



## **An Exploration of Culture in Listening and Speaking Materials from an English as an International Language Perspective**

**Amonrat Rattanawong<sup>a</sup>, Saneh Thongrin<sup>b,\*</sup>**

<sup>a</sup> [amonrat.r@ku.ac.th](mailto:amonrat.r@ku.ac.th), Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, Thailand

<sup>b</sup> [saneht@arts.tu.ac.th](mailto:saneht@arts.tu.ac.th), Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, Thailand

\* Corresponding author, [saneht@arts.tu.ac.th](mailto:saneht@arts.tu.ac.th)

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### **ABSTRACT**

As material that projects linguistic and cultural knowledge to students, English Language learning textbooks shape students' learning in various educational contexts. However, many textbooks have been found to perpetuate Anglo-Western norms and beliefs; thus, they fail to represent local students' socio-cultural backgrounds. With this in mind, our study analyzes listening–speaking sections of ten textbooks used in leading Thai universities. More specifically, through a perspective on cultural content sources (i.e., local, target, international, and neutral content), in combination with a deeper two-level analysis of such cultural content (surface and deep), we explore cultural contents integrated in listening–speaking sections of the ten textbooks selected. Findings indicated that three patterns of multiple cultural contents were well integrated in five of the ten textbooks: Touchstone, Speakout, Navigate, Unlock, and Prism. These five books seemed to embrace much broader multicultural content that represented non-Western students' histories and their global counterparts. Despite the overall low frequency of local

	<p>students' realities portrayed in the sampled textbooks, our findings indicate that textbook authors and publishers have begun to acknowledge students' realities in terms of English being an international language. We suggest directions practitioners and researchers can explore so that learners can be exposed to linguistically and culturally appropriate content.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> EIL, ELT textbooks, cultural contents</p>
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## Introduction

In language education, textbooks enhance students' learning domains and teachers' effective instruction (Rose et al., 2021) in various ways. For students, textbooks take on psychological roles as learning essentials (McKay, 2012), as they contain linguistic, cultural, and functional contents that both advocate and stimulate learners' learning domains (Risager, 2018). With texts used in any classes, students not only manage missing learning content, but also independently organize their learning, either inside or outside a classroom, and prepare for any tests properly (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994). More importantly, through textbooks, those with some deficit learning backgrounds can have equal access for content knowledge during learning processes and learning outcomes subsequently evaluated (Kirpatrick, 2014; Sharifian, 2013).

These fundamental roles then determine what teachers should consider when selecting or writing textbooks. Regardless of purposes, teachers should be aware of the perspectives underlying such textbooks. Asserted by a number of scholars (e.g., McKay, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2003; Sharifian, 2013), language learners should be well equipped with EIL, where learners are exposed to interactions between people who represent different orientations to the world. To this end, the contents of learning material should be associated with various cultural perspectives, and students' needs and socio-cultural realities (McKay, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2003; Sharifian, 2013). However, most textbooks empirically explored seem to rely more on the approaches other than cultural perspectives, such as product, practice, perspective, community, and person (Moran, 2001), five senses (Smith, 2009). These approaches could benefit students. However, significant cultural agents that address students to understand more varieties of social practices could have been missed.

The study viewed by comprehensive cultural perspectives can be found in Cortazzi and Jin (1999) with the framework of source culture, target culture, and international culture, which well reflects "assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that are used to interpret other people's actions, words, and patterns

of thinking” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p. 197). More importantly, this framework is closely related to the concept of globalization, where understanding global and local elements of economic domains are important foundations to understand further practices that could emerge subsequently. Here, students expected to take on future roles need to be prepared from language education, where textbooks should embrace “students’ representations of reality and global cultures” to encourage “negotiated meaning”, and “learning subject matters” and thus create “critical, active learners” (Thongrin, 2018, p. 156). As such, textbooks aiming to open up language learners’ multiple views should be oriented to the cultural contents drawn from Cortazzi and Jin (1999)—local culture representing learners’ realities, target culture addressing English native speakers’ norms, and global views widening students’ world experiences.

The first reflects learners’ concept of self before moving on to ‘otherness’ in wider scales lying in the other two types (Thongrin, 2018). In addition, a room for neutral view of culture could be given (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014) as it might take a safe stance in some situations. However, these sources of culture alone may not lend clear perspectives, as culture itself is very complex. The surface-deep levels of culture by Hall (1976) could be viewed together. Much attention has been paid to the surface, visible cultural level, the ‘c’ level, rather than the deep counterpart or the ‘C’, although the latter, invisible but deeper, does represent cultural content more accurately (Raigón-Rodríguez, 2018) and develop learners’ critical thinking more profitably (Gómez Rodríguez, 2015; Shaules, 2007). Hall’s view could also be strengthened by Brody’s (2003) two levels of culture—level one, the product of “civilization” (p. 39), the formal, macro level found among institutional practices, and level two, the deeper ways found in individuals’ everyday lives. Certainly, both levels are indispensable for cultural insights, by which the practices in institutions and of individuals can be well underpinned. Apparently, the ‘surface-deep meanings’ of culture by Hall (1976) could be complementarily implemented along with the ‘three sources’ of cultural content by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and a neutral stance by Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014).

In addition to promoting learners’ understandings of English varieties, textbooks can also foster interactions between second language speakers of English (McKay, 2012), and code-switching in dialogues where two or more language are used. As a result, textbooks with listening-speaking skills can be used to explore such possibilities as these two skills are considered earlier gateways for communication encounters, and thus designed to enhance linguistic, discourse, interactional, sociocultural, formulaic, and strategic competence (see Celce-Murcia, 2008). As such, the analysis of listening-speaking activities designed in textbooks should also be achieved through a

comprehensive view of the cultural perspectives by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and neutral culture (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014), in a combination with the surface-deep levels of culture by Hall (1976).

This study consequently aims to analyze listening-speaking sections of ten textbooks used in ten leading universities of Thailand. These universities are ranked according to the Time's Higher Education (THE, 2020) index, which is based on certain ranking criteria—one of which reflects an international outlook encompassing international students, staff, and collaboration. In our analysis, three sources of cultural contents (local, target, and international), a neutral stance of culture, and two levels of such cultural content (surface and deep) were systematically explored. The assumption being that any textbooks found to contain a relatively large proposition of all three inter-connected elements could be considered a “quality” textbook in terms of promoting EIL.

## Review of Literature

### English as an International Language and Its Instruction

The concept of English as an International Language (EIL) has been proposed and promoted by various scholars during the 21st century (e.g., McKay, 2012, Sharifian, 2013, Tomlinson, 2005). Smith (2009), who was one of the early pioneers, proposed what is now widely known as English as an International Auxiliary Language or EIAL. EIAL allowed the field of language teaching to move away from internalizing native speaker norms, as it de-nationalized the English language. It also encouraged learners to communicate their ideas to people from different linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds, and put communication through English as an educational goal. In other words, from an EIAL perspective, English is seen as a language of international communication, thus it celebrates variety and intercultural communication, wherein learners should be taught to communicate with native *and* non-native speakers of English effectively. As Sharifian (2013) notes, “the main aim of language teaching is to facilitate the development of skills and competencies to prepare learners for engaging in intercultural communication with speakers from a wide range of cultural backgrounds” (p. 3). Given this view, the paradigm of English instruction shifted to serve individual identities worldwide, as well as a wide range of educational topics, some of which include travel, international relations, communications, economic domains, advancements in science and technology, media, and culture (Seidlhofer, 2003). The paradigm particularly encourages more innovative views of English language teaching that includes

various entities, such as curricula, materials design, and more (See Rose et al., 2021).

In the realm of language education and culture, there has also been a realignment of English in the global sense, in which individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds can communicate and interact to achieve their goals (McKay, 2004). A debatable question is should one culture be given priority so that a balance between the learners' culture, their own selves, and international cultures can be made. Kirkpatrick (2014), McKay (2012), and Sharifian (2013) propose that other cultures should be used to highlight the roles of individuals that are as equally important as those from the dominant countries. Related to this concern is the view that EIAL pedagogy should be aligned with the concepts of intercultural competence, which is a concept that aims to enhance learners' exposure to cultural diversity (Kirkpatrick, 2014). Here, Kirkpatrick (2014) suggests that Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) English Language Teaching curricular should include cultural components from countries other than inner circle ones.

Together, these thoughts suggest some positive gains in the field of ELT, one of which is the importance of learners' critical cultural awareness (Byram et al., 2002). Such thoughts also highlight classroom teaching, where learners can acquire and adjust both communicative competence and intercultural skills in order gain skills in negotiation, adaptability, and sensitive responses to contextual variations (Tomlinson, 2005). Such thoughts also reflect the importance of classroom materials and textbooks, the latter of which have been assigned as products of the cultures. In this light, research has shown how textbooks should be questioned in terms of their bias toward Anglo-Western cultures (Keles & Yazan, 2020), and beliefs regarding sexuality (Selvi & Kocaman, 2020), racism (Bowen & Hopper, 2022), religious stigmas and multicultural representations (Risager, 2018). Overall, as McKay (2012) broadly suggests, EIL-aligned materials should embrace the students' culture or local culture as this kind of multi-perspective allows local teachers to become competent teachers and design materials appropriate for students' cultural realities.

## **ELT Textbooks and the Analysis of Cultural Content**

There is now strong evidence that ELT textbooks, over the last thirty or so years, have been bounded to an Anglo-Western view of the world (Keles & Yazan, 2020). For example, Raigón-Rodríguez (2018) discovered that big "C" indexicals, which are clearly visible in material items such as food, dress, and art, as well as small "c" indexicals, which are less visible and include more abstract elements that are commonly assigned to culture, such as customs,

behaviors, values, beliefs, and attitudes, mostly occurred in receptive skills sections of textbooks used in Spain. In contrast, Hakander (2018) found that ELT textbooks used in Sweden, *Vienpoints 1, 2, and 3*, predominately included content related to target cultures (mainly British and American cultures), in which the complex, deep culture was predominantly embedded in the textbooks. In other words, in both studies the cultural content was clearly oriented to the normative practices of English speaking cultures, revealing a certain preference to which the text producers are familiar with in terms of their own socio-political background and ways of seeing knowledge, both of which they believe should be shared with non-English speaking countries.

The same phenomenon was found in Middle Eastern contexts, in which the recent study of Hosseinzadeh et al. (2021) was carried out. Their study showed that the textbook, *Touchstone*, was dominated by the target culture (i.e., an Anglo-American view of reality), while the locally published textbook embraced Iranian culture. Similarly, Ashrafi and Ajideh (2018) explored three advanced textbooks in the Iran Language Institute (ILI) and found that Anglo-American cultural hegemony was predominant in the textbooks, while international and local culture received less attention. In addition, one of the books focused more on surface cultural contents, while the deeper ones occurred more often in the last two textbooks. Informed by these studies, textbooks developed based on a single view could fail to benefit students as their learning domains might not be completed. In fact, varieties of cultural contents should be addressed in textbooks that text writers and teachers can widen students' views more effectively.

Cultural biases toward surface and deep cultural contents aligned with Anglo-Western views of the world have been found in ELT materials used across the Asian contexts, such as in China (Zhang & Su, 2021), Thailand (Teo & Kaewsakul), the Middle East (Ashrafi & Ajideg, 2018; Hosseinzadeh et al., 2021), and so on. Zhang and Su (2021), for instance, found that the textbooks used in China seemed to balance out differences between cultures, while those from Germany offered more multicultural perspectives to demonstrate the dynamic and negotiable concept of cultures. However, a predominant cultural perspective was observed in the studies of Teo and Kaewsakul (2016), indicating that the target culture together with surface elements of culture was incorporated as cultural representations in ELT commercial textbooks used in fundamental English courses in the universities under investigation. In such studies, the researchers have tried to encompass multifaceted practices or cultural perspectives in language education and curricula. However, an EIL lens has rarely been used explicitly to analyze the cultural contents of textbooks. As a result, research exploring any specific skills in textbooks, such as listening and speaking, reading and writing, in connection with the analysis related to a complete view culture—both inside

and outside of the learners, locally and globally, where their own culture could lie in the complex, deep level of culture could be investigated as it could contribute to a methodological level of ELT practices. In this study, we explored these cultural aspects in listening-speaking sections of ten textbooks, analysing sources of culture, together with complexity levels of culture, where we conducted a two-level analysis using individual cultural frameworks and integrative views of such cultural contents.

## **Methods**

### **Research Approach**

This study focused on the analysis of ELT textbooks used to teach first-year students in top-ranked Thai universities (THE, 2020). We used content analysis (see Bauer, 2000) to explore representations of cultures, where both numerical descriptions of the categories analyzed and qualitative patterns were investigated.

### **Research Context and Criteria of the Textbook Samples**

We purposively selected ten large universities located in four different regions of Thailand, so as to obtain broad coverage of textbook usage across Thailand, where we used fictitious names to identify their location and ethically protect their identity. We sampled universities in Central, Northern, Northeastern, and Southern Thailand. Only one university from the south was ranked in 2020 THE list. To include universities that represent all regions, we then applied a randomness principle so that the findings could represent actual practice of these universities. Based on the rank order, the first three universities of central, northern, and northeastern regions, and the one southern university were identified. The textbook used in these selected universities were finally selected—together ten textbooks under this investigation. Importantly, a textbook in and of itself should carry necessary elements for teaching-learning processes, in which presentations of textbook elements are believed to represent certain approaches and theoretical assumptions of these finished textbooks (Hutchison & Torres, 1994). Therefore, this study mainly investigated only main textbooks used in universities' curricular were analyzed, any supplementary documents were not taken into consideration. The related information of these selected textbooks is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1***Summary of ten textbooks' related information*

No.	Titles	Institutes	Publisher	Publication date	Level	Accents
1	Blossom	Central University 1	In-House publisher	2019	Unidentified	BE, AE, ThE
2	Unlock	Central University 2	Cambridge	2016	B2	AE, BE, IE
3	Smart Choice	Central University 3	Oxford	2016	A2-B1	AE, BE
4	Life	Northeastern University 1	National Geographic	2014	B1	AE, IE
5	Prism	Northeastern University 2	Cambridge	2017	A2	AE
6	Touchstone	Northeastern University 3	Cambridge	2014	A1-A2	AE
7	Life	Northern University 1	National Geographic	2014	B1	AE, BE
8	Navigate	Northern University 2	Oxford	2020	B1	AE, BE, IE
9	Personal Best	Northern University 3	Richmond	2018	B1	AE
10	Speakout	Southern University 1	Pearson	2017	B1	IE

\* AE = American English/ BE = British English/ IE = International English/ ThE = Thai English

The ten textbooks used in the analysis are the main textbooks used in ten universities. *Blossom* is the only in-house published textbook while the others are published by well-known publishers, such as Oxford, Cambridge, or Pearson. *Blossom* focuses on listening and speaking skills in various situations, and it is based on teaching pragmatic language functions such as greeting and giving advice, making and accepting apologies, asking and giving directions, or booking a table and ordering food at a restaurant. Provided within each unit are a number of conversations between native speakers and Thai interlocutors. The textbook's level was not mentioned, however. Among the publishers of the other selected texts, Cambridge University Press was the most frequent publisher and it published the textbooks, *Prism Listening and Speaking 1*, *Touchstone*, and *Unlock Reading and Writing Skills 4*. This publisher insisted that their textbooks were written with American English on their covers or companion websites.

Regarding accents used in the accompanying audio files, some textbooks clearly stated their position as British or American English; others tended to use accents that are more international or the textbook itself, claimed to serve global needs in the 21st century. *Speakout* from Pearson seemed to be the only textbook that claimed in its website that it included authentic, real world language and a wide range of international accents. It emphasized "an authentic real world language" (Pearson, 2023). This resulted in a wide range of pronunciation features. For example, the videos from the program on a BBC channel, namely Going Local in which Rafael Estophania travels to Rio de Janeiro and he speaks with Portuguese English speakers, or BBC News presents Ethiopian Bethlehem Tilahun Alemu founding her company, soleRebels, to produce footwear.



*Navigate* presented issues from around the world, yet the textbook did not offer English language used in international contexts. It claimed that it was produced in line with 21st century skills, which consist of cross-cultural skills and global awareness, and there were other accents included such as those from Middle Eastern English speakers or Indian English speakers. Similarly, *Life Split Edition A* from National Geographic Learning, which is a part of Language Learning publication and authorized only in Thailand. Its contents were the same as *Navigate* with regard to various themes and issues from around the world, but American or British English editions were still emphasized on its webpage to indicate its position. *Life* was printed using American English, but British and American pronunciations were used in the videos and conversations. Nevertheless, Trinidad and Tobago English, in the version used by Northeastern University 1, was used when local people were interviewed. *Personal Best*, which focused on 21st century skills and technology, and *Smart Choice*, which mentioned The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in the design of the textbooks, mostly emphasized Anglo-American notions from an Anglo-American author.

### **Analysis Frameworks**

As the textbooks selected for this study have been implemented in ELT curricular for a certain period of time, the suggestion by Harmer (2015) that “a judgement on how well a book has performed in fact” (p. 301) should be effective in this study. In the analysis process, we explored the cultural contents in listening and speaking skill tasks through the concepts of surface and deep culture, which stems from the cultural iceberg model of Hall (1976); we also used categories of cultural sources (target culture, international, local cultures) from Cortazzi and Jin (1999) with the additional category of neutral culture (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014). Our assumption was that this combined approach could give increased insights into cultural domains that should be considered in textbook publications.

### **Data Analysis and Validation**

The inclusion criteria were applied to the textbook selection, where we worked together throughout a four-step process for accurate information with textbook samples at the outset. First, we independently read all ten textbooks, starting from the overall information (i.e., publishers, publication dates, purposes, accents, and levels) of each textbook to understand the actual purposes of the textbooks. We then moved on to detailed descriptions of all chapters in each textbook. Second, we individually analyzed the chapters with

Listening and Speaking Sections, which contained either Listening-Speaking as separate tasks or integrated them with Reading-Writing-Grammar Sections. Here, we paid more attention to cultural senses based on the selected frameworks. We used the predefined categories for cultural representations in this step. Third, we compared our two sets of analyses and resolved for disagreements, ensuring that each researcher had aligned to the selected frameworks and theoretical perspectives related to ELT practices in general, and cultural concepts in textbooks in particular. Lastly, we gave our combined analyses to first language English researcher who had experience of ELT teaching and research in several education contexts. We discussed questionable points and resolved any disagreements.

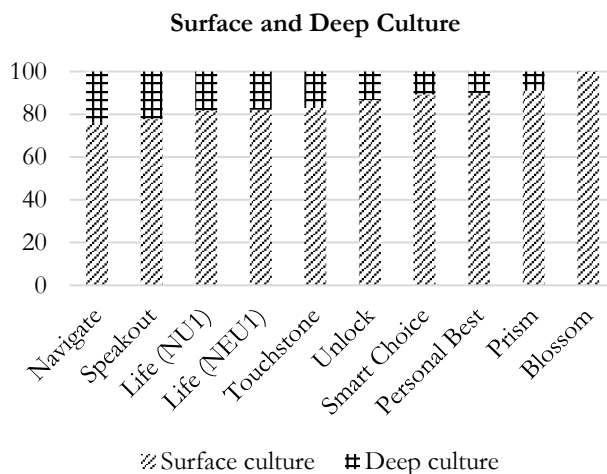
## Findings

With the Iceberg Model (Hall, 1976) and the integrated models of cultural aspects of Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014), cultural elements in Listening-Speaking Sections in each textbook were analyzed. The data were analyzed into two major layers: individual views of culture based on the selected frameworks and integrative views where all the frameworks are collectively considered.

### Textbooks Viewed by Individual Frameworks

#### *Analysis using the Iceberg Model*

The data analysis using Hall's (1976) Iceberg Model are shown in Figure 1. Among the ten textbooks, *Speakout* and *Navigate* contained the highest proportion of deep culture. The deep culture in *Navigate* (23.89%) discusses time concepts in terms of being present-focused or future-focused, wherein individuals are not solely telling time or talking about free-time activities, which is the focus in the other textbooks. In Unit 3 social etiquettes were mentioned in listening tasks and included discussions about different places, such as at the cinema, in the classroom, on the train, at the table, or in a queue at the bank. In Units 4 and 12, life stages and events were the highlight of the unit. For example, one task focused on the life changing directions of João Carlos Martins, who stopped being a successful pianist and conductor to become a boxing manager and politician. This task led students to engage in critical thinking.

**Figure 1***The proportion between surface culture and deep culture*

The percentage of deep culture appearing in *Speakout* is similar to that of *Navigate*. Most of the deep culture (22.29%) in *Speakout* was found in Units 1 and 7, which related to changes such as changes in someone's life or problems encountered by people when they change their lives. In Unit 1, the deep culture content emphasized life, happiness, and relationships. For instance, students were assigned to read a passage entitled "The Seven Secrets of Happiness" and then discuss with classmates about the happiness in their lives. Additionally, a video about the relationship between Mike and Miranda on a BBC program allowed students to share their opinions on the couple's problems and discuss characteristics of their own special person. In Unit 7, Jessica Fox, who moved from California to Scotland, or the Durrells, who sold their house in the UK to live on the island of Corfu in Greece, raised some issues for students to discuss.

Seven out of ten textbooks analyzed in this study contained less than 20% of deep culture content: *Life* (18.27%), for example, taught in Northern University 1, and *Life* (17.83%) taught in Northeastern University 1 edition, *Touchstone* (16.03%), *Unlock* (13.33 %), *Smart Choice* (10.75%), *Personal Best* (10%), and *Prism* (8.85%). Although the amount of deep culture is quite low, the results to some extent demonstrate the attempts by authors or publishers to encompass such cultural content. Given its complexity, it is quite difficult to understand any particular deep cultural content that could be found in

something unobservable, subjective, and abstract such as norms, beliefs, attitudes, values, and more (Shaules, 2007). However, the low amount of this type of cultural content can indicate some change the authors and publishers would welcome, as well as some conceptualizations of the complex characteristics of deep culture.

However, the cultural content found in the in-house published *Blossom* is limited to only surface culture, such as interests, accommodations, shopping, lifestyles, food and restaurants, education, transportations, and tourist attractions. Although this book was written for a Thai university, it did not seem to touch deep elements of Thai culture that could be drawn from values, beliefs, individuals' behaviors, and more. These finding could be explained, once again, by the complexity of deep culture; more importantly, EIL should be addressed more in such a non-English educational setting so students' narratives and histories could be echoed more loudly.

### ***Analysis of Cultural Aspects***

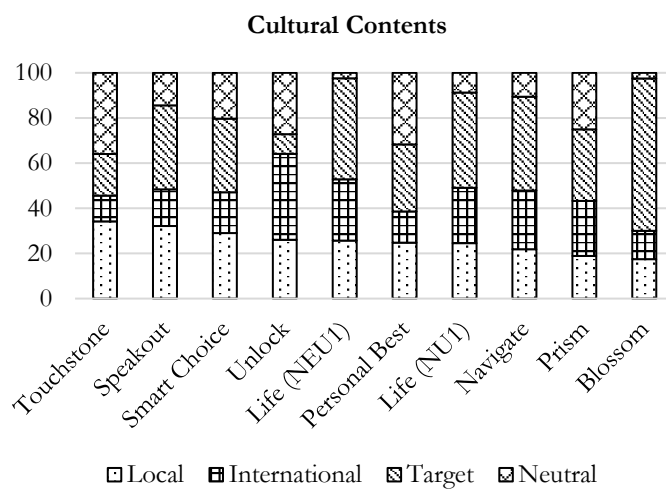
Types or sources of culture transmitted through the selected textbooks were analyzed. The findings are addressed here based on the prevalence of sources in terms of target, international, neutral, and local cultures. The figure below shows the different proportions of cultural contents in each ELT textbook.

The most predominant culture found in most textbooks was the target or first language English speakers' culture. This source of culture was observed in *Blossom* (67.50%), *Life* (Northeastern University 1) (44.73%), *Life* (Northern University 1) (42.14%), *Navigate* (41.54%), *Smart Choice* (32.6%), *Speakout* (37.18%) and *Prism* (31.7%). All these textbooks contained a level of target culture content that was less than 50%, while the least amount of target culture occurred in *Touchstone* (18.42%) and *Unlock* (8.71%). *Blossom*'s majority of listening and speaking tasks involved target culture content (67.5%). The pronunciation tasks played the most important role of the textbook at the beginning of every unit in. They served to tune the listening and speaking skills of students to native speakers' accents. Interestingly, some audio files were recorded with interactions between first language English speakers and Thai speakers. Unsurprisingly, most of the textbooks emphasized the target culture in the same way as other studies have found (Ashrafi & Ajideh, 2018; Hakander, 2018; Hosseinzadeh et al., 2021; Teo & Kaewsakul, 2016; Zhang & Su, 2021). Somehow, the perspectives to liberate EIL students could be

incorporated in ELT practice more so students could open their world views and thus survive in multicultural realities.

**Figure 2**

*The proportions of cultural contents of ten textbooks*



As indicated by the data, international culture was another source found in all the commercial textbooks, most predominantly in *Unlock* (38.04%), followed by *Life* (Northeastern University 1) (27.14%), *Life* (Northern University 1) (24.56%), *Navigate* (26.05%), and *Prism* (24.39%). *Unlock* was the only textbook in the selected sample that emphasized the international culture to any great extent. Gondoliers in Italy, Ayurveda in India, the history of silk in China, the Three Gorges Dam in China, Islamic Architecture in Spain and in Turkey, a Leonardo da Vinci design, and the tribe Khanty of Siberia were some topics related to international culture. Most of the tasks involved watching videos and asking questions based on them. In *Smart Choice* (18.12%), *Speakout* (16.24%), *Personal Best* (13.86%), *Blossom* (12.50%), and *Touchstone* (11.40%), international culture was found in very low percentages. Interestingly, these textbooks could welcome the international outlook and embrace “students’ representations of reality and global cultures” (Thongrin, 2018, p. 156). The practice certainly helps equip students when they have to encounter and manage interactions between people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Seidlhofer, 2003; Sharifian, 2009).

The data also showed that these textbooks supported neutral culture, such as topics oriented to general or universal concepts. These include *Touchstone* (35.97%), *Personal Best* (31.69%), *Unlock* (27.17%), *Prism* (25.01%), and *Smart Choice* (20.29%). In *Touchstone*, 35.96% of the listening and speaking tasks involved neutral culture, whereas 18.42% of tasks involved the target culture. In contrast, *Speakout* (14.42%), *Navigate* (10.56%), *Life* (Northeastern University 1) (2.42%), *Life* (Northern University 1) (8.74%), and *Blossom* (2.50%) placed importance on other types of culture. Neutral culture could have reflected bias-free attitudes. However, in real-world realities, students should be introduced to critical views of social practices, which could be assisted in their learning processes that include the use of textbooks. Within the EIL paradigm, learners should be facilitated to understand, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, compare, and contrast their cultures with others' through intercultural sensibilities (Byram et al, 2002; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Here, textbooks with cultural agents could help learners to achieve so.

Last but, perhaps, most interestingly is the source of culture related to students' realities, or local culture, mostly found in *Touchstone* (34.21%), *Speakout* (32.16%), and *Smart Choice* (28.99%). As indicated by its high percentage of cultural content drawn from local sources, *Touchstone* could be a great agent for local culture, reflecting a sense of cultural ownership, as many researchers have suggested (Kirpatrick, 2012; McKay, 2012; Sharifian, 2013; Smith, 2009). Although the topics were as common as the others such as childhood, classmates, favorite music, hobbies, food, eating habits, festivals, childhood vacation, growing up memories, hometown, travel, house chores, or communication, the textbook offers more chances for students to express their ideas and perspectives in those tasks based on what they were familiar with. For example, students were assigned to choose a festival they know and ask their classmates questions or they were asked to discuss childhood memories, friendships, or romantic relationships. *Speakout's* local culture allowed students to share their culture with regard to living with their family, life, TV programs in their country, food, dream jobs, dream commuters, cities visited, travel and transport, life change, tourist attractions, business, and country life and city life. The proportion of local culture in *Smart Choice* (28.99%) sat in third place. Its speaking tasks asked students to show their abilities and apply their background knowledge more clearly than in the listening tasks. *Smart Choice* assigned students to share ideas and discuss their own vacations, the movies they like, the most beautiful place in their country/city, wedding ceremonies, festivals, or types of houses. Although the inclusion of local culture is quite low, it is a promising sign that this kind of

content is still implemented in some popular commercial texts. The low use of local culture could be expanded if ELT practitioners are more open to students' narratives and histories.

### **Integrative View of Cultural Content**

To explore cultural dimensions more comprehensively, we also put together the analysis collectively drawn from all the frameworks by Hall's (1976) Iceberg's Model, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) so we could draw deeper elements of culture that could be inferred to the textbook authors and publishers that encompass various perspectives of cultures. The analysis includes three categories of the combinations.

#### ***Textbooks with Local, Neutral, Target, and International Sources of Culture***

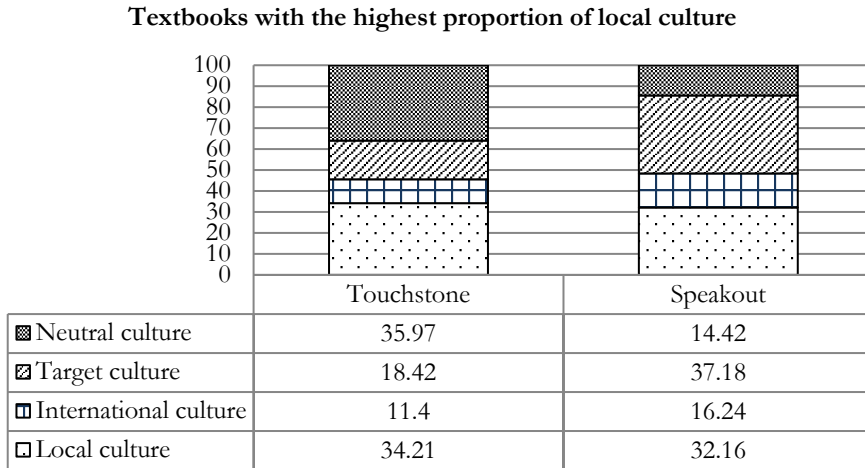
The first group is the combination of local, neutral, target, and international sources of culture, where local culture is placed at the forefront and is well proportioned with its counterparts in two textbooks.

As shown in Figure 3, *Touchstone* accentuated local culture (34.21%) and neutral culture (35.97) instead of target and international culture. 16.03% of its content could be considered as deep culture in Figure 4. The textbook also provided many tasks in which students can express their own culture and values. For example, there were activities where students were asked to talk about stress, childhood memories, friendship, or romantic relationship. Similarly, *Speakout's* inclusion of local culture (32.16%) gave students a chance to share their culture with regard to living with their family, life, TV programs in their country, food, dream jobs, dream commuters, cities visited, travel and transport, life change, tourist attractions, business, as well as country life and city life.

Such a relatively high proportion of local culture in these textbooks might be beneficial for students (McKay, 2012; Sharifian, 2013); nevertheless, the high proportion of neutral culture in *Touchstone* and low proportion of deep culture in both textbooks should be questioned. Fundamentally, cross-cultural elements in a textbook should assist students to gain better skills in negotiation, adaptability, and sensitive responses to contextual variations (Tomlinson, 2005).

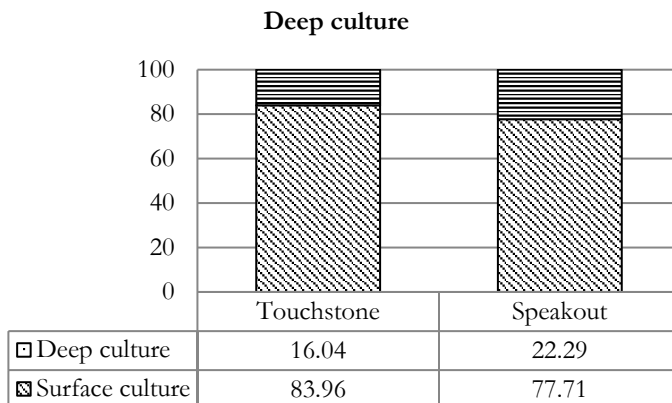
**Figure 3**

*Textbooks with combination of local, neutral, target, and international culture*

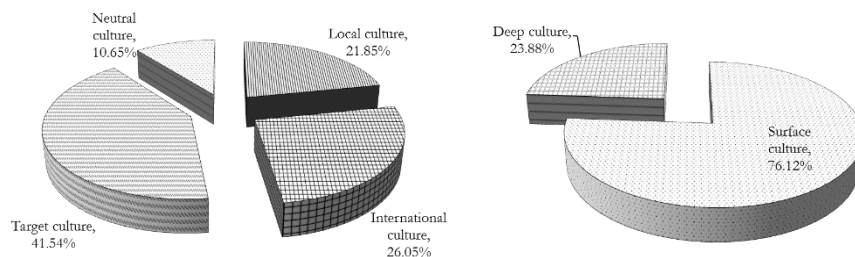


**Figure 4**

*Deep culture of textbook with combination of local, neutral, target, and international culture*





**Figure 5***Textbook with the highest proportion of deep culture*

As revealed in Figure 5, although *Navigate's* cultural content proportion was not remarkable, it was the textbook with the highest proportion of deep culture (23.88%), and 41.54% of the target culture, which reflected a relatively high occurrence of first language English speaker norms and an emphasis on surface culture items such as buildings, food, and history. Although it emphasized target culture content (41.54%), one fourth of its content projected international culture (26.05%). International cultural content included material from various countries and continents, such as Asia (e.g. Vietnam, India, Japan, UAE), Europe (e.g. Austria, Germany, Spain, Poland, Italy, France), Africa (e.g. Morocco), and South America (e.g. Brazil, Chile).

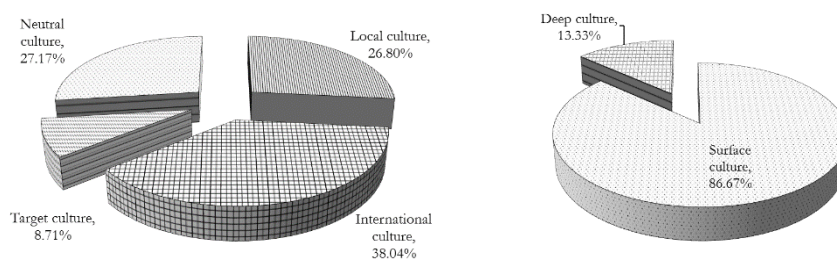
Although *Navigate* contained the highest proportion of deep culture among all ten textbooks, the proportion still seemed to be so low that it could not create “critical, active learners” (Thongrin, 2018, p. 156), thus students exposed to such materials may not be well-positioned to understand cultural insights. Topics concerning present-focused or future-focused language choices relating to individuals, family relationships, or life changing directions, for instance, gave students a chance to communicate the language through their own background knowledge and perspectives. However, deep and surface culture should play equally important roles in textbooks so that the receptive skills can help develop productive skills in multicultural interaction (Raigón-Rodríguez, 2018).

### ***Textbooks with International, Neutral, Local, and Target Sources of Culture***

Another combination of these cultural dimensions indicates the international culture as a leading one along with neutral, local, and target cultures (Figure 6). This can be found in *Unlock*.

**Figure 6**

*Textbook with combination of international, neutral, local, and target culture*



*Unlock*'s culturally based tasks occurred almost equally and included international culture (38.04%), local culture (26.08%), and neutral culture (27.17%), although most of the tasks focused on the international culture. Students were assigned to talk or discuss their perspectives. For example, students had to discuss, in Unit 1, products or food produced in their country, medical or alternative treatments in Thailand, or respect for elderly people in unit 10. The popularity of alternative medicine, education of elderly people, taking risks, chocolate making process, natural disasters, and alternative energy were presented to students as neutral culture since the content did not lean toward any specific culture. Little of the target culture appeared in the textbook. Nonetheless, the target culture and the international culture were merged in the same tasks, such as in unit 1, in which a task proclaimed New York City as the world of food in one city with many kinds of international food found there (e.g. South American, Central European, the Caribbean, and Chinese food). Similarly, unit 9 highlighted art and photography artists around the world (e.g. American, German, and French).

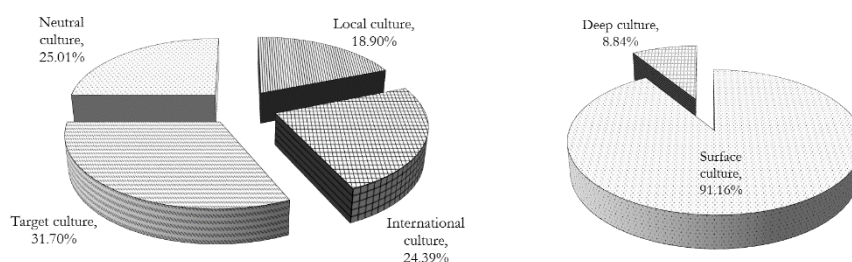
*Unlock* provided a higher percentage of deep culture because it was designed to foster critical thinking skills and strategies to meet The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) standards. It might become a new trend in which the target culture will be less dominant and the deep culture will play a more important role in ELT textbooks to precipitate changes on ELT curriculums. It is true that some textbooks are published based on global cultures, but it is more profitable if learners' culture is included (McKay, 2012), and if they facilitate students to acquire the language through more familiar cultural experiences (Zhang & Su, 2021).

## *Textbooks with Target, International, Neutral, and Local Sources of Culture*

The third combination of these cultural sources indicates target culture as a major one among the other sources. Found in this category is *Prism*, whose contents also indicate deep culture at quite a low degree (Figure 7).

**Figure 7**

*Textbook with combination of target, international, neutral, and local culture*



*Prism* was the only textbook that was almost equal in terms of types of cultural content: target culture (31.71%), international culture (24.39%), local culture (18.90%), and neutral culture (25%); whereas deep culture (8.84%) was rarely found. Although the target culture still played the major role and the local culture seemed to be the minority, the cultural content in other textbooks did not show the same distributional pattern as this textbook. Home in the US, a lecture about Vancouver, Canada, Festival of Ideas, originating in UK, North American holiday or celebration, weather that changing people's mood in the US and Canada, drought in the US, food and coffee shop in the US and the UK, Americanized food, history of Jonathan Koon, Chinese in the US, or American rap star JayZ were represented as the target culture. The mixture between the target culture and the international culture in the same tasks was also presented in the form of a podcast about strange homes and festivals around the world. For the international cultural tasks, they were The Grand Canal in Venice, Italy, global warming in the Western Ghats rainforests of India, Moroccan desert footrace, chess boxing, urban golf, the Serbian tennis player, Novak Djokovic, Sepak Takraw, Kiwayu Island and art from trash, Polish writer Joseph Conrad who studied Latin, Greek, geography, and math. Lastly, the occurrence of local cultural content, which looked less prominent than the other cultures, was assigned

as speaking tasks such as students' city, festival, clothes, coffee shop in students' imagination, artists and craftsmen in their country. This finding should be questioned as to whether the textbook can be considered one of the prototypical textbooks which embraces the concept of EIL more than the others.

*Prism*, however, provided very little deep culture content (8.85%), which should be given more consideration if this textbook is used in any EIL classes. A more equal proportion of cultural elements might allow students to explore and get familiar with diversity, but they might not be equipped with critical thinking skills which can help them scaffold to higher levels.

To sum up, if the textbooks are taken into consideration based on the highest proportion of local, international, and deep culture or the suggestive combination, *Touchstone*, *Speakout*, *Unlock*, *Navigate*, and *Prism* should be the finalists as they comply with the EIL paradigm. Students can feel more comfortable when they can acquire English language through their own values and perspectives in *Touchstone* and *Speakout*. *Unlock*, meanwhile, can help internationalize students' worldviews. *Navigate* might not be the best choice but it can provide in-depth perspectives through deep culture which sharpen critical thinking skills of students. The balance of cultural elements in *Prism* might be a good feature for EIL curriculums and future trends.

## Discussion

The results of this study indicated that varieties of cultural content, especially local and deep culture are not sufficiently represented, although these elements are essential for learners to acquire adaptability and sensitivity (McKay, 2012; Sharifian, 2013). British and American English were always popular varieties in audio materials found in textbooks. However, *Touchstone*, *Speakout*, and *Prism* were almost closed to the notion of EIL as there was no occurrence of an international variety of English in the audio materials. Rather, a curriculum design which improves listening and speaking skills of learners of non-English communities to familiarize multilingual and multicultural with communicative strategies should be developed (Kirkpatrick, 2014).

The findings that showed a 20% proportion of deep culture in *Navigate* indicates something. Probably, during the past two decades, teachers and educators in Thailand could have not been concerned about deep culture, although EIL scholars (Gómez Rodríguez, 2015; Raigón-Rodríguez, 2018; Shaules, 2007) have been promoting its advantages in scaffolding students' proficiency. Gómez Rodríguez (2015) is one of the scholars who agreed to teach students with a critical approach through deep culture since it is the way to show them how transformative and heterogeneous culture is. Similarly,

*Blossom*, an in-house published textbook, was devoted to the insiders of Thai culture, but multilingual and multicultural contents were less realized. The needs and cultural backgrounds of the text's users, including Thai students and other stakeholders, may not be considered sufficient.

Lastly, one of the findings indicated that the distribution of the local, international, target, and neutral culture is not precisely equal, yet "source cultures and other cultures should be equally important in English language use and learning" (Zhang & Su, 2021, p.91). *Prism* was the only textbook that almost equally represented the four types of culture; nonetheless, the proportion of cultural elements found here also indicated that learners' perspectives were quite low. Moreover, the high proportion of neutral culture in *Personal Best* and *Touchstone* were unlikely to enhance students' critical thinking. To strengthen students' ability to understand, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, compare, and contrast their culture with others' cultures through intercultural sensitivity (Byram et al, 2002, Cortazzi & Jin, 1999), textbook producers should make more use of multicultural contents rather than contents with no reference to a particular culture. *Prism* might be a good choice for representing a variety of culture, but it is not a good choice to equip students to develop skills in critical thinking. However, some findings could have highlighted positive trends, though to a very low extent, in that a few attempts striving to shift from the orthodox norms would be possible.

Together, the findings clearly suggest that textbooks to be used in an EIL paradigm should widen students' views in relation to their own local senses, English native speakers, and other international counterparts, all of which should strike a better balance, addressing issues portraying deep culture of each cultural source so students can be well-informed about related fragments or elements of their multi-levelled societies, both their own and others. As such, future researchers, materials writers, and teachers can explore more possibilities to embrace more varieties of cultural elements, one of which should include students' realities as an early gateway to know about their own self, who can help reflect others' selves more clearly. If we, teachers and materials writers, are to transform our learners to well-rounded members of real-world societies, the approaches to develop such textbooks should consider students' histories found in their cultural values, beliefs, and social norms of different cultures, the deep cultural elements by Hall (1976). These variables are awaiting more investigations.

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### About the Authors

**Amonrat Rattanawong:** A PhD candidate in the English Language Studies program at Thammasat University, works as a lecturer of English for Service Industry program at Kasetsart University. Her research interests focus on English as an International Language, Intercultural Communication, and English for Specific Purposes.

**Saneh Thongrin:** Associate Professor in the department of English, Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, has published some scholarly works in *The Asian EFL Journal*, *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, an English Language Education series, Springer, and a Routledge Research in Higher Education series.

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