples by 25 Canadian ED students and 27 Slovakian EFL students, and identifying key elements influencing their assessments, the study found statistically significant differences in formality perceptions. EFL speakers gave greater weight to address formality than ED speakers, underscoring the need to enhance pragmatic competence among EFL learners and highlighting the possibility of cross-linguistic transfer (Lasan, 2021).

   Since both of their looks into the subtleties of language use in contexts where English is being used as a foreign language (EFL). In research, examine the power dynamics and cultural representations present in Thai EFL textbooks, whereas Lasan's study focuses on how various groups view formality in communication, emphasizing the value of pragmatic competence and the possibility of cross-language transfer.

Although Lasan's work focuses on individual perceptions of formality incommunication, my analysis challenges the wider implications of cultural content in educational materials and their effect on learners' comprehension of power relations. Both studies emphasize the significance of comprehending cultural and contextual factors in language education. When taken as a whole, studies advance our knowledge of the ways in which language and culture interact in EFL settings.

5. Fransiska Prihatiningsih, Ismail Petrus, and Sary Silvhiany, *"Cultural Representation in EFL Textbooks for the Seventh Graders: A Multimodal Analysis"*. This study employed a qualitative content analysis using Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal social semiotic approach to analyze cultural representation in EFL textbooks for seventh graders. The research found that source culture was more prevalent than target and foreign cultures, indicating an imbalance. This suggests prioritizing students' identity development and character education over using English as a lingua franca, potentially limiting their opportunities to learn about other cultures and develop as effective cross-cultural communicators.

The researchers suggested that English teachers should actively select appropriate textbooks and supplement them with additional materials or activities to address these shortcomings While the other research focuses on identifying source, target, and international cultures, this study seeks to uncover issues of cultural dominance and the influence of political and economic factors on the selection of teaching materials in order to pro mote a more inclusive and representative curriculum.

However, what unites them is the emphasis on cultural representation in EFL textbooks, which ultimately seeks to guide pedagogical practice and recognize the significance of culture in language acquisition while considering textbooks as valuable tools in the classroom.

6. Salma Ali Salem Mansoor & Dihliza Basya, *"The Representation of Multicultural Content Provided by 'World-Class Franchise' English Course Textbook Used in Indonesia"* This study examines the representation of multicultural content in an English course textbook (Trailblazers Series, Book 4: A2) used by a world-class franchise language program (Education First) in Indonesia. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the methodological framework, the researchers applied Halliday's systemic functional linguistics and Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar to analyze both verbal

and visual components of the textbook(Alawlaqi & Dihliza Basya, 2023).

The study found that while the textbook aims to serve culturally diverse learners, the majority of its content reflects Western-centric perspectives, particularly from American and British cultures. Iconic landmarks, food, social customs, and character depictions predominantly highlight Western identities, often with white, English-speaking individuals at the center. Local Indonesian culture and other non-Western cultural representations are largely marginalized or absent. Although there are attempts to include Asian elements—such as a reference to Korean music culture—these are limited and do not offer substantial engagement with local cultural narratives.

The findings suggest that despite the international positioning of the textbook, its cultural portrayals are imbalanced, reinforcing dominant Western ideologies while neglecting the cultural realities of Indonesian learners. This imbalance may hinder students' ability to develop intercultural competence and critical cultural awareness. The study advocates for increased collaboration between educators, curriculum developers, and publishers to produce more culturally responsive and inclusive EFL materials.

The similarity between this study and Arphattananon's research lies in their shared concern with multicultural education and the integration of diversity within educational content. However, while Arphattananon focuses on policy and practice in Thai public schools, this study centers on a commercial EFL textbook used in private language education. Additionally, whereas Arphattananon identifies a tendency toward assimilation under the guise of multicultural policy, Mansoor and Basya highlight how superficial multicultural representation reinforces global cultural hierarchies within language learning materials.

7. Soni Ariawan, *"Investigating Cultural Dimensions in EFL Textbook by Using Byram Checklist"* This study investigates the cultural dimensions represented in the 2017 edition of an English textbook used in Indonesian senior high schools, officially published by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Using content analysis and Michael Byram's (1989) intercultural framework, the research analyzed 11 conversations, 17 reading texts, and 83 visual elements to determine how cultural aspects are incorporated across verbal and visual modes (S. Ariawan, 2020).

   The study revealed that the dominant dimension was stereotypes and national identity (28.05%), emphasizing

local heroes, popular locations, and cultural artefacts. Other frequently occurring dimensions included social interaction (15.9%), socialisation and the life cycle (15.9%), and national geography (12.2%), indicating a strong focus on familiar and localized contexts.

Dimensions such as belief and behaviour, national history, social identity and group, and social and political institutions were represented to a lesser extent. The findings suggest that while the textbook supports the national curriculum's goal of character development by prioritizing Indonesian cultural elements, it provides limited exposure to international and target cultures. The integration of figures like B.J. Habibie and Cut Nyak Dhien, religious expressions (e.g., Islamic greetings), and everyday social practices (e.g., handshakes, congratulatory phrases) underscores efforts to root English language education in local values.

Despite these efforts, the study concludes that cultural representation remains imbalanced, with limited attention to intercultural dimensions that would support broader cultural competence. The textbook is viewed as progressing toward a more proportional representation but still requires further inclusion of diverse global cultures to fully support intercultural communicative competence.

The similarity between this study and Arphattananon's lies in their critical engagement with how educational materials reflect multicultural values and shape learners' cultural awareness. However, while Arphattananon critiques school policy and practice for favoring assimilation in Thai multicultural education, Ariawan's work highlights the dominance of national cultural content over intercultural exposure in Indonesian EFL textbooks.

8. Diah Ayuni Ariawan, Joko Nurkamto, & Sumardi, *"Critical Discourse Analysis of Cultural Representations in EFL National Commercial Textbooks"* This research investigates how cultural elements are represented in Indonesian senior high school English textbooks authored by a national commercial publisher. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the methodological framework and guided by Yuen's (2011) cultural elements (product, practice, perspective, and person) and Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) cultural categories (source, target, and international), the study critically analyzed the textual materials from two textbooks for Grades 10 and 11 (D. A. Ariawan et al., 2022).

   The findings indicate that cultural content in both textbooks is imbalanced, with a predominant focus on

Indonesian culture (source culture), which accounted for 59% in Grade 10 and 51% in Grade 11. Cultural elements categorized as “product” and “person” were most frequently represented, whereas “perspective” and “practice” were underrepresented.

While there were some references to target cultures (e.g., British and American), these were minimal (11% and 26% respectively), and international cultures (e.g., Italian, Chinese) were scarcely featured (17% and 8%). The textbooks also included a small proportion of “universal” cultural content not tied to any specific national identity.

Although the textbooks successfully showcase Indonesian cultural richness—including references to figures like Ki Hajar Dewantara, traditional foods, and historic sites—they offer limited exposure to intercultural perspectives that are crucial for fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). The study highlights the importance of representing a wider range of global cultures, including those from Southeast Asia, Africa, and non-Western regions, to better prepare students for real-world communication in global contexts.

The similarity between this study and Arphattananon’s lies in their shared concern with how educational

materials engage with multicultural values. While Arphattananon critiques Thai multicultural education for reinforcing national assimilation through superficial diversity, Ariawan et al. emphasize that Indonesia's EFL textbooks, despite promoting local cultural identity, lack sufficient intercultural breadth to fully support students' global communicative competence.

9. Ali Derakhshan, *"Should Textbook Images Be Merely Decorative? Cultural Representations in the Iranian EFL National Textbook from the Semiotic Approach Perspective"* This study investigates cultural representations in Iran's nationally mandated English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbook, Vision 1, using a semiotic framework inspired by Peircean theory. Unlike previous research that focused primarily on textual analysis, this study uniquely examines the dynamic interplay between text, image, and task—referred to as the "text-task-image triad"—and gathers perspectives from Iranian EFL students, teachers, and teacher educators through semi-structured interviews(Derakhshan, 2024).

   Findings revealed three major themes: (1) the relationship between text and image is predominantly indexical and denotational, lacking the cultural depth needed to foster intercultural understanding; (2) images

in the textbook often function decoratively rather than pedagogically, showing minimal integration with tasks and failing to promote cultural awareness; and (3) participants suggested alternative images that could better engage learners with cultural content. Despite localized efforts to incorporate Iranian culture, the textbook generally lacks sufficient content to build students' global cultural competence or to challenge monolithic cultural narratives.

The study emphasizes the importance of moving beyond superficial inclusion of images by ensuring the meaningful co-instantiation of text, image, and task. It proposes a dynamic "unguided semiosis" model in which cultural meanings are constructed interactively between the textbook, teachers, and learners. The author argues that Iranian EFL textbooks need to be re-envisioned to encourage critical reflection and to better prepare students for intercultural citizenship.

The similarity between this study and Arphattananon's lies in their critique of surface-level multicultural representation in educational content. Both studies highlight how materials that claim to support cultural diversity often reinforce dominant ideologies. While Arphattananon critiques policy-driven assimilation in Thai schools, Derakhshan focuses on the pedagogical

limitations of textbook imagery in the Iranian EFL context, ultimately calling for greater cultural responsiveness and intercultural pedagogy.

10. Ruobing Chi, Tingting Zhang, & Li Liu, *"How Do Intercultural Communication Textbooks Represent Culture? A Case Study of Chinese Culture"* This study analyzes how intercultural communication (IC) textbooks represent Chinese culture, focusing on both the depth and form of such representation. Using a qualitative content analysis approach based on Moran's (2001) cultural framework and supported by semiotic perspectives, the authors reviewed eight widely used IC textbooks published in English. The analysis focused on four cultural dimensions—products, practices, perspectives, and persons—and also examined how Chinese culture is positioned relative to intercultural theory and other cultures.

    The results show that Chinese culture is frequently included in IC textbooks, with over 580 cultural incidents identified and coded into 1,384 references. Cultural products and persons are most frequently featured, including elements such as Chinese language, media, traditional symbols, historical figures, and contemporary public personalities.

Cultural practices and perspectives, including communication norms, Confucian values, and social behaviors, are also present, though less prominently. Chinese culture is often used to illustrate key intercultural theories, such as collectivism, power distance, and high-/low-context communication styles (Chi et al., 2024).

However, most references are surface-level or theoretical, often presented in simplified East–West comparisons that risk reinforcing stereotypes. The study highlights that while Chinese culture is visible in IC textbooks, it is frequently framed through a Western lens or used as a convenient example to contrast "the East" with "the West." Furthermore, representations often neglect the diversity within Chinese culture itself and prioritize mainstream or national-level cultural narratives.

The authors argue for the need to move beyond essentialist portrayals and advocate for more nuanced, localized, and context-rich representations that include internal cultural diversity. They suggest that future IC textbooks should balance theoretical relevance with intercultural sensitivity and avoid over-relying on dichotomous frameworks.

The similarity between this study and Arphattananon's lies in their shared concern about the superficial or essentialist treatment of cultural diversity in educational materials. While Arphattananon critiques Thai multicultural education policies for promoting assimilation under the guise of diversity, Chi and colleagues highlight how intercultural communication textbooks, while inclusive of Chinese culture, often perpetuate reductive or stereotypical images rather than fostering genuine intercultural understanding.

C. Conceptual framework

Textbooks are essential to learning English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly in Thailand, where instructional materials serve as a crucial tool for both language acquisition and the representation of culture and power. This study investigates how culture and power are portrayed in EFL textbooks used in Thai schools, employing a Critical Content Analysis design.

This study examines two key theoretical constructs: cultural representation and power in education. The analysis of cultural representation involves comparing local and Western cultures within the textbooks, and investigating hoe stereotypes and social issues are depicted (Prihatiningsih et al., 2021). Concurrently, power in education is explored by scrutinizing

who controls the content of textbooks and how political and economic factors influence the selection of teaching materials.

The overarching conceptual framework for this research can be visualized as follows:

1. EFL Textbook serves as the primary data source.
2. Within these textbook, two interconnected elements are critically analyzed:
    a. Cultural Representation

        This includes explicit and implicit portrayals of various cultures.

    b. Ideological Content & Power Structures Embedded in Texts

        This refers to the underlying messages, values, and power dynamics implicitly or explicitly conveyed through the textbook content.
3. Ultimately, this analysis aims to understand the Impact on Thai Students' Worldview, Identity, and Cultural Perception.

The critical content analysis method has been applied in various scholarly works to address issues of representation, power dynamics, and systematic marginalization within diverse contexts. One notable application of this method is illustrated by Shen et al., who performed a critical content analysis focused on identifying emergent bilinguals in the educational settings of North Texas.

Their study emphasizes the necessity of viewing educational texts through a critical lens, highlighting issues of equity and the risks of unearned privileges within gifted education (Shen et al., 2024). This aligns with the broader framework of critical content analysis, which aims to interrogate the processes and power structures underlying textual representations.

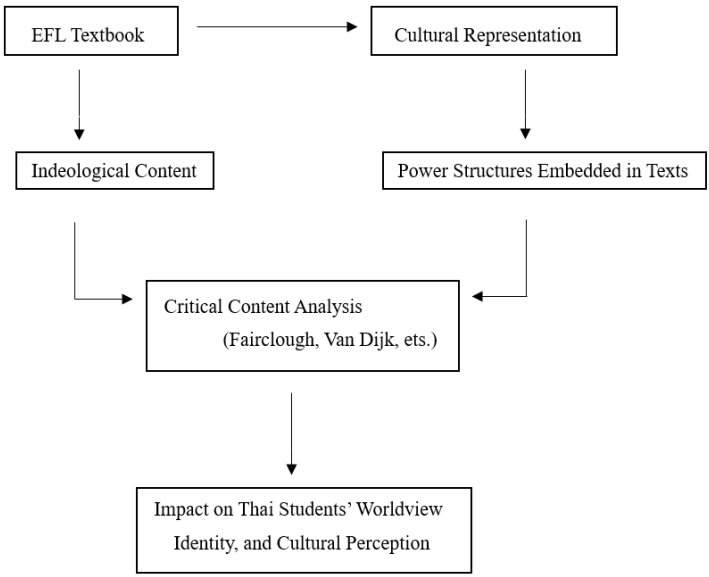
Similarly, Jannat's research offers a critical qualitative content analysis of media representations, specifically examining underrepresented groups in the context of health identity (Jannat, 2023). This study exemplifies how critical content analysis can shed light on the multifaceted aspects of power that influence media portrayals and, consequently, public perceptions of these groups. Jannat's work underscores the method's ability to adaptively critique content and examine the societal implications of such portrayals, supporting the argument that critical content analysis is vital for understanding contemporary media dynamics.

In a different sphere, Pardo's examination of Colombian-authored EFL textbooks employs critical content analysis to unpack colonial legacies and emergent decoloniality (Pardo, 2022). By scrutinizing these textbooks within their socio-cultural contexts, Pardo illuminates the hidden messages that perpetuate cultural hegemony. This exemplifies the extensive applicability of critical content analysis beyond conventional boundaries, underlining its usefulness in educational discourse.

Furthermore, the conceptual framework introduced by Huber et al. illustrates how Critical Race Theory intersects with critical content analysis to focus on children's literature about People of Color (Huber et al., 2020). This work provides a structured approach for analyzing texts through a lens that recognizes race, class, gender, and other intersectional identities, thereby enriching the discourse on inclusion and representation in literature aimed at younger audiences.

In summary, the method of critical content analysis serves as a powerful tool for dissecting texts across various domains, revealing underlying power dynamics and societal implications inherent in different forms of representation. It allows researchers to engage with the content more reflectively, addressing historical injustices and advocating for greater equity in various sectors, including education and media.

By adopting this critical approach, the study is expected to reveal the extent of Western cultural dominance in textbooks and elucidate the role of power dynamics in curriculum formation. The findings provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers, guiding them in creating a more inclusive and representative curriculum that better serves Thai students.


EFL Textbook
Cultural Representation
Indeological Content
Power Structures Embedded in Texts
Critical Content Analysis
(Fairclough, Van Dijk, ets.)
Impact on Thai Students' Worldview
Identity, and Cultural Perception

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter outlines the methodological approach employed in this research. The primary focus of this chapter is on the research design, the description of the primary data corpus, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques applied to address the research objectives regarding cultural representation and power dynamics in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), textbooks for Thai students.

A. Research Design

This study employed critical content analysis as its primary research design. This qualitative method is specifically chosen to facilitate an in-depth, subjective interpretation of both textual and visual content within the EFL textbook. Critical content analysis allows the researcher to move beyond surface-level descriptions to identify underlying patterns, themes, hidden messages, and implicit ideologies that may reflect power dynamics and cultural biases (Prihatiningsih et al, 2021).

This design is particularly relevant for analyzing how cultural representations and power relations are depicted and potentially reinforced in educational materials. The analysis focuses solely on Critical Content Analysis (CCA) to identify underlying ideologies and cultural representations embedded within the textbook content.

The core methodology involves a systematic examination of the EFL textbook Student's Book SPARK 2 (2008). The analysis aims to deconstruct cultural representations and potential power relations expressed through themes, imagery, and language use within the textbook. Emphasis is placed on recurring patterns and underlying messages to gain a deeper understanding of how culture and social relations are portrayed in the learning material.

Research analyzing cultural content in English textbooks has been carried out in various countries. For example, in Iran, Cheng and Beigi (2012) as well as Behnam and Mozaheb (2013) investigated the presence of Muslim cultural elements in English textbooks authored by Iranians and used at the high school level within the Iranian educational context (Yuso, 2020). The analysis focuses solely on Critical Content Analysis to identify underlying ideologies and cultural representations embedded within the textbook content.

1. Analytical Framework

In line with the research title, the analysis focuses on two main aspects:

a. Cultural Representation:

An examination of how various cultures (particularly Western and Thai, or other non-Western cultures) are

depicted in the textbook, including values, traditions, lifestyles, and worldviews.

b. Power and Social Hierarchy Representation:

An investigation into how power relations, social hierarchies, and dominant or subordinate ideologies are presented in the textbook's narratives, dialogues, and imagery, and how this may influence students' understanding of identity and social roles.

B. Primary Data Source

The main data source in this study is an English textbook entitled *Student's Book SPARK 2* (2008). This book is part of the SPARK series published by Express Publishing, written by Virginia Evans and Jenny Dooley, with ISBN 9786162037313. This textbook is used as official instructional material, specifically the Quality Assurance Textbook version, for Grade 8 students (มัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 2) at Rusmee Sthapana School, a private educational institution in Thailand.

This textbook was chosen as the primary corpus due to its rich and varied content, as well as its relevance to the research context of Thai junior high school students. Designed for non-native English learners, the book follows the Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 and adopts an integrated language learning approach that emphasizes the development of four core language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

1. Overview of Textbook Content

The textbook material is structured into eight systematic thematic units, designed to engage students in a variety of everyday and imaginative contexts. Each unit includes components such as vocabulary exercises, grammar explanations, reading passages, writing tasks, and conversational dialogues that reflect real-life communication. Additionally, the book features special sections such as Across Culture, which introduces cultural aspects of English-speaking countries, and Fun Time, which provides engaging learning activities through songs and games. The textbook also helps students prepare for national standardized exams such as the O-NET and encourages project-based learning.

The eight thematic units are:

Unit 1: "At Work, At Play" (Introduces activities related to professions and leisure).

Unit 2: "Myths and Legends" (Explores traditional stories and folklore).

Unit 3: "Let’s Party!" (Learns about celebrations and social events).

Unit 4: "Sports and Chores" (Combines physical activities with daily responsibilities).

Unit 5: "Our Wonderful World" (Focuses on the natural environment and global wonders).

Unit 6: "Out and About" (Centers on outdoor activities and exploration).

Unit 7: "Experiences" (Allows learners to reflect on personal events and memories).

Unit 8: "Places Around Us" (Highlights local places and community settings).

In addition to linguistic content, the textbook contains numerous visual elements—such as illustrations, photographs, and comic-style panels—that complement the textual materials and provide context for communication scenarios. The content not only reflects everyday situations but also includes portrayals of family life, school environments, social interactions, holidays, and leisure activities.

C. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure in this research involves a systematic and in-depth examination of the Student's Book SPARK 2 textbook. The steps taken are as follows:

1. Cultural Representation

The textbook predominantly reflects Western, particularly British and American, cultural values. Sections such as Across Culture introduce customs, holidays, and daily life scenarios from English-speaking countries, with limited reference to non-Western or Thai cultural contexts. While this may serve the

purpose of exposing students to target language culture, it also highlights a Eurocentric bias in content selection.

2. Power and Social Hierarchies

Numerous situations in the book show official establishments with distinct hierarchies, like families, the police, or schools, which frequently reinforce deference to authority without encouraging critical thinking. The lack of varied power dynamics may indirectly encourage conformity and passivity in social interaction models taught to students, even if they are not explicitly ideological.

D. Data Analysis Technique

This study employs critical qualitative content analysis to examine cultural representations and power dynamics within the Student's Book SPARK 2 (2008) textbook. With an inductive methodology, the analysis begins with a careful reading of the textbook to become acquainted with its texts, illustrations, conversations, and exercises. The data analysis process follows these steps:

1. Open Coding:

After familiarization, the raw data (texts and visuals) from the textbook were broken down and given initial codes. This coding is "open" to capture emerging concepts and ideas from the data, without preconceived categories. These codes focus on how the content refers to:

a. Cultural values (e.g., individualism, collectivism).

b. Power dynamics (e.g., authority, subordination, domination, marginalization).

2. Axial Coding:

The initial codes are then grouped into more general categories or themes based on conceptual similarities. This involves identifying relationships between codes and forming broader categories that correspond to recurrent themes in the content, such as "Dominant Western Cultural Representation," "Traditional Gender Roles," "Institutional Authority," or "Globalization Narratives."

3. Selective Coding (Theme Development):

These categories are then further evaluated in the context of cultural theory (e.g., Hall's cultural orientations, Hofstede's cultural dimensions) and previous literature on cultural representation and power in EFL textbooks. This stage aims to uncover underlying messages and ideologies, and how the textbook shapes students' worldviews.

4. Critical Interpretation and Synthesis:

Finally, the developed themes are critically interpreted to identify the implications of cultural and power representations for language learning and the identity formation of Thai students. The researcher maintains consistency in the coding procedure and supports

interpretations with relevant academic references to ensure the validity and reliability of the results.

E. Limitation of the Study

This study has several limitations including:

1. The focus of this research is limited to a critical content analysis of a single EFL textbook (Student's Book SPARK 2) for Thai students, specifically regarding the representation of multiculturalism and power. This limits the generalizability of the findings to other textbooks, levels, or national contexts.
2. As a qualitative content analysis, the interpretation of themes and patterns relies on the researcher's subjective judgment. While efforts are made to ensure consistency and support interpretations with theoretical frameworks, different researchers might identify different nuances or emphasize other aspects.
3. This study does not include direct observation of classroom practices or surveys/interviews with students and teachers who use the textbook. Therefore, it cannot ascertain how the cultural and power representations within the textbook are perceived, interpreted, or enacted in real teaching and learning environments. The findings reflect the inherent characteristics of the textbook but not its actual impact in practice.

4. The analysis is confined to the textbook's explicit and implicit content. External factors influencing textbook production (e.g., publisher's policies, curriculum developers' intentions, political influences) are not directly investigated.

CHAPTER IV

FINDIING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the critical content analysis of the EFL textbook *Student's Book SPARK 2 (2008)*. It is divided into two main sections: the presentation of results related to cultural representation and power dynamics, followed by a discussion that critically examines these findings.

The purpose of this chapter is to address the research objectives by detailing how culture and power are implicitly and explicitly conveyed within the analyzed textbook, moving beyond mere description to uncover underlying ideologies and their implications.

A. Finding

Table 4.1 Cultural Modules in SPARK 2 (2008)

No	Modules	Across cultures/Across the curriculum
1.	**At Work, At Play**	**National Pastimes**
2.	**Myths & Legends**	**The Maya (History)**
3.	**Let's Party!**	**Wet Festivals**
4.	**Sports & Chores**	**Eco – Friendly Houses (PSHE)**
5.	**Our Wonderful World**	**Natural Wonders of The World**
6.		
7.	**Out and About**	**The Time Michine (Literature)**

8.	**Experiences**	**Amazing Sighs!**
9.	**Places Around Us**	**A Little Goes a Long Way (Citizenship)**

These cultural elements demonstrate that the textbook is designed to introduce students to international issues while also reflecting the ideological shaping of culture. The results show that Western perspectives dominate cultural portrayals, highlighting imbalances in the representation of diverse cultures.

Through a critical content analysis of the eight figures provided, several important observations have emerged regarding both cultural representation and subtle power dynamics:

Figure 1, discussing "National Pastimes," represents sports as a cultural identity, specifically cricket in India and baseball in the United States. The text implicitly emphasizes the role of sports in shaping adolescent aspirations ("dream of becoming a professional cricketer") and collective identity ("favorite team colors"). The use of two countries as examples indicates a cultural comparison in the context of national leisure activities, highlighting how hobbies can become deeply rooted mass phenomena.

From a power perspective, by showcasing major sports from these specific nations, the textbook implicitly elevates their cultural practices to a global standard, potentially marginalizing less prominent national pastimes from other regions, including

Thailand. This reinforces a form of cultural soft power though popular culture.

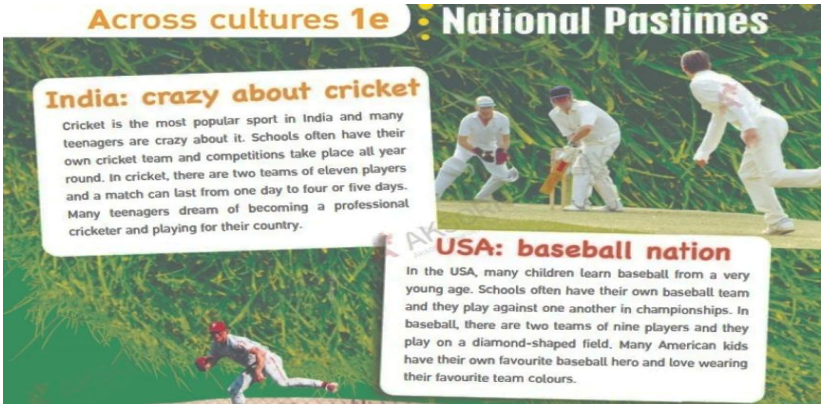


Figure 1 National Pastimes

The Maya culture is examined in Figure 2, focusese on their accomplishments in mathematics, astronomy, and construction, as well as their intelligence ("very clever people"). The story of architectural grandeur is further supported by visual depictions of massive stone temples and pyramids.

The later portion of the text, discusses "tragedy" and "disappeared" without providing clear causes for their mortality (drought or conflict), highlights successes but also creates a narrative of mystery and ambiguity. This could be an attempt to add intrigue or a reflection of historical information constraints. The intriguing idea that chocolate is "the drink of the gods" also gives the reader an intriguing cultural perspective.

The intriguing idea that chocolate is "the drink of the gods" also gives the reader an intriguing cultural perspective. In terms of power, representing an ancient, non-Western civilization as "disappeared" without clear reasons, while fascinating, can inadvertently perpetuate a narrative of decline for non-Western histories, contrasting with the implied continuous progression of Western knowledge and culture often found in EFL materials.

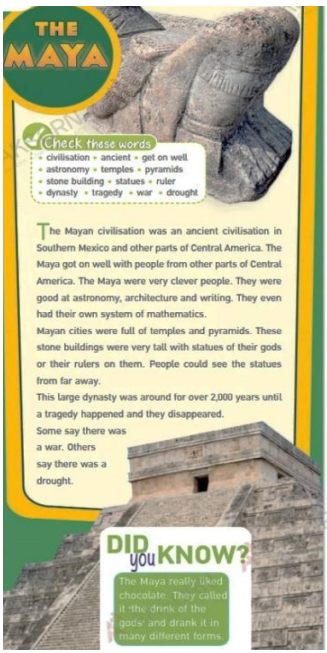


Figure 2 The Maya

The subject of Figure 3's "Wet Festivals," which includes unusual celebrations such as the Windsor Pumpkin Regatta. The

wording invites the reader to put themselves in the audience's shoes by highlighting the enjoyable ("fun festivals") and interactive elements. Vibrant descriptions of players being "very wet" and engaging expressions like "Come to the..." paint a picture of an enjoyable, if slightly chaotic, but constructive activity.

This portrayal implies that festivals serve as platforms for social interaction and artistic expression in addition to being celebrations. The choice of a quirky, somewhat exotic festival from Canada, while promoting cross-cultural awareness, also subtly positions Western cultural practices as the primary examples of "fun" or "unusual" global phenomena, potentially overshadowing or de-emphasizing local Thai festivals that might offer similar or richer cultural experiences for the students.

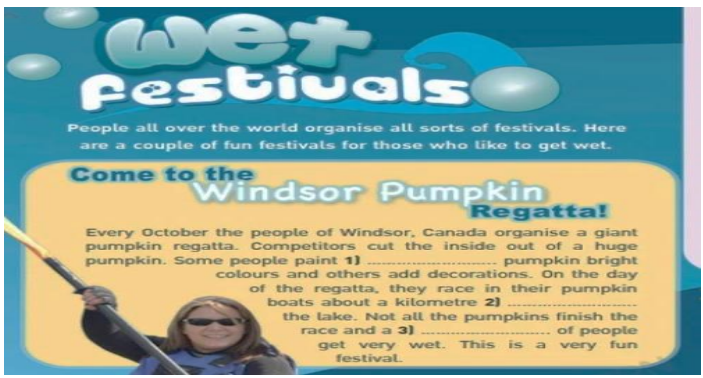


Figure 3 Wet Festivals

Figure 4, titled "Eco-friendly Houses," explicitly promotes environmentally friendly practices at home. The text uses an instructive style, providing a list of concrete actions such as "Turn off the lights," "Put solar panels," and "Collect rainwater." The emphasis on "protect the environment and make the world a better place" adopts a narrative of individual responsibility towards sustainability. The concept of "the three Rs—reuse, repair, and recycle" is highlighted as a core principle, indicating the importance of responsible consumption and waste management. While promoting a universally positive message, this section can be seen as subtly reinforcing a Western-centric discourse on environmentalism, where solutions are often framed around individual consumer choices rather than broader systemic or collective actions that might be more culturally relevant or impactful in some non-Western contexts.

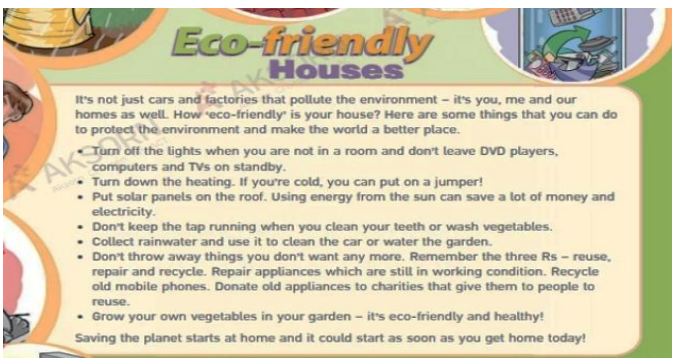


Figure 4 Eco-friendly Houses

Figure 5 discusses "Natural Wonders of the World," showcasing Lake Baikal and Niagara Falls. The representation of these two natural marvels focuses on their scale (deepest, oldest, largest) and ecological uniqueness (endemic animals and plants). The narrative not only describes their geographical locations but also instills a sense of awe for nature, mentioning Niagara Falls' electricity generation capacity and Lake Baikal's clear water.

This builds an understanding of both the intrinsic and instrumental value of nature. The selection of these specific natural wonders, while globally recognized, contributes to a Eurocentric or Northern Hemisphere-centric view of "wonders," potentially overlooking equally significant natural landmarks in Southeast Asia or other non-Western regions, thus shaping students' perceptions of global importance.

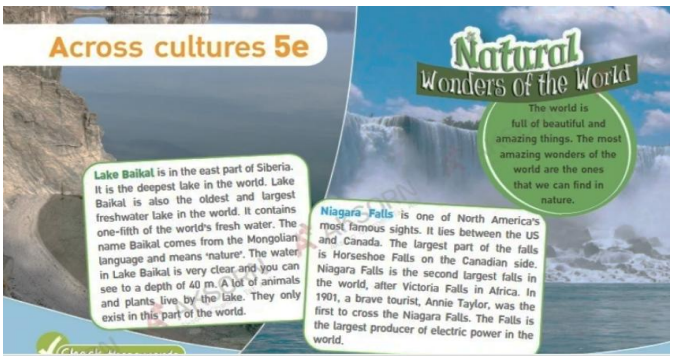


Figure 5 Natural Wonders of the World

As an illustration, Figure 6 shows a passage from "The Time Machine." A tense and exploratory science fiction story is presented in this text. A dramatic atmosphere is created by the narrator's statements of "going mad," "crying and shouting," and being "very worried." The reader is drawn into an unfamiliar world by the mystery and danger created by the encounter with "little people" and a "creature" that resembles an ape with crimson eyes. Readers are encouraged to identify with the character by the emphasis on the narrator's feelings and behavior.

The inclusion of a classic Western science fiction excerpt, while valuable for literary exposure, implicitly establishes Western literary traditions as the standard for imaginative narratives, potentially sidelining equally rich and diverse folklore or contemporary literature from Thai or other non-Western cultures. This can subtly influence students' perceptions of what constitutes "important" or "engaging" literature.

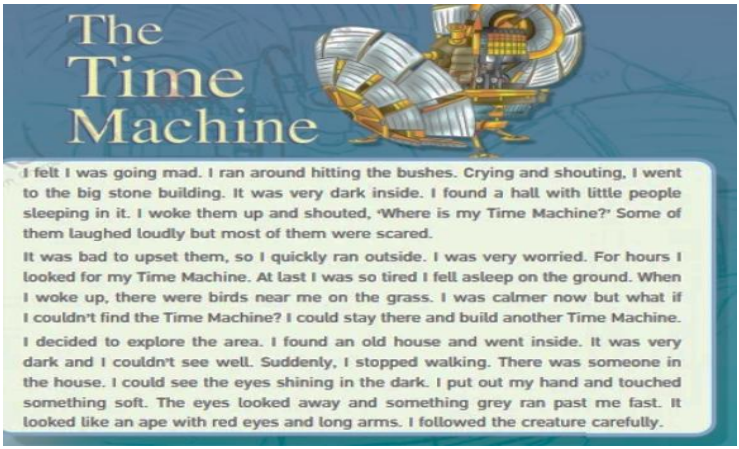


Figure 6 The Time Machine

Figure 7 features "Amazing Sights!" of red crabs on Christmas Island and pink flamingos in Lake Nakuru. Both natural phenomena are presented as spectacular visual attractions ("wonderful sight!" "amazing sea of pink"). The text not only explains migration and animal behavior but also highlights human conservation efforts, such as "crab crossings and tunnels" and the increase in flamingo population after decline due to hunting and pollution. This indicates a narrative of nature protection and positive interaction between humans and wildlife.

This Figure similar to Figure 5, the selection of these specific "amazing sights" from Australia and Kenya, while showcasing biodiversity, continues to contribute to a curated global view that may not sufficiently incorporate the unique natural beauty or conservation efforts within Thailand itself.

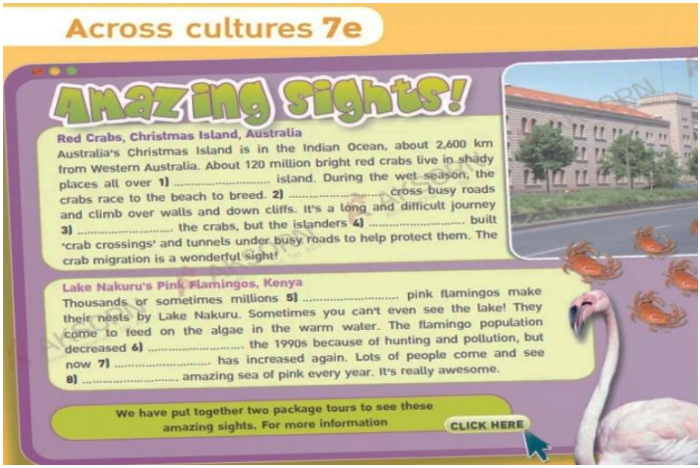


Figure 7 Amazing Sights!

The Figure 8, titled "A Little Goes a Long Way," focuses on individual actions to maintain environmental cleanliness. Its main theme is that small collective actions can yield significant impact ("If everyone helps... they are helping the planet too"). The text offers five practical tips, ranging from "Reuse and recycle" to "Set an example." Visual representations of people cleaning up litter and planting trees reinforce the positive message of community contribution, encouraging social responsibility and active participation.

This section subtly promotes a Western-individualistic approach to social change, where individual actions are paramount. While valuable, it may downplay the significance of community-wide, governmental, or systemic efforts that are often more

prevalent or culturally ingrained in certain non-Western societies, including Thailand, for addressing social and environmental issues.



Figure 8 A Little Goes a Long Way

B. Discussion

The findings presented above reveal a consistent pattern in the Student's Book SPARK 2 (2008) textbook, where cultural representations are predominantly Western-centric, and subtle power dynamics are embedded within the chosen narratives and visual elements. These elements collectively shape students' worldviews, often reinforcing a "hidden agenda" that privileges certain cultural norms and ideologies.

1. Cultural Representation on EFL Textbook

The analysis confirms that the textbook primarily introduces Western cultures, particularly from English-speaking countries like the USA, UK, and Canada, as seen in "National

Pastimes," "Wet Festivals," and implicitly through literary selections like "The Time Machine." This aligns with previous research by Labtic & Teo (2020) and Saemee & Nomnian (2021), who highlight the prevalent reliance on native-speaking countries for ELT material content, often leading to a scarcity of non-native cultural information.

For instance, while "National Pastimes" broadens students' horizons by showcasing cricket in India alongside baseball in the USA, the overall balance still leans heavily towards Anglo-American cultural norms.

The minimal or absent representation of Thai culture is a critical finding, echoing (Prihatiningsih et al.'s, 2021) observation that source culture is often underrepresented, potentially limiting students' opportunities to connect English learning with their own socio-cultural backgrounds and develop comprehensive intercultural communicative skills. This imbalance can lead to a phenomenon where students internalize foreign cultural norms as superior or more "global," potentially devaluing their own cultural heritage (Sadeghi & Sepahi, 2018).

The textbook's "Across Culture" sections, while aiming to expose students to target language cultures, tend to present these cultures in a largely positive, often idealized light (e.g., "fun festivals," "amazing sights"). While educational, this simplified portrayal might not equip students with a nuanced understanding of

cultural complexities or critical awareness of global power imbalances.

The inclusion of ancient civilizations like "The Maya" (Figure 2) is a welcome attempt to diversify, but the narrative's ambiguity around their disappearance could inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes of historical decline in non-Western contexts without deeper historical context.

This selective inclusion and often superficial treatment of non-Western cultures reinforce a form of cultural soft power, where certain narratives are subtly promoted as universal or more significant (Jindapitak & Boonsuk, 2018).

2. The portrayed in the EFL Textbook

a. . Jobs and Daily Life

- The textbook emphasizes everyday occupations such as:
  - Pilot, nurse, police officer, magician, secretary, hairdresser, dentist, artist, etc.
- Descriptions include duties, tools used, work environment, and character traits (e.g., being organized, brave, creative, patient, cheerful).
- Vocabulary and grammar activities are built around real-life routines, encouraging learners to describe and relate to these professions.

b. Character Qualities and Values

- Traits like bravery, sociability, patience, creativity, organization, fitness are explicitly highlighted.
- Activities help students identify these qualities in professions, promoting positive behavioral modeling.

c. Global Cultural References
   - Fota Wildlife Park in Ireland is featured, including exotic animals and interactive tourist activities like safari jeep tours and cheetah runs.
   - Franklin Park Zoo in the USA also appears, showcasing different global ecosystems like rainforests, African savannas, and the Australian outback.
   - These examples expose students to international settings and wildlife conservation efforts, albeit mostly from a Western perspective.

d. Grammar in Context
   - Grammar topics (e.g., present simple vs. present continuous, adverbs of frequency, infinitives and gerunds) are taught through culturally neutral or Western lifestyle scenarios (e.g., a police officer in London, daily routines, tourist visits to Buckingham Palace).

- Little or no reference is made to local Thai culture in grammar contexts.

e. Multicultural Exposure (Limited and Indirect)

- While animals, jobs, and tourism spots are mentioned globally, the cultural representation is indirect and focused more on linguistic function than intercultural understanding.
- The focus is Western-centric, with locations like Ireland, London, Boston, and references to Western customs.

Summary of Culture Representation

Aspect	**Representation**
Professions & Values	Everyday global jobs + universal traits (e.g., brave, fit)
Cultural Settings	Mainly Western (UK, Ireland, USA)
Local/Thai Culture	Almost **absent or invisible**
Multicultural Balance	**Limited diversity**; non-Western cultures are missing
Educational Focus	Grammar, vocabulary, values—not cultural comparison

3. Power Dynamics and Ideological Reinforcement

Beyond explicit cultural content, the textbook subtly reinforces various power dynamics and ideologies. The promotion

of "Eco-friendly Houses" and "A Little Goes a Long Way" (Figures 4 and 8) emphasizes individual responsibility for environmental issues.

While commendable, this narrative implicitly aligns with a Western-centric, individualistic approach to problem-solving, as highlighted by scholars in critical environmental education. It may overshadow the importance of collective action, governmental policies, or systemic changes that are often crucial in addressing large-scale environmental challenges, and which might resonate differently within a collectivist culture like Thailand.

This represents an ideological framing where the onus of change is placed primarily on the individual, rather than on broader power structures (Cunningsworth, 1995).Furthermore, the textbook's portrayal of social interactions, particularly in situations involving official establishments like schools or families (though not explicitly detailed in the provided findings for Spark 2, this is a common characteristic in many ELT materials), frequently reinforces deference to authority without encouraging critical thinking.

The analytical framework for "Power and Social Hierarchy Representation" (Chapter 3) specifically aimed to investigate how dominant or subordinate ideologies are presented and how this may influence students' understanding of identity and social roles. While the findings indicate situations that "reinforce deference to authority" and suggest a "lack of varied power dynamics," a more

explicit discussion in the findings could further elaborate on specific examples where power relations are depicted.

This implicit reinforcement can lead to conformity and passivity in students' understanding of social interaction models, potentially limiting their ability to question existing power structures (Arphattananon, 2018). The selection of literary excerpts, such as "The Time Machine" (Figure 6), while enriching, also represents a cultural power dynamic. By prioritizing classic Western science fiction, the textbook implicitly elevates Western literary traditions, potentially suggesting them as the pinnacle of imaginative storytelling.

This can inadvertently marginalize equally rich literary traditions from Thailand or other non-Western cultures, influencing students' perceptions of literary value and global cultural hierarchies. This aligns with the concept of linguistic imperialism, where the dominance of a particular language (and its associated cultural products) can exert power over others (Phillipson, 1992) and (Labtic & Teo, 2020).

a. Power dynamic since ideological menforcement

In summary, while Student's Book SPARK 2 aims to educate and inspire, its contents carry a "hidden curriculum" (Cunningsworth, 1995) through its cultural selections and ideological framings.

The dominance of Western cultural content and the subtle reinforcement of individualistic problem-solving and uncritical

acceptance of authority figures demonstrate how the textbook, perhaps unintentionally, plays a role in shaping the students' worldview, identity, and cultural perception in a way that may not fully align with the goals of developing comprehensive intercultural communicative competence and critical thinking in a diverse global context.

These findings underscore the critical need for educators and policymakers to evaluate EFL textbooks not just for linguistic content, but also for their deeper cultural and ideological messages.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the critical content analysis of the EFL textbook, along with suggestions for various stakeholders in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Thailand.

A. Conclusions

A critical content analysis of the EFL textbook Student's Book SPARK 2 (2008) reveals that its cultural representation is largely centered on Western norms and values, with minimal to no inclusion of Thai or other non-Western cultures. This observation aligns with a recurring trend in English language teaching materials, which often prioritize the cultures of native English-speaking countries, thereby potentially sidelining learners' own cultural backgrounds.

In addition, the textbook subtly perpetuates certain ideological stances and power relations, such as promoting individual accountability for environmental concerns and reinforcing respect for authority figures. These elements suggest the presence of a "hidden curriculum"—an implicit set of values and assumptions that can shape learners' perspectives, identities, and understanding of the world. The strong emphasis on Western literary and cultural references further reflects patterns of linguistic imperialism, potentially influencing students' notions of cultural and literary value within a global hierarchy.

This analysis highlights the need for educators and policymakers to assess EFL textbooks not only for their linguistic accuracy and pedagogical value but also for the cultural and ideological narratives they convey. Such critical scrutiny is crucial in developing teaching resources that support both linguistic development and intercultural competence, while promoting cultural inclusivity and equity in education.

B. Suggestion

Based on the conclusions drawn from this critical content analysis, the following suggestions are offered to various stakeholders:

1. For Textbook Developers and Publishers:
   a. Promote Balanced Cultural Representation:

      Actively incorporate a wider range of cultures, including a more significant and nuanced representation of Thai culture and other non-Western cultures. This can involve depicting diverse customs, traditions, daily lives, and perspectives from around the world.

   b. Encourage Critical Thinking:

      Design content that prompts students to critically analyze cultural information, rather than passively absorb it. This can be achieved through comparative tasks, discussion questions that explore different viewpoints, and scenarios that challenge stereotypes.

c. Integrate Local Contexts:

Ensure that the textbook content is more culturally relevant to Thai learners by weaving in local contexts, examples, and issues that resonate with their experiences.

d. Review for Implicit Ideologies:

Conduct thorough reviews of both textual and visual content to identify and address any unintended reinforcement of dominant ideologies or power imbalances.

2. For Teachers and Educators:

a. Supplement Existing Materials:

Acknowledge the limitations of textbooks in terms of cultural representation and actively seek out supplementary materials (e.g., articles, videos, guest speakers, real-life interactions) that offer diverse cultural perspectives.

b. Facilitate Critical Discussions:

Utilize the textbook as a starting point for discussions about cultural differences, similarities, and the inherent biases in any material. Encourage students to question, compare, and reflect on the cultures presented.

c. Develop Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC):

Prioritize activities that enhance students' ICC, enabling them to understand, appreciate, and effectively communicate across different cultural contexts.

d. Participate in Textbook Evaluation:

Engage in systematic evaluation processes for textbook selection, advocating for materials that align with principles of inclusivity and critical pedagogy.

3. For Policymakers and Curriculum Developers:
   a. Establish Clear Guidelines for Cultural Content:

   Develop comprehensive guidelines and frameworks that mandate a balanced, respectful, and diverse representation of cultures in EFL textbooks, emphasizing both global and local contexts.

   b. Support Local Content Creation:

   Invest in the development of locally authored and culturally relevant EFL materials that reflect the unique socio-cultural landscape of Thailand.

   c. Foster Teacher Training in Cultural Pedagogy:

   Implement teacher training programs that equip educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to critically analyze cultural content, integrate diverse perspectives, and foster ICC in the classroom.

4. For Future Researchers:
   a. Empirical Studies on Perception:

   Conduct studies that explore how Thai students and teachers actually perceive and interpret the cultural and power representations within EFL textbooks, including classroom observations and interviews.

b. Comparative Textbook Analysis:

Expand the research to include a comparative analysis of multiple EFL textbooks used in Thailand or other non-native English-speaking contexts to identify broader trends and differences in cultural representation.

c. Impact on Student Outcomes:

Investigate the long-term impact of specific cultural representations in textbooks on students' language proficiency, cultural identity formation, and intercultural communicative competence.

d. External Factors:

Explore external factors influencing textbook production, such as publishers' policies, market demands, and political influences, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how content is shaped.

It is hoped that by adopting these recommendations, EFL education in Thailand can evolve into a more inclusive, critically stimulating, and culturally pertinent approach, better equipping students for effective communication in an increasingly interconnected and diverse world.

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