

Authoritative discourse in a locally-published ELT textbook in Thailand

Naratip Jindapitak^{1*} and Yusop Boonsuk²

¹*Department of Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Hatyai Campus, Hatyai, Songkhla, Thailand*

²*Department of Western Languages, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, Mueang, Pattani, Thailand*

ABSTRACT

This study examines cultural contents in a locally-published English language teaching (ELT) textbook for primary 6 students in Thailand. It aims to investigate whether the locally-published textbook depicts sources and themes of cultures in a way that perpetuates and reproduces dominant ideologies and how cultural contents in the locally-published textbook were dealt with by an English teacher in the classroom. Grounded on Bakhtin's notions of authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse, the findings revealed that there were mismatches between the cultural representation in the textbook and students' lived experiences. Concerning how cultural contents were dealt with in the classroom, there was no evidence that the teacher assisted learners to forge effective linkages between authoritative discourse and their everyday life. The findings are discussed regarding how cultural contents are ideologically depicted in the textbook and how the cultural contents adversely affect students' learning experience. Implications and recommendations for textbook authors, language teachers, and future research are presented.

Keywords: Authoritative discourse; cultural contents; ELT materials; local ELT textbook; ELT in Thailand

First Received:

2 April 2018

Revised:

16 August 2018

Accepted:

1 September 2018

Final Proof Received:

24 September 2018

Published:

30 September 2018

How to cite (in APA style):

Jindapitak, N., & Boonsuk, Y. (2018). Authoritative discourse in a locally-published ELT textbook in Thailand. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 8, 266-277 doi: 10.17509/ijal.v8i2.13274

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, when people communicate with one another using English as a lingua franca (ELF), they are not only required to have linguistic knowledge but also to possess cultural knowledge and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) to interact with speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. An individual having ICC is one who possesses (1) knowledge of different communicative practices in diverse sociocultural settings, (2) skills to apply cultural knowledge in real-life communication effectively and appropriately, and (3) attitudes toward communication involving the ability to relativize one's

own cultural values, beliefs, and expectations (Baker, 2015; Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). In this respect, language can be a carrier of cultures as people tend to use it to communicate their values, beliefs, identity, and customs. To simplify this, language and culture are inevitably interconnected because language is used as a tool for daily interactions to get interpersonal errands done. In different societies, the same language may be employed differently depending on a couple of social influences which include (a) situational contexts: personal, professional, formal, or informal interactions and (b) cultural contexts: norms, values, and expectations (Baker, 2015, 2016; Halliday,

* Corresponding author:

Email: naratip.jin@psu.ac.th

1978; Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). Pennycook (1995) defines culture as a process by which people make sense of their lives, and this process involves people's struggle against meaning and representation. When relating culture to ELT classroom, Canagarajah (1999) maintains that teachers need to understand the inseparable interrelationship between language, culture, and context for the purpose of achieving the best teaching tools for different cultural contexts.

Particularly, textbooks can be the primary source of cultural knowledge and used to expose learners to cultural information of people of diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds. They play a pivotal role in how students view English because they usually provide cultural information variously embedded in descriptive texts, dialogues, exercises, writing tasks, and visuals (Dinh & Sharifian, 2017; Syrbe & Rose, 2018; Widodo, 2018). It should be noticed, however, that although textbooks are a useful source of transmitting cultural messages, they may convey sets of cultural values, a phenomenon Cunningsworth (1995) refers to as a hidden agenda in the curriculum. Therefore, the question regarding how or in what way a particular culture is imposed on teachers and students need not be overlooked (Bourdieu; 1991; Dinh & Sharifian, 2017; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Sherlock, 2016; McConachy, 2018). This study examines how cultures are ideologically depicted in an ELT textbook and how they are appropriated by a teacher in the classroom.

Bakhtin's notions of authoritative *Discourse and internally persuasive discourse*

The discourse which is limited in meaning and socioculturally distant from an interpreter is called authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981). Bakhtin further notes that since this type of discourse is preferably fixed, there is no space for individuals to personalize the meaning by inserting other meanings situated in their context. Therefore, when dealing with this type of discourse, individuals are forced to either uphold or disregard it. The internally persuasive discourse is, on the other hand, semantically unrestricted, meaning that it is open to alteration and can be intertwined with individuals' voices drawn from the context where the dialogic interaction occurs. Bakhtin (1981) puts it:

In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else's. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words ... and does not remain in an isolated and static condition. (p. 345)

These two types of discourse were contrasted by Lin and Luk (2005) as the following:

Authoritative discourse is... discourse imposed on a person - but for one to really accept, acquire and own a language or discourse, it has to become an internally persuasive discourse, hybridized and populated with one's own voices, styles, meanings, and intention. (p. 93-94)

When relating Bakhtin's notions of *authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse* to the field of ELT, many scholars (e.g., Boriboon, 2004; Canagarajah, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Pennycook, 1994) have strongly argued that the discourse presented in most commercial textbooks seems to be authoritative because it only allows the voices of individuals who have authority, power, and right to be heard. It is particularly believed that for many underprivileged learners, this type of discourse is illegitimate because it is inharmonious with their living habits (Boriboon, 2004; Bourdieu, 1991).

As far as language learning is concerned, authoritative discourse can interrupt the learning as learners may find it awkward when asked to manipulate a discourse that is alien to them (Canagarajah, 1999). At the end of the day, learners could learn the language, but they may not be able to mean it (Halliday, 2001). This can cause language learners to feel marginalized because their cultural capital or "semiotic budget" (van Lier, 2000, p. 253) is insufficient to produce meaningful language required by the authoritative discourse.

It should also be realized that since a language classroom is considered as the contact zone where the negotiation of identities and counter-identities occurs, learners should be allowed to celebrate their local creativities, identities, and voices they prefer to display in the classroom (Lin & Luk, 2005). That is, in order to create a more meaningful learning condition for learners, it is important to provide linguistic or cultural codes promoting their meaning potential (Halliday, 2001). This learning experience will allow language learners to perceive language as a code of meaning and increase their motivation and affective involvement in language learning.

Textbooks and culture

Commercial textbooks used for learning and teaching English in large parts of the world usually embody Western cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes often including stereotypical pictures that represent dominantly Western cultures or communities (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Having been adopted and used in ELT classrooms across the world, many textbooks are said to "have a magical hold on both teachers and learners most of whom just cannot do without them" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 21). Likewise, Pennycook (1994) notes that internationally-published materials are far from being neutral because they represent particular or biased views of language, communication, learning, and education, which are very much part of a broader range of discursive and cultural understandings shaped by the West. By looking at studies analyzing ELT textbooks in different parts of the world (Awayed-Bishara, 2015; Chao, 2011; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014), it can be seen that internationally-published textbooks, to a large extent, present dominantly Western cultural information, mostly related to the two mainstream English-as-a-mother-tongue countries, the USA and the UK. However, cultural information

associated with other parts of the world and learners' home country was largely under-represented. Alptekin (1993) argues that a plethora of references made to native English-speaking or Western cultures in an international series of ELT textbooks can be explained by marketing considerations. Exclusive orientation towards cultural information of a single non-English country would prevent other societies from implementing materials in question. Furthermore, as many textbook writers are native English speakers, it is unlikely for them to gain and include accurate cultural information outside their circles in textbooks (Alptekin, 1993).

English in primary education in Thailand

In Thailand, English is widely used for educational purposes, academic advancements, career opportunities, traveling, technological access, and economic success (Chalapati, 2007). In terms of English teaching and learning curriculum, specifically, English is studied in primary schools and is a required subject for higher education (Office of Education Council, 2006). Based on the Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008, English is one of the mandatory subjects taught to students from grades 1 to 12. Language learning is aimed at enabling learners to acquire a favorable and positive attitude towards the language and the ability to use English for communicating in various situations. Furthermore, its objective is to provide primary English students with the linguistic knowledge required for studying at higher levels. The main content of teaching and learning English in Thailand involves eight standards; one of which includes four strands of study, often known as the four Cs: communication, culture, connection, and community (Keyuravong, 2010; Mackenzie, 2004).

According to the Basic Education Core Curriculum, primary school students need to learn English at least 1 hour per week from grades 1 to 3, and 2 hours per week from grades 4 to 6. Moreover, schools are allowed to add more English courses as long as needed. Regarding the use of teaching and learning materials, although textbook selection depends on schools and teachers, they are required to choose textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education.

METHOD

The literature has revealed how students' understandings of the world are ideologically shaped internationally-published textbooks. However, little is known about how home cultures are treated, or how themes and sources of culture are presented in locally-published materials (Liu & Fang, 2017). Therefore, it is important to analyze locally-published ELT materials to find out whose cultures are depicted. A study analyzing cultural contents in locally-published textbooks not only fills the gap in research in ELT textbooks analysis but also provides suggestions for the inclusion and (re)evaluation of cultural contents in ELT materials.

Apart from knowing whose cultures and which themes of culture are ideologically depicted in textbooks, it is important to delve deeper into how an ELT practitioner (a local English teacher) views and experiences using a locally-published textbook in the classroom. Such empirical information may provide insights into how cultural contents are appropriated in the local ELT, thus giving us solid ideas about how to approach pedagogical innovation in relation to culture teaching in language classrooms as suggested by the current literature.

This study aims to investigate cultural contents represented in the *New Aha English* textbook for primary 6 (grade 6) students in Thailand and how such cultural contents were dealt with in the classroom based on the interview with a local teacher. It examines the following research questions:

1. Does the locally-published textbook depict sources and themes of cultures in a way that perpetuates and reproduces authoritative discourse?
2. How are cultural contents in the locally-published textbook dealt with by an English teacher in the classroom? To what extent does the teacher appropriate or adapt the textbook to suit students' lived experience?

Textbook selection

In this study, the locally-published textbook for primary 6 students, *New Aha English 6* (Simahasan & Thongprem, 2012), was chosen for analysis. The criteria for textbook selection involve the following considerations: it was (1) published in Thailand, (2) written by Thai author(s), (3) used in the primary level (primary 6), (4) approved by the Ministry of Education, and (5) designed following the integrated syllabus. In fact, although there were many locally-published textbooks available at a government bookstore (e.g., *Smile 6*, *Say Hello 6*, and *New Express English 6*), they did not fit the aforementioned criteria. For instance, although *Smile 6* was published in Thailand, the authors were native speakers of English. *Say Hello 6* was authored by Thais, but it was not designed based on the integrated syllabus and had fewer activities than the others. *New Express English 6* had fewer units than the others. *New Aha English 6*, comparatively, seemed to be more suitable than its counterparts for the current study. It consists of 12 lessons, integrating four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing - into 11 smaller sections within a lesson. Each lesson is sequenced based on the 3Ps instructional method: presentation, practice, and production. For presentation and practice stages, each lesson includes a lead-in activity, Listen & Say (listening and speaking), Ask & Answer (speaking), Let's Learn (reading), and Let's Read (reading). The production stage includes English Club Board (writing), Sing a Song (speaking), Game (speaking), knowledge development activities (writing), critical thinking activities (writing and speaking), and knowledge application (writing and speaking).

Content analysis and coding schemes

A content analysis was used to identify themes and sources of cultures contained in the locally-published textbook. Concerning units of analysis, the focus was on 144 texts and tasks throughout the book (excluding quizzes). The contents could be words, sentences, whole passages, and any messages geared for communication. Non-linear texts, such as pictures and tables accompanying the texts and tasks, were also used as support for the cultural content analysis. Themes of culture were categorized based on Ramirez and Hall’s (1990) sociolinguistic rubric of cultural content analysis, “examining the uses of language involving different topics, the situations in which communication may occur, and communicative purposes as presented in the texts” (p. 49). Sources of culture were categorized

into Western countries, non-Western countries, and Thailand.

The cultural materials representing nations, including all texts and tasks, were coded. Each lesson of the textbook is divided into different sections. Each section takes up a separate entry. However, one section may contain more than one cultural theme and source. For example, a reading passage on the differences between British and Chinese family was coded under both native-English-speaking and non-Western countries (Table 1). It should be noted that only the contents which represent nations were counted, and the contents which do not contain cultural information nor do they represent nations were excluded. For example, a story about the life cycle of an animal was excluded. Simple statistical tools, frequencies, and percentages were used to summarize the findings.

Table 1. Example of data extracts

Page	Skills	Themes and (Nation)	Contents representing nations
31	Reading	Family (Native-English-speaking) (Non-western)	Differences between a Chinese and British family
147	Speaking Writing	Literature (Native-English-speaking)	Stories by American writers (e.g., Snow White, Brian Keene, Indiana Jones, the Funny Book, and Animal Portraits)
148	Writing	Literature (Native-English-speaking)	Giving opinions about different kinds of books (e.g., Civics for Americans, Aspects of Western Civilization, Twilight, Clone Wars, Jim Carter’s Ace Ventura, etc.)
167	Speaking	Cultural occasion (Western- general)	Things people do on Halloween
183	Listening Speaking	Entertainment (Native-English-speaking)	Talking about favorite movies by referring to Toy Story and Titanic
185	Reading	Entertainment (Native-English-speaking) (Thai)	Stories about famous people (Angelina Jolie and a Thai actor, Film Rattaphum)

An interview with a local teacher

To investigate how cultural contents were dealt with in an English classroom, an interview was conducted with a primary-6 local English teacher from a small and rural public school in Thailand. The participant was a 33-year-old female teacher with 11 years of teaching experience. She was the only English teacher in charge of all the 21 primary-6 students. Located in a small village of Pua, Nan, a hometown to one of the researchers, the school houses less than 200 students from grade 1 to grade 6 (primary school). The choice of a school and research participant was based on a personal connection with a local teacher who helped contact the English teacher. Based on the teacher’s data of students’ socio-economic backgrounds, most students were either from the same or nearby villages where the locals earn their living through rice and maize farming, the two main agricultural products of the region.

The teacher was asked to describe her teaching of a selected lesson. In this interview, Lesson 4 “My favorite seasons” was chosen as it contains the most authoritative and Western-dominant contents. The

interview was conducted via Skype, and the teacher was asked to bring the book during the interview as it could help her recall and reflect on how she dealt with sections, activities, or tasks. Throughout the interview, the teacher was invited to recall the concurrent thinking she had during the teaching when prompted with the textbook. During the interview, the first author took a good-listener role but initiated the conversation by asking how the teacher taught each section. Also, the teacher was asked to develop and explain ideas and give examples. She was also urged to elaborate on the ideas expressed before and speak of the issues as extensively as possible. Since the purpose of the interview was to observe if the teacher would attempt to turn an authoritative discourse shown in the textbook into an internally persuasive one, the interview questions were carefully executed. Instead of directly asking whether specific cultural contents presented in the textbook were congruent with students’ sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, the data was expected to emerge out of self-reflection. The interview process lasted approximately two hours.

FINDINGS

Since this study aimed to analyze the cultural themes and sources employed in the locally-published textbook, this section will further discuss the findings which were primarily obtained from textbook analysis and interviewing. The former core findings, textbook analysis, dealt with 8 cultural themes in 3 classifications: Western, non-Western, and specifically

Thai based on country representations (see Table 2 for more details) and how the cultural contents were distributed through the four communicative skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The latter core findings, interviewing, dealt with how the teacher viewed content appropriateness, the practicality of the cultural activities and techniques exemplified in the textbook.

Table 2. Themes and cultural sources

Cultural themes	Country representation of cultural contents				
	Western countries			Non-Western countries	Thailand
	Native-English-speaking countries	Non-native-English-speaking countries	General		
HOLIDAY	6	1	0	1	2
FAMILY	6	0	0	1	2
LEISURE	7	0	0		3
ENTERTAINMENT	7	0	0	1	4
LITERATURE	3	0	0		
SCHOOL	4	2	0	1	1
CULTURAL OCCASION	0	0	9	0	0
SEASON	4	0	0	0	0
Total (N)	37/55	3/55	9/55	4/55	12/55
Total (%)	67.27%	5.45%	16.36%	7.27%	21.82%

Textbook analysis findings

From the analysis of 144 texts and tasks, 55 cultural units represented Western countries, non-Western countries, and Thailand under different themes: HOLIDAY, FAMILY, LEISURE, ENTERTAINMENT, LITERATURE, SCHOOL, and CULTURAL OCCASION (Table 2). There is an imbalance in the cultural representation of different regions. Cultural contents associated with Western countries were found most frequently whereas the non-Western and Thai contents were found much less. The Western contents were mostly directed towards native-English-speaking countries (67.27%), while the non-native-English and general contents made up 5.45% and 16.36%, respectively. Cultures representing Thailand are depicted by 21.82%, while only 7.27% belongs to non-Western countries. As it can be seen from the table,

the contents representing Western countries are pervasive in most themes. However, the imbalance becomes less marked in ENTERTAINMENT as there is information referring to Thai pop singers and actresses. Interestingly, LITERATURE, SEASON, and CULTURAL OCCASION are the three themes without any inclusion of other foreign cultures. In other words, cultures related to these themes are heavily Western-influenced. Interestingly, in CULTURAL OCCASION, all the cultural information in the lesson refers exclusively to Halloween.

As shown in Table 3, there is an obvious bias in favor of Western cultures distributed in the four primary skills. There are considerably fewer references made to non-Western countries in all skills, and Thailand in listening and speaking skills. However, there are some reading and writing activities related to Thailand.

Table 3. Distribution of cultural contents in the four main skills

Cultural themes	Country representation of cultural contents				
	Western countries			Non-Western countries	Thailand
	Native-English-speaking countries	Non-native-English-speaking countries	General		
Listening	11	2	2	1	1
Speaking	15	2	4	2	1
Reading	13	1	3	1	6
Writing	7	1	1	1	4

Interview findings

Long stretches of conversation were presented here to describe in detail how the teacher dealt with different sections, dialogues, activities, and tasks in the lesson; and reflected her attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies on what was appropriate or necessary in her instruction. To begin with, the teacher was asked if the overall contents on seasons and activities presented in this lesson were

appropriate. The teacher reflected that the contents were highly appropriate, justifying that they were useful when communicating with native English speakers. Excerpt 1 illustrates this:

Excerpt 1

Researcher : How do you rate the appropriateness of these contents for your students?

Teacher : I think it's quite appropriate.
 Researcher : ... any reason?
 Teacher : Well, I think... the students need to know about... seasons in the world because they might need... to talk to native speakers when they grow up.

During the presentation and practice stage, the teacher first presented the students with dialogues between four native-speaking kids discussing the

favorite seasons. The talk involved winter, summer, swimming, snow, and skiing. The teacher asked the students to repeat after the CD and pair up for a conversation drill. In the next section, the teacher asked the students what season they like best and what activity they did or are going to do during the summer. Four season pictures, such as winter, spring, summer, and fall together with pictures of Western children, with blond hair, ice skating, sailing a boat, playing soccer, and flying in a balloon were presented in Figure 1.

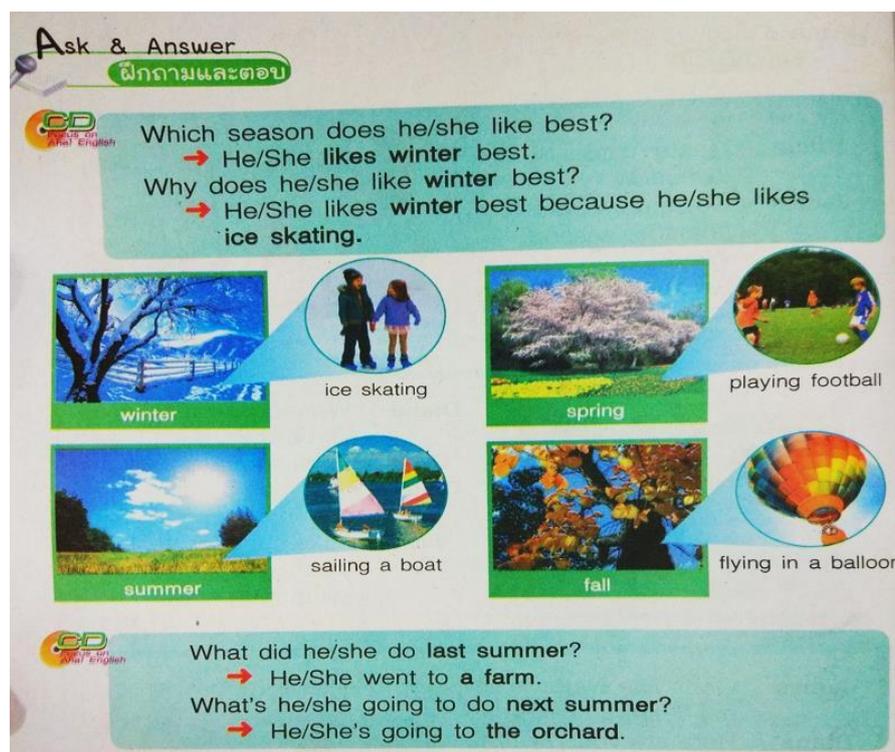


Figure 1. Seasons and seasonal activities (p. 40)

As shown in Excerpt 2 below, when the teacher asked the students to discuss their favorite seasons and seasonal activities, she discovered that the class did not proceed as smoothly as expected—the students' oral performance was dissatisfying due their inadequate linguistic knowledge. After a vocabulary lesson with guessing and matching the pictures with words, the teacher asked them to share the opinions:

Excerpt 2

Teacher : ... I taught them difficult vocabulary... and explained about different seasons. I then asked them to repeat after me... I also got them into pairs, asking them to practice asking and answering questions... I also asked them to talk about their preferred activities...and sports in different seasons.
 Researcher : How did you teach vocabulary?
 Teacher : ... by asking them to guess from pictures...
 Researcher : Were they able to make correct guesses?
 Teacher : Most could... And I also asked them to

match the words with their meanings in Thai on the board.
 Researcher : So, after learning vocabulary and having some oral practice, what did they do next?
 Teacher : They talked about the seasons they liked and activities or sports they liked to do in different seasons...
 Researcher : OK. How well did the students perform then?
 Teacher : I think... they didn't perform well... They couldn't talk much actually. I think the task was a bit difficult for them.
 Researcher : Why do you think it's difficult for them?
 Teacher : ... because most of them couldn't form sentences ... and many of them didn't know parts of speech.

During the interview, the teacher was asked to give sentence examples the students produced. She made a comparison between the good and poor students. She repeatedly mentioned that poor grammatical ability flawed the students' oral performance when discussing

favorite seasons and seasonal activities. Apart from the grammar check, the teacher did some translation for the students from Thai to English (Excerpt 3).

Excerpt 3

Researcher : Can you give me examples of sentences the students said on a task you asked them to talk about favorite seasons and activities they like to do?

Teacher : Well, they could say something like... “I like summer because I like a farm”, “I like football in summer”, or “I like this and that in winter”... I mean good students knew how to imitate... but poor students tended to say things in chunks and ungrammatical...

Researcher : Can you give me examples of sentences poor students produced?

Teacher : ... like “summer play football” or “winter I go farm”. They were all ungrammatical.

Researcher : Did you take action for their errors?

Teacher : Yes... but it didn’t seem effective... and, most of the time, they said things in Thai and I had to do some translation.

Researcher : What were some sentences you translated for them?

Teacher : ... like “*Chan Chob Len Kab Phuen*” [I like playing with friends], “*Chan Chob Pai Keb Nomai Nai Pa*” [I like going to the forest to collect bamboo shoots], or “*Chan Chob Pai Tee Dan Huai Kron Nai Ruedu Ron*” [I like going to the Thai-Laos border in summer].

Referring to familiar local activities can help the local students learn better. The teacher was asked whether the students enjoyed talking about local activities and how she dealt with dialogues about local activities. Excerpt 4 offers an evidence of a local voice insertion.

Excerpt 4

Researcher : Did the students enjoy talking about local activities?

Teacher : Yes, but they mainly talked in Thai.

Researcher : Did you encourage them to talk in English?

Teacher : Sometimes. I did some translation and had them repeat.

Researcher : OK. Did you ask the students to create more dialogues based on the topic about local activities they had initiated?

Teacher : Yes, sometimes... but it was hectic because they joined the conversation using Thai all the time, trying to play instead of trying to learn.

Researcher : Any example?

Teacher : Last time I asked them whether they went to “Ngan Kwang” [Hercules’s beetle fighting festival and district fair, held annually in the beginning of winter] over

the weekend, and... they ended up talking in Thai.

Researcher : Did you ask them what they did at the fair?

Teacher : Exactly... but like I told you... they kept talking in Thai.

Researcher : Did you encourage them to use English... teaching them how to talk about activities in English?

Teacher : The vocabulary could be difficult for them... They just couldn’t form long sentences, so I turned their focus into the activity in the book instead.

After asking the students to read the story of a Western kid spending his last summer with the family, the teacher turned to another reading passage, a report on world seasons (Figure 2). Although the first paragraph addresses how seasons in “different parts of the world” differ throughout the year periods, both the contents in the subsequent paragraphs and pictures portray “seasons” only in the native English speaking countries, the USA and Australia. In this section, the teacher taught the students difficult vocabulary and translated difficult words/sentences into Thai. Later, in Excerpt 5, the students were asked to read the passage before checking comprehension through Yes-No and Wh- questions.

Excerpt 5

Teacher : ... I asked them to read aloud and I helped translate difficult words into Thai. You know... some words appeared in the previous section but they couldn’t remember!

Researcher : OK. Did you check their comprehension?

Teacher : Yes, I sometimes asked Yes-No and Wh-questions.

Researcher : How well did they understand?

Teacher : They could understand well, I guess.

The production stage holds a variety of lesson activities, such as describing favorite seasons and seasonal activities, singing a song of weekend activities, answering questions from pictures, drawing from word clues, matching words with pictures, and constructing sentences from pictures. The analysis was based on the first and last activities as they provide the most prominent evidence concerning how authoritative discourse permeates language learning tasks and marginalizes periphery students.

The first task comes with a Thai objective in the right box instructing the students to draw a picture of a favorite season, describe it, and write about favorite things to do in different seasons. The example picture is a snowman, and the example sentence reads “Winter is my favorite season because I like making a snowman” (Figure 3). In the following excerpt, the teacher was asked to reflect her understanding on the activity and describe her teaching approach (Excerpt 6).

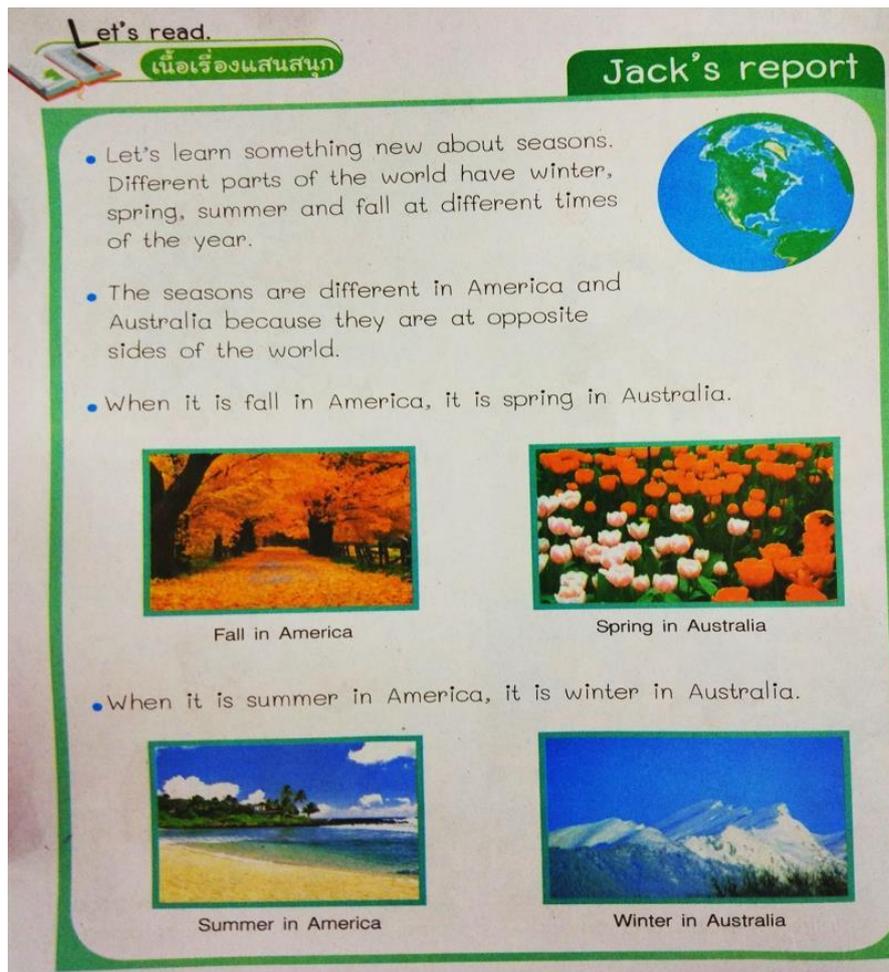


Figure 2. Seasons in different parts of the world (p. 42)



Figure 3. My favorite season (p. 43)

Excerpt 6

Researcher : How did you teach this section?

Teacher : Well, I asked them to read the sentence and draw picture... and write their own sentence following the model sentence...

They had to describe the picture.

Researcher : OK. Did you explain to them what a snowman is like?

Teacher : Yes, actually I told them activities people do during winter... like Christmas and new-

year festival.

Researcher : ... to make students understand better?

Teacher : Yes, so that they could have some ideas to write.

Researcher : And then...

Teacher : They had to draw a picture about an activity they like doing in a particular season and write a sentence describing the picture.

The teacher was further asked if she was satisfied with the students' performance. She commented that while the students performed well in drawing and decoration, the writing part needed some improvement (Excerpt 7).

Excerpt 7

Researcher : How was the students' work? Were you satisfied?

Teacher : Well, I think they did well in drawing ... Some pictures were colorfully decorated... very impressive. But, many of them produced wrong sentences.

Researcher : Wrong sentences?

Teacher : Yes, like the use of "like" followed by infinitive, instead of gerunds... I explicitly taught them this, but again they forgot...

Researcher : OK. Did you remember what seasons they normally wrote about?

Teacher : Summer and winter. Summer is their holiday... no school, so they could do lots of activities.

Researcher : Do you remember what kinds of activities they wrote?

Teacher : ... They wrote about... watching cartoons, playing football, swimming in the river, going to a temple, etc... and some even copied the examples from me... Many were just good at drawing, and their sentences were ungrammatical.

The last task of the lesson instructs the students to write both questions and answers from the provided pictures and adverbs of time. The teacher said that she asked the students to examine the pictures and produce the questions and answer with sentences of the past tense and provided adverbs (Figure 4). Although she realized that the task was too difficult for her students, she made no materials adjustment (Excerpt 8).

Excerpt 8

Researcher : Can you tell me what the students did here?

Teacher : For this homework, they had to write both questions and answers based on the pictures and adverbs of time... I gave them examples on the board...

Researcher : OK. Did the students understand everything in the pictures?

Teacher : ... oh I also taught them the required

vocabulary, such as beach, book store and cinema.... They just had to form sentences using correct forms of verbs... But again they couldn't do it.

Researcher : They had to write sentences about themselves or others?

Teacher : About themselves... Writing about themselves was already a headache for them... I don't think they could think of appropriate pronouns to write about others... It would be a disaster for them.

Researcher : So it means they had to do some imagination when they were to work on this activity, or when they had to write sentences based on the given adverbs of time.

Teacher : Yes, but it didn't seem like they had good imagination... For example, many of them used "go" for every picture, some used "play" for every picture, etc. I think the task is too difficult for them...

Researcher : Did you make it easier?

Teacher : No, I think they should be familiar with uncontrolled writing because it's good for their future...

DISCUSSION

Within this study, the findings obtained from both the textbook analysis and the teacher interview are discussed in relation to Bakhtin's notions of authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. The analysis of cultural contents on national representation in the locally-published textbook for primary 6 students revealed that the textbook serves as a tool for perpetuating and reproducing dominant and mainstream Western/native-English ideas. Most cultural contents referring to holidays, places to visit, leisure activities, literature, cultural occasions, and favorite seasonal activities are generally found to be related to Western and native-English-speaking nations. However, most Thai primary students are less familiar with such discourses. There is a great disparity between their lifestyles or real-life experiences and the exposed cultural information (Boriboon, 2004). Pictures of Western people eating pizza, driving a BMW car, going to an amusement park, traveling to England, ice skating, sailing a boat, and flying in a balloon represent wealthy urban lifestyles, contradicting to most Thais, especially those residing in rural areas.

It is also evident that cultural contents are presented in a way that requires customers to have specific cultural knowledge common to Western countries. For instance, sentences like "I like Fish and Chip;" "Drink a cup of tea;" "Do you like Jackie Chan's movies?" "I could play the double bass;" and pictures of books and movie posters, such as "Twilight," "Civics for Americans," "Aspects of Western Civilization," and "Down with Love" are presented with an absence of explanation. Therefore, the assumption that common

Western knowledge is also globally common (Awayed-Bishara, 2015) is entirely a fallacy. In terms of skills, the quantitative findings revealed that the students were required to extensively listen to, speak, read, and write about Western cultures/countries. There are considerably fewer opportunities to explore the other parts of the world, especially the home country (see Table 3). Texts and tasks such as these are thought to be problematic as they depict an incomplete presentation of

the world. As Matsuda (2002) puts it, “the depth in which students can explore different countries in the world ... tends to be limited” (p. 436). Much of the presented cultural information is also incompatible with the students’ social identities or cultural capital. Being exposed to unfamiliar lifestyles, such as traveling abroad, eating Western food, or shopping on Oxford Street, the students may find it difficult to engage in a discussion (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996).



Figure 4. The writing task with provided pictures and adverbs of time (p. 48)

The dominating discourse in the textbook is considered illegitimate because it largely constrains the students from communicating through their own linguistic resources and constructing their own voice with local and cultural relativity (Canagarajah, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

This mismatch between students’ lived experience and the textbook discourse may affect their learning experience. As evident in the interview, one of the reasons the students were unable to produce meaningful sentences, apart from fluency, could be because the teacher did not utilize the student-familiar discourse. According to the teacher’s report, the students utilized the familiar vocabulary, such as farm and football or

sentences like “*Pai Keb Nomai*” (collecting bamboo shoots) and “*Chan Chob Pai Tee Dan Huai Kron Nai Ruedu Ron*” (I like going to the Thai-Laos border checkpoint during the summer) when they were asked to talk about their favorite seasonal activities. These activities are compatible with the students’ lived experience, thus allowing a more in-depth and enjoyable discussion on the issues. For the most part, however, the students were exposed to unfamiliar discourses preventing them from associating what they learned, expressing with their lived experience, or personalizing meanings. Excerpts 6 and 7 demonstrate how Western cultural information fails to provide the students with the sufficient and appropriate input to perform the tasks.

The teacher elaborated her technique to use such cultural contents as Christmas, new year, and winter festivals to explain the concept of a snowman; and the strategy she employed to help her students to accumulate the writing ideas was through drawing pictures and writing factual sentences. Due to the inconsistency between the provided input and personalized meaning, the students might find it difficult to use culture-specific schemas to relate the input presented in the lesson and provided by the teacher with what they already know (Alptekin, 1993, 2002; Widdowson, 1990). As a case in point, Alptekin puts it:

... a learner of English who has never resided in the target-language culture will most likely experience problems in processing English systemic data if these are presented through such unfamiliar contexts as, say, Halloween or English pubs. Even if these are explained, the learner may still fail to perceive Halloween or the pub in the same way in which they are normally evoked in the mind of the native speaker of English, (Alptekin, 1993, p. 137)

In fact, the teacher attempted to make the contents more accessible to the students as she tried to create dialogues about local activities once her students brought something up. She gave an example of a familiar local festival and district fair, "Ngan Kwang." This was productive as the students understood and discussed the fair enjoyably. As reflected in the teacher's response, "They... enjoyed talking about the fair" With little attempt made to encourage the students to discuss the source culture through the target language, the teacher turned her focus to the activity presented in the textbook, believing that the students failed to satisfactorily perform in the target language. The fact is that when there was any dissatisfying situation resulting from the students' lack of participation or involvement in communicative tasks, the teacher seemed to have believed that it was due to inadequate linguistic capital, ignoring the probability that the students' sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds could also be the contributing factors (Abebe & Deneke, 2015; Canagarajah, 1999).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The aims of this study were to investigate whether the locally-published textbook depicted sources and themes of cultures in a way that perpetuates and reproduces dominant ideologies and how the cultural contents in the locally-published textbook were dealt with in a primary language classroom. The findings revealed that the cultural contents presented in the texts and tasks mostly revolve around cultural products, events, places, activities, practices, and values outside the students' lived experience. Cultural meanings, artifacts, and visual signs embedded in the textbook are exclusively disconnected from the students' sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Consistently, the interview findings showed that personal experiences the students

gained over the course of their lives within specific sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts remained completely marginalized in the classroom. The teacher did not show any attempt to customize the cultural materials to suit the target students.

The findings suggest that local textbook authors, editors, and teachers should pay more attention to student and contextual needs. Mikk (2000) pointed out that today's textbooks can influence tomorrow's minds; therefore, the parties involved in ELT should reflect on whose and which cultures to be included in ELT textbooks (Chao, 2011). Specifically, textbooks should include a variety of cultures representing different countries of the world rather than only portraying everything about the West. Presently, English has become an international lingua franca used in both intra- and international communication on diverse domains of life (Widodo, Wood, & Gupta, 2017). It would be beneficial for Thai children to be exposed to a variety of cultures, instead of being limited to some Western countries. With the English language, as Matsuda (2002) argues, students can access different parts of the world that are inaccessible otherwise. It could become a magic tool for the students to make sense of the world only if the language and cultures were presented appropriately and effectively (Matsuda, 2002; Yamanaka, 2006). Apart from a better balance in cultural contents and national representation in textbooks, it is also important for locally-published textbooks to include contents related to students' lives and that revolved around familiar social and cultural contexts. Being locally emphasized does not necessarily mean that textbooks have to exclude every Western cultural aspect. The intention is to ensure that teachers make a critical examination of cultural information presented in textbooks. Without such examination, localization, and customization, a direct knowledge transfer would risk misleading that a particular culture or value must be learned or mastered to become superior in English. Instead, the students should focus on an awareness of global diversity. Moreover, teachers should know how to tailor ELT materials to the local needs so that current Western-centric activities, dialogues, tasks, and exercises can be made appropriate and meaningful to local students and their preferred voices and identities. Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) excellently put it:

To what extent can we expect rules of interpretation and discourse conventions to be shared by speakers of English in London and Hanoi, for example? ... Authentic native-speaker discourse in London... might be quite inappropriate for speakers of English in other parts of the world; what is appropriate for speakers of English in one context might need to be made appropriate to another. (p. 199)

Many issues are beyond the scope of this study, thereby deserving future studies. The following recommendations are proposed: Firstly, the conclusion drawn from this study is only limited to a locally-

published textbook for primary 6 level. To obtain broader perspectives on how cultural contents and national representation are depicted, future studies could include more textbooks from other local publishers in the analysis. Secondly, this study only investigated the cultural contents characterized by nations. Further research may investigate cultural contents from different perspectives, such as an operational dimension of culture outlining four sub-dimensions or senses of cultures: aesthetic, sociological, semantic, and pragmatic, as posited by Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990). Thirdly, in an attempt to investigate how the teacher dealt with cultures, this study based its findings on verbal evidence the teacher produced, which may or may not accurately reflect current practices. Future studies could look into the real actions and compare the observed with interviewed data, which might produce a more insightful interpretation of how cultural contents are actually dealt with. Finally, it would also be worthwhile to investigate teachers' ability to critically analyze ELT materials and their attitudes towards teaching Western, international, and home cultures. Such obtained data would be useful to draw implications for training courses on a critical evaluation of ELT materials.

REFERENCES

- Abebe, D. T., & Deneke, D. G. T. (2015). Causes of students' limited participation in EFL classroom: Ethiopian public universities in focus. *International Journal of Educational Research and Technology*, 6(1), 74-89.
- Alptekin, C. (1993). Target-language culture in EFL materials. *ELT Journal*, 47, 136-143.
- Alptekin, C. (2002). Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT. *ELT Journal*, 56(1), 57-64.
- Awayed-Bishara, M. (2015). Analyzing the cultural content of materials used for teaching English to high school speakers of Arabic in Israel. *Discourse & Society*, 26, 517-542. doi: 10.1177/0957926515581154
- Baker, W. (2015). Research into practice: Cultural and intercultural awareness. *Language Teaching*, 48, 130-141. doi: 10.1017/S0261444814000287
- Baker, W. (2016). Culture and language in intercultural communication, English as a lingua franca and English language teaching: Points of convergence and conflict. In P. Holmes & F. Dervin (Eds.), *The cultural and intercultural dimensions of English as a lingua franca* (pp. 70-89). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (M. Holquist, Ed.; C. Emerson & M. Holquist, trans.). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Boriboon, P. (2004, May). 'We would rather talk about Plaa Raa than hamburgers': Voices from low-proficiency EFL learners in rural Thailand. Paper presented at the Postgraduate Conference, Edinburgh, the UK..
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chalapati, S. (2007). *The internationalisation of higher education in Thailand: Case studies of two English-medium business graduate programs* (Unpublished PhD Thesis). RMIT University, Australia.
- Chao, T. (2011). The hidden curriculum of cultural content in internationally published ELT textbooks: A closer look at New American Out. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 8, 189-210.
- Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your coursebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dinh, T. N., & Sharifian, F. (2017). Vietnamese cultural conceptualisations in the locally developed English textbook: A case study of 'Lunar New Year'/'Tet.' *Asian Englishes*, 19, 148-159. doi: 10.1080/13488678.2017.1279763
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Arnold.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (2001). New ways of meaning: The challenge to applied linguistics. In A. Fill, & P. Muhlhausler (Eds.), *The ecolinguistics reader* (pp. 175-202). London and New York: Continuum.
- Keyuravong, S. (2010). Insights from Thailand. In R. Johnstone (Ed.), *Learning through English: Policies, challenges and prospects: Insights from East Asia* (pp. 69-95). London: British Council.
- Kramsch, C., & Sullivan, P. (1996). Appropriate pedagogy. *ELT Journal*, 50, 199-212.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2012). Individual identity, cultural globalization, and teaching English as an international language. In L. Alsagoff, G. Hu, & S. L. McKay, W. A. Renandya (Eds.), *Principles and practices for teaching English as an international language* (pp. 9-27). New York: Routledge.
- Kusumaningputri, R., & Widodo, H. P. (2018). Promoting Indonesian university students' critical intercultural awareness in tertiary EAL classrooms: The use of digital photograph-mediated intercultural tasks. *System*, 72, 49-61. doi: 10.1016/j.system.2017.10.003
- Lin, A. M. Y., & Luk, J. C. M. (2005). Local creativity in the face of global domination: Insights of Bakhtin for teaching English for dialogic communication. In J. K. Hall, G. Vitanova, & L. Marchenkova (Eds.), *Dialogue with Bakhtin on second and foreign language learning: New perspective* (pp. 77-98). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Liu, J., & Fang, F. G. (2017). Perceptions, awareness and perceived effects of home culture on intercultural communication: Perspectives of university students in China. *System, 67*, 25-37. doi: 10.1016/j.system.2017.04.003
- Mackenzie, A. (2004). *Small steps in English language teacher development in Surin: Step one*. Obirin University Foreign Language Education Centre English Language Program.
- Matsuda, A. (2002). International understanding through teaching world Englishes. *World Englishes, 21*, 436-440.
- McConachy, T. (2018). Critically engaging with cultural representations in foreign language textbooks. *Intercultural Education, 29*, 77-88. doi: 10.1080/14675986.2017.1404783
- Mikk, J. (2000). *Textbook: Research and writing*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Office of Education Council, Ministry of Education. (2006). *Education in Thailand in 2005/2006*. Bangkok: Amarin.
- Pennycook, A. (1994). *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. New York: Longman.
- Ramirez, A. G., & Hall, J. K. (1990). Language and culture in secondary level Spanish textbooks. *The Modern Language Journal, 74*(1), 48-65.
- Sherlock, Z. (2016). Japan's textbook inequality: How cultural bias affects foreign language acquisition. *Power and Education, 8*(1), 73-87. doi: 10.1177/1757743815624119
- Simahasan, A., & Thongprem, S. (2012). *New Aha English 6*. Bangkok: Aksorn.
- Subramainan, L., Mahmoud, M A., Ahmad, M S., & Yusoff, M. Z. M. (2018). A conceptual dynamics using agent-based social simulation. *Journal of Fundamental and Applied Sciences, 10*, 1338-1346.
- Syrbe, M., & Rose, H. (2018). An evaluation of the global orientation of English textbooks in Germany. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 12*, 152-163. doi: 10.1080/17501229.2015.1120736
- Tajeddin, Z., & Teimournezhad, S. (2014). Exploring the hidden agenda in the representation of culture in international and localized ELT textbooks. *The Language Learning Journal, 43*, 180-193. doi: 10.1080/09571736.2013.869942
- van Lier, L. (2000). From input to affordance: Social-interactive learning from an ecological perspective. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning: Recent advantages* (pp.245-259). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Widdowson, H. (1990). *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Widodo, H. P., Wood, A., & Gupta, D. (Eds.). (2017). *Asian English language classrooms: Where theory and practice meet*. New York: Routledge.
- Widodo, H. P. (2018). A critical micro-semiotic analysis of values depicted in the Indonesian Ministry of National Education-endorsed secondary school English textbook. In H. P. Widodo, M. R., Perfecto, L. V. Canh, & A. Buripakdi (Eds.), *Situating moral and cultural values in ELT materials: The Southeast Asian context* (pp. 131-152). Cham: Springer.
- Yamanaka, N. (2006). An evaluation of English textbooks in Japan from the viewpoint of nations in the inner, outer, and expanding Circles. *JALT Journal, 28*(1), 57-76.