THE CULTURAL REPRESENTATION IN ENGLISH-10 TEXTBOOK AND VIETNAMESE TENTH-GRADERS' BELIEFS

Tan Hoai Kim
Tra Vinh University

Hoa Thi Hoang Chau
Tra Vinh University

Thuy Thanh Dao
(corresponding author)
Hong Duc University

ABSTRACT

The inclusion of current cultural content in English as a Foreign Language textbooks, is to educate learners in current cultural content and to orient teachers to the focus of the curriculum. However, the recent reforms in the Vietnamese national curriculum have aroused concern about the integration of culture into newly developed textbooks. To address the concern, the current study examines what sources and themes of cultures are presented in the textbook entitled Global Success used for Grade 10 at Vietnamese high schools and students' beliefs toward cultural learning. Data was collected from an analysis of the mentioned textbook and a survey with 60 tenth-grade students at a high school in an underexplored rural area in Vietnam. The analysis of the textbook shows that over half of the cultural content came from cultures other than Vietname culture, followed by British culture. Interestingly, unidentified source culture and Vietnamese culture shared the same percentage, accounting for 10.17% of the total. Among the 17 cultural themes under Big "C" and little "c" culture, the most prevalent theme was the little "c" theme of values and common little "c" themes (e.g food, holidays, hobbies, and body language) were omitted. Data collected from the questionnaire shows that the students preferred learning about their native culture, followed by target and international culture. In terms of cultural themes, the students preferred little "c" culture more than big "C" culture. Concerning source (Vietnamese) culture, students were in favor of customs and history.

Keywords: *Big C culture, little c culture, cultural content, sources of culture, target culture, themes of culture, textbook analysis*

1. INTRODUCTION

Culture and language are acknowledged as intertwinted disciplines as the integration of cultural content into language education can broaden students' views, fosters their respect for other cultures, and assists them in going beyond the local boundaries. For Vietnamese learners, cultural understanding is essential to develop intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which is defined as the capacity to adjust and behave correctly when engaging with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, as well as sensitivity to other cultural standards (Alptekin, 2005). Foreign language learners should study their source culture to build cultural awareness, gain knowledge through textbooks, and describe their background in English. Local textbooks are expected to reflect source culture, yet findings are inconsistent. For example, Song (2019) analyzed "*New Concept English"* and found that 68% of its content comprised general cultural information, while target culture accounted for 46% and source culture only 2%. Similarly, Ulum and Erdoğan (2016) reported that in Turkey, (English as a Second Language) ESL cultures (66.2%) had twice the influence of native English-speaking cultures (33.8%), partly due to the involvement of editors from English-speaking countries. In Indonesia, Putra et al. (2020) identified a comparable trend: English textbooks prioritized learner culture and target culture, with limited representation of other cultures. In "*Bahasa Inggris"*, source culture accounted for 46.81%, and target culture for 43.26%; in *"Pathway to English*", source culture made up 33.95%, while target culture covered 31.00%. Some studies showed source culture dominance, while others, like Liu (2012), found it minimal—highlighting a lack of consensus. Although students favored native themes, the textbook offered limited content on these, raising concerns about whether such materials meet learners' cultural and communicative needs. Textbooks are essential in (English Language Teaching) ELT classrooms, offering core language content, learning models, and lesson frameworks. They shape students' beliefs and behaviors, and including cultural information can boost motivation. Widely seen as reliable resources, textbooks play a key role in both language acquisition and cultural understanding.

Crucially, textbooks carry a "hidden curriculum" of cultural values that can be "more powerful than the official curriculum". Therefore, it is essential that textbooks offer an equivalent amount of cultural material and include content that helps students learn about intercultural difficulties and enhances their communicative competence.

Researching students' beliefs toward cultural content in English classes is essential, as these beliefs strongly affect language learning success. Positive beliefs support second language acquisition and are central to ICC. Teachers need to understand these views to design effective curricula. As Byram (1997) notes, curiosity and openness ease intercultural communication and reduce stress.

This gap may limit cultural engagement. The study faced limitations, including analysis of just one textbook and a small sample of 60 students from one school in Trà Vinh. It also focused only on student views, not teachers' perspectives on ICC and culture teaching, revealing a gap for future studies. This study aims to explore the representation of cultural content in Grade 10 English coursebooks and ten-grade students' beliefs towards cultural content and learning in English class. It seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What is the representation of cultural content in Grade 10 English textbooks?
2. What are the tenth-graders's beliefs towards cultural content and learning in English class?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Language learning and culture

Language and culture are inextricably linked, and teaching one inevitably involves the other. As Kang-Young (2009) affirms, they share a crucial relationship in second language acquisition. Sun (2013) highlights that learning a foreign language not only facilitates communication, work, and study, but also fosters understanding of different cultures and traditions. Similarly, Hu (2002) points out that it helps learners broaden their horizons and gain new perspectives beyond their native context. Scholars such as Cortazzi and Jin (1999), Genc and Bada (2005), and Arikan (2011) stress that understanding cultural differences is key to respecting all cultures, making cultural instruction essential in language teaching. Brown (2000) emphasizes the inseparable nature of language and culture, stating that neither can be fully understood without the other. According to Byram (1989, as cited in Saluveer, 2004), "the language holds the culture through the denotations and connotation of its semantics" (p.11). Kramsch (1998) identifies three cultural functions of language: it conveys, embodies, and symbolizes cultural reality. Thanasoulas (2001) argues that linguistic categories shape how speakers perceive the world, citing context-sensitive Vietnamese pronouns and differing grammatical preferences across cultures as examples. He concludes that cultural perspectives are shaped by conceptual patterns embedded in language (pp.8–9).

The inclusion of source culture in ELT textbooks aims to enhance learners' awareness of their own cultural identity. McKay (2000) suggests that teaching English through themes and vocabulary related to students' backgrounds promotes intercultural communication. Target culture has traditionally played a crucial role in ELT by boosting learners' motivation

(McKay, 2002). However, as native speakers often lack access to cultural knowledge beyond their own, they tend to rely on target cultures (Alptekin, 1993). With the shift from ESL/ (English as a Foreign Language) EFL to (English as an International Language) EIL textbooks should represent diverse cultures (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). According to McKay (2000), incorporating international cultures allows non-native speakers to express appropriate interpersonal norms and reflect their own cultural identities.

Still, identifying the cultural basis for EIL, which is understood as a language that is widely spoken but has no historical or political relevance as a first language for international communication in certain countries, remains complex (McKay, 2004). Cortazzi and Jin (1999) outline three sources: source, target, and international cultures. While some argue language cannot be taught without culture (Steward, 1982; Valdes, 1986; Byram, 1998, as cited in McKay, 2004), others see EIL as culturally fluid (McKay, 2002, p.15). Kirkpatrick (2007) challenges the relevance of native-speaker models. Similarly, Pennycook (1988, as cited in Pham, 2001, p.7) views them as unsuitable in non-native contexts. Therefore, McKay (2003, p.140) emphasizes that cultural content in EIL should extend beyond native English-speaking cultures.

Learning the source culture in foreign language education involves various interrelated approaches, particularly through textbooks and classroom activities. While some scholars conclude that local textbooks increasingly reflect international culture, this contrasts with Dat's (2008) assertion that they typically highlight source culture. Dat (2008) emphasized that the value of local textbooks lies in their cultural relevance to learners. However, when source culture is underrepresented, as in this study, the textbook loses its local effectiveness. In rural areas where traditional values remain strong, students may find international cultural content irrelevant or even conflicting with local norms, which could lead to negative psychological distance (Gass & Selinker, 2008) and reduce learner motivation. Brown (2000) and Cunningsworth (1995) argue that integrating more source culture not only fosters engagement but also aligns with students' educational context. Hermawan and Noerkhasanah (2012) found that English textbooks mainly promote target culture, while source culture appears in characters and rituals. Similarly, Silvia (2014) noted that visuals dominate cultural representations. For advanced learners, interactive tasks like debates support cultural competence (Aguilar, 2007), enhancing intercultural sensitivity and adaptability (Alptekin, 2005).

2.2 Cultural Content and Textbooks

Various factors influence students' success in learning languages and cultures, particularly textbooks and learners' beliefs. Cunningsworth (1995) emphasizes the essential role of

textbooks in ELT classrooms, as they provide linguistic content, models, and guidance for lesson planning. Similarly, Tomlinson (1998) notes that textbooks serve as the foundation for both language input and classroom practice. Since language and culture are interrelated, EFL textbooks inevitably contain sets of cultural values, often referred to as the “hidden curriculum” (Cunningsworth, 1995). This hidden curriculum, frequently more powerful than the official one, can significantly shape students’ cultural awareness, perspectives, and knowledge over time.

In addition to materials, learners’ beliefs are crucial in language and culture learning (Paige et al., 1999). Numerous studies (Dörnyei, 1994; Ellis, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972) underline the importance of positive beliefs in second language acquisition. ESL/EFL learners must maintain favorable beliefs to succeed, while teachers should be attentive to how students perceive cultural content (Chlopek, 2008).

Given the substantial influence of instructional resources on learners’ linguistic and intercultural development, this research aimed to explore how cultural content is represented in English textbooks for EFL learners and to examine students’ beliefs toward learning culture through English.

The sources briefly mention that the "Global Success" textbook for Grade 10 incorporates plentiful photographic content. Additionally, one previous study found that English textbooks mostly use visual illustrations to depict cultures, with people and things from those cultures being the main sources of representation. However, the sources do not provide detailed criteria on ideal presentation aspects like size of images, color usage, or specific symbols to make content easy to understand or eye-catching.

Presenting cultural content in textbooks in a substandard or inappropriate manner can have several detrimental effects. Low representation of local culture makes materials less relevant, creating negative psychological distance when content clashes with students' values. This can cause a drop in motivation if learners feel the material is unnecessary. Moreover, a mismatch between students’ cultural interests and textbook content—such as limited source culture or missing favorite topics—shows that cultural content may fail to inspire learners. As a result, students may lack the drive to explore other cultures and develop weak intercultural communication skills, limiting their engagement in cross-cultural interactions.

Based on the research methodology in the sources, a framework for evaluating cultural content in textbooks typically focuses on two main perspectives: sources of culture and themes of culture.

Based on the methodologies in previous studies, a common framework for evaluating cultural content in ELT textbooks focuses on two key aspects: sources of culture and themes of

culture. The sources include four categories: *source culture* (learners' own culture, e.g., Vietnamese), covering customs, norms, and beliefs; *target culture* (countries where English is the native language, e.g., the US, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand); *international culture* (from both English and non-English-speaking countries, e.g., China, Japan, Brazil); and *unidentified sources* (when origins are unclear). Regarding themes of culture, two types are often distinguished: *Big "C"* culture includes formal domains like art, history, politics, geography, literature, and education, grouped into 12 themes: politics, economy, history, geography, literature/art, social norms, education, architecture, sports, music, movies, and science. In contrast, *Little "c"* culture reflects everyday life aspects such as beliefs, food, customs, hobbies, values, and gestures, represented across 7 themes: food, holidays, lifestyles, customs, values, hobbies, and body language.

2.3 Vietnamese/ Asian Students' Beliefs About Cultural Content

Beliefs are often used interchangeably with "beliefs", defined as how one feels, thinks, and behaves toward something. Beliefs involve affective, behavioral, and cognitive components, reflecting sentiments, convictions, and tendencies toward people, ideas, or groups. Researching students' beliefs or beliefs about cultural content is vital for several reasons. First, it has impacts on learners' achievement. Positive beliefs support language learning success. First, it has implications for lesson planning. Teachers need to understand learners' views to design effective ELT materials. It influences ICC. Learners' beliefs shape their openness and reduce stress in cross-cultural encounters. However, research has shown findings; therefore, it is timely to conduct this study.

2.4 Previous Research Asian Students' Beliefs

Previous studies on Asian learners' beliefs about cultural content in ELT have produced mixed results. Jiang (2010) reported low interest among Chinese students in learning about British (32%), American (17.5%), and even Chinese culture (1%) in English classes, with similarly low interest in global cultures (e.g., France, Japan, India). Xiao (2010) found that English majors wanted to learn both source and target cultures, but viewed international culture as less relevant. These students also preferred *Big "C"* topics (e.g., history, literature, politics) over *Little "c"* aspects. Similarly, Liu (2012) showed that non-English majors favored their own culture above target and international ones, showing moderate interest in *Big "C"* themes such as history and geography. In contrast, Vietnamese students in the present study preferred source culture most, followed by target and international culture—echoing Xiao (2010), Liu (2012), and the intercultural approach, but differing from Alshenqeeti (2019), who found source culture least favored. Regarding cultural themes, Vietnamese learners showed a stronger preference for *Little "c"* culture (e.g., food, holidays,

customs, gestures) over *Big "C"*, with history being the most liked *Big "C"* theme. This contrasts with previous Chinese studies, where *Big "C"* was dominant. A notable finding is the mismatch between students' strong interest in source and *Little "c"* culture and the limited representation of such content in textbooks (only 10.17%). This suggests that current materials may not sufficiently engage students or reflect their cultural learning needs.

3.METHOD

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive analytical research methodology. Its primary objective was to discern and quantify the cultural content embedded in the English 10 textbook and to evaluate students' beliefs toward this cultural content and their learning process.

3.2 Participants and Context

The study's participants were 60 tenth-grade students. They were studying with the English 10 course book during the beginning of the 2023–2024 school year. No further specific information regarding their exact age range, gender distribution, or academic "ngành" (major/field) beyond "high school students" is provided in the sources.

The study was conducted at a high school in Tra Vinh Province, a rural area in Southern Vietnam. While not explicitly stated, the context suggests students may interact with tourists and need to describe their local culture. The main textbook used is "Global Success," approved by Decision No. 442/QD-BGDDT.

3.3 Material

The studied material is Global Success English 10 textbook, jointly published by Vietnam Education Publishing House and Pearson, and officially adopted for English instruction from the 2022–2023 academic year. Aligned with the 2018 General Education Curriculum issued by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET).This textbook was chosen because it is a prominent and comprehensive resource for tenth-grade students, validated by an official decision. It extends beyond traditional language skill development by incorporating literature appreciation and cultural insights for holistic English language education throughout its unit lessons. It is recognized for its engaging content, structured activities, thematic exploration of global perspectives, and plentiful photographic content. The textbook includes ten units and three review sections, as shown in Table 1. Each unit is organized into eight sections: Getting Started, Language, Reading, Speaking, Listening, Writing, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and Looking Back, as presented in Table 2. Each unit is designed for 8 periods of 45 minutes.

Table 1. The organization of topics in the textbook English 10

Unit 1: Family Life
Unit 2: Human and the Environment
Unit 3: Music
Review 1
Unit 4: For a Better Community
Unit 5: Inventions
Review 2
Unit 6: Gender Equality
Unit 7: Vietnam and International Organizations
Unit 8: New Ways to Learn
Review 3
Unit 9: Protecting the Environment
Unit 10: Ecotourism

Table 2. Numbers of sections of analysis on cultural content

Sections / Units/ Reviews	**Getting Started**	**Language**	**Reading**	**Listening**	**Speaking**	**Writing**	**CLIL**	**Looking Back**
Unit 1	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Unit 2	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Unit 3	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Review 1	×	×	✓	✓	×	×	×	×
Unit 4	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Unit 5	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Review 2	×	×	✓	✓	×	×	×	×
Unit 6	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Unit 7	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Unit 8	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Review	×	×	✓	✓	×	×	×	×

3								
Unit 9	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
Unit 10	✓	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
✓: Culture-related content is presented in the section. ×: Culture-related content is not presented in the section.								

3.4 Textbook content analysis

3.4.1. Content analysis

Content analysis, as outlined in Table 2, serves as a key instrument for identifying cultural content. This method involves systematic and objective counting to provide a quantitative description of the text (El Shawa, 2011). For this study, a checklist was employed as the main tool to collect, describe, and analyze textbook content.The analysis focused on two main aspects. First, following Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) framework, cultural references were categorized into target culture, international culture, source culture, and an additional category of unidentified cultural sources. Second, based on Chen (2004) and Lee (2009), nineteen cultural themes were identified: 12 representing Big "C" culture (e.g., politics, economy, history, geography, literature/art, social norms, education, architecture, sports, music, movies, and science) and 7 representing little "c" culture (e.g., food, holidays, lifestyles, customs, values, hobbies, and gestures/body language). Out of 104 total sections in the textbook, 56 sections containing cultural content were selected for analysis. These included "Getting Started, Reading, Listening, Writing, and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)" sections. Each selected section was classified by cultural source and then subcategorized by cultural theme. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (6th Edition) was consulted to determine the definitions of cultural themes for classification. Although quantitative content analysis was applied, the study also involved subjective interpretation and in-depth evaluation. Therefore, it does not aim to produce universally generalizable findings but rather to develop a theoretical understanding. This approach aligns with the nature of qualitative research, supported by quantitative methods.

3.4.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire, adapted from Liu (2012), aimed to explore high school students' beliefs toward cultural content in English classes. It asked participants to rank 19 cultural themes classified into Big "C" and little "c" categories. In addition, students rated their interest in eight pre-listed countries and could add up to five more, making a total of 13 countries. Rankings ranged from 0 (not interested) to 13 (highly interested), with repetition of 0 permitted. Initially written in English, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts for content validity and then translated into Vietnamese. A pilot study was conducted to ensure students understood the instructions, though the sources do not report any specific findings or modifications based on this stage. The finalized questionnaire was administered to 60 students at the beginning of the 2023–2024 school year during their English class and took no more than 20 minutes to complete. The sources do not clarify whether ethical approval or consent (parental or student) was obtained, nor do they mention any issues encountered during data collection.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Research Question 1: What is the representation of cultural content in Grade 10 English textbooks?

Textbook analysis showed that 56 out of 104 sections in the *Global Success English 10* textbook included cultural content, totaling 59 cultural instances due to overlaps. As presented in Table 3, international culture accounted for the largest share (59.32%), followed by target culture (20.34%) from English-speaking countries. Vietnamese and unidentified cultures each made up 10.17%. These findings suggest that the textbook heavily emphasizes international and target cultures, with less focus on local or unspecified cultural elements. This distribution highlights a preference for global exposure over local representation in the cultural content provided for students.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of cultural content in Global Success English 10 textbook

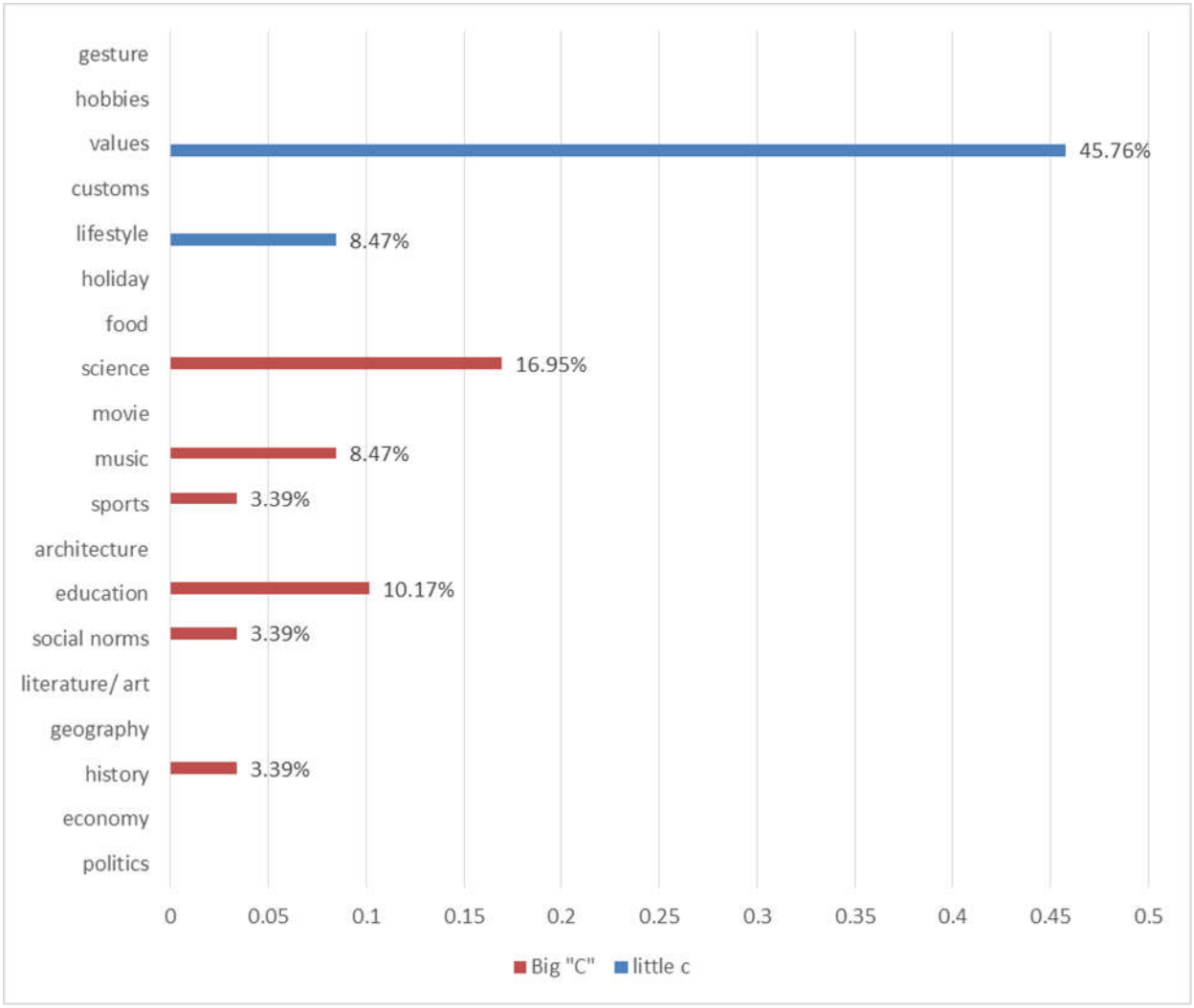
Section	Vietnamese Culture		Target Culture		International Culture		Unidentified Culture	
	Big "C"	little "c"	Big "C"	little "c"	Big "C"	little "c"	Big "C"	little "c"
Unit 1				1		3		1
Unit 2						5		
Unit 3	1		1		2			1

Review 1			1		1			
Unit 4				1		4		
Unit 5			1		4	1		
Review 2					1	1		
Unit 6			2		2			1
Unit 7		1	1			3		
Unit 8			2				3	
Review 3			1		1			
Unit 9					2	3		
Unit 10		4		1	1	1		

	Vietnamese Culture		**Target Culture**		**International Culture**		**Unidentified Culture**		
	Big "C"	**little "c"**	**Big "C"**	**little "c"**	**Big "C"**	**little "c"**	**Big "C"**	**little "c"**	
Total	1	5	9	3	14	21	3	3	
	6		12		35		6		59
Total percentage	**1.69 %**	**8.47%**	**15.25 %**	**5.08%**	**23.73 %**	**35.59 %**	**5.08%**	**5.08%**	
	10.17%		**20.34%**		**59.32%**		**10.17%**		**100 %**

The 59 cultural sections in the *Global Success English 10* textbook were analyzed based on Big "C" and little "c" cultural themes. Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of 19 identified themes. The top five were: "Values" (little "c") at 45.76%, followed by "Science" (Big "C") at 16.95%, "Education" (Big "C") at 10.17%, and both "Music" (Big "C") and "Lifestyle" (little "c") at 8.47%. The least common were "Sports," "Social Norms," and "History" at 3.39% each. Notably, several common cultural themes—such as "Gestures," "Hobbies," "Customs," "Holidays," and "Food" (little "c"), and "Movie," "Architecture," "Art," "Geography," "Economy," and "Politics" (Big "C")—were absent. Overall, "Values" emerged as the dominant theme.

Figure 1. Frequency of cultural themes in Global Success English 10 textbook



Research Question 2: What are the tenth-graders's beliefs towards cultural content and learning in English class?

Questionnaire data revealed students' preferences for learning about various cultures in English classes. Eight countries were listed, with space to add five more. Due to low mentions, added countries like Egypt and India were grouped as "other." Table 4 presents the weighted scores and ranks. Vietnamese culture ranked highest (10.747), showing students' strong interest in their own culture. The U.S. ranked second (9.394), followed by China, France, and Japan. While students showed interest in diverse cultures, the data indicates a clear preference for native culture, followed by target and international cultures.

Table 4: Rank of student's preference for source of culture in English classroom

Countries	Target culture	International culture	Source culture	Weigh scores	Rank
Vietnam			✓	***10.747***	***1***
America	✓			***9.394***	***2***
China		✓		***8.393***	***3***
France		✓		***7.345***	***4***
Japan		✓		***6.804***	***5***
Brazil		✓		6.625	6
Australia	✓			6.025	7
Korean		✓		4.850	8
Others				364	N/A

Questionnaire results revealed students' preferences for 19 cultural themes, classified as Big "C" or little "c" culture. Table 5 shows that learners favored little "c" themes, such as Food, Customs, Holidays, and Body Language, which ranked in the top five alongside History (Big "C"). History was the most preferred Big "C" theme (rank 4), while little "c" themes occupied ranks 1, 2, 3, and 5. This trend highlights students' stronger interest in everyday cultural aspects.

Table 5: Rank of students' preference for cultural themes in English classroom

Themes	Big "C"	Little "c"	Weigh score	Rank
Food		✓	3886	***1***
Customs		✓	3777	***2***
Holidays		✓	3701	***3***
History	✓		3676	***4***
Body language		✓	3655	***5***
Movies	✓		3624	6
Music/Sports	✓		3619	7
Lifestyles		✓	3614	8
Hobbies		✓	3585	9
Education	✓		3563	10
Science	✓		3519	11
Architecture	✓		3461	12

Literature/Art	✓		3441	13
Politics	✓		3278	14
Social norms	✓		3275	15
Values		✓	3264	16
Economy	✓		3243	17

Table 6 shows students' preferences for cultural learning. For Vietnamese culture, they favored “Holiday,” “Customs,” and “History.” For international cultures (e.g. China, France, Japan), they preferred “Food,” “Movies,” and “Music/Sports.” For target cultures (America, Australia), “Body Language,” “Food,” and “Customs” were most popular. “Food” (international and target) and “Customs” (source and target) were commonly favored little “c” themes. Overall, students preferred learning about source culture first, then target, and lastly international cultures, with a clear interest in little “c” themes like “Food,” “Customs,” and “Holidays.”

Table 6: Top five favorite cultural themes and sources

Themes	**Target culture**	**International culture**	**Source culture**
Food	***2***	***1***	8
Customs	***3***	***4***	***2***
Holidays	10	***5***	***1***
History*	9	6	***3***
Body language	***1***	7	17
Movies	12	***2***	11
Music/Sports	16	***3***	7
Lifestyles	***4***	13	***4***
Hobbies	6	9	9
Education	14	8	***5***
Science	**5**	11	15
Architecture	15	12	6
Literature/Art	7	10	16
Politics	13	15	12
Social norms	11	16	10
Values	17	14	14
Economy	8	17	13

5. DISCUSSION

This section delves into the interpretation and implications of the findings, addressing the two research questions posed in this study. The discussion will elaborate on what the results indicate, their significance, how they compare to previous research, and what actions relevant stakeholders should consider based on these insights.

The results show a clear dominance of international culture in the textbook *Global Success English 10*. Specifically, the study reveals that international culture accounts for 59.32% of all cultural representations found in the textbook. This indicates that more than half of the cultural content comes from English-speaking or global cultural sources such as the US, UK, Canada, or culturally neutral international practices. In contrast, Vietnamese culture, also referred to as the source culture, constitutes only 10.17%, which is a surprisingly low proportion considering that the textbook is designed for Vietnamese learners. The same percentage (10.17%) is also allocated to unidentified cultures, meaning cultures that are not clearly defined or recognized.

The target culture—primarily referring to cultures of English-speaking countries—makes up 20.34%, showing that although English-speaking countries still have a significant presence, they are not the overwhelming focus. This distribution pattern aligns with EIL perspective, which emphasizes the global, cross-cultural use of English rather than focusing solely on native-speaking countries. However, this cultural distribution raises questions about how well the textbook meets the cultural and identity needs of Vietnamese learners.

In terms of cultural themes, the textbook is heavily weighted toward the theme of "Values" (45.76%). This includes themes such as environmental protection, respect, kindness, and friendship. These are important universal themes but may lack cultural specificity. Furthermore, the textbook gives little attention to little "c" culture, such as food, holidays, customs, and everyday practices. This is problematic because these types of content are often more engaging and relatable for students.

The results have several important implications, both pedagogically and culturally. Firstly, the dominance of international culture and the underrepresentation of Vietnamese culture suggest that the textbook might unintentionally contribute to what some researchers call cultural marginalization. In other words, students may not see their own cultural identity reflected in the materials, which can lead to negative psychological distance. This is a term used to describe the emotional and cognitive gap students might feel when they are unable to relate to the learning content.

From a motivational standpoint, when students do not see their culture represented, they may feel that English learning is irrelevant to their own lives, thus lowering their motivation.

Moreover, the overemphasis on "Values" at the expense of more tangible and relatable cultural elements like food and customs may make the textbook feel abstract and disconnected from students' everyday experiences. While "Values" are undeniably important, they should be balanced with practical and culturally rich content.

Furthermore, from an intercultural communication perspective, the lack of little "c" cultural content can undermine students' intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is not just about knowing grand historical facts or philosophical values; it involves understanding how people from different cultures behave, eat, celebrate, and express emotions in daily life. Without exposure to these practical cultural themes, students may struggle to use English appropriately in real-life intercultural contexts.

Finally, the results indicate a disconnect between the textbook design and learner expectations. Learners prefer content that allows them to explore and express their own cultural identity while simultaneously learning how to interact with others. The textbook's current content does not sufficiently support this goal, which diminishes its pedagogical effectiveness.

6. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted with a twofold purpose: firstly, to explore the representation of cultural content in Grade 10 English coursebooks, and secondly, to investigate ten-grade students' beliefs towards cultural content and learning in English class. The research aimed to answer two specific questions: "What is the representation of cultural content in Grade 10 English textbooks?" and "What are the ten-grade students' beliefs towards cultural content and learning in English class?"

The study provides practical insights for teachers, syllabus designers, and students in Vietnam, especially Tra Vinh. Theoretically, it advances cultural communication in language teaching and encourages educators to prioritize cultural content, while highlighting to administrators the importance of integrating cultural competence into the English curriculum.

Based on these findings, several pedagogical implications and recommendations emerge.

Textbooks should offer a balanced representation of source, target, and international cultures, reflecting English's role as a global lingua franca. Since students show a strong interest in native culture, greater inclusion would boost engagement and affirm cultural identity. More little "c" cultural themes like *Food*, *Holidays*, and *Customs*—which students prefer—should be incorporated, as they support daily intercultural communication and help avoid misunderstandings.

Despite its insights, this study has limitations. It focused only on the English 10 textbook; broader analysis of the entire Global Success series (grades 6–12) could offer a fuller picture.

The sample was limited to 60 students from one high school in Tra Vinh, so expanding to more diverse regions could yield more reliable results. Future research should involve larger, more varied samples and examine regional differences. Combining interviews with questionnaires would clarify students' real preferences. Additionally, future studies could explore teachers' views on intercultural communicative competence and the role of culture in English language teaching.

REFERENCES

Aguilar, M. J. C. (2007). Dealing with international communicative competence in the foreign language classroom, In E. A Soler & M. P. S. Jorda (Eds.), *Iintercultural language use and language learning*, (pp. 59-78), Springer Netherlands.

Alptekin, C. (1993). Target-language culture in ELT materials. ELT Journal,47(2), 136-143. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/47.2.136

Alptekin, C. (2005), Dual language instruction: Multiculturalism through a lingua franca, *In a TESOL symposium on dual language education: Teaching and learning in two languages in the EFL setting* (pp.5-11). Bogazici University.

Alshenqeeti, H. (2019). Representation of culture in EFL textbooks and learners' preference. *Pedagogy Journal of English Language Teaching*, *7*(2), https://doi.org/10.32332/pedagogy.v7i2.1647

Arikan, A. (2011). Prospective English Language Teachers' Perceptions of the Target Language and Culture in Relation to Their Socioeconomic Status. *English Language Teaching*, *4*(3), 232-242.

Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles and language learning and teaching* (4th ed.). Addison Wesley Longman.

Byram, M. (1989). *Cultural studies in foreign language education* (Vol. 46). Multilingual matters.

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

Byram, M. (1998). Cultural Identities in Multilingual. *Beyond bilingualism: Multilingualism and multilingual education*, *110*, 96.

Byram, M., & Feng, A. (2004). Culture and language learning: Teaching, research and scholarship. *Language teaching*, *37*(3), 149-168.

Chen, B.B. (2004). A survey on cultural learning and its variables analysis. Xi'an: Journal of Xi'an International Studies University, 12(3), 21-24. https://www.scribd.com/document/472834878/LAMPIRAN

Cholpek, Z. (2008). The intercultural approach to EFL teachig and learning. *English Teaching Forum, 46*(4), 10-19. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1096289.pdf

Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L.X. (1999). Cultural mirrors: Materials and method in the EFL classroom. In Hinkel, E. (ed.), *Culture in second language teachin*g (p.196-219). Cambridge University Press.

Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your coursebook*. Hinemann.

Dat, B. (2008). ELT materials used in Southeast Asia. *English language learning materials*, 263-280. Continuum.

Dornyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. *Modern Language Journal, 78*(3), 273-284. https://doi.org/10.2307/330107

El Shawa, N. (2011). Evaluating the cultural content of English for Palestine secondary stage textbooks in the light of universal trends. *Unpublished Master Thesis, The Islamic University, Gaza, Palestine*.

Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford University Press.

Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). Attitude and motivation in second language learning. Newbury House Publishers.

Hermawan, B. & Noerkhasanah, L. (2012). Traces of cultures in English textbooks for primary education. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 1*(2). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276396538_Traces_of_cultures_in_english_textbooks_for_primary_education

Hu, G. (2002). Potential cultural resistance to pedagogical imports: The case of communicative language teaching in China. *Language culture and curriculum*, *15*(2), 93-105.

Jiang, B. (2010). *The role of college English textbooks in the teaching of culture in China*. [Unpublish doctor's thesis, University of York Department of Education Studies].

Kachru, B. (1985). Institutionalized second-language varieties. *The English language today*, 211-226.

Kirkpatrick, A. (2007). *World Englishes, implications for international communication and English teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Lee, K-Y. (2009). Treating culture: What 11 high school EFL conversation textbooks in South Korean. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 8*(1), 76-96. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ847287.pdf

Liu, S. (2012). *Cultural content in EFL textbooks and students' preferences: a case study of non-English major students in China* [Master's thesis, Prince of Songkla University]. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/32429155.pdf

McKay, S. L. (2002). Teaching English as an international language: Implications for cultural materials in the classroom. *TESOL Journal, 9*(4), 7-11. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1949-3533.2000.tb00276.x

McKay, S. L. (2002). *Teaching English as International Language: rethinking goals and approaches.* Oxford University Press.

McKay, S. L. (2003). Teaching english as an international language: The Chilean context. *ELT Journal, 57*(2), 139-148. https://doi.org.10.1093/elt/57.2.139

McKay, S. L. (2004). Western culture and the teaching of English as an international language. *English Teaching Forum, 42*(2), 10-15.

Oxford, L. (2016). Definition of be verb from the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.

Paige, M., Jorstad, H., Siaya, L., Klein, F., & Colby, J. (1999). *Culture learning in language education: A review of literature*. https://carla.umn.edu/culture/res/litreview.pdf

Penny Ur. (2009). English as a lingua franca and some implications for English teachers. https://www.tesol-france.org/uploaded_files/files/Coll09-Ur_Plenary_Handouts.pdf

Peterson, B. (2004). *Cultural intelligence: A guide to working with people from other cultures*. Intercultural Press.

Pham, H. H. (2001), A second look at the question of the ownership of English. *Teacher's Edition*, 4-10. https://www.nzdl.org/gsdl/collect/literatu/index/assoc/HASH285f.dir/doc.pdf

Putra, T. K., Rochsantiningsih, D., & Supriyadi, S. (2020). *Cultural Representation and Intercultural Interaction in Textbooks of English as an International Language*. Journal on English as a Foreign Language, 10(1), 163–184. https://doi.org/10.23971/jefl.v10i1.1766

Rao, P. S. (2019). The role of English as a global language. *Research Journal of English, 4*(1), 65-79. https://www.rjoe.org.in/Files/vol4issue1/new/OK%20RJOE-Srinu%20sir(65-79).pdf

Saluveer, E. (2004). *Teaching culture in English classes*. [Master's thesis, University of Tartu]. http://hdl.handle.net/10062/922

Silvia, A. (2014). *Cultural content in English textbooks used in Madrasah Tsanawiyah in DKI Jakarta* [Doctoral dissertation, Fakultas Ilmu Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Syarif Hidayatullah]. https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/25029

Song, B. (2019). Exploring the cultural content in Chinese ELT textbooks from intercultural perspectives. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, *16*(1), 267.

Thanasoulas, D. (2001). The importance of teaching culture in the foreign language classroom. *Radical Pedagogy.* https://123docz.net/document/3131778-the-importance-of-teaching-culture-in-the-foreign-language-classroom.htm

Ulum, Ö. G., & Erdoğan, B. (2016). Cultural elements in EFL course books. Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences, 15(1), 15–26. https://doi.org/10.21547/jss.256738

Valdes, J. M. (1986). *Culture bound: Bridging the culture gap in language teaching* (Vol. 25). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Xiao, J. (2010). *Cultural content of an in-use EFL textbook and English major students' beliefs and perceptions towards culture learning at Jiangxi University of Science and Technology, China*. [Unpublisch master's thesis, Prince of Songkla University, Songkhla, Thailand].

Tan Hoai Kim is a visiting lecturer at Tra Vinh University, Vietnam. His academic interests center on teaching English as a foreign language within the context of general education. He is particularly passionate about examining the cultural dimensions embedded in EFL textbooks used in Vietnamese high schools. His work aims to encourage educators to integrate cultural learning into language instruction and to advocate for the inclusion of cultural competence as a core component of the English curriculum in educational policy and material selection.