SSOAR

Open Access Repository
www.ssoar.info

Teachers' Perceptions of Cultural Contents in English Language Textbooks Used in Multicultural Classrooms at a Thai Primary School
Saemee, Kulthida; Ra, Jaewon Jane

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

gesis
Leibniz-Institut
für Sozialwissenschaften

Mitglied der
Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

Teachers' Perceptions of Cultural Content in English Language Textbooks Used in Multicultural Classrooms at a Thai Primary School

Kulthida Saemee[a] & Jaewon Jane Ra[a]

[a] Mahidol University, Thailand

Textbooks have always played a significant role in the field of English language teaching (ELT). They are the main source that conveys cultural values and information in the language classroom. However, compared to the increasing number of migrants in Thailand, and particularly migrant children in Thai public schools, ELT textbooks have yet to properly take into consideration the reality of the multicultural Thai context. English is currently the most widely used lingua franca in the world, which means that it is shaped by a large number of non-native speakers in various multilingual and multicultural settings and local contexts. Thus, it is no longer sensible for ELT to be solely associated with Anglophone cultures. This study is based on observations in classrooms and semi-structured interviews with three Thai teachers of English at a government primary school in Samut Sakhon province in Thailand. Findings demonstrate that there is a strong need for more cultural content related to ASEAN countries in English textbooks, especially in multicultural schools. Furthermore, this study addresses implications for future ELT practices and materials for Thai primary schools in light of the continuously growing diversity within Thai society.

Keywords: English Language Teaching; Intercultural Awareness; Intercultural Communicative Competence; Multiculturalism; Thai English Textbooks

∼

INTRODUCTION

There has been an increasing number of migrants from ASEAN countries coming to Thailand and several issues concerning these migrant children in Thai schools have been raised. One of the main concerns is that there have not been appropriate cultural representations reflecting the reality of the multicultural Thai context in school textbooks. Recent studies have demonstrated that the curricula, textbooks, and other educational materials are generally not relevant to the cultures of migrant children, and in the case of English language textbooks, the majority of the content displays native speaker cultures, disregarding multiculturalism in Thailand and other Asia-Pacific nations (Syahri & Susanti, 2016, Thumvichit, 2018; Yamada, 2010; Yuen, 2011). However, at present, the English language is extensively used as a global lingua franca for

intercultural communication and, in reality, it is rarely associated with native speaker cultures but embraces diverse cultures of speakers from different backgrounds (Canagarajah, 2009, 2011; Jenkins, 2015; Pennycook, 2010).

Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand how local teachers perceive and convey cultural content in English language textbooks, and to what extent this promotes intercultural awareness (ICA) and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in multicultural classrooms. This study is part of a larger project that aims to investigate cultural representations both in written and visual forms in English language textbooks used in a primary school located in Samut Sakhon province where there is a mix of Thai and migrant students from ASEAN countries. This article includes semi-structured interviews of Thai teachers of English as well as classroom observations conducted over one academic semester at a government primary school in Samut Sakhon province. Qualitative content analysis has been employed and findings suggest that ELT textbooks used by public schools in Thailand lack cultural diversity, which ought to be considered a crucial aspect in the language learning classroom, particularly in multicultural contexts. Furthermore, this study addresses implications for future ELT materials and practices in Thai primary schools in light of the continuously growing diversity within Thai society.

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN ELT

Culture is a concept too broad and vague to define in simple terms. In general, the most commonly accepted idea of culture perceives it as something that people have in common and that can be differentiated across different groups. People see culture as a set of beliefs, values, and rules that affect how people behave and are useful to understand different dimensions of human behavior (Scollon et al., 2012). However, such conceptions are problematic and create boundaries between people from different groups and disregard "the negotiated, contested, changeable and situated nature of culture" (Baker, 2015, p. 38). Moreover, Scollon et al. (2012) argue that culture should not be highlighted as a thing that distinguishes people from different groups but should be perceived as a heuristic "tool for thinking" (p. 3) when it comes to intercultural communication.

From Kramsch's (1998, 2009) perspective, culture represents membership in a discourse community and the members of this type of community not only share daily practices, histories, values, and beliefs, but are also aware of how to interact within the community. In line with Kramsch, Holliday (2013) believes that discourse is the unique way of communicating in particular groups. Through specialized discourse, insiders of the community can easily distinguish themselves from outsiders. In addition to the sociocultural aspect of culture, Kramsch (1998) proposes cultural imagination. She claims that this common imagining, which is negotiated by language, is an essential phenomenon that influences the way cultural reality is formed in discourse communities. This cultural reality is what controls one's judgement and behavior.

In this sense, language and culture are intricately fused and, thus, it is difficult to separate the two without either losing its significance. At present, the status of culture has progressed to be more hybrid, fragmented, and globalized, owing to the fluid boundaries between lived cultures and the cultures represented through the

internet (Kramsch, 2015; Sifakis & Sougari, 2003). Thus, solely introducing sociocultural norms of Anglophone countries (for exapmple from the UK or the US) in ELT has become obsolete and irrelevant for global uses of English.

Furthermore, when it comes to language learning, textbooks are considered the main source of culture (Zu & Kong, 2009). In other words, it is through textbooks that students encounter cultural information presented by visuals, dialogue, audio, descriptive texts, vocabulary, and so forth. Thus, textbooks are powerful tools that can deliver certain cultural values and meaning to language learners. Consequently, cultural diversity should be vigorously presented in English textbooks so that cultural understanding can be aligned with linguistic skills. In this fashion, ELT would become more appropriate if it was adapted to the sociocultural context of the respective country.

In the past few decades, cultural awareness (CA) has been considered a crucial skill for second language (L2) users when communicating with people from different linguacultural backgrounds (Byram, 2012). Although the notion of CA has provided its usefulness in relation to cultural aspects of language use and teaching, it is still associated with boundaries and distinctive nations. Hence, CA has become questionable when English is now flexibly and fluidly used as a global lingua franca.

Accordingly, the notion of intercultural awareness (ICA), which further develops from CA and takes a more dynamic intercultural framework, has been proposed as an approach to conceptualizing the cultural dimension for ELT (Baker, 2011, 2012). ICA derives from the idea of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which refers to "the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language" (Byram, 1997, p. 71). Thus, someone who has developed ICC is able to "build relationships while speaking in the foreign language; communicates effectively; mediates interactions between people of different backgrounds and develops their own communicative skills" (Byram, 1997, p. 71).

Baker (2011) takes an ICA perspective and discusses how a cultural dimension that reflects global realities can be incorporated into the ELT classroom. He argues that ELT practitioners need to realize the global status of English and its links to diverse sociocultural contexts and, in order to do this, they need "to approach culture in a non-essentialist and dynamic manner" (Baker, 2011, p. 3). Not only language but also culture should be viewed as "an emergent, negotiated resource in communication" (Baker, 2011, p. 3). Baker (2011) provides further recommendations for implementing ICA in language classrooms, which include "investigating the relationships between culture, language and communication through: exploring local cultures; exploring language learning materials; exploring the media and arts both online and through more traditional mediums; making use of cultural informants; and engaging in intercultural communication both face-to-face and online-based communication" (p. 7). English teachers, especially in non-Anglophone, multicultural classrooms, can consider the above recommendations for a more appropriate ELT in a globalized world.

Cultural Diversity in English Textbooks

Many schools in Thailand have been using English textbooks written by native speakers, and these are considered one of the main sources of cultural representation (Greil, 2004). Thumvichit (2018) investigated cultural representations in Thai

secondary school English coursebooks. The findings reveal that, although Thai secondary teachers understand the importance of including intercultural aspects in ELT, Anglophone cultures are primarily represented in all of the coursebooks. Thai cultures in general are absent in the reading-focused activities and only a few pictures related to Thailand were identified. Ziaei (2012) examined an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) book series used in many language institutions in Iran and found out that the books mostly present American and British cultures, excluding any type of Iranian content. Yuen (2011) examined English textbooks at Hong Kong secondary schools to see whether they reflect the current global status of English; the study showed that cultures of Anglophone countries were saliently shown compared to other cultures. In Japan, Yamada (2010) discovered that English textbooks used at a junior high school contain cultural diversity but mainly in the context of Japanese habitants living in Anglophone countries.

Syahri and Susanti's study (2016) shows a different result. They explored nine English textbooks used at a high school in Indonesia and found that five books showed at least some examples of local cultures, while the rest still focused on target cultures (i.e., British, American, etc.). Likewise, Nomnian (2013) investigated the extent to which Thai cultural contents are included in English textbooks published in the UK and used at a Thai secondary school. Results showed that Thai cultures are somewhat represented in the textbooks written by a native English speaker. Consequently, Nomnian (2013) refers to *Thailand's English Language Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008* and emphasizes the importance of equivalently including Thai, regional, and international cultures in English textbooks so that learners would be prepared to use the global language more relevantly to their context. More studies such as these are needed to understand to what extent English textbooks used in Thai or ASEAN schools demonstrate the diversity of cultures relevant to Thai learners in order to improve their intercultural communication skills (Laopongharn & Sercombe, 2009; Nomnian, 2013).

Thai Teachers' Perceptions of Cultural Contents in the Classroom and English Textbooks

If ELT ought to reflect cultural diversity, teachers certainly play an important role in developing learners' intercultural skills. Messekher (2014) states that, regardless of what cultural dimensions are represented in textbooks, their effectiveness relies upon how they are taught. Likewise, Mahmud (2019) points out that language teachers should integrate local cultures into English language classrooms. The incorporation of local and ASEAN regional cultures in multicultural classrooms is thus a vital aspect that is increasingly taken into consideration.

Fungchomchoei and Kardkarnklai (2016) looked at Thai secondary school teachers' perception of intercultural competence and to what extent they included this in their ELT practices. Their study reveals that, although teachers acknowledge the importance of developing intercultural skills in the classroom, they do not have enough experience in culturally diverse environments to teach this themselves. Furthermore, the term ICC appears to be relatively unknown to most teachers, making it difficult to implement appropriate methods for teaching intercultural competencies in the classroom. Cheewasukthaworn and Suwanarak (2017) explored how Thai EFL

teachers at a private university perceive ICC, and how this is integrated into their teaching practices. In this study, the teachers seem to have a good understanding of ICC on a surface level; however, they are not fully aware of how to implement an intercultural approach to language teaching. Furthermore, teachers believe that ICC only indirectly helps students with their English communication skills. Jantadej and Charubusp (2018) interrogated Thai secondary school teachers on their perceptions and implementation of intercultural teaching in English language classrooms. According to the results, the EFL teachers place importance on providing intercultural competence training but lack the means to assess students' attitudes and behavior towards developing their skills in this area. According to the above-mentioned studies, it appears that Thai ELT teachers in general stress the importance of understanding different cultures and ICC in the ELT classroom, but they are unaware of how to effectively implement this in concrete classroom practices.

In conclusion, culture and language are interrelated and, thus, in the era of globalization, ELT classrooms (including practices, textbooks, and materials) need to provide different cultural perspectives so that learners can understand the use of English in intercultural contexts. It is firstly important that ELT teachers are able to critically evaluate textbooks and materials that are used in the classroom and make judgements on the level of relevancy to both local and global issues, so that they can adapt their classes. Therefore, this article aims to provide an understanding of how Thai teachers at a multicultural primary school perceive and convey cultural contents presented in their school's English textbooks.

METHOD

Research Setting and Participants

The research setting of this study is a government primary school located in Samut Sakhon province in Thailand. The province has the second largest number of migrant workers in Thailand, coming from mainly three countries – Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos – with the total number of 257,559 migrant workers in 2019 (Ministry of Labor, 2019, p. 13). Thus, the research setting of this study had migrant students in every grade (Grade 1 to Grade 6). There is a total of 45 migrant students in this school and the majority of them are from Myanmar (22 students), followed by Laos (9 students), Cambodia (8 students), and other ethnic groups (6 students). Three teachers (two female, one male) have been teaching English at this school and all of them agreed to take part in the research. All of the teachers were Thai and from the local area of Samut Sakhon province. Below is a table that portrays each participant in more detail (pseudonyms have been used).

Interviews

Before having separate interviews with the three participants, non-participant observations were conducted by one of researchers in the language learning classrooms. The researcher observed six different classrooms from grade 1 to grade 6. At the time of the fieldwork, Helen taught grades 1 and 3; Jack taught grade 2; and Rose taught

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education Degree(s)	Teaching Experiences	International Travel Experiences
Helen	28	Female	BEd English	She has been teaching for two months at the school. She teaches Grade 1 and 3 students. She taught English at a secondary school for four years.	She has been to Laos when she was a pre-service teacher. It was a short field trip to study and exchange cultures with Laos universities.
Jack	25	Male	BEd English	He has been at the school for three months. He teaches Grade 2 students. He taught English at a different primary school for a year.	He has been to Laos when he was an undergraduate student. He traveled there with his Thai friends.
Rose	28	Female	BEd English	She has been teaching English at the school for five years. She teaches Grade 4-6 students.	She has been to Laos, Malaysia, and Japan. She traveled to Laos when she was a pre-service teacher.

Table 1. Participant information. (author's compilation).

grades 4, 5 and 6. Each observation lasted 50 minutes and focused on factors such as the lesson topic, teaching methods, use of textbooks, types of classroom activities and exercises, teacher-student interactions and student interactions.

Data collections involved semi-structured interviews and observations of teaching and learning in classrooms. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate teachers' perceptions towards representations of culture in English textbooks used in this research context. Harrell and Bradley (2009) indicate that "semi-structured interviews are often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided" (p. 27). The interview is the most widely used method in qualitative research (Dörnyei, 2007). Interviews are used to elicit the participants' attitudes, perceptions, feelings, motivations, and behavioral connotations, which are difficult to discover solely through observations (Brewer, 2000; Richards, 2003). Flexible interviews can be more appropriate for qualitative inquiries because they provide more in-depth information about the participant and more elaboration on their stories (Dörnyei, 2007; Silverman, 2011).

In addition, non-participant observations were conducted by one of the researchers in the language learning classrooms. The researcher observed six different classrooms from grade 1 to grade 6. At the time of the fieldwork, Helen taught grades 1 and 3; Jack taught grade 2; and Rose taught grades 4, 5 and 6. Each observation lasted

50 minutes and focused on factors such as the lesson topic, teaching methods, use of textbooks, types of classroom activities and exercises, teacher-student interactions, and student interactions.

This article demonstrates how Thai teachers perceive, teach, and convey cultural diversity represented in the school's English textbooks at a multicultural primary school in Thailand. By conducting interviews and observations, the researchers were able to explore how participants interpret a situation or an issue in a way that cannot be achieved solely through observation (Merriam, 2009). In this study, a digital voice recorder was used during interviews and the language used was a mix of Thai and English. The Thai transcript was translated by one of the researchers. The process of constructing interview questions was as follows:

1. The researchers reviewed the role of textbooks in ELT, the role of culture in English textbooks, and adapted a conceptual framework for textbook analysis;
2. The researchers reviewed and analyzed the school's English textbooks (used for each grade) with the focus on cultural implications (another part of the larger study);
3. The researchers outlined interview questions based on 1) and 2);
4. The interview questions were presented at and approved by the Ethical Review Board, Institute for Population and Social Research at Mahidol University.

1. Were you able to select your own English textbook(s)? If yes, please explain the criteria used to select the textbook(s).
2. How did/do you plan to use the textbooks for each lesson?
3. Do you always rely on the textbooks? Why? Why not?
4. Do you have difficulties using the textbooks? If yes, please explain.
5. What do you think about the cultures represented in the textbooks?
6. How do you present cultural contents in the textbooks?
7. Do you have difficulties understanding cultural contents or images presented in the textbooks? If yes, please give an example.
8. What cultural aspects presented in the textbooks are related to the cultural context of your students?
9. Do you have any suggestions to improve and develop the textbooks? If yes, please specify.

Table 2. Guided interview questions. (author's compilation).

The English textbooks used at this school (see Table 3) were a six-level series of American English language coursebooks for primary school students called *Super Magic American English*, written by Mariagrazia Bertarini, Martha Huber, and Paolo Lotti and published in 2015 by Aimphan Publisher, Thailand.

Analytical Framework

This study employed qualitative content analysis based on an adapted analytical framework. The framework used two concepts as follows: 1) Five categories of

culture: *products*, *perspectives*, *practices*, *persons*, and *places* (Yuen, 2011); 2) Sources of cultural contents adapted from Cortazzi & Jin's (1999) model. The adapted model used in this study contains six layers of sources of cultural contents: 1) *source cultures* (C1), 2) *ASEAN regional cultures* (C2), 3) *Asian regional cultures* (C3), 4) *target cultures* (C4), 5) *international cultures* (C5), and 6) *global cultures* (C6) (see Figure 1).
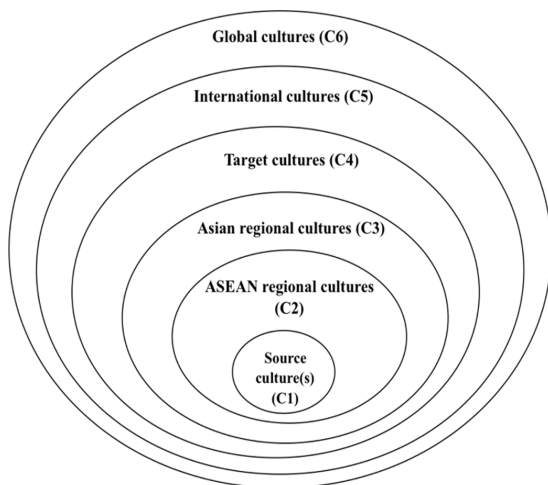

Figure 1. Sources of cultural contents used in this study. (figure by the author).

FINDINGS

Based on interview data, the findings are divided into two themes: 1) the reliability of selected English textbooks, and 2) teachers' perceptions towards cultural contents presented in the English textbooks.

The Reliability of Selected English Textbooks

Helen and Jack were newly transferred teachers when the fieldwork started and, thus, Rose was the only teacher who was present for taking part in textbook selection. She explains the process of textbook selection at the school (Extract 1). Jack still gives some of his own criteria when selecting textbooks in case he has to make a decision later on (Extract 2). It appears that Jack trusts the criteria listed by the government for textbook selection. All participants state that they mostly rely on the topics presented in the textbooks (Extract 3, 4, 5) to create their lesson plans for each class. All participants explain that they have to add more exercises and activities in their lessons. It seems that Rose tries to prepare cultural contents related to the students' contexts separate from the textbooks (Extract 5). This might be due to the fact that the textbooks in general lack cultural contents from ASEAN contexts (see Saemee & Nomnian 2021a, 2021b). Helen mentions that she has to create new exercises and activities by herself based on her own knowledge (Extract 6). On the other hand, Jack and Rose also include exercises and activities from other sources, such as online websites (Extract 7 & 8).

Extract 1

INTERVIEWER: Were you able to select textbooks for your teaching? If so, please explain the criteria used to select them.

ROSE: *Yes. I remember that school officers gave us three sets of textbooks with a list of prices and publishers who had already contacted them. The publishers provided textbook previews. At that time, I was the only English language teacher in this school. So, I had to make a decision. I chose these selected textbooks because they are colorful. They also provide lots of actual things expressed through illustrations. I didn't select the other textbooks because they were not colorful and they contained lots of texts. I think that they would not have been able to draw students' attention. Also, I think that the price was an essential factor when selecting the textbooks.*

Extract 2

INTERVIEWER: What are your criteria for selecting English language textbooks?

JACK: *If I can choose a textbook, I would adopt the standard criteria laid out by the Ministry of Education.*

Extract 3

INTERVIEWER: Do you always rely on the textbooks? Why or why not?

HELEN: *Yes. The lesson plans are based on the topics that are presented in the textbooks. I think that contents are not too difficult for our students in this context.*

Extract 4

INTERVIEWER: Do you always rely on textbooks? Why or why not?

JACK: *I mainly use textbooks. Sometimes, I add more exercises and activities. I think that the textbooks are quite reliable because they have already been assessed.*

Extract 5

INTERVIEWER: Do you always rely on textbooks? Why or why not?

ROSE: *I use textbooks as a primary source. However, I also try to add some new exercises which relate to upcoming events and festivals, such as Loi Kratong; things that you could observe in the classroom.*

Extract 6

HELEN: *I tried to add some activities in my classrooms because the Grade 1-3 textbooks mostly present just vocabulary. So, I have to create extra exercises and activities.*

Extract 7

JACK: *I think that each unit provides only a few contents. So, I usually have to find out some more information on the internet.*

Extract 8

ROSE: *I try to provide more exercises for my students. Apart from using the textbooks, I often download worksheets from the ISL Collective website and give them to my students.*

Teachers' Perceptions Towards Cultural Content Presented in the English Textbooks

Based on the adopted analytical framework (assuming five categories of culture, i.e. products, practices, perspectives, persons, places), the participants predominantly addressed cultural contents related to products and practices (Extract 9, 10, 11). The participants address that the cultural contents in their textbooks are inadequate (Extract 10 & 11). Consequently, they try to provide some more cultural contents in their classrooms.

The participants indicate that the cultural sources represented in the textbooks mostly involve target cultures (i.e., cultures of native speakers of English), such as Halloween and Christmas traditions (Extract 9). The rest of cultural sources – source cultures, ASEAN regional cultures, Asian regional cultures, international cultures, and global cultures – are rarely mentioned in the textbooks (see Saemee & Nomnian, 2021a, 2021b). However, they suggest that the textbooks should contain various cultural aspects from different sources (Extract 12). Thus, every participant considers that cultural diversity is an important element that should be included more in English textbooks. Rose also talks about migrant students' cultures and ASEAN regional cultures (Extract 13). Although Jack does not mention migrant students' cultures, he discusses that Thai culture should be included in English textbooks (Extract 14).

> **Extract 9**
> HELEN: *Mostly, they provide cultural contents in terms of festivals, such as Christmas and Halloween, which in the Thai context people may not pay much attention to. I think that those festivals are international traditions that students should know. Also, food and drinks, and school life of students who have different backgrounds should be represented.*

> **Extract 10**
> JACK: *There is not much cultural content. Sometimes, I try to adapt other sources. I think that the cultural topics represented in the textbooks involve general topics, such as greetings.*

> **Extract 11**
> ROSE: *The textbooks do not provide many cultural contents. I think the textbooks provide different cartoon characters, including Molly, Jenny, Eddy, and Nick. They have different skin and hair colors. I think that Eddy represents African American students. I told my students that we can be friends although we are of different races.*

> **Extract 12**
> HELEN: *I think cultural diversity should be added in the textbooks. They should represent different cultural contexts because English language is regarded as an international language that people use throughout the world.*

> **Extract 13**
> ROSE: *I think we should provide ASEAN regional cultures in our classrooms so that the migrant students will be glad that their friends will get to know their cultures. It's beneficial for every student. They can learn about other cultural identities and their own cultural identity as well.*

Extract 14
JACK: *I think that Thai cultures should be included in the textbooks, such as the famous traditions in Thailand – Loi Krathong and Song- Kran festivals.*

Jack says that he is not familiar with some of the target cultures presented in the textbooks (Extract 15). He gives an example of when he had to do research about a certain cultural topic in the textbook in advance so that he can explain it better during his class. Helen mentions that the teachers sometimes have to skip some exercises and activities in the textbooks because they have to be done using audio CDs, which are not provided (Extract 16). Thus, the teachers have to organize exercises and activities by themselves instead. During this part of the interview, a contradiction has been noticed by Helen. Helen describes that it would be better if students could practice their pronunciation by listening to native speakers' accents (Extract 16), although she is aware of the global status of English and believes that it is important to include cultural diversity in the textbooks (Extract 12).

Extract 15
JACK: *Sometimes, I find some cultural traditions I am not familiar with, such as Easter. I have to find more information and try to understand the background of that culture beforehand.*

Extract 16
HELEN: *Normally, we have a TV and CD player that we can use in our classrooms, but we do not have audio CDs. There are lots of exercises and activities from the textbooks that require using audio CDs. We don't have them, so we have to skip it. Normally, students have to practice pronunciation with a Thai accent. I think that it would be better if we had audio CDs. Students will have a chance to learn directly from the original accent.*

The findings reveal that textbooks are significant factors in ELT because teachers rely on them as a primary source. In summary, every participant points out that the cultural elements represented in the textbooks are inadequate and believes that the textbooks should include more cultural diversity. They suggest that textbooks should provide more cultural content and various cultural sources, such as Thai and ASEAN regional cultures. According to Rose, the migrant student's cultures – Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodian cultures – are not presented sufficiently in the textbooks, which should be the opposite case.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Three Thai ELT teachers mainly discussed cultural content referring to products (e.g., food and drinks) and practices (e.g., greetings and traditions) when asked about the usefulness of the school's English textbooks. The other categories of culture — perspectives, persons and places – were rarely addressed. Based on the sources of cultural content, the participants pointed out that target cultures are extensively represented in the textbooks. The other sources – source cultures, ASEAN regional cultures, Asian regional cultures, international cultures, and global cultures – were rarely brought up during the interviews. Furthermore, every participant suggests

that Thai cultures should be integrated more into the English textbooks. One participant (Rose) also emphasized the importance of including migrant students' cultures and ASEAN regional cultures in English textbooks, as they are used in multicultural classrooms. Although the two other participants did not mention migrant students' cultures and ASEAN regional cultures, they believe that the textbooks should contain a variety of cultural content. Hence, it appears that every participant considers cultural diversity an important element that should be incorporated into English textbooks, which would be a good start for teachers to develop their ICA while also raising awareness in the ELT classroom.

However, when it comes to critically evaluating textbooks, the participants do not seem to have cultural diversity as a main factor in mind for selection. In other words, while they discuss the importance of including diverse cultures in English textbooks, they do not have ideas of ICC and ICA embedded in their criteria for textbook selection (Cheewasuktahworn & Suwanarak, 2017; Fungchomchoei & Kardkarnklai, 2016; Jantadej & Charuhusp, 2018). Jack appears to have full confidence in the government's criteria for his decision-making process, regardless of whether or not they contain a category related to cultural content, while Rose has taken part in textbook selection mainly based on how appealing (based on colors and intensity of texts) they would be for young learners. Furthermore, Helen believes that it is more advantageous for students to be exposed to native speaker accents for practicing pronunciation skills.

English is currently the most widely used lingua franca in the world, which means that it is shaped by a large number of non-native speakers in various multilingual and multicultural settings and local contexts (Canagarajah, 2009; 2011; Jenkins, 2015; Pennycook, 2010). Thus, it is no longer sensible for ELT to be solely associated with American and British cultures. However, many English textbooks used in both private and public educational sectors in ASEAN nations still predominately represent such Anglophone cultures (e.g., Syahri & Susanti, 2016, Thumvichit, 2018; Yamada, 2010; Yuen, 2011), and the English textbooks used at the school of this study were also American English coursebooks published in the US (cf. Greil, 2004).

This study demonstrates how ELT teachers have the right to take part in modernizing teaching practices and are aware of how to adapt their lessons to make them more relevant. Their role is vital in creating a culturally aware classroom environment, for enhancing students' intercultural skills needed in the era of globalization (Nomnian, 2013). Although, in many cases, textbooks are used as a primary source for ELT, teachers can approach them in a critical manner. Teachers (and even students) should have the opportunity to evaluate and compare cultural content presented in textbooks with their own context (Baker, 2011). Moreover, more studies investigating cultures in English textbooks and teachers' perceptions in ASEAN contexts can gradually help stakeholders of ELT understand the real role of English in a globalized world. Modernizing and internationalizing ELT in the ASEAN region has been long overdue and it is crucial that more and more integration of local and regional cultures are taken into consideration, particularly in multicultural ELT classrooms.

While this study focused on teachers and their views of ELT textbooks in relation to their local context, the sampling of the study was rather small and it did not take into account the development of students' ICA or their ideas pertaining to their language learning materials. Thus, it would be worthwhile to continue this research

with students' perceptions of ELT textbooks and possibly compare different schools and areas around the country.

∼

REFERENCES

Baker, W. (2011). From cultural awareness to intercultural awareness: Culture in ELT. *ELT Journal,* 62–70.

Baker, W. (2012). From cultural awareness to intercultural awareness: Culture in ELT. *ELT journal, 66*(1), 62-70.

Baker, W. (2015). Culture and complexity through English as a lingua franca: Rethinking competences and pedagogy in ELT. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca, 4*(1), 9-30.

Brewer, J. D. (2000). *Ethnography*. Open University Press.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2012). Language awareness and (critical) cultural awareness–relationships, comparisons and contrasts. *Language awareness, 21*(1-2), 5-13.

Canagarajah, S. (2009). The plurilingual tradition and the English language in South Asia. *AILA Review*, *22*(1), 5-22.

Canagarajah, S. (2011). Codemeshing in academic writing: Identifying teachable strategies of translanguaging. *The Modern Language Journal*, *95*(3), 401-417.

Cheewasukthaworn, K., & Suwanarak, H. (2017). Exploring Thai EFL teachers' perceptions of how intercultural communicative competence is important for their students. *PASAA, 54*, 177-204.

Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. X. (1999). Cultural mirrors: Materials and methods in the EFL classroom. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Culture in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 196-219). Cambridge University Press.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford University Press.

Fungchomchoei, S., & Kardkarnklai, U. M. (2016). Exploring the intercultural competence of Thai secondary education teachers and its implications in English language teaching. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *236*, 240-247.

Greil, T. (2004). Cultural representations and references in English textbooks used at secondary school in Thailand: A quantitative analysis. *PASAA*, *35*, 35-50.

Harrell, M. C., & Bradley, M. A. (2009). *Data collection methods: Semi-structured interview and focus groups*. RAND National Defense Research.

Holliday, A. (2010). *Intercultural communication and ideology*. Sage.

Holliday, A. (2013). *Understanding intercultural communication: Negotiating a grammar of culture*. Routledge.

Jantadej, K., & Charubusp, S. (2018). A case study of Thai secondary school teachers' English intercultural teaching and perception. *International Journal of Progressive Education, 14*(5), 39-56.

Jenkins, J. (2015). Repositioning English and multilingualism in English as a Lingua Franca. *Englishes in Practice*, *2*(3), 49-85.

Kachru, B. B. (1985). Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the Outer Circle. In R. Quirk & H. Widdowson (Eds.), *English in the world, teaching and learning the language and literatures* (pp. 11-30). Cambridge University Press.

Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and culture*. Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (2009). *The multilingual subject*. Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (2015). Language and culture. *AILA Review, 27*, 30-55.

Laopongharn, W., & Sercombe, P. (2009). What relevance does intercultural communication have to language education in Thailand. *Annual Reviews of Education Communication and Language Sciences*, *6*, 59-83.

Mahmud, Y. S. (2019). The representation of local culture in Indonesian EFL textbooks: Rationales and implications. *Indonesian EFL Journal*, *5*(2), 61-72.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Messekher, H. (2014). Cultural representations in Algerian English textbooks. In S. Garton & K. Graves (Eds.), *International perspectives on materials in EFL* (pp. 69-86). Palgrave Macmillan.

Ministry of Labor. (2019). *Statistics of migrant workers in Thailand.* https://www.doe.go.th/prd/assets/upload/files/alien_th/52dab4165bbb5c8b3f92ad6c1fc3321d.pdf

Nomnian, S. (2013). Thai cultural aspects in English language textbooks in a Thai secondary school. *Veridian E-Journal, 6*(7), 13-30.

Pennycook, A. (2010). *Language as a local practice*. Routledge.

Richards, K. (2003). *Qualitative inquiry in TESOL*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Saemee, K., & Nomnian, S. (2021a). Cultural representations in ELT textbooks used in a multicultural school. *rEFLections, 2*(1), 107-120.

Saemee, K., & Nomnian, S. (2021b). Diversity of cultural sources in ELT activity books: A case study of a multicultural primary school in Thailand. *PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand*, *61*, 61-86.

Scollon, R., Scollon, S. W., & Jones, R. H. (2012). *Intercultural communication: A discourse approach* (3rd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Sifakis, N. C., & Sougari, A. M. (2003). Facing the globalisation challenge in the realm of English language teaching. *Language and education, 17*(1), 59-71.

Silverman, D. (2011). *Interpreting qualitative data: A guide to the principles of qualitative research*. Sage.

Syahri, I., & Susanti, R. (2016). An analysis of local and target culture integration in the English textbooks for senior high school in Palembang. *Journal of Education and Human Development, 5*(2), 97-102.

Thumvichit, A. (2018). Cultural presentation in Thai secondary school ELT coursebooks: An analysis from intercultural perspectives. *Journal of Education and Training Studies, 6*(11), 99-112.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2019). *SDG 4 Data Book: Global Education Indicators*. Quebec: UNESCO.

Yamada, M. (2010). English as a multicultural language: Implications from a study of Japan's junior high schools' English language textbooks. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *31*(5), 491-506.

Yuen, K.-M. (2011). The representation of foreign cultures in English textbooks. *ELT Journal*, *65*(4), 458-466.

Ziaei, S. (2012). Examining cross-cultural clues as to globalization and Iran's culture in an international EFL book series – American English file. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Science*, *3*(1), 141-148.

Zu, L., & Kong, Z. (2009). A study on the approaches to culture introduction in English textbooks. *English Language Teaching, 2*(1), 112-118.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kulthida Saemee holds a master's degree in Language and Intercultural Communication from the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University. Her research interests include multicultural education, English as a lingua franca, and English language teaching (ELT) materials used in current ELT classrooms.

▸ Contact: kulthidasm@outlook.co.th

Jaewon Jane Ra teaches English for Specific Purposes /English for Academic Purposes at business schools in Paris, France. Before this, she was a lecturer in Language Teaching at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand. She holds a PhD degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Southampton, UK, and an master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language/Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the University of Birmingham, UK. Her research interests include global Englishes, English Language Teacher, English Medium Instruction, intercultural communi-

cation, internationalization of higher education, intercultural citizenship, interculturality, and translanguaging.

▸ Contact: jaewon.ra@gmail.com