

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON ELEMENTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS

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Abstract: In the transcultural and transnational settings, intercultural communication (IC) via English as a lingua franca (ELF) has received much attention, especially in English language teaching. Consequently, English textbook designers have been aiming at integrating IC elements into textbook contents. This paper presents a critical evaluation on such elements in the currently used English textbooks at high school in Vietnam from the perspectives of high school teachers in a province of Central Vietnam. Findings reveal that teachers are generally positive about the IC-related knowledge embedded in the textbooks. However, they believe that the textbooks lack resources to develop learners' intercultural skills, attitudes and awareness. Results also show that teachers' opinions are divided on whether the inclusion of ELF-based information and practice in the textbooks is necessary. Based on the findings, practical implications are drawn for future IC-integrated textbook design, teaching practice, and teacher training programs.

Key words: Intercultural communication (IC), English a lingua franca (ELF), English textbook evaluation, teachers' perceptions

1. Introduction

Under the impact of globalization and internationalization, the use of English as a global language for communication across borders and disciplines has generated an unprecedented number of multilingual speakers of English. Given that English users from non-English-speaking countries outnumber their native-speaker counterparts, the ownership of the language has largely been questioned (Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2014; Seidhofer, 2011), challenging the domination of Native-English variations in the world's communication and particularly, in English language teaching (ELT). In the ELT setting, many attempts have been made to better equip English learners with knowledge, attitudes and skills needed for intercultural communication (IC), where much international interaction is conducted among non-native English speakers. One of those efforts is to move teaching and learning achievement goals and materials away from native-speakerism perspectives, embracing cultural diversity as well as the multilingual identities of English learners (McKay, 2018).

This article seeks to examine the teachers' evaluation on how IC components are presented in a set of locally written English textbooks. There are two main reasons underlying the purpose of this study. Firstly, given the growing importance of ELF, it is essential to see whether classroom practice and teaching materials can sufficiently cater for learners' needs for their daily communication and future jobs in the globalized world. Secondly, as textbooks are considered the foundation for structuring classroom activities and the primary resource for students to enhance their English skills and intercultural communicative competence (Jiang et al., 2022),

assessment research on textbooks should be encouraged. Within the Vietnamese context, in 2020, nine sets of English textbooks in the high school curriculum were approved by The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) (according to Decisions 441/QĐ-BGDĐT and 442/QĐ-BGDĐT). Along with this new policy, MOET also adjusted the general objective of the English subject at high school, which includes the goal of providing students with knowledge of cultures from English-speaking countries and other countries, and creating global citizens capable of communicating in the culturally diverse environment (according to Circular 32/2018/TT-BGDĐT). The introduction of the nine English textbook sets has led to the increase in number of textbooks' quality evaluation studies (e.g. Kieu, 2020; Nguyen & Cao, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021; Vu & Pham, 2021); however, insights from English teachers and students who directly use the textbooks have largely been missing from the literature of textbook evaluation. Therefore, this study, with its attempt to provide evaluation on currently used textbooks based on teachers' feedback, is hoped to contribute to the body of literature in textbook assessment. Ultimately, pedagogical implications are drawn for future IC-integrated textbook design and language teacher training programs. In this regard, this study sets out to seek the answer to the research question as to what are Vietnamese teachers' perceptions on elements of intercultural communication in high school English textbooks.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Intercultural competence frameworks

Intercultural competence (IC) has become a significant objective in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. However, there is no consensus among theorists on the definition of intercultural competence due to its complexity. Many scholars have introduced various models to conceptualize intercultural competence. This study focuses on Byram's (1997, 2000, 2021) Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) framework and Baker's (2011, 2015, 2022) Intercultural Awareness (ICA) model.

Byram's ICC framework comprises two competences: communicative competence and intercultural competence. Communicative competence consists of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. Byram's model primarily emphasizes intercultural competence, which encompasses knowledge, attitude, interpretation and relation skills, skills of discovery and social interactions, and critical cultural awareness. Knowledge refers to understanding one's own culture and the culture of the interlocutor. Attitude involves curiosity, openness, and the willingness to suspend disbelief about other cultures. Interpretation and relation skills include the ability to interpret and relate documents from different cultures. Skills of discovery and social interactions involve gaining new knowledge about one's own and other cultures. Critical cultural awareness enables the critical evaluation of one's own and other cultures' perspectives, practices, and products (Byram, 1997). In a revised model, Byram (2021) clarifies that the term "country" is used for convenience and can refer to "multilingual, multicultural" entities consisting of diverse communities (p.1).

Baker's (2011, 2015, 2022) ICA model focuses on the speaker's ability to mediate between different culturally and contextually grounded communication modes and frames of reference in global lingua franca contexts. Unlike earlier interpretations of intercultural

competence, Baker (2011) highlights the need for effective communication in ELF settings and the diminishing importance of communication solely with native speakers. The ICA model encompasses three levels of awareness: (1) basic cultural awareness, (2) advanced cultural awareness, and (3) intercultural/transcultural awareness. The highest level involves the capacity to negotiate and mediate between diverse communication practices and frames of reference.

Byram's ICC framework is widely used in foreign language pedagogy due to its comprehensive nature (Baker, 2022; Hoff, 2020). However, its applicability in transcultural communication, where clear linguistic and cultural boundaries are difficult to establish, remains a subject of debate. To address this, Baker's ICA model, particularly its Level 3, is considered, as it focuses on intercultural/transcultural awareness. In their study, Baker and Sangiamchit (2019), introduced the term *transcultural communication* as a more appropriate approach to language teaching in the fluid setting of globalization and trans-nationality. The term refers to communication that transcends the borders of cultures and languages (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). However, it is also important to note that "transcultural communication perspectives build on, rather than replace intercultural communication research" (Baker, 2021, p.10). In other words, when it comes to intercultural communication in the ELF context, it is worth noting that a transcultural perspective is essential as a next step to conduct interactions beyond cultural and linguistic boundaries, rather than mix them (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). Therefore, the researcher combines both Byram's (1997, 2000, 2021) and Baker's (2011, 2015, 2022) models as the theoretical basis for data analysis, taking into account the perspectives of an ELF user.

2.2 An overview of English teaching curriculum in Vietnam

English is one of the important subjects across school levels in Vietnam, generating an enormous amount of attention from students, parents, and educators in the country. In 2006, MOET made English the compulsory subject and focused on communication as the main goal of the learning and teaching program. Recently, in response to fast-paced changes of the world and the role of the English language as the common means of communication, MOET has implemented modifications to its policies and objectives for English language instruction. Specifically, the 2020 English Education Project was implemented with the aim of training English learners to be able to communicate in multilingual and multicultural settings (Nguyen & Le, 2020). In addition, MOET emphasizes the mission of teaching and training English learners with international communication skills, building a foundation of multicultural knowledge among countries, and the ability to become global citizens (MOET, 2018). This focus on IC in ELT classrooms reflects educators' and book designers' awareness of the growing global significance of English.

Despite this emphasis, the 'native-speaker' standard still serves as the target of EFL teachers and learners (Ho & Nguyen, 2019). In the textbooks, native norms and cultures, especially British and American, dominate the contents and activities (Dang & Seals, 2016; Ho & Nguyen, 2010; Nguyen et al., 2021). It should be noted that the standards and norms from native cultures cannot adequately equip English learners with knowledge and skills needed to communicate in a globalized and multicultural context, where non-native English speakers outnumber native English speakers (Jenkins, 2014; Seidhofer, 2011). Within the Vietnamese context, much of international communication involves interactions between Vietnamese and

English users from non-English-speaking countries, rather than native speakers (Ton & Pham, 2010). Therefore, there is a need for changes in the textbook content design to provide English language teachers with the framework for ELT lesson preparation with the objective of ELF-mediated IC.

2.3 Evaluation of IC in English textbooks in Vietnam

The evaluation of English textbooks globally, and specifically in Vietnam, has long been a lively topic among researchers and educators. Recently, the evaluation of multicultural, intercultural, and global English components in textbooks designed and developed by local experts has also received significant attention (e.g., Chan, 2014; Sybre & Rose, 2018; Xu, 2013). In Vietnam, many studies have been conducted to evaluate textbooks; nonetheless, with respect to cultural and intercultural components, assessment research in Vietnam remains scanty.

Specifically speaking, Dang and Seals (2016) carried out a study to assess primary school textbooks from a sociolinguistic perspective. This assessment focused on four sociolinguistic aspects: teaching methods, bilingualism, language variation, and IC. The study revealed that primary school textbooks were designed based on communicative language teaching methods. However, English language variation and intercultural knowledge elements were limited in the books (Dang & Seals, 2016). Regarding high school English textbooks (English 10, 11, 12), Nguyen and Cao (2020) found that the cultural content related to Anglophone and Western cultures, and local culture, predominated in the books. Meanwhile, cultural features from Asian countries (e.g., China, Japan, and ASEAN) and intercultural contexts were under-represented in the content. It is also pointed out that although the tasks in the textbooks appealed to students as they were related to their personal experience, they failed to provide them with chances “to critically engage with more profound cultural values and ideologies implicitly embedded in the materials” (Nguyen & Cao, 2020, p. 8). Based on the same set of textbooks, Nguyen et al. (2021) carried out a textbook evaluation from an English as an international language perspective. The findings suggested that the books primarily aimed to prepare learners to communicate with Anglophone English speakers, thus only partially addressing learners’ diverse communicative needs in real-world situations. Another assessment study by Kieu (2020) examined visual information and written texts in the same textbooks, in which she came to a conclusion that the book set was good from the perspective of ICC. To be more specific, the textbooks included knowledge of cultures, which are “inputs for linguistic as well as cultural practices” (p.39). However, Kieu (2020) also noted that for intercultural competence development, knowledge of cultures was not adequate. Teachers also needed to help students conduct the activities and learning tasks in the textbooks to enhance their intercultural attitudes and skills. In a concluding note, Kieu (2020) pointed out the importance of an ELT teacher to be “interculturally competent and knowledgeable” (p.41).

The review has revealed that the notion of IC still receives little attention in textbook evaluation research. Therefore, this study is conducted to provide evaluation and critical analyses of components of IC in the currently circulated textbooks through a survey of feedback from high school English teachers of different schools. The study is expected to serve as a helpful reference for English textbook design improvement in the future.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, which attempts to yield in-depth results from quantitative and qualitative data sources (Dornyei, 2007). Particularly, the qualitative component involves collecting and analyzing numerical data through a survey with closed-ended questions. Meanwhile, the qualitative component explores participants' opinions through interviews. It is hoped that this mixed-methods study would provide a more insightful understanding of how English language teachers at high schools in Vietnam perceive IC components in the textbooks.

3.1 The textbooks

Three English textbooks from the *Global Success* series – *English 10, 11, 12* – were selected for this study. The series, jointly-published by Vietnam Education Publishing House and Pearson Education, was written and edited by acclaimed authors in Vietnam who understand the ELT reality in Vietnam, cultural and psychological characters of Vietnamese to select and construct contents, book structure, knowledge and language appropriate to Vietnamese teachers and learners. The books are designed to develop learners' communication competence and intercultural awareness, preparing them for the integration in globalization.

Re-introduced to the teaching curriculum in 2020 with a new look and more updated changes, the books are believed to have been used by over 10 million teachers and students across 63 cities and provinces in the country. Despite the introduction of different sets of textbooks, this series is arguably the most influential one at high schools in Vietnam. It should be stressed that despite previous assessment research on this series, few studies have adopted the IC perspective to analyze teachers' feedback on the books. Therefore, the researcher believes that this IC-based evaluation on these textbooks is timely, hopefully providing valuable information for the books' future editions.

3.2 Participants and subject of study

Participants in this study were 21 teachers who are teaching at high schools in a province in central Vietnam. The subject of the study is the teachers' perceptions on IC elements in English textbooks currently used in Vietnam.

3.3 Methods of data collection

Two main data sources were collected for the analysis process. In more detail, a set of questionnaires was devised in a 5-point Likert-style format. The Likert-style checklist was adopted and adapted from Lei and Soontornwipast (2020) in which they developed a 60-item questionnaire as a tool for critical evaluation of IC attributes in EFL textbooks. The checklist serves as "a helpful tool for teachers in textbook evaluation" (p.92). Given the more ELF-based purpose of this study, some question items were adjusted to focus more on ELF-mediated cross-cultural communication. Specifically, the questionnaire is divided into two parts: (1) overall evaluation (from item 1 to item 20) and (2) IC attributes (from item 21 to 60). The latter includes four sub-dimensions of IC, including intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness.

The second data source was gathered from individual semi-structured interviews, eliciting the chosen participants' perceptions on the IC components in the currently circulated

English textbooks. It is expected that interview data can generate the thick description of the participants' beliefs, specifically elaborating in-depth description on some major themes listed in the questionnaire. In this study, five teachers from five schools in the province were chosen for the interview. All interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to make sure the most amount of information was elicited from the interviewees. For the sake of confidentiality, five teachers participating in the interview were referred to as T1 to T5.

3.4 Data analysis

Multiple data sources from questionnaires and interviews were collected for quantitative and qualitative analyses. There are two phases involved in the analysis process. In the first phase, 60 items in the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively through descriptive statistics. The process continued with a qualitative content analysis of data from the chosen participants' interviews.

With respect to the analytical framework for qualitative data, the research employed the five dimensions, including (1) knowledge, (2) interpreting and relating skills, (3) discovery and interaction skills, (4) attitudes and (5) critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997, 2000, 2021). However, as noted by Baker (2022), intercultural awareness is no longer seen as the awareness of any specific culture or community, but it rather refers to emergent and hybrid intercultural communication. Therefore, two levels of ICA adapted from Baker's (2011, 2015, 2022) were incorporated into the analysis of critical cultural awareness (Table 1). Another rater, who received the training on qualitative data analysis, participated in the inter-rater training and coded 1/3 of all qualitative data. After comparing the coding results, the researcher and the other rater resolved the discrepancies and reached the consensus to achieve inter-rater reliability.

Table 1. Analytical framework

Frameworks	This study	Byram's (1997, 2000, 2021) ICC model	Baker's (2011, 2015, 2022) ICA model
Dimensions	Knowledge	Knowledge	
	Attitudes	Attitudes	
	Skills	Interpreting and Relating Skills	
		Discovery and Interaction Skills	
Awareness	Critical Cultural Awareness	Advanced cultural awareness	
			Intercultural/transcultural awareness

4. Results

The process of both quantitative and qualitative data analyses, pertaining to two frameworks of Byram's ICC (1997, 2000, 2021) and Baker's ICA (2011, 2015, 2022), have yielded several findings.

4.1 Quantitative analysis

As for the questionnaire items, they are divided into five main parts, including overall evaluation, intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness. The reliability coefficient and mean scores of IC dimensions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean scores and reliability coefficient for each IC dimensions

IC dimensions	N	Reliability coefficient	Mean
Intercultural knowledge	10	0.87	3.45
Intercultural skills	10	0.79	3.50
Intercultural attitudes	10	0.81	3.23
Intercultural/Transcultural awareness	10	0.88	3.07

Table 2 shows the reliability coefficient of each IC dimensions presented in the questionnaires. Results suggest that the items across all dimensions have a good level of reliability ($0.70 < \alpha < 0.90$). Also, the mean scores of knowledge and skills are 3.45 and 3.50 respectively, indicating a generally favorable feedback from the teachers on how IC elements in the textbooks facilitate learners' development of intercultural knowledge and skills. On the other hand, the remaining dimensions, attitudes and awareness, receive lower mean scores, at only 3.23 and 3.07. This means that the participants may perceive these two dimensions as needing more focus in the textbooks. More detailed descriptive statistics of the items on major IC attributes in the textbooks are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the participants' perceptions on IC elements (N=21)

IC dimensions	Items	Mean	SD
Intercultural knowledge	38. The textbook content includes much Vietnamese culture.	4.10	0.60
	37. The textbook content includes cultures from English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries.	4.05	0.65
	22. Cultural topics are appropriate to learners.	4.01	0.92
	36. Cultural information focuses more on everyday norms and traditions than cultures in literature, arts, architecture.	3.72	0.87
	35. Cultural information helps learners interpret events of one's culture and others'.	3.60	0.85
	32. Cultural information is not culturally biased.	3.09	0.81
	34. Cultural information provides teachers and learners with knowledge about different cultures.	3.05	0.89
	31. Cultural information focuses on intercultural situations and issues.	2.82	0.73
Intercultural skills	54. Tasks in the textbooks require learners to compare and contrast different cultures.	3.54	0.77
	52. Tasks in the textbooks require learners to apply knowledge of their cultures and other cultures to solve intercultural issues.	3.05	0.95
	53. Tasks in the textbooks require learners to discover and relate their cultures to others'.	3.04	0.84
Intercultural attitudes	40. Cultural information is interesting, creating curiosity and openness of learners to other cultures.	3.05	0.72
	41. Cultural information encourages learners' readiness to suspend their assumptions and stereotypes to other cultures.	2.77	0.81
Intercultural/transcultural awareness	56. Tasks in the textbooks help teachers and learners be aware of the development of their intercultural communication competence.	2.91	0.87
	57. Tasks in the textbook require learners to identify, interpret and question cultural assumptions and stereotypes.	2.72	0.88
	58. Cultural information helps increase learners' awareness of mismatch and miscommunication that might occur in intercultural communication.	2.72	0.70
	55. Different English variations in the world are included in the textbooks.	1.95	0.90

Turning specifically to the items under each cluster, the mean scores for intercultural knowledge is moderately high, indicating that the textbooks provide learners with information about different cultures, including both native and non-native cultures of the English language. In more detail, it is obvious from the table that Vietnamese cultures occupy large space in the book content (38. *The textbook content includes much of Vietnamese cultures – 4.10*). Moreover, the books contain cultural norms and values from both English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries. The statistics also shows that despite the positive feedback from the teachers in terms of intercultural knowledge, cultural information in the textbooks is perceived as not sufficiently focusing on intercultural aspects (31. *Cultural information focuses on intercultural situations and issues-2.82*). Compared to intercultural knowledge, the three other dimensions of IC competence, namely skills, attitudes and awareness, receive lower scores. With respect to intercultural skills, the tasks in the textbooks are reported by the teachers not to adequately foster IC-related practice for learners. Similar evaluations are found in the statistics for intercultural attitudes and awareness. Particularly, it is worth noting that the mean value of 55. *Different English variations in the world are included in the textbooks* is only 1.95, suggesting the lack of ELF-based information in the textbooks. Additional insights from qualitative data were analyzed to elaborate on these quantitative data results.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

Four main themes were found from thematic analysis of the data, namely knowledge, skills, attitudes and intercultural/transcultural awareness. Each coded theme is presented as follows.

4.2.1 Intercultural knowledge

Table 4. Theme and codes of intercultural knowledge

Theme	Features	Codes
Theme 1 – Knowledge	- knowledge of one’s own culture; - knowledge of the interlocutor’s culture; - knowledge of general process of societal and individual interaction	Theme 1 – Code 1.1 – Vietnamese cultures Theme 1 – Code 1.2 – different cultures in the world Theme 1 – Code 1.3 – cross-cultural and intercultural topics and information

When it comes to the dimension of IC knowledge, Byram (1997, 2000, 2021) argues that a competent English speaker needs to be equipped with sufficient knowledge of their own cultures as well as that of one’s interlocutor. Furthermore, general knowledge of social and individual interaction is also needed for successful intercultural communication (as shown in Table 4). Findings reveal that in general, the interviewees have positive feedback towards how the textbooks present cultural topics and information, but in terms of intercultural information, opinions were diversified.

As pointed out by the interviewees, cultural information about Vietnamese cultures and different cultures in the world are presented in the textbooks. Cultural topics cover a wide range of social and cultural issues. Each topic is also depicted through different cultural lenses, providing learners with chances to explore new cultures from other countries. One interviewee

stated, *“What I like about the book is how it covers different topics related to students’ real life. The topics are also familiar to my students. Moreover, each unit has the Communication and Culture section, which provides students with linguistic tools for daily communication and cultural knowledge around the world”* (Theme 1 – Code 1.1 – T1).

In terms of intercultural topics and information, four interview participants recognize the bias in cultural representation, stating that Western and Vietnamese cultures occupy too much space in the book content. They believe that there is a need for more intercultural content, especially in Asian settings where Vietnamese learners are most likely to join in communication with other non-native speakers. For instance, one interviewee commented: *“The content is mostly either cultures in Vietnam or in the US or UK. Some other countries are mentioned, but for me the content is too general”* (Theme 1 – Code 1.1, Code 1.2 – T1). Particularly, the content in the books is criticized by one teacher to be heavily dependent on Vietnamese culture, which possibly limits the sensitivity of students towards international and intercultural issues. She thinks that the content related to Vietnamese cultures, including texts and visuals, is unnecessarily that much, because *“the information and pictures about Vietnamese cultures, such as heritages are too familiar with Vietnamese students. [...] more international information should be included to prepare students for IC”* (Theme 1 – Code 1.1 – T4). Meanwhile, two remaining participants are satisfied with the current representation of Asian cultures and cross-cultural content in the textbooks, as noted by one participant in the interview, *“In the newly edited version of English 12, a new unit of A Multicultural World is added, which aims at providing students with information about globalization and cultural diversity”* (Theme 1 – Code 1.3 – T2). The texts, nonetheless, are believed to remain somewhat superficial, providing only factual information about particular countries rather than deeper intercultural situations which can allow students to come up with more useful strategies for real-life intercultural interactions. It is also worth noting that the information is provided as separate national cultures, which is considered “narrow traditional views” (Baker, 2021) and irrelevant to today’s context of interculturality and transculturality.

4.2.2 Intercultural skills

Table 5. Theme and codes of intercultural skills

Theme	Features	Codes
Theme 2 – Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interpreting a document or event from another culture; - relating it to one’s own culture; - acquiring new knowledge of a culture; - implementing knowledge, attitudes, and skills in real-time communication 	Theme 2 – Code 2.1 – interpreting cultural references and relating them to one’s own cultures Theme 2 – Code 2.2 – applying knowledge and skills in real-life situations

With respect to the skills needed for IC, such as discovering, interpreting and relating skills, the majority of the interview participants claim that the activities in the textbooks enable students to develop their intercultural competence, as they create a certain amount of space for discussion, comparison and contrast between Vietnamese cultures and other cultures. This addition of discussion and presentation activities are believed to facilitate intercultural skills such as interpreting, comparing and contrasting cultures, as mentioned by some teachers in the interview, *“in each Communication and Culture section, there is always a reading passage about cultural events or information in the world. After reading the text, students are asked to compare*

their cultures with the ones mentioned” (Theme 2 – Code 2.1 – T3), and *“I think the textbooks can provide learners with opportunities to raise their voice about different social and cultural issues in the world. For example, in Unit 2 English 12, the Speaking part requires students to develop a plan for Multicultural Festival Day, where multiple cultures from many countries are presented through music, traditional costumes and cuisines”* (Theme 2 – Code 2.1 – T2). Despite this, the teachers think that the tasks could be designed in more interesting ways, such as problem solving or role-play based on real-life simulations. Furthermore, when asked about real-life teaching practice in class, four out of six interviewees admitted that their intercultural teaching is faced with many challenges. The most frequently-mentioned issue is the language ability of the students. One teacher said, *“My students are really weak, compared to those from other schools in the city, so they are nervous when I ask them about cultures and any questions that require deeper thinking”* (Theme 2 – Code 2.2 – T1). Another teacher observed from her students that only a few of them are actively engaged in IC-based activities, the others either keep silent or *“discuss in Vietnamese”* (Theme 2 – Code 2.2 – T2). Apart from that, time constraints and large numbers of students are also mentioned as difficulties when teaching intercultural features at high school.

4.2.3 Intercultural attitudes

Table 6. Theme and codes of intercultural attitudes

Theme	Features	Codes
Theme 3 - Attitudes	- curiosity and openness to new cultures; - readiness to suspend assumptions and stereotypes;	Code 3.1: curiosity and openness to new cultures; Code 3.2: readiness to suspend assumptions and stereotypes

As regards intercultural attitudes, teachers are asked whether or not the intercultural components in the textbooks facilitate curiosity and openness to new cultures, and readiness to suspend assumptions and stereotypes among their students (Byram, 1997; 2000). The results suggest that according to the majority of participants, the IC-related content, including texts and visuals, do not focus on developing intercultural attitudes for learners. The content is reported to be somewhat superficial, thus it fails to enable deeper judgment towards cultural differences. Acknowledging the importance of attitudes in intercultural interactions, the teachers believe that it is of significance to develop not only linguistic skills and cultural knowledge, but also critical attitudes for students towards intercultural issues and IC-related mismatch. For example, one interviewee said, *“I think the content should focus more on cultural stereotypes, so teachers can use the materials to generate critical attitudes among students towards cultural differences”* (Theme 3 – Code 3.2 – T5). As such, IC-related texts and tasks in the textbooks should create more space for students to develop critical attitudes when communicating in intercultural contexts.

4.2.4 Intercultural/ transcultural awareness

Table 7. Theme and codes of intercultural/transcultural awareness

Theme	Features	Codes
Theme 4 – intercultural/transcultural awareness	- advanced cultural awareness (of multiple perspectives, possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication);	Theme 4 – Code 4.1 – advanced cultural awareness

	- intercultural/transcultural awareness (of emergent and hybrid cultural reference and practices, moving beyond stereotypes, a capacity to negotiate and mediate between different emergent communicative practices and frames)	Theme 4 – Code 4.2 – intercultural/transcultural awareness Theme 4 – Code 4.3 – awareness of different English variations
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As explained by Byram (1997, 2000, 2021), advanced cultural awareness describes an English user’s ability to approach a new culture from multiple perspectives, and recognize the possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication when it comes to IC. Adding to that, Baker (2011, 2015, 2022) suggests a more ELF-based perspective of intercultural/ transcultural awareness where ELF users transcend borders of countries and cultures, critically judge stereotypes to overcome presumptions, and are able to mediate in the emergent and fluid cultural context. As regards the theme of intercultural/transcultural awareness (as shown in Table 7), some interesting findings were reported. First, the interviewees hold different beliefs regarding the role of ELF in intercultural interactions. According to some teachers, the inclusion of various variations of English is necessary as it contributes to increasing students’ awareness of ELF, as cited from the interview transcript, *“It is important to get students to know different accents in the world because they can prepare themselves when communicating with people from non-English-speaking countries. And more importantly, they can develop a sense of respect for different accents”* (Theme 4 – Code 4.2 – T2). Meanwhile, other teachers support the inclusion of only native variations of English as *“it would be very confusing for students to learn about many Englishes in the lessons”* (Theme 4 – Code 4.2 – T4). Nonetheless, it is important to note that the major purpose of the introduction to different English variations, as mentioned by some, is *“[...] to cultivate intercultural awareness for learners, not to force them to speak in Singlish or Thailish”* (Theme 4 – Code 4.3 – T2). One teacher pointed out that even the characters in the textbooks are Vietnamese, they speak in perfect British accents, which she finds *“really awkward”* (Theme 4 – Code 4.3 – T5). Therefore, she believes that the inclusion of *“Vietlish accent”* can promote national identity and awareness for students. Second, with respect to IC-related tasks in the textbooks, teachers believe that the tasks are successful in providing learners with cultural knowledge around the world; but they fail to increase learners’ awareness of IC-based issues, especially within the setting of ELF-mediated communication. As pointed out by some interviewees, the tasks mainly revolve around group discussion and presentation. As a result, the teachers feel that more problem-solving tasks based on real-life intercultural interactions, especially those between non-native speakers, should be presented in the textbooks. Teachers are also concerned that although they are aware of IC as one of the main objectives in their classrooms and the increasing popularity of ELF in international communication, some of them acquire a *“vague”* understanding of the notion as they receive *“nearly no training in intercultural teaching”* (T1).

5. Discussion and implications

5.1 Discussion

Regarding quantitative data analysis, it is safe to say that although there is an amount of improvement in the IC content in the textbook series (English 10, 11, 12), it appears to the teachers that many IC elements can be enhanced for more effective teaching and learning of IC. In particular, cultural contents contain those from both English-speaking and non-English-speaking

countries. Furthermore, in terms of knowledge and skills, tasks in the textbooks are designed to enable IC-integrated discussion and presentation, thus providing students with opportunities to acquire knowledge about multicultural features, and recognize cultural differences across communities and countries. However, according to the teachers, some ELF-based features are insufficiently presented in the textbook such as variations of English in the world, and real-life intercultural situations. IC-related tasks in the textbooks primarily focus on the surface of cultures, thus not meeting the needs of an ELF user in today's globalized world. Moving to qualitative analysis, more insightful perceptions about the items in the questionnaire are provided by the interview participants. First, they agree that the textbook contents and tasks have been changed to be more IC-oriented, thus possibly offering teachers and learners IC-based materials and practice. Nonetheless, the reality of teaching and learning practice at schools might be different. Challenges such as limited in-class time, large numbers of students, especially students' low linguistic ability, are listed by the participants as the main hindrances of intercultural teaching. What is more, little focus is stressed on intercultural instruction in teacher training, thereby creating difficulties for teachers to carry out IC practice in their classrooms. Second, despite the domination of native norms and standards in the textbook content, an increasing amount of cultural information from non-English-speaking countries, especially Asian countries (e.g. Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore), is introduced in the books. However, the participants in the interview indicate that the content about multicultural features are mostly factual, leaving little space for deep and critical engagement from learners. This is in line with findings from previous studies (e.g. Dang & Seals, 2016; Kieu, 2020; Nguyen & Cao, 2020) as they point out the superficiality of IC content in the textbooks. It is suggested by the teachers that more simulation from real-life settings, especially those among non-native speakers, should be designed to enhance students' IC competence. Last but not least, teachers' perceptions regarding the notion of ELF differ greatly. As shown in quantitative data analysis, the inclusion of English variations in the world in textbooks receive modest attention, compared to native variations. In this regard, while some teachers advocate for more ELF-based content being introduced to students through the texts, visuals and audios in the textbooks, some believe that there is no need to do so. This, once again, raises the question of how non-native English teachers approach the concept of ELF and its role in international communication.

5.2 Implications

Based on the findings, implications are recommended for IC-integrated textbook writing, teaching practice and teacher training programs. As regards the textbook design, it is necessary to highlight that the inclusion of disparate cultural facts and events across countries fails to adequately promote IC competence among students. Instead, materials in the textbooks should enhance learners' knowledge, skills, attitudes and critical intercultural/transcultural awareness through the simulation of real-world situations. Therefore, the content and tasks should be designed pertaining to the notion of intercultural interactions using ELF; that is to say, they should embrace the "pluricentric nature of English" rather than focusing too much on native norms and standards (Nguyen et al, 2021, p. 197). As concerns teaching practice, within the context of the fast-paced globalization with the use of ELF, the relationship between language and culture becomes more complex and diverse, leading to a demand for appropriate syllabi and learning materials that engage diverse communities and cultural practices. However, it is not feasible for

learners to possess comprehensive knowledge of all the diverse linguistic or cultural backgrounds and practices which they may encounter in intercultural and transcultural communication. Instead, learners need to be aware of the processes involved in such communication, enabling them to adapt their linguistic and communicative resources effectively in each interaction (Baker, 2022; Canagarajah, 2013). Hence, it is highly recommended for syllabi designers and language instructors to integrate emergent and fluid cultural frames and practices in their lessons through alternative materials other than textbooks, such as films, intercultural videos, and authentic materials, allowing learners to flexibly adopt their knowledge and skills to deal with intercultural misunderstandings or conflicts. More importantly, learners are given chances to cultivate more positive attitudes, open-mindedness and respect towards different cultures, and are able to negotiate and mediate with occurring situations during intercultural communication with people from various backgrounds. Turning to teacher training programs, as stated by participants in the interview, they hardly receive official training on IC teaching. This issue can be seen as a mismatch with the objectives of MOET in ELT, in which IC competence is emphasized as one of the major goals of EFL classrooms to enhance global citizenship. In fact, the lack of training in IC teaching is also observed across Asian contexts (e.g. Wang, 2012; Curran & Chern, 2017; Chiu, 2021). To solve this issue, as suggested by Nguyen et al. (2021), there must be a collaboration among policy-makers, textbooks designers, teacher educators and classroom teachers. Also, it is time for changes in the teacher training curriculum. First, pre-service teachers should be exposed to IC-based materials and practices with the main goal of developing their awareness of IC in today's globalized context. Moreover, regular training programs for in-service teachers should focus not only on communicative approach (i.e. teaching four skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing) but also on IC approach to equip teachers with intercultural competence, especially intercultural awareness.

6. Conclusion

In general, the study has found that teachers have mixed attitudes towards the components of IC in the textbooks. The majority of teachers believe that the textbook content includes cultural and intercultural knowledge, but the information is superficial and lacks depth. Moreover, the textbooks are reported to lack IC-related resources for students to develop appropriate skills, attitudes and awareness for effective communication across countries and cultures. Also, it is worth noting that teachers hold different perceptions on the inclusion of ELF-based information and practice in the textbook content, even though all of them recognize its importance. Based on these findings, it is suggested that textbook designers should focus on IC-related content. As for teaching practice, teachers are encouraged to use alternative materials apart from textbooks to increase IC-related resources for learners. Finally, regarding teacher education, language teachers should be made aware of the importance of IC competence in ELT.

The study has some limitations, including a small sample size and the lack of classroom observation, which might limit generalizability and insights into IC teaching practices. Future research should include a larger, more diverse sample and incorporate classroom observations.

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NHẬN THỨC CỦA GIÁO VIÊN VỀ YẾU TỐ GIAO TIẾP LIÊN VĂN HOÁ TRONG SÁCH GIÁO KHOA TIẾNG ANH BẬC TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG

Tóm tắt: Trong bối cảnh xuyên văn hóa và xuyên quốc gia, giao tiếp liên văn hóa (GTLVH) qua tiếng Anh như một ngôn ngữ chung (ELF) đã thu hút nhiều sự chú ý, đặc biệt trong việc giảng dạy tiếng Anh. Do đó, các nhà thiết kế sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh đang hướng tới việc tích hợp các yếu tố IC vào nội dung sách giáo khoa. Bài báo này trình bày một đánh giá mang tính phê phán về các yếu tố này trong hai cuốn sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh đang được sử dụng ở các trường trung học tại Việt Nam, từ góc nhìn của giáo viên. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy giáo viên nhìn chung có thái độ tích cực về kiến thức liên quan đến IC được lồng ghép trong sách giáo khoa. Tuy nhiên, họ cho rằng sách giáo khoa thiếu tài nguyên để phát triển kỹ năng, thái độ và nhận thức liên văn hóa của học sinh. Phân tích sâu hơn cũng cho thấy ý kiến của giáo viên còn chia rẽ về việc có nên đưa vào các thực hành dựa trên ELF trong sách giáo khoa hay không. Dựa trên các kết quả này, các khuyến nghị thực tiễn được đưa ra cho việc thiết kế sách giáo khoa tích hợp GTLVH và các chương trình đào tạo giáo viên trong tương lai.

Từ khóa: Giao tiếp liên văn hóa, tiếng Anh như ngôn ngữ chung (ELF), đánh giá sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh, nhận thức của giáo viên