



Embracing Global Voices: An Exploration of Thai Teachers' Attitudes and Practices on Culturally Diverse ELT Materials in a Northern Thai University

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Abstract: In recent times, the advancement of technology and globalization has significantly impacted educational practices worldwide, making teaching and learning increasingly complex and interconnected. In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), these changes have challenged traditional approaches and necessitated the integration of more culturally diverse materials to reflect the global usage of English. Against this backdrop, this study aims to investigate teachers' attitudes toward cultural diversity and their representation of cultures in ELT materials at a Thai university. Situated in Thailand's diverse cultural landscape, the research explores how teachers' cultural backgrounds, institutional policies, and student feedback influence the selection and depiction of cultural content. Utilizing a qualitative approach that employs semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and classroom observations, the study seeks to uncover the extent to which global cultures are represented in their ELT materials. In addition, it aims to identify trends in teachers' practices and perceptions, highlighting a potential shift towards a more inclusive curriculum that mirrors the global context of English language teaching and learning. Consequently, this study contributes to the broader discourse on the importance of cultural diversity in education, offering practical recommendations for educators and policymakers in globalized educational environments.

Keywords: Thai Teachers, ELT Materials, Cultural Diversity, Attitudes, Technology and Globalization

1. Introduction

Over the past few years, the field of ELT has undergone remarkable transformations, reflecting broader shifts in educational paradigms and cultural viewpoints on a global scale. This evolution is indicative of a deeper appreciation for the role of language in a globalized society. As scholars such as Byram (1997) and Crystal (2003) have long argued, language serves not merely as a medium of communication but also as a vital tool for accessing and appreciating the world's cultural diversity. More recent contributions to the field, such as those by Jenkins (2014) and Canagarajah (2016), have further emphasized the crucial interplay between language learning, cultural identity, and the necessity for ELT to promote both linguistic proficiency and cultural empathy, aiming to prepare individuals for global citizenship. This progressive perspective challenges the traditional ELT focus on grammar and vocabulary, advocating instead for an expanded curriculum that includes cultural literacy and intercultural communication skills. Such advancements in ELT highlight the growing importance of developing language competence alongside cultural fluency to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

In areas where English is a native language, traditional ELT methodologies have often centred on the cultural norms and practices of English-speaking countries. However, the widespread adoption and adaptation of English globally demand a re-evaluation of the 'native speaker model' (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999), giving rise to discussions led by scholars such as Holliday (2015), who propose a transition to a 'post-native speaker era' that celebrates linguistic diversity and intercultural understanding. The concept of 'World English' (Kachru, 1986), supported by more recent studies (e.g., Matsuda, 2019), also advocates an ELT approach that reflects the linguistic and cultural plurality of English speakers worldwide, preparing learners for the nuanced realities of global communication.

In Thailand, the role of English extends beyond its function as a foreign language (henceforth EFL), acting also as a bridge between local and global contexts (Baker, 2012; Darasawang, 2007). The country's unique linguistic landscape, characterised by a mix of local dialects and the increasing prevalence of English in urban areas (Bennui, 2023), poses distinct challenges and opportunities for ELT. The novelty of this study thus lies in its detailed exploration of how cultural elements are woven into ELT within the Thai educational landscape, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between worldwide English usage patterns and the distinct cultural narratives of Thailand. This

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approach yields innovative insights into the ways societal shifts and technological progress shape ELT methodologies in Thailand, offering a distinctive contribution to the broader discourse on ELT. The study is propelled by a set of clearly defined research objectives, which are as follows:

1. To examine Thai teachers' attitudes towards integrating cultural materials into ELT, understanding their perceptions and the factors influencing their approach to cultural inclusion.
2. To investigate the practices of cultural integration in ELT by Thai teachers, analyzing how cultural elements are implemented in teaching and their impact on student learning.

Through its focused investigation, this research endeavours to enrich the global ELT conversation with actionable insights and strategies aimed at fostering a more inclusive and responsive approach to language teaching in Thailand, reflecting the complex realities of global communication and cultural diversity.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cultural Dimension In Language Teaching

In the field of language education, the integration of cultural elements into ELT is increasingly recognized as essential. This recognition extends beyond the mere inclusion of cultural facts to fostering intercultural competence, or the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts. A foundational theoretical framework in this context is Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence. Byram articulated that language learners should not only develop linguistic proficiency but also embrace attitudes of openness, attain knowledge of social groups and their cultural practices, and cultivate critical cultural awareness. This framework has significantly influenced contemporary ELT approaches, steering them towards a more holistic incorporation of culture.

For example, building on the theoretical underpinnings provided by Byram, Sharifian (2015) offers a nuanced perspective on cultural linguistics, highlighting the intricate relationship between language, culture, and conceptualization. Sharifian argues for the inclusion of cultural linguistics in language education, emphasizing how language reflects and shapes cultural values and cognitive patterns. His work suggests that understanding the cultural underpinnings of language use can significantly enhance learners' communicative competence and intercultural understanding, advocating for ELT practices that integrate cultural insights to reflect the complexity of language as a cultural tool.

Similarly, Baker (2015) contributes to the discussion by focusing on the dynamics of intercultural awareness in language teaching, specifically on developing intercultural communicative competence. Baker stresses the importance of teaching strategies that actively involve learners in intercultural interactions, promoting empathy, reflection, and the critical examination of cultural stereotypes. His research demonstrates how intercultural training in language courses can improve learners' abilities to navigate cross-cultural differences and enhance their communicative effectiveness, underscoring the pedagogical necessity of incorporating structured intercultural experiences and reflections within ELT.

Krishnasamy et al. (2023) further expand on the integration of cultural elements in ELT by exploring the impact of cultural management on the empowerment of women educators within higher education institutions. Their findings highlight the significant role cultural management practices play in enhancing the psychological empowerment of female staff, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. This study emphasizes the importance of cultural competency beyond traditional language learning, advocating for a comprehensive approach that includes the empowerment of educators as a crucial aspect of cultural integration in ELT.

Building on these insights, the present study thus posits that a comprehensive approach to integrating cultural dimensions into ELT significantly enhances learners' intercultural communicative competence. This approach fosters attitudes of openness, critical cultural awareness, and the ability to effectively engage in cross-cultural interactions, grounded in the belief that a holistic incorporation of cultural elements in ELT is essential. In addition, it is considered that the pedagogical implications of integrating cultural dimensions in ELT encompass more than selecting culturally diverse materials. It involves creating learning environments that respect and value cultural differences, designing activities that encourage cultural exploration and reflection, and utilizing texts that represent a broad spectrum of cultural viewpoints. These practices are vital for developing learners' ability to engage in meaningful cross-cultural interactions and for promoting empathy and respect for diverse cultures. In particular, in the current era of globalization where English serves as a lingua franca (ELF) for speakers from various cultural backgrounds, the need for cultural understanding in ELT becomes more pronounced.

2.2. Cultural Contents In ELT Materials

The categorization of cultural contents in ELT materials, as conceptualized by Cortazzi and Jin (1999) elaborated by subsequent scholars, encompasses three primary types: target culture, source culture, and international culture. This framework provides a holistic understanding of the cultural dimensions integral to effective language education, facilitating a nuanced approach to teaching and learning.

Target culture, defined by Cortazzi and Jin (1999), refers to the culture of English-speaking countries. Incorporating this aspect into ELT materials is crucial for immersing learners in the linguistic and societal norms of native English-speaking contexts, thereby enhancing their ability to use English in culturally appropriate situations. Source culture, or the learners' own culture, integrated into ELT materials, acts as a bridge connecting the new language with learners' existing cultural knowledge. This approach aids in language acquisition by providing familiar reference points and fosters a deeper appreciation of one's own culture. Finally, international culture in ELT materials embodies a global perspective, recognising the diverse cultural settings in which English functions as an international language. This approach prepares learners for interaction in a globally interconnected community by exposing them to a variety of cultural experiences and perspectives.

Reflecting on the pedagogical significance of integrating target, source, and international cultures in ELT materials, this study hypothesizes that a balanced integration of these cultural contents enhances learners' cultural competence. Such an approach is expected to foster not only language acquisition but also critical thinking, empathy, and an appreciation for cultural diversity, suggesting that exposure to diverse cultural perspectives significantly contributes to learners' intercultural understanding and prepares them for effective communication in a globalised world. This hypothesis is supported by Nawaz et al. (2020) who advocate for a balanced cultural integration in ELT resources. They suggest that an educational strategy encompassing the target, source, and international cultural elements can offer learners a comprehensive cultural exposure. This approach goes beyond mere language proficiency; it cultivates critical thinking and fosters an inclusive appreciation for diverse cultures. That is, according to Nawaz et al. (2020), this method is not just beneficial but necessary, aligning with the modern demands of language education to prepare students for a complex and interconnected global landscape.

2.3. Integrating Cultural Diversity In ELT: Teachers' Attitudes, Practices, And Challenges

In ELT, the integration of cultural diversity crucially shapes the effectiveness of language instruction, being significantly influenced by teachers' attitudes and practices. These attitudes vary widely from a strong appreciation for cultural diversity to a preference for traditional models centered on native English-speaking cultures. For example, Corbett (2003) illustrates that teachers who embrace cultural diversity recognize the enrichment that diverse cultural perspectives bring to language education, viewing cultural competence as integral to language proficiency and essential for fostering global understanding. They thus employ various strategies, such as using culturally diverse materials and facilitating discussions that promote cultural sensitivity, often drawing upon their own experiences to provide rich, varied perspectives in the classroom.

In contrast, other researchers reveal a preference among certain teachers for the "native speaker model," which prioritizes the cultural norms of English-speaking countries like the UK and the USA. For instance, Murata (2019) observed that these teachers argue this model deepens students' understanding of English by anchoring it in its traditional contexts. Risager (2007) also points out that some educators lean towards using the native English speaker model in teaching due to a noticeable shortage of materials that display the cultural diversity of English. This preference may also arise from institutional limitations and the challenge of addressing sensitive cultural topics, which can impede the incorporation of a broader range of cultural perspectives into the curriculum. Consequently, this inclination towards native English-speaking cultures—whether due to educators' preferences or a scarcity of varied educational resources—may inadvertently limit students' exposure to the broad global diversity of English and its various cultural contexts. This raises a question about whether the choice of ELT materials by teachers in the target context is shaped by their personal attitudes, institutional policies, or student feedback, as suggested by other studies.

2.4. Previous Studies On Teachers' Attitudes Toward Cultural Diversity In ELT

Exploring teachers' attitudes towards cultural diversity in ELT is crucial, offering diverse perspectives on cultural integration in language instruction and revealing a significant research gap in the Thai context. The significance of integrating cultural diversity into ELT practices is underscored by frameworks such as Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, which shows that teachers trained in intercultural communication are more likely to value and integrate cultural diversity in their teaching. This underscores the role of professional development in boosting teachers' ability to effectively manage cultural nuances. Cortazzi and Jin's (1993) exploration into the integration of a 'cultural syllabus' reveals the diversity in teachers' approaches, ranging from focusing on the target culture to adopting a more inclusive approach that integrates both target and source cultural elements.

Contrasting attitudes between native and non-native English-speaking teachers have been explored, with Mahboob (2010) suggesting that non-native teachers often bring a broader range of cultural perspectives to their teaching, influenced by their personal experiences. Moreover, research on multicultural classrooms, such as Gay (2018), highlights the challenges teachers encounter in addressing cultural diversity adequately. The integration of digital technology in ELT, as discussed by Shadieff and Dang (2022) also offers new opportunities and challenges in introducing cultural diversity in language education.

In the Thai context, there is a noticeable scarcity of research specifically addressing teachers' attitudes towards cultural diversity in ELT. While there is substantial research on ELT practices in Thailand, the focus has often been on challenges related to adopting Western methodologies in a largely monolingual and monocultural society,

as highlighted in more recent studies such as those by Darasawang and Reinders (2015) and Hayes (2019). These studies delve into the complexities of implementing Western ELT practices within the unique cultural and linguistic landscape of Thailand, underscoring the need for a more nuanced understanding of how cultural diversity is integrated into language teaching in this context.

Adding to the discourse with more recent studies within the Thai context, Witayarat (2023) and Snodin (2016) provide insights into the integration of cultural content and intercultural communicative competence in Thai ELT settings. Witayarat (2023) explores intercultural competence among Thai university students, while Snodin (2016) focuses on leveraging Thailand's rich cultural heritage to enrich the ELT curriculum. Saemee and Nomnian (2021) examine the incorporation of ASEAN cultural content into English teaching in Thai schools, underscoring the importance of regional cultural awareness. Jandt (2020) evaluates the effectiveness of intercultural training programs for Thai English teachers, highlighting the gap between the awareness of cultural diversity's importance and the practical application in teaching.

These studies collectively emphasise the need for more focused research in Thailand on how ELT teachers perceive and integrate cultural diversity, considering the unique societal and educational context. Considering global research and the Thai context gap, this study reaffirms that targeted professional development in intercultural competence and cultural sensitivity will positively affect Thai teachers' attitudes and practices towards cultural diversity in ELT. Addressing this gap is crucial for advancing ELT practices in Thailand, and preparing teachers to effectively navigate the complexities of cultural diversity in language education.

3. Methodology

3.1. Qualitative Research

This study employed a qualitative research approach, grounded in constructivism as defined by Creswell (2013), to explore Thai teachers' experiences with culturally diverse ELT resources during the 2021 academic semester. By exploring their perspectives and understanding the intricacies of their experiences, the research aimed to present a comprehensive depiction of their viewpoints. The constructivist approach highlights that knowledge is actively constructed within social contexts, guiding the investigation beyond mere fact identification towards understanding how these teachers construct, interpret, and comprehend their experiences. This in-depth exploration into their communal constructions provided significant insights into the real-life application of culture in language teaching, highlighting the complexity and richness of integrating cultural diversity in educational settings.

3.2. Research Participants And Sampling Procedures

In line with this constructivist approach, the study prioritized thoroughness in information gathering through a specific sampling strategy as suggested by Patton (2002). Participants were carefully selected from English language teachers at a university in Northern Thailand. This selection was not solely based on their membership in a particular group but also on their extensive experience and expertise, which were deemed crucial for providing valuable and profound insights. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring ethical compliance and respect for their autonomy and confidentiality. The requirement for teachers to have a minimum of five years of teaching experience ensured their familiarity with ELT materials and their proficiency in integrating these materials into their teaching methodologies. Furthermore, the study aimed for a balanced gender distribution among participants, consisting of three women and three men. This deliberate composition was designed to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives on pedagogy and to enrich the understanding of cultural integration in ELT from diverse viewpoints. Table 1 below details the participants' gender, years of experience, educational qualifications, and the courses they teach, offering a snapshot of the study's diverse and experienced participant pool.

Table 1: Teacher participants' background information

Teacher	Gender	Years of Experience	Educational Qualification	Course
T1	Male	13	Master's degree	English Sentences
T2	Male	7	Master's degree	Explorative English
T3	Female	10	Master's degree	Listening & Speaking in Daily Life
T4	Female	6	Master's degree	Listening & Speaking for Opinion Expression
T5	Female	6	Master's degree	Listening & Speaking on Current Issues
T6	Male	5	Master's degree	English for Phayao Studies

Source: From Semi-Structured Interview Results

3.3. Research instruments

This study employed three research instruments to gather comprehensive data: semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and classroom observation. Each method was chosen for its specific strengths in capturing different aspects of how cultural diversity is integrated into ELT.

3.3.1. Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews, chosen for their flexibility, allowed participants to freely express their experiences and perspectives on cultural integration in ELT. The selection was based on the flexibility they offer in facilitating authentic conversations with participants. The semi-structured format, as described by Merriam (2009), allowed participants to freely express their practices, stories, and reflections. A research-based interview guide provided a structured framework but also encouraged unrestricted self-expression from participants. This approach ensured consistent coverage of essential topics while allowing for in-depth and detailed discussions, aiming to elicit insights from teachers about their experiences with ELT materials and their perspectives on cultural integration in language teaching.

3.3.2. Document Analysis

Complementing the interviews, document analysis went beyond simple content examination, dissecting the narratives and biases within ELT materials. Following Bowen's (2009) guidelines, this analysis aimed to dissect the narratives, ideologies, and biases embedded within these materials. Such a detailed examination enabled the identification not only of explicit cultural references but also of more subtle cultural assumptions that might influence the perceptions and attitudes of teachers and learners alike. The documents analyzed included a diverse array of ELT materials, such as textbooks, slideshows, handouts, online resources, and tests, used in six different courses during the 2021 academic semester. These resources were carefully selected to represent a wide range of English language aspects. The materials, provided by the teachers, offered a rich overview of the resources employed over the semester and were instrumental in understanding the implementation of English teaching methodologies. The analysis of these documents was critical in determining the extent to which cultural diversity was incorporated into the curriculum and teaching materials of the English department. Table 2 lists the courses, their focused English skills, and the types of ELT materials collected, showcasing the range of content analysed for cultural diversity integration.

Table 2: Courses' titles, focused English skills, and ELT materials collected

Course	Focused Skill	ELT Materials
Explorative English	General English skills	Textbook, PowerPoint slides, YouTube videos, and Exam papers
English Sentences	Writing skill	Textbooks, PowerPoint slides,
Listening & Speaking in Daily Life	Listening and speaking skills	Textbook, PowerPoint slides,
Listening & Speaking for Opinion Expression	Listening and speaking skills	Textbook, PowerPoint slides,
Listening & Speaking for on Current Issues	Listening and speaking skills	Textbook, PowerPoint slides,
English for Phayao Studies	General English skills and local area-based knowledge	PowerPoint slides, YouTube videos, and exercises

Source: From Document Analysis Results

3.3.3. Classroom Observation

Classroom observations were deliberately included to capture teachers' authentic experiences within their teaching environments. This method was essential for connecting the teachers' theoretical perspectives to their practical applications in the classroom. Observations allowed for direct witnessing of teaching moments and the acquisition of knowledge, capturing real-time interactions, challenges, and responses to culturally complex materials. These observations, often missed in interviews or document analysis, were pivotal in uncovering the teachers' underlying biases, assumptions, and pedagogical choices. Additionally, they provided insights into classroom dynamics, such as student interactions, the affective atmosphere, and non-verbal cues vital for intercultural communication. The ethnographic approach (Angrosino, 2007) adopted in these observations meant that they were not merely passive but deeply interpretative, with observers actively situating the observed phenomena within the contexts of culture, language, and education. This immersive approach yielded a nuanced understanding of the intricacies of intercultural teaching and learning.

3.4. Data Analysis

This study utilized content analysis as its primary data analysis method, drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology. The initial step entailed transcribing all interviews to accurately capture participants' expressions and thoughts. Subsequently, a meticulous examination of transcripts and field notes from classroom observations was conducted, fully immersing in the content to grasp its nuances. Generating open codes involved identifying distinct data segments and labeling them with codes derived from participants' statements or interpretations, closely aligned with their meanings. The subsequent grouping of these codes into overarching themes was based on patterns, synergies, or contrasts observed within the data. This thorough approach, aided by the use of NVivo

software, ensured a structured and insightful analysis, revealing the interconnections between various topics and codes. The combined use of classroom observations and content analysis provided a comprehensive picture of how teachers integrate cultural components into their ELT practices, highlighting the complexities and richness of cultural assimilation in language education.

4. Results

4.1. Interview Results

The interview results revealed multifaceted and nuanced teacher attitudes toward integrating cultural diversity in ELT materials, reflecting the complexities of language education. The responses ranged from strong support for the inclusion of diverse cultures to concerns about the potential challenges this diversity might introduce.

On the positive side, many teachers, like Teacher 1 (T1), expressed robust support for cultural diversity, recognizing its crucial role in enriching students' language learning experiences. T1 emphasized the importance of representing various cultures in teaching materials, suggesting that this not only aids in language comprehension but also fosters an inclusive and dynamic educational environment. This perspective resonates with the growing recognition in ELT that language is not just a communicative tool but a medium to understand and connect with different cultural contexts.

"In my opinion, it is vital to include diversity in ELT materials as it allows students to connect with both the language and its cultural context. By incorporating examples and cultural insights, we create a more inclusive and dynamic teaching environment." (T1)

However, alongside these positive views, concerns were raised about the current state of ELT textbooks. T3, for example, pointed out the inadequacy of representing a wide spectrum of cultures in existing materials. This limitation was seen as a missed opportunity to broaden students' global perspectives and cultural understanding.

"The commercial textbook I use lacks a representation of cultures. I strongly believe that exposing students to a variety of materials showcasing cultures is essential, for their learning journey." (T3)

An interesting balance was suggested by some teachers who advocated for a thoughtful integration of both local and global cultures in ELT materials. For instance, T6 proposed that while highlighting local culture is essential for students to connect with their own heritage, comparing it with global cultures can provide a more comprehensive understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and similarities.

"While our textbook primarily focuses on culture exploring similarities and differences between Thai culture and nearby regions can significantly expand students' cultural knowledge fostering understanding." (T6)

On the other hand, the research also uncovered some negative attitudes towards cultural diversity in ELT materials. A notable concern was the potential for overwhelming cultural diversity. Some teachers expressed apprehension that too much emphasis on diverse cultures could lead to confusion among students, especially when it comes to grasping the nuances of language use in different cultural contexts. To illustrate, T4 suggested that there needs to be a careful balance so that the inclusion of diverse cultures does not overshadow the primary goal of language acquisition.

"If ELT materials incorporate a range of cultures of solely focusing on native speakers cultures it may lead to confusion for Thai students when they need to communicate with actual native English speakers. Moreover, I believe that the inclusion of diversity in ELT materials could potentially impede the language learning process. It is important to prioritize culture in classrooms if we want to learn and utilize the English language." (T4)

In summary, the results from the interviews paint a complex picture of teachers' perspectives on cultural diversity in ELT materials. The findings underscore the importance of a balanced approach that respects and incorporates cultural diversity without compromising the effectiveness of language teaching and learning. This calls for a thoughtful consideration of how different cultures are represented in ELT materials, ensuring that they serve to enhance, rather than hinder, the language learning process.

4.2. Document Analysis Results

The examination of cultural diversity integration in ELT materials aligns with Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) framework, which categorized content into target culture, source culture, and international target cultures. This framework forms the basis for analyzing the representation of different cultures in ELT materials, providing a structured approach to understanding how various cultures are incorporated into language education.

A detailed analysis of these materials reveals a prominent emphasis on cultures of English-speaking countries, notably the United States and the United Kingdom. For example, the "English File; Pre-Intermediate Students Book" by Oxford University Press predominantly explores British culture, including chapters and activities that

delve into various aspects of British life. This focus on target cultures of native English-speaking countries is evident in Figure 1, showcasing how commercial ELT materials often prioritize English-speaking cultures.



Figure 1: Examples of target cultures presented in a commercial book.

Source: Latham-Koenig, C., Oxenden, C., & Seligson, P. (2012). *English File: Pre-Intermediate Student's Book Third Edition*. Oxford University Press.

In contrast, there are efforts to incorporate a broader range of international cultures in materials like “Ready to Write; Perfecting Paragraph” by Pearson Education. Designed for the “English Sentences” course, this book adopts a more global approach, presenting diverse cultures in the context of teaching English writing. Figure 2 illustrates this inclusion of international target cultures, demonstrating a shift from the traditional focus on English-speaking countries to a more inclusive representation of global cultures.

3. For thousands of years, garlic has had many uses. The Romans gave garlic to their slaves for strength and to their soldiers for courage. During the Middle Ages, some people used garlic to keep witches away. In the eighteenth century, garlic was used to cure diseases. Even today, some people believe that eating garlic can prevent colds. Garlic has a long history as a plant with many uses.

a. What is the topic sentence? _____

b. How many supporting sentences are there in the paragraph? _____

c. What is the concluding sentence? _____

PRACTICE Choose the best concluding sentence for each paragraph. Write it on the line.

1. Kimchi is the most popular food in Korea. In fact, Koreans serve kimchi as a side dish at almost every meal. Kimchi is made of pickled vegetables and spices, and it's very hot and spicy. Koreans enjoy more than 100 different kinds of kimchi! This delicious food can be eaten alone or mixed with rice or noodles. Luckily, since I eat a lot of it, kimchi is very nutritious. It has vitamins, lactic acid, and minerals. _____

a. If you visit Korea, I hope you will try kimchi.

b. I love all kinds of spicy food.

c. Pho is the most popular food in Vietnam.

Figure 2: Examples of target cultures presented in a commercial book.

Source: Blanchard, K., & Root, C. (2010). *Ready to Write 2: Perfecting Paragraphs, Fourth Edition*. Pearson Education, Inc.

Significantly, Thai teachers are contributing to this diversity through their content creation. The self-produced textbook for the “Explorative English” class is a key example, blending various cultures and reflecting a move towards more inclusive ELT materials. As depicted in Figure 3, this initiative aligns with a broader educational objective of promoting global intercultural understanding.

Unit 5 My unforgettable holiday | Reading

My Unforgettable Overseas Trip in My Life

On previous holidays, my family and I travelled to the island of Langkawi. We arrived there in the evening. We checked in at the hotel before we went to our first destination, the Cable Car. The cable car has three stops. It was quite scary when I rode it. We used the cable car to climb up and down. It was such a challenging and exciting experience, causing my nausea and two times vomiting.



At night, we had dinner together at Telaga Seafood Restaurant. This restaurant provided Western, Arabian, and Malay food. We ate a lot of food that my parents had ordered for us. At first, I did not know how to eat because each dish on the dinner table looked weird for me. Then after my mom showed me how to eat it, I started to enjoy the meal. The most delicious dish was Malay meals. It was terrific and impressed me the most.



Unit 3 World kitchen part 1

Unit 3 World kitchen



001103 Explorative English
School of Liberal Arts, University of Phayao

Reading

Racism, the impact of this word

All human beings are naturally diverse. There is a wide range of sizes, shapes, and colors. Asian people have dark or dark brown eyes and hair. Africans or Black people have dark skin tones and black curly hair while Caucasians people have light skin tone and light hair color such as brown, blond, or red. All people have different body build. Someone was born short while some were born tall. Some have bigger build while the others have smaller build. However, our cultural values contain body shapes and skin colors more than others.

This week's top recommendation written by Lisa Casati

You Lard Gaff
Remember when cafes served full English breakfast: sausages, beans, fried bread, bacon and eggs - with a strong cup of tea? Well, this place will do and you can have your breakfast at any time you like during the day while you listen to your favorite music from the 1960s.



Fast food
Fast food doesn't have to be junk food, at this cafe power. Do you fancy a really good hamburger made with the best ingredients, or old-fashioned fish and chips fried to perfection, all on the table in super - quick time? Speed and quality are important here, and the prices aren't bad either.



Reading

Houses around the World

People have built shelters that suit their surroundings throughout history. Individuals from all around the globe continuously reinterpret, restructure, and redefine the definition of home based on a common collection of requirements, such as access to food, availability of supplies, and environmental risk.

A house is a four-walled structure with a permanent base to all of us. Others, on the other hand, see it as a narrow ledge, a deck cave, or even a tall, crone. Let's take a look at a wide range of shelters across the globe.

CAVE HOMES (MATKATA, TUNISIA)

In Matkata, Tunisia, cave houses - ancient shelters that have been carved out of sandstone - keep people comfortable all year long. These cave-like properties provide protection from the North African sun and desert winds.



STILT HOUSES (KAMBODIA)

Stilt houses can be found in Southeast Asia, where heavy rain is frequent. These houses are built on stilts to shield the residents and their belongings from floods. They're also designed to sit just high enough to keep intruding ground, such as snakes and insects, at bay. Furthermore, their roofs are sloped to allow rainwater to flow down easily without damaging the property.



Figure 3: Examples of international target cultures presented in a self-produced material.
Source: U-Dee et al. (2022). *English for Communication CEFR A2*. University of Phayao;
 Tachasiriwan, U. (2023). *My Unforgettable Holiday*. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/DtDkVPcPzBs>

English for Phayao Studies - Phayao Way of Life



worshipping
champhong marks the most important

English for Phayao Studies - Delightful Dishes



plason or pickled fish is one of the most popular

Journal of Intercultural Communication

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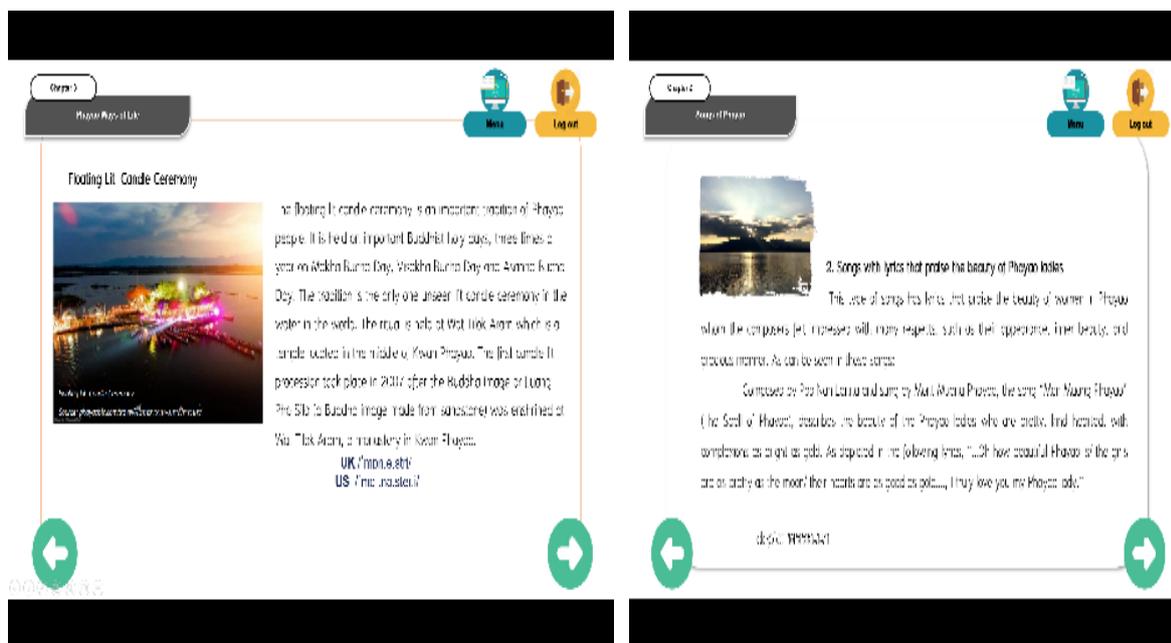


Figure 4: Examples of source cultures in English for the Phayao Studies Course

Source: K. Thanakong (2022). *English for Phayao Studies – Phayao Ways of Life*. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/kb3udrqCkbc>

Furthermore, the course “English for Phayao Studies” presents a unique example of integrating local or source culture. Focusing primarily on Thai culture, this course explores the cultural elements of the Phayao Province, including music, clothing, philosophy, and cuisine. Figure 4 shows how Thai elements are integrated into the course, emphasizing the importance of source culture in ELT materials for fostering language proficiency and a stronger cultural identity.

In summary, the analysis of ELT materials used by Thai teachers reveals a nuanced perspective on cultural integration. While there is a clear trend towards incorporating diverse cultures, a significant focus on English-speaking nations persists. However, the inclusion of both source cultures and international perspectives offers valuable opportunities for language proficiency and nurturing cultural identity. This study underscores the need for a balanced representation of cultures in ELT materials, vital for preparing learners as effective communicators in a globalized world.

4.3. Classroom Observation Results

Classroom observations provided valuable insights into the complex interplay between language learning and cultural content in Thai education. These observations highlighted the challenges teachers face when introducing topics from diverse cultural backgrounds. For instance, in T3’s lesson on the American holiday of Thanksgiving, the difficulties in bridging cultural gaps became evident. T3’s efforts to explain the cultural nuances of Thanksgiving, from the turkey feast to the historical context and the custom of “breaking the wishbone,” faced hurdles as many students struggled to connect with these unfamiliar cultural aspects. This scenario, detailed in Appendix A, illustrates how introducing foreign cultural concepts can lead to disengagement and confusion among students, demonstrating the challenges in teaching cultural content that is distant from the students’ own experiences.

In contrast, the classroom environment transformed in T6’s “English for Phayao Studies” course, which focused on a local Thai festival. This shift towards culturally relevant content resulted in increased student engagement, lively discussions, and active participation, as documented in Appendix B. This positive change showcased the benefits of incorporating culturally familiar material into language instruction, suggesting that when students can relate to the content, their learning experience is enriched.

These classroom observations, combined with insights from interviews and document analysis, reveal a clear disparity in cultural integration in ELT in Thailand. Teachers recognize the importance of culture in language education, yet there is a significant dissonance between this recognition and the content of available ELT materials, which predominantly feature Western narratives. The engaging classroom dynamics seen in lessons with culturally relevant content highlight the urgent need for ELT materials to include a wider range of cultural perspectives. Despite the growing demand for inclusivity, mainstream ELT resources have not yet fully adapted to this need.

In conclusion, the study reveals that while Thai teachers are advocates for integrating culture into language instruction, there is a notable gap between their educational ideals and the reality of available ELT materials. This situation underscores the need for a transformative and inclusive revision of ELT resources. Such an overhaul is

crucial not only for aligning teaching materials with the multicultural realities of the modern world but also for ensuring that students have a holistic and engaging language learning experience that embraces cultural diversity.

5. Discussion

Utilizing interviews, document analysis, and classroom observations, this study has uncovered nuanced dynamics in ELT materials' content. These findings echo the principles set forth by scholars such as Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Byram (2020). Consistent with research by Alsaif (2016) and Song (2019), there is a prevalent emphasis on target cultures, particularly those of English-speaking countries. This trend, while noteworthy, indicates a narrow focus that risks reinforcing cultural dominance in English language pedagogy. As English gains global traction, the increasing necessity for ELT materials to reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of its speakers becomes more pronounced.

The efforts of some publishers and teachers to incorporate a range of international cultures in ELT content are commendable. This approach aligns with Kramersch's (2014) views on fostering learners' intercultural competence, where exposure to diverse narratives enhances linguistic skills and broadens global perspectives. Additionally, the respect for indigenous cultures, as seen in the "English for Phayao Studies" course, follows the principles advocated by Matsuda and Friedrich (2011) and Byram (2020). Integrating language learning with local contexts not only affirms cultural identity but also deepens student engagement.

Classroom observations have crucially highlighted the importance of cultural resonance in ELT. When ELT content mirrors the students' own cultural experiences, as observed in the Thai context, there is a notable improvement in engagement and comprehension. This observation aligns with the pedagogical approaches suggested by Matsuda and Friedrich (2011) and emphasizes the value of culturally responsive teaching practices, as noted in the work of T6.

However, the challenge lies in balancing diverse cultural contexts. While diverse cultural insights offer valuable learning opportunities, their integration into ELT materials must be carefully managed to avoid creating barriers to learning. This necessity for balance reflects the perspectives of teachers like T6 and supports the argument for more inclusive ELT materials, as suggested by Byram (2020).

The gap between the aspirations of teachers and the reality of available ELT materials highlights systemic issues in the field of language education. Despite teachers' desires for more culturally inclusive materials, as supported by Alsaif (2016) and Song (2019), many resources remain Western-centric. This misalignment calls for a closer collaboration between publishers and teachers, echoing the sentiments of Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Kramersch (2014). Such partnerships are essential for creating ELT materials that truly represent the diverse range of cultures and voices in the global community.

6. Conclusion

This research critically examines cultural content dynamics within ELT materials, highlighting a significant discrepancy between Thai teachers' perceptions and the actual content of commercial resources. A prominent finding of this study is the overwhelming focus on cultures associated with native English speakers (NES), which risks overshadowing the diverse cultural tapestry of the global community, including Thailand's rich cultural heritage. Classroom observations were pivotal, demonstrating how this imbalance impacts student engagement, with students disengaging from Western-centric content and showing enthusiasm for culturally relevant materials, such as in the "English for Phayao Studies" course. These observations underscore a crucial gap: despite teachers' recognition of the importance of cultural integration in ELT, most commercial materials do not reflect this pedagogical necessity. This study urgently calls for a re-evaluation in ELT material development to ensure resonance with learners' diverse cultural backgrounds. By fostering resources that balance linguistic proficiency with cultural relevance, English language teaching can become a powerful tool for authentic global communication, facilitating deeper understanding and connection across different cultures. This necessitates a significant shift towards more inclusive ELT material development, advocating for collaborative efforts between teachers and publishers to create resources that truly respect and represent the vast cultural diversity of our global society.

7. Research Limitations And Future Directions

This study, while providing insightful contributions to the understanding of cultural diversity in ELT, encounters several limitations. The methodological reliance on qualitative approaches, while providing rich detail, may limit the generalizability of the findings. The sample size, confined to a specific region and number of participants, further constrains the study's wider applicability. Additionally, inherent biases and the focused scope of research might have overlooked relevant aspects not covered in this investigation.

Future research should aim to broaden the empirical base, incorporating quantitative or mixed methods to enhance findings' robustness and generalizability. Investigating diverse educational settings and integrating longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term impacts of culturally inclusive teaching practices. Moreover, examining the effectiveness of teacher training programs on cultural sensitivity and the utilisation of digital technologies in bridging cultural gaps presents a promising avenue for further exploration.

Addressing the identified gaps, it's crucial to develop ELT materials that balance the representation of cultures, moving beyond the predominant focus on English-speaking countries. Collaboration between publishers and educators is essential in creating resources that accurately reflect the global use of English, incorporating both local and international cultural elements. Enhancing professional development programs for teachers, focusing on strategies for effectively integrating cultural diversity into the classroom, will be key. Additionally, educational policies should be revised to support the inclusion of cultural content in language education, recognising its significance in fostering global citizenship and intercultural competence among learners.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Observation Notes from T3's Classroom

Date: September 13, 2021

Course: Listening and Speaking for Opinion Expressions

Teacher: T3

Context: Lesson on American Thanksgiving celebration. Focus on traditions such as the turkey feast, historical background, and expressing gratitude.

Observation Findings:

- **Student Engagement:** Varied levels of engagement. Some students participated actively in discussions about Thanksgiving, while others seemed confused and disengaged.
- **Confusion and Disconnection:** Notable confusion during the explanation of the “breaking the wish-bone” tradition. Many students struggled to relate, as evidenced by perplexed expressions and peer exchanges.
- **Non-Verbal Cues:** Some students showed difficulty understanding the context through furrowed brows and pensive looks. Others appeared distracted.

Implications: Introducing American cultural traditions like Thanksgiving can challenge student comprehension and engagement. This suggests the need for considering cultural familiarity in ELT materials.

Appendix B: Observation Notes for T6's Classroom

Date: September 14, 2021

Course: English for Phayao Studies

Teacher: T6

Context: Lesson focusing on a local festival, emphasizing contextually relevant content.

Observation Findings:

- **Positive Classroom Dynamic:** Noticeable positive shift in dynamics with the introduction of the local festival topic. Students showed brightened expressions and active participation.
- **Increased Engagement:** High interest in the festival topic. Students actively engaged in discussions, sharing personal experiences and asking questions.
- **Feeling Connected:** Students displayed a deep connection with the festival content, sharing anecdotes and cultural insights, indicating a sense of shared identity and pride.

Implications: Introducing culturally relevant and contextually meaningful content significantly enhances student engagement and connection. It emphasizes the importance of integrating culturally relevant material to deepen students' understanding of cultural nuances.