

Middle School English Teachers' Views on Reflection of Core Competencies and Culture Teaching in Korean Textbooks

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The study investigated ten Korean secondary English teachers' views on to what extent core competencies were reflected in textbooks using 18 Likert-type statements. This study also examined their views on how well cultural contents and activities met curricular objectives of teaching culture through open-ended questions and interviews. Results showed that the three items on civic competence had lower means except for the one on ethical use of information collected in class. Teachers replied that tasks for each grade were deficient in helping students feel proud of their own culture and developing positive attitudes toward other cultures. They thought that current cultural contents lacked diversity despite positive improvements in including other cultures over the years and possibility of meeting curricular goals. Consequently, they made various efforts to offer appropriate culture teaching using additional materials and/or activities with diverse teaching strategies and techniques. Some implications are drawn from these results for better culture teaching.

Key words: culture teaching and learning, culture contents, textbook analysis, teachers' views, core competence

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1. INTRODUCTION

‘Culture’ has been a buzzword in various fields of studies since globalization, but ELT has included culture in teaching language for decades. However, many researchers (e.g., Banks, 2018; Kramersch, 1993, 2010; Moran, 2001) poignantly state that culture is a complex, difficult concept to define, but people have often thought that some culture is superior to other culture. Despite such problems, including culture in English Language Teaching (ELT) has been considered essential and much research has been done on culture, for example, on types or origins of cultural content, development, use of relevant materials, and instructional effects of and suggestions for teaching culture in various contexts (e.g., Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Jung, 2017; S. Kim & Paek, 2015; Lim, 2015; Yoo, 2002). These studies show that there is an excessive amount of cultural content from the U.S. and the U.K. in ELT materials compared to that of other English-speaking countries (Chae, 2004; Chao, 2011; Jang, 2015; Kong & Sung, 2020).

Since the 2000s, key organizations in the world (Richards, 2001; TESOL International Association, 2019; the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Culture Organization; UNESCO, 2011, 2018) have emphasized the importance of including competency in education. In a similar vein, the 2015 Revised National English Curriculum (RNEC) (Ministry of Education; MOE, 2015a) included four competencies; English Communication Skills (ECS), Self-Management Competence (SMC), Knowledge-Information Processing Skills (KIPS), and Civic Competence (CC). Among these, CC emphasizes the importance of enhancing learners’ understanding of their own and other diverse cultures in the world. However, despite such an emphasis on cultural competence, the existing literature merely acknowledges its importance or calls for its inclusion in curricular materials (e.g., Cho, 2019; Kim & Cha, 2019; Kwon & Lim, 2018). Given such a lack of research on core competencies, this study purports to examine secondary English teachers’ views on; 1) the extent of inclusion of core competencies in textbooks and 2) their views on enhancing learners’ cultural competence through cultural contents and activities in textbooks.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. Culture Learning in ELT

Learning culture is integral to learning a target language. Damen (1987) views culture as a fifth element along with the four language skills. Kramersch (1993) also views culture learning as “always in the background, right from day one” (p. 1) in language teaching and learning. In EFL contexts, textbooks are one of the primary resources in learning culture.

Therefore, in order to expose learners to diverse cultural content, textbooks present cultural content from various countries, including learners' own culture (Han & Bae, 2005).

The 2015 RNC of Korea specifies "the vision of an educated person" as "a cultivated person who appreciates and promotes the culture of humankind on the basis of cultural literacies and understanding of diverse values" (MOE, 2015b, p. 1). In order to fulfill such a vision, the 2015 RNC (MOE, 2015b) has originally specified six core competencies for curriculum developers for each subject to choose appropriate ones; Communication Skills, Self-Management Competence, Knowledge-Information Processing Skills, Civic Competence, Creative Thinking Skills, and Aesthetic-Emotional Competence. Accordingly, the 2015 RNEC (MOE, 2015a) included four of them; English Communication Skills (ECS), Self-Management Competence (SMC), Knowledge-Information Processing Skills (KIPS), and Civic Competence (CC). Among these four competencies, CC refers to learners' abilities in "understanding and accepting cultural identities, linguistic and cultural diversity" (p. 4).

Under such directions, secondary English teachers should help lower graders (7th-9th) understand foreign culture and information and introduce Korean culture in English. For upper graders (10th-12th), teachers should cultivate respectful attitudes toward the originality of each culture based on the balanced interests in and proper understandings of both own and foreign culture. However, merely presenting aims and directions on what cultural content to include cannot ensure EFL learners' acquisition of sufficient knowledge on their own and other cultures. Instead, learners should be presented with diverse and meaningful tasks in which they can apply their cultural learning to real-life (e.g., Huh, 2013; Kim, 2002; Kong & Sung, 2020; Neff & Rucynski Jr., 2013).

2.2. Competency-Based Education

Competency-based Education (CBE) began in the 1970s in the U.S. and was widely implemented in mostly vocational and ESL programs at first (Richards, 2001). Given that CBE typically predetermines learning goals and outcomes (Schenck, 1978). That is, measurable outcomes or observable behaviors in specific tasks were often identified before deciding on content and process of teaching in general (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). For example, backward curricular design is typically used to teach basic language skills by incorporating specific content and tasks so that learners can achieve pre-specified competencies required in jobs or in society (Auerbach, 1986; Nkwetisama, 2012; Tiana, Moya, & Luengo, 2011; Wesselink, Dekker-Groen, Biemans, & Mulder, 2010).

In the 1990s, CBE had also been incorporated into Standards Movement, on the one hand, and into ESL and ESP programs, on the other hand (Richards, 2001). For example, TESOL International Association (2019) presents 'Standard 2: English Language Learners in the Sociocultural Context', in which teachers are encouraged to understand learners' diverse

social and political contexts and relevant theories and approaches to consider their cultural and linguistic diversity. The UNESCO (2011, 2018) has also been spearheading sustainable educational development for future generations with the 17 different sustainable goals along with the competencies statements for education. In line with CBE, the 2015 RNC for Primary and Secondary Schools (MOE, 2015b) has originally specified six core competencies as stated earlier. As for the English subject, four competencies ECS, SMC, KIPS, and CC, are included in its curriculum, but two of them (i.e., Creative Thinking Skills and Aesthetic-Emotional Competence) are not included.

2.3. Previous Studies on Core Competency English Textbooks

In Korea, nationally mandated textbooks have been used in secondary schools for more than six decades, and there are quite a few studies on cultural content in English textbooks that investigated cultural backgrounds or types in Korea (e.g., Hong & Sohn, 2018; Kong & Sung, 2020; Ku, 2020; Kwon & Lim, 2018). Many of these studies classified types of cultural contents in terms of their origins and reported the dominant proportion of cultural contents from the U.S. and the U.K. though there has been more inclusion of the source and international culture over the years.

In Asia, very few studies on English textbooks are found. Lessard-Clouston (1996) investigated 16 Chinese in-service teachers' perceptions of culture teaching and learning in a summer training program. They reported that teachers seldom taught culture explicitly in the classroom due to the test-oriented teaching, which revolved around grammar or reading comprehension. Shin, Eslami, and Chen (2011) examined 25 international ELT textbooks used in Asian countries and reported that there were predominantly cultural contents from English-speaking countries. Davidson and Liu (2020) investigated the cultural representation in the selected two Japanese elementary English textbooks and reported that there was more Japanese cultural content than international cultures from only 19 other countries. Accordingly, they suggested that such an imbalance may limit learners from attaining intercultural awareness or perpetuate cultural stereotypes.

There is only a paucity of studies on culture in conjunction with core competencies in general in Korea and Asia. Baig, Siddiquah, and Javed (2020) carried out a content analysis of the Punjab Textbook Board English Textbook VIII along with a survey. They reported that the textbook incorporated most of the curricular standards and benchmarks and was designed to help learners attain reading and thinking skills. Arifah, Santosa, and Ngadiso (2018) conducted a content analysis of *Bahasa Inggris*, an English textbook for the 10th graders in Indonesia, to examine whether textbook content reflected the core competencies (i.e., spiritual attitude, social attitude, knowledge, and skill) in the 2013 curriculum. They used a checklist completed by the two evaluators and reported that the three aforementioned

core competencies were present in each chapter of the book.

In Korea, Kwon and Lim (2018) examined 11 high school textbooks and categorized the topics in cultural sections regarding the 3 core competencies in the 2015 RNEC. They reported that 19 out of 98 topics were related to SMC (14.2%), 58 to CC (52.1%), 21 to KIPS (19.1%). Kong and Sung (2020) conducted a textbook analysis on five 8th grade English textbooks using an evaluation checklist based on the definitions and sub-elements of the four core competencies from the 2015 RNEC and reported that only one out of five textbooks scored the highest for ECS, CC, and KIPS. Cho and Park (2016) analyzed 52 textbooks in social studies, ethics, and the Korean language for the 3rd to 9th graders. They reported that the cultural contents in these books were insufficient and imbalanced as there were more cultures from mainstream countries than those in minority countries. Although this study did not examine English textbooks in Korea, they still shed light on the cultural representations in Korean textbooks.

Many previous studies on culture solely focused on the types and/or origins of culture presented in English textbooks. However, more recent studies in Korea, Pakistan, and Indonesia (e.g., Arifa et al., 2018; Baig et al., 2020; Kwon & Lim, 2018; Kong & Sung, 2020) have incorporated competencies in their curriculums and instructional materials. However, given the lack of research related to competence-based and culture teaching in ELT, this study examines whether or not culture teaching can actually meet the goal of developing learners' core competencies, especially civic competence (CC), which is included in the 2015 RNEC in Korea. The research questions for this study are; 1) What is the extent of reflecting four core competencies in secondary English textbooks? and 2) What are secondary English teachers' views on achieving the stated objectives in CC in teaching culture?

3. METHODS

3.1. Selection of Textbooks with Culture Activity Sections

Based on the 2015 RNEC, 9 different publishing companies had published 13 different English textbooks for the 7th-9th grades, which means there are a total of 39 textbooks. The curriculum evaluators selected from the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation reviewed and endorsed all these textbooks. Among them, 12 textbooks for the 7th grade include culture sections except for *Textbook M*. As for the 8th-9th grades, 11 textbooks present culture sections except for *Textbooks L and M*. In other words, 34 out of 39 textbooks for Grade 7th-9th provide cultural topics or contents in their lessons.

Amongst the 13 different textbooks for each grade, 8 textbooks present culture elements with facts or information only with no guideline or activity based on them. Therefore, this

study focuses on examining the extent of reflecting core competencies as in the five textbooks for each grade, which means there were a total of 15 textbooks for this study. The titles of the cultural activity sections in the five textbooks are as follows,

- *Textbook A*: Culture & Life Project
- *Textbook B*: Project Link
- *Textbook C*: Missions Across Cultures
- *Textbook F*: Project Work
- *Textbook H*: Culture Project

3.2. Participants for Checklist on Core Competencies

The 10 in-service female teachers with proper qualifications (See Table 1) were recruited for the Checklist evaluation through an online community for in-service English teachers (<https://cafe.daum.net/joyce95>). A recruiting notice was posted with the explanation of the study and an appeal for voluntary participation to share their curricular and instructional expertise and experiences in completing the Checklist and for interviews. 15 teachers originally volunteered to participate in the study and 10 teachers were selected after considering their teaching experience and grades they were teaching at middle schools. Teachers with diverse teaching experiences were chosen for the final list of participants. Last but not least, the different sets of data related to the teachers' evaluation of core competencies and culture teaching were utilized though the participants were the same as in another study (Kong & Sung, 2021).

TABLE 1
Demographic Information of 10 In-Service Teachers

Teacher	Age	Academic Background	Years of Teaching	Grade Currently Teaching
A	Mid 30s	BA	6	7th
B	Mid 30s	BA	9	7th & 9th
C	Early 30s	BA	3	7th
D	Early 40s	MA	14	8th
E	Late 30s	BA	11	7th & 8th
F	Mid 30s	BA	8	7th
G	Mid 30s	MA	8	7th ~ 9th
H	Mid 30s	BA	10	9th
I	Early 30s	MA	1	7th & 8th
J	Late 20s	MA	1	9th

Among the 10 teachers, 7 teachers had textbook evaluation and selection experiences in school, while one teacher (B) participated in writing a high school textbook for 'Practical English.' The other teachers had learned about materials evaluation and analysis at teachers'

colleges as well as curricular structure and elements for the English subject.

3.3. Checklist for Core Competencies

A checklist was modified based on descriptions and sub-elements of four core competencies (i.e., ECS, SMC, CC, KIPS) in the 2015 RNEC and a previous study examining cultural activity sections in the 8th grade English textbooks (Kong & Sung, 2020). That is, the researchers rewrote the statements of the objectives more clearly, and some items were removed while a few items were added through the process of repeated reviews and confirmation by the researchers. As a result, the checklist eventually had 18 items in a 5-point Likert-type scale in the end (See Table 3 on p. 61).

The lead researcher briefed on the purposes of the study and explained each item in the Checklist above in Korean in order to acquire consistent results of their views on the items. Then, they were given the Checklist in a bilingual format for a clear understanding of the statements on the four core competencies. Two teachers were randomly assigned to analyze a total of 3 textbooks for each grade published by the same publisher for three weeks during mid-November and early December in 2020. Then, the results of the evaluation in pair were crosschecked by the researchers, and the degree of agreement was calculated to determine the reliability of the raters using Cohen's Kappa Coefficient.

3.4. Open-Ended Questions and In-Depth Interviews

All the teachers who participated in the checklist evaluation were also interviewed at first to freely share their views on culture-related activities, strategies in teaching culture, ways of modifying their teaching, ways to improve culture teaching, and the significance of teaching culture. In addition, another round of in-depth interviews was conducted based on 5 questions; 1) what extent the cultural contents and activities in the textbooks meet curricular objectives, 2) helping learners take pride in their own culture, experience diverse countries and peoples, 3) developing a positive attitude toward other culture, 4) how they complemented their lessons on culture based on some deficiencies they perceived, and 5) what elements should be added or revise in core competencies related to culture. Each in-depth interview was done on the phone due to the pandemic and took between 15 to 20 minutes, while some follow-up information was collected by email.

3.5. Data Analysis

First, given that the number of participating teachers was small and referential statistical analyses appeared inappropriate, the data collected through the Checklist was analyzed using

descriptive statistics to find some similarities and differences in the teachers' views on core competency. Second, the teachers' responses in both open-ended questions and in-depth interviews were carefully and repeatedly read by the two researchers to identify recurring themes or issues related to culture teaching. More specifically, from the teachers' replies, the researchers extracted key words and phrases and coded and categorized them in terms of frequency, importance, and uniqueness (Saldaña, 2015) along with a few direct quotes concerning specific themes or issues.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Extent of Reflecting CC in Cultural Activities

For the examination of the degree of agreement in the teachers' ratings, collapsed were the scales of 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree,' and the same is true of 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree.'

TABLE 2
Raters' Extent of Agreement for 5 Selected Textbooks

Textbook	Teacher	Teacher	Agreement (Cohen's Kappa Coefficient)
A	8	9	0.750
B	1	2	0.834
C	5	10	0.801
F	3	6	0.757
H	4	7	0.799

Note. Kappa Coefficient of 0.61 ~ 0.80 refers to a substantial agreement and 0.81 ~ 1.00 almost perfect agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Table 2 above shows that there was a substantial agreement between the raters for Textbook A, C, F, and H. Textbook B showed almost perfect agreement with Kappa's coefficient of 0.834. Table 3 shows the result of the teachers' ratings for the cultural activity sections across five textbooks for 7th-9th grades. The means are rounded off to the nearest tenths.

TABLE 3
Results of the Checklist by In-Service Teachers

Core Competency	No.	Objectives	Textbook					<i>m</i>
			A	B	C	F	H	
ECS	1	Tasks require learners to listen to peers' opinions attentively.	4.3	<i>4.6</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>4.5</i>	4.3	4.5
	2	Tasks require learners to use their reading comprehension skills.	3.1	3.8	3.7	3.4	3.8	3.6
	3	Tasks require learners to communicate in English to complete the task.	3.2	3.0	<i>4.0</i>	<i>4.2</i>	3.0	3.5
	4	Tasks require learners to write in English to complete the task.	4.1	<i>4.5</i>	4.1	<i>4.3</i>	3.8	4.2
SMC	1	Tasks give learners a sense of confidence in their English skills.	3.7	<i>4.0</i>	<i>4.2</i>	<i>4.0</i>	3.7	3.9
	2	Tasks are designed to motivate learners for English learning.	<i>4.0</i>	<i>4.0</i>	<i>4.3</i>	<i>4.0</i>	3.6	4.0
	3	Tasks require learners to utilize various learning strategies.	<i>4.0</i>	<i>4.2</i>	<i>4.4</i>	<i>4.2</i>	3.3	4.0
	4	Tasks are designed to promote self-directed learning.	3.8	4.4	4.3	4.1	3.7	4.1
	5	Tasks give learners a chance for self-assessment. (Peer-assessment in group work)	<i>4.3</i>	<i>4.9</i>	1.0	<i>4.4</i>	<i>4.3</i>	3.8
CC	1	Tasks require learners to cooperate with each other.	4.1	<i>4.7</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>4.4</i>	<i>4.4</i>	4.4
	2	Tasks require learners to respect peers during the task completion process.	4.3	<i>4.5</i>	<i>4.4</i>	<i>4.4</i>	<i>4.5</i>	4.4
	3	Tasks are designed to give learners pride in their own culture.	2.6	3.6	4.2	3.4	3.1	3.4
	4	Tasks are designed for learners to experience diverse cultures.	1.8	2.8	<i>4.5</i>	3.1	3.7	3.2
	5	Tasks require learners to have positive attitudes towards diverse cultures.	2.1	3.1	<i>4.5</i>	3.1	3.6	3.3
KIPS	1	Tasks require learners to collect information to do the task.	3.8	4.1	<i>4.7</i>	4.2	<i>5.0</i>	4.3
	2	Tasks require learners to analyze information to do the task.	3.7	4.0	<i>4.7</i>	4.1	<i>4.7</i>	4.2
	3	Tasks require learners to gather information from the media.	3.5	4.0	<i>4.5</i>	4.0	<i>4.5</i>	4.1
	4	Tasks guide learners to utilize the collected information ethically.	3.1	3.7	3.4	3.1	3.1	3.3

Note. 1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Neutral, 4 - Agree, 5 - Strongly Agree

* The term 'task' is used as the 2015 RNEC strongly recommends task-based language teaching

* The italicized numbers represent the values higher than the mean for each item.

In Table 3 above, while all the items in the ECS and SMC showed higher means than the mid-point ($m = 3.5$), Items 3, 4, and 5 on the CC were lower than the rest of the items while Item 4 on the ethical use of information collected was under the means in the KIPS. Therefore, such results indicate that the tasks in the five textbooks for each grade are somewhat deficient in helping students take pride in their own culture, provide diverse cultural experiences, and develop positive attitudes toward other cultures.

4.2. Teachers' Views on and Importance of Culture Teaching

Table 4 below presents the keyword analysis results of the teachers' responses to the open-ended questions regarding cultural contents and activities in the textbooks.

TABLE 4
Positives, Negatives and Improvement Needed in Culture Activities

Positives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • link to the main content • link to four skills • cognitively appropriate level of content • diverse resources provided • inclusion of non-English cultures • potential helpfulness for self-directed engagement • placing culture at the end of the unit for project-based teaching
Negatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simple facts or activity (search & present, $n = 2$) • lack of interaction among learners
Improvement needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need learners' willingness to learn • need more content • need more English and non-English cultures • inclusion of both Oriental and Western cultures • avoid general content which instigates discriminatory thinking • more experiential tasks rather than knowledge transmission • use of the title by linking to other subjects • parental complaints on testing, teaching content & methods

Note. 'n' indicates the number of the same comments by different teachers.

Table 4 above shows that there were more positive views than negative ones. Their affirmative responses were related to linking culture to the main content and four skills, provision of cognitively appropriate levels of content and diverse materials, inclusion of non-English cultures, and potential helpfulness for learners' self-directed engagement. However, two teachers who were negative about culture activities mentioned that there were only simple facts or activities such as searching more to present. One teacher disliked them as there was a lack of promoting interaction among learners. Accordingly, the teachers suggested some needs for improvements such as adding more content, including diverse non-English cultures, avoiding general content, and providing experiential tasks instead of simple transmission of cultural knowledge. Teacher H wrote a unique view that the title of 'culture section' should be linked to other subjects while another teacher commented on the difficulty of teaching culture due to parents' insistence on preparing students for tests and complaints filed on learning content and methods used in class.

Concerning the importance of teaching culture, all the teachers except one (Teacher C) provided various thoughts; Six teachers commented on innate or close relationships between language and culture and viewed culture learning as indispensable for international

understanding and communication. They also agreed that culture learning contributes to and motivates language learning ($n = 2$). On a more practical level, Teacher D stated that culture learning is vital for learning retention and suggested linking culture learning to verbal and non-verbal communication. Finally, Teacher H presented an entirely different but important view that culture learning is equivalent to developing learners' global citizenship.

4.3. Teachers' Views on Extent of Enhancing Learners' Civic Competence

4.3.1. Learners' understanding of and taking pride in own culture

Table 5 below presents the teachers' views on the extent to which cultural activities in textbooks help learners understand and be proud of their own culture.

TABLE 5
Enhancing Learner Understanding and Pride in Own Culture

Positives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more inclusion of SC ($n = 5$) • comparing culture ($n = 3$)
Negatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unsure of enough inclusion of SC • mere topic introduction • lack of link b/w culture & activities • lack of chance to share information with foreigners • mainly information transfer
Insufficient elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of guidance ($n = 3$) • lack of main activities on SC ($n = 3$) • lack of examples ($n = 2$) • limited activities • narrow dimensions of SC • unclear criteria of culture presented • contents & activities in English needed for SC learning • lack of teachers' understanding

The teachers viewed that including more SC ($n = 5$) and comparing cultures ($n = 3$) could help raise learners' understanding of and pride in their own culture. However, one teacher thought there were not enough activities related to SC as many activities compared to different cultures. Another teacher mentioned the limitation of merely presenting culture topics and transmitting such information to learners. Teacher H acutely commented on negative aspects of cultural contents and activities in the textbooks as follows;

I think though cultural contents are presented to some extent, they are not specific enough and only toss some topics. There are also cases in which these contents are not well connected to activities. Furthermore, there are not many

examples. The parameter of culture is unclear, and teachers do not understand it well. For example, I often doubt what culture is. What is the difference between preferences and culture?

Lastly, Teacher I stated that the textbooks were typically structured to deliver cultural information to learners. In fact, there were more comments on insufficient aspects of culture content and activities; three teachers, respectively, mentioned the lack of guidance in teaching culture and that of main activities on SC. More specifically, Teacher C and G suggested a questioning activity on SC to complement such a limitation. One teacher suggested that contents and activities should be done in English for SC on a practical level. Teacher J also suggested that all examples on diverse cultures should include some elements of SC to help learners realize the importance of understanding their own culture before others. Lastly, one teacher viewed that teachers' lack of understanding in other cultures is a limitation itself.

4.3.2. Providing sufficient cultural experience of diverse countries and peoples

Table 6 shows the teachers' responses on helping learners experience culture from different countries and peoples. Their responses were classified into positive and negative views along with insufficient elements in the textbooks, classified into 'the lack of balance' and 'more guidance needed,' respectively.

TABLE 6
Providing Sufficient Experience in Diverse Countries and Peoples

Positives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diverse culture provided ($n = 4$) • balanced inclusion of culture in general ($n = 2$) • introducing diverse culture with structure • possible with activities for searching and sharing diverse countries & ethnicities • organizing activities to search lesson content • possible in developing learners' CC by presenting diverse cultures, self-directed searching • possible in developing ECS through activities
Negatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not enough experience on culture • merely motivating or drawing interests • difficulty in guiding activities • not possible to use English • mainly simple activities • lack of specificity • lack of authenticity in content • outdated materials • not possible to learn culture only with textbooks • difficulty in presenting diverse culture due to page limit

Insufficient elements	<p><u>Lack of balance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excessive western culture despite efforts for balance • limited to British & American culture • inclusion of culture from diverse & 3rd countries, yet still more British & American culture • diverse culture included but only those familiar to learners • still presenting dominant culture more • presenting diverse cultural experiences equally • repeated inclusion of same countries • need to include less developed or developing countries <p><u>More guidance needed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ways to provide more direct experience • directions for team presentation to share • brainstorming along with specific explanations • second-handed experiences through writing • more time for culture learning • complementary tasks to search by the continents
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Several positive views were concerned with the inclusion of diverse cultures to provide enough experiences through the introduction of different cultures, activities for searching and sharing, good choices of materials. Accordingly, two teachers viewed that it was possible to develop learners' CC or ECS with current textbooks. For example, Teacher B replied that

Contents or activities that show the worldwide cultural trends and each culture's uniqueness can provide learners with opportunities to experience diverse cultures.

Two teachers, however, thought that providing diverse cultural experiences only with textbooks was impossible. One teacher mentioned the problem of including diverse cultures due to the page limit in textbooks. A few comments revolved around ever-existing limitations such as the inclusion of mainly simple activities without specificity, lack of authenticity in content, and out-of-date information or materials as shown in Teacher A comments;

Diverse culture is indeed presented. However, I doubt that activities help students fully experience it. I think the cultural contents presented are too elementary, and activities simply motivate students or provide them with some interests. They are insufficient to guide students to specific activities and are also somewhat challenging to guide students to use English.

The teachers also mentioned a number of deficiencies, classified into two subcategories;

Lack of balance in culture content and More guidance needed. First, the teachers often mentioned that there was still a dominant amount of western culture, mainly British and American culture. Teacher C expressed a strong criticism on this issue;

Though I try to help students know more about diverse cultures, the textbook only presents some familiar countries (mainly the U.S. and other developed countries). As a result, when I guide them to search for some cultural information on their own, they typically search for information on these countries, which shows the difficulty of ensuring diversity.

Teacher C's view, in fact, resonated with those of other teachers. For example, Teacher H said that there was a more familiar culture than others, while the other teachers questioned the repeated inclusion of the same countries and called for the inclusion of less developed or developing countries. Lastly, a few comments revolved around the necessity of more guidance, such as providing direct cultural experience, offering directions for group work, using brainstorming activities, more time for culture learning, and complementing culture teaching with tasks.

4.3.3. Developing learners' positive attitude toward diverse culture

Table 7 reports the result of analysis on the teachers' views on the extent of helping develop learners' positive attitudes toward other cultures.

TABLE 7

Developing Learners' Positive Attitude toward Diverse Culture	
Positives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • possible by including content & activities concerning history & ideas of countries • possible to do activities of searching diverse countries or ethnicities based on common themes and sharing • possible with finding activities on diverse cultures or making posters • somewhat possible by teaching culture from a relative attitude • possible with presenting, introducing, & sharing culture with peers
Negatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficult due to simple content & activities (n = 5) • impossible due to simple introduction or evaluation • unsure/lack of possibility in developing positive attitudes with current content & activities • lack of diversity • lack of explicit guidance to experience diverse cultures • lack of materials such as videos
Suggestions for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching ability for culture teaching more important (n = 3) • more activities or asking questions (n = 2) • need teachers' plan & modification • clear guidance for learner roles in group presentations • providing background information on culture to reduce learner rejection of unfamiliar culture

Some teachers expressed that developing learners' positive attitudes for other culture could be possible if teachers could include content and activities concerning history and ideas of countries or guide learners with searching and sharing activities on diverse countries or ethnicities based on common themes, making posters on diverse cultures, or presenting cultures from relative points of views. For example, Teacher I suggested that

It is possible to develop learners' respectful attitudes with activities which involve presenting/introducing/sharing culture with peers as such activities will help them realize the importance of valuing diverse communities through communication.

As for negative views on enhancing learner respect for other cultures, five comments were related to the difficulty of achieving such an objective due to simple content and activities in the textbooks. In fact, Teacher C, D, and H were in complete agreement in that they were unsure of developing learners' positive attitudes with content and activities in current textbooks. Teacher D commented that;

I think a teacher's teaching ability is more important. Ensuring learners have unbiased attitudes depends more on how a teacher can organize a learning environment than the contents or activities in the textbooks. I do not think there is concrete content included to help learners develop positive attitudes in the textbooks.

Relatedly, there were three comments such as the lack of diversity, materials, and instructions on how to guide learners to experience diverse cultures. However, the teachers also suggested some possible ways to ensure learner respect for other cultures. Three teachers who presented the same negative view above mentioned that developing teachers' ability in culture teaching was more important. In addition, there were other suggestions such as providing more activities, using questioning strategies, specifying learner roles during group work, or giving background information on culture. Teacher D, interestingly, said that the teacher should have positive attitudes for their own culture as English is a tool to promote SC.

Lastly, when asked how they complemented their culture teaching practices, the teachers replied that they used diverse materials such as CDs, Padlet, Google arts, interesting introductory videos, and dramas. Regarding how to guide learners in class, searching and sharing were the most frequent activities in class. In addition, the teachers mentioned various strategies they used such as sharing results from other classes, giving specific guidelines with examples, asking comparative questions on own and other cultures, offering direct

experience (e.g., learning foreign language, traditional dance) or authentic or other materials, including culture on Performance-based assessment (e.g., speaking, writing, projects), and offering information on less familiar countries.

Regarding what is lacking or should be added in the core competencies in the 2015 RNC, Teacher C suggested the inclusion of 'real communication ability' in core competencies and use of online chatting with foreigners in order to enhance their pride, experience other cultures fully, and develop a positive attitude toward them. Teacher H, however, commented that the meanings of 'enough experience' and 'positive attitudes' were not clear and should be written in more detail.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study focused on examining the Korean secondary English teachers' views on the extent of reflecting core competencies, especially the CC and culture teaching to meet curricular aims stipulated in the 2015 RNEC (MOE, 2015a). The results of the Checklist completed by the 10 in-service teachers showed that the means for the items 'taking pride in their own culture', 'providing diverse cultural experiences,' and 'developing positive attitudes for other cultures' were lower than the other items except for one item on the ethical use of information acquired. Therefore, it appears that the 15 textbooks with cultural activities are not sufficient to achieve curricular objectives of teaching culture. These results corroborate existing studies that report on a perennial problem in providing learners with diverse cultural experiences for both own and other cultures (Kim, 2011; Kim & Cha, 2019).

According to the analyses on the teachers' views based on open-ended questions, the teachers mainly were positive of teaching culture as cultural contents seemed related to lesson topics and four skills and offered cultural information of various countries, including non-English cultures. However, as noted in previous studies (Im & Ihm, 2020; Kong & Sung, 2020; Kwon & Lim, 2018), there were negative views that these contents were simple, and the most frequent activity was searching information. Accordingly, the teachers suggested necessary improvements such as adding more contents, including diverse non-English cultures, providing experiential tasks, and more.

The teachers in this study considered that teaching culture is integral or a pre-requisite in teaching language. Accordingly, the teachers mentioned instructional benefits of teaching culture, such as motivating learners and providing more interests in learning language. However, given that culture is a larger concept, considering culture as a means for learning a language may be problematic. As one teacher clearly stated, culture learning should be a conduit to develop learners' global citizenship though English practitioners often make a passing reference to such importance in Korea.

According to the in-depth interviews, there were more negative views regarding whether or not cultural contents and activities in the textbooks could help learners feel proud of their culture. In addition, the teachers mentioned the insufficiency of SC, limited activities on and narrow dimensions of SC, few relevant examples, an unclear selection of contents for SC, and so on. So, it is evident that despite the prolonged emphasis on raising learner pride in SC, many efforts and curricular readjustments have yet to be made.

Regarding whether the textbooks provided enough cultural experiences on diverse countries and peoples, the most frequent positive answers were that the textbooks presented diverse cultures and were related to content and activities. However, there were quite the opposite views, such as the lack of contents and activities, suitable materials or resources to use, and helpful guidance for meaningful teaching. The teachers also poignantly commented on the ever-present lack of balance in cultural content as there were more western culture, especially British and American culture. Accordingly, they wanted more guidance to expose learners to diverse cultures, such as providing direct cultural experiences, sharing activities in groups, brainstorming and providing specific explanations, and writing-based activities to provide second-handed cultural experiences.

Lastly, upon the question of ensuring learners' positive attitude toward diverse cultures, a few teachers were positive and seemed to make efforts to include diverse contents and activities such as searching and sharing about diverse countries. However, their views were somewhat tentative as no one answered definitively positive on this question and added some possible ideas. On the negative side, there were comments on such problems as an excessive amount of simple content and activities and the lack of diversity, materials, and guidance, which resonate with the results from the open-ended questions above. To bridge such gaps, they exemplified some of the efforts made, such as developing better abilities to teach culture, planning and modifying teaching methods and materials, and having positive attitudes toward their own culture.

This study clearly shows that despite the curricular intention of teaching culture through the mandate of including the core competencies in the 2015 RNEC, there are many areas to be improved. The simple presentation of cultural topics and contents still exists while the dominance of Western culture still continues, though more SC and other cultures are included. More seriously, it appears that the objectives related to culture teaching in CC are not well implemented, given that 8 out of 13 textbooks did not even include activity sections. Therefore, curricular experts should realize negative influence of abstract and theoretical directions on culture teaching imparted through mere descriptions of the CC in the core competencies. As the teachers in this study rightly pointed out, it is imperative that there should be clear guidelines and examples of how to realistically engage in responsible culture teaching to meet the stated objectives on the CC. Therefore, the MOE first should guide all the textbooks developers to provide relevant activities in culture sections instead of merely

including simple cultural facts or information.

Furthermore, searching relevant literature related to this study yielded very few, limited previous studies were found. Thus, more research is necessary on this topic in the countries where core competency is invoked and promoted in their curricula so that current efforts to reflect it in their curricular contents and instructional practices can bring any substantial change in teaching culture. Another thing is, the results of this study may have been different if all the teachers reviewed all the 34 books, but it was literally impossible to ask them to do so as each book contained more than eight units in each grade. In other words, a pair of teachers had to review at least 24 units for the 7th-9th grades while they were teaching on and offline due to the pandemic.

In this study, there were indeed some contrastive and contradicting views among the teachers in the open-ended and in-depth interview questions. However, their suggestions for improvement in cultural contents and activities were diverse and appropriate. Moreover, their efforts and use of diverse strategies to offer the best possible teaching practices were well-noted and understandable. However, due to the small number of participants for this study, the results of this study should be carefully interpreted and not be generalized to different pedagogical contexts. Instead, further research on teachers' views on relationships on culture teaching and CC can be done with a larger sample. In addition, another line of studies can also be done on how English teachers actively engage in meaningful culture teaching in real classrooms where direct data from observation and other qualitative methodologies are utilized.

Applicable level: Secondary

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