

## CULTURAL REPRESENTATION IN OMANI CURRICULUM: AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS GRADES (5-12)

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### **Abstract**

*This quantitative study investigates the representation of source, target, and international cultures in English language textbooks used in Omani government schools. Using Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) approach and Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation, it analyzes how cultural content influences students' intercultural awareness. Data was acquired by rigorous coding of textual and visual materials in specified exercises of the textbooks taught in Omani government schools. The findings imply a strong focus on Omani culture, with little exposure to target and global cultures. To promote students' global competence while preserving national identity, the study recommends a more balanced approach to cultural representation, curriculum changes, extracurricular resources, and professional teacher development*

### **Introduction**

The developing worldwide significance of English language instruction underscores its critical role in promoting international communication, with both Arab and non-Arab contexts recognizing it. Recent research has focused on how English textbooks include cultural elements into exercises, reading passages, and visual representations, embedding language learning within culturally situated frameworks. Within the Omani environment, the English curriculum from Grades 5 to 12 includes a significant amount of cultural content, allowing students to achieve not just linguistic proficiency but also intercultural competency. Exposure to such varied cultural elements promotes improved flexibility during international activities such as travel, educational exchanges, and higher education studies abroad. Mahu (2012) emphasizes the broad inclusion of English in academic programs globally, whereas Alshenqeeti (2019) confirms the intrinsic link between language and culture, implying that language acquisition is intrinsically culturally based. This research examines the integration of social and global content in the English language curriculum in Oman and their effects in terms of provoking students' intercultural awareness and readiness for global participation. It is based on the premise that the learning process of languages inherently requires knowledge of broader human experiences such as cultural diversity and global interconnectedness. The study analyzes the impact of curriculum design on the capacity of students to communicate across cultures and prepare to work in international multicultural settings.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Omani English textbooks from Grades 5 to 12 show a strong emphasis on local culture, with limited integration of target and international cultures. This imbalance may restrict students' exposure to diverse cultural perspectives and hinder the development of cross-cultural competence.

In Oman, where English is taught as a foreign language, the curriculum is designed to promote linguistic competency and intercultural understanding while retaining national identity and values. However, English language textbooks have a limited integration of cultural representations, notably in terms of reflecting Omani, Islamic, English-speaking, and global cultures. The lack of substantial cultural content may impede students' ability to develop intercultural competency, limiting their readiness for effective communication in an increasingly globalized environment.

## 1.2 Significance of the Study

This study analyzes the cultural representation in English curricula, specifically the Omani curriculum for grades 5–12. The representation of different cultures in English textbooks is an important area of creating intercultural awareness, inclusivity, and engagement in language learning.

In Oman, where English is taught as a foreign language, the curriculum is intended to strike a balance between promoting international understanding and protecting national identity and values. However, this study identifies a significant disparity in the degree to which English language textbooks incorporate multiple cultural representations. While there is a focus on linguistic proficiency, the systematic inclusion of Omani, Islamic, and larger international cultural viewpoints appears to be restricted, raising concerns about the adequacy of cultural exposure required for students to build intercultural competence.

### Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine cultural representation in English curricula, specifically the Omani curriculum for grade 5–12. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Identify and decode patterns and themes of cultural representations in English language textbooks used in Omani schools using quantitative thematic analysis.
2. Examine the representation and equilibrium of source, target, and international cultures in the textbooks in relation to cultural content model.
3. Evaluate the influence of textbook cultural representation on students' intercultural consciousness.

### Research Questions

1. What are the themes and patterns that are identifiable in English language textbooks used in Omani schools' cultural representation?
2. What are the types of cultural content—target, source, and international—that are presented in the textbooks, and what is the distribution between them?
3. What is the possible impact of the cultural representation in the textbooks on the students' intercultural awareness and knowledge?

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 The Significance of English Language Teaching (ELT)

English language teaching (ELT) is of immense value to global education, providing access to communication, information, and economic possibilities. Iryanti and Oviyanti (2024), discuss students' perceptions of why English learning is significant in Arabic language instruction. According to a pair of scholars, a certain section of learners is after the purpose of studying English besides Arabic, which signifies a wide argument on whether foreign language is learning worth someone's time, in addition to their mother tongue or not. Van Huy et al. (2024), refer to English speaking skills among foreign language learners and link them with sociolinguistic competence. With time, there is a growing significance of English in that the majority of careers make it essential for one to have proficiency in the language and most of our social interactions require it too. Ahmed et al. (2021), analyze attitudes towards English learning by students in Iraq's Kurdistan region, focusing on motivation and ELT issues. When it comes to English language learning, Kurdistan's study area considers certain motives as well as the obstacles the school system and the students have to deal with. Sudusinghe and Gamage (2023), study English proficiency in Sri Lanka's nursing education, with its importance in specialist fields. It is very important to take up the study of English in any university course if a person wants to be able to communicate with native English speakers and for the sake of migration to an English-speaking country. Nair et al. (2014), also study the support of parents and the attitudes towards English in language acquisition, studying in addition the global worth

of ELT. The majority of the families teach their kids English with the intent to have them be able to successfully use it in the future.

## **2.2 English Language Teaching Methodologies and Practices**

As Al-Khamisi and Sinha (2022), examine communicative language teaching (CLT), in Oman, gauging its effectiveness in EFL contexts. Looking at communicative language teaching enables to check if it is successful in enhancing the language skills of learners in Oman as well as to that it meets the EFL educational system's requirements. Alkhairi (2023), discusses the effectiveness of students and teachers in Saudi Arabia's EFL environments, with emphasis on pedagogy. Discussing the effectiveness of students and teachers in learning English as a foreign language, it highlights the importance of teaching methods to enhance students' understanding and practical application of the language. Teachers can improve language skills and outcomes by implementing effective strategies, which will ultimately lead to students having a better understanding of English in educational contexts. Kurdi and Nizam (2022), critically assess the strengths of using short stories as a teaching material in ESL classes, outlining its use in language learning. Stories and outlines are frequently used in ESL teaching to provide students with an enjoyable and engaging learning experience. Regardless of the culture, these stories can be enjoyable and beneficial to learn a language as it makes learning others more accessible and relatable. Kohnke and Ting (2021), outline students' awareness of mobile apps for learning discipline-related words, pointing out the role of technology in ELT. Yunus and Hua (2021), write on gamification learning platforms like Quizizz in ESL contexts. By making learning fun and engaging, gamification technologies help students retain material better and comprehend the language more fully. Jamila (2021), writes about assessing higher-order thinking in the Omani English curriculum, linking approaches to assessment with pedagogical success. The assessment of students' language skills in relation to instructional strategies is the primary goal of this study. Malik et al. (2023), write about dativization in Punjab English textbooks, introducing contextualization of curriculum to local settings. According to this study, dativization is used in Punjabi English curricula to help students' grammar.

## **2.3 Cultural Representation in English Language Teaching Textbooks**

Cultural representation in ELT textbooks has been widely analyzed to assess inclusivity and authenticity. Alonso and Ponte (2021), analyze the cultural vocabulary representation in children's EFL textbooks. Examining the cultural terminology used in children's EFL textbooks reveals how language resources present target, local, and global cultures. Such depiction promotes early intercultural knowledge and understanding while helping with language development. Bose and Gao (2022), critically analyze cultural representations in Indian ELT textbooks in terms of bias and omission. International and target cultures are frequently given priority in Indian curricula, while Indian culture is either underrepresented or disengaged, according to critical analysis of bias and omission in these programs. This cultural disparity may restrict students' self-awareness and impede their growth in inclusive intercultural competency. Calais (2021), compares cultural representations in Swedish EFL coursebooks. Examining how local, target, and foreign cultures are presented in relation to Swedish culture is the goal of comparing cultural representations in textbooks. This comparison aids in evaluating how well cultural content is balanced and how it affects students' intercultural comprehension, identity development, and cultural awareness. Zhang and Su (2021), analyze English textbooks used in China and Germany. The cultural content incorporated into activities can have a big impact on students' cultural awareness and knowledge, according to an analysis of English textbooks used in China and Germany. Dolgunsöz and Yiğit (2022), conduct cross-national content analysis of Iranian and Turkish ELT coursebooks with the aim to discover cultural trends. This study demonstrates how culture is incorporated into language instruction by highlighting the cultural orientations of Iran and Turkey through cross-national content

analysis of their own cultural representations in ELT textbooks. Prihatiningsih et al. (2021), conduct multimodal content analysis of seventh-grade EFL textbooks and reveal cultural themes. Students in Grade seven should be exposed to a variety of cultures through textbook activities and illustrations since this will increase their cultural awareness and make studying more interesting and significant. Rouaghe and Bouguebs (2023), assess equilibrium among target, international, and source cultures of middle school EFL courses. To comprehend how exposure to diverse cultures impacts middle school kids' learning and intercultural competency, it is essential to look at how various cultural representations impact them through their English language textbooks. Pasichnyk et al. (2024), look back at the intercultural dimension of foreign language learning in Ukraine under conditions of socio-political transformations. Knowing the larger context in which language learning takes place and how it affects students' growth requires looking at how sociopolitical factors impact students' learning through intercultural dimensions. Short et al. (2024), conduct a critical multimodal discourse analysis of Chinese EFL secondary school textbooks and uncover cultural narratives. Chinese English as Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks enhance students' comprehension of the language and its cultural context by presenting cultural narratives alongside linguistic proficiency.

#### **2.4 ELT Curriculum Development and Arab Cultural Representation**

Cultural integration in Arab ELT curricula has been an area of extensive research. Alqahtani (2024) critically examines women's representation in Saudi secondary school secondary school EFL textbooks according to Saudi Vision 2030 reforms. This study Examining how women are portrayed in EFL textbooks for Saudi secondary schools shows how the curriculum supports Vision 2030's objectives of empowering women in the social and educational sectors and promoting gender inclusivity. Aoumeur and Ziani (2022), contrast linguistic and content characteristics of Algerian EFL textbooks. The linguistics and content of the Algerian textbooks are contrasted, emphasizing the importance of these two components in forming the curriculum and affecting the efficacy of language instruction. Boudouaia (2021), analyzes Algerian teachers' perceptions of recent curriculum reform. Teachers' analysis of current curriculum in Algeria points to the need for reform, which is equally pertinent to the Omani setting, where ongoing textbook production and evaluation are crucial to meeting students' changing requirements and maintaining linguistic and cultural balance. MrKhilafat (2022), talks about Libyan teachers' practice in incorporating target cultures in ELT. Teachers also make connections between knowledge and aspects of the target culture, like cuisine, customs, and day-to-day activities. This helps students link to the language more deeply and improves their cultural awareness; the Omani curriculum can also profit from this strategy. Nassim and Labidi (2022), talk about the integration of intercultural education among Arab EFL students. Since it improves their capacity to interact with a variety of cultural situations, deepens their language comprehension, and fosters more effective communication in international contexts, intercultural understanding is crucial when teaching EFL to Arab learners. Görür and Babadoğan (2021), analyze Syrian students' challenges in implementing ELT curricula. Like many others, Omani pupils could find it difficult to participate in some of the curriculum's activities. By using contemporary teaching techniques to raise students' English competence and make studying more interesting and relevant, teachers can help students overcome these challenges. Aljaafil (2024), offers a SWOT analysis of Lebanon's Grade 12 English language curriculum, emphasizing strength areas and development requirements. The Grade 12 English curriculum in Lebanon can be improved by addressing its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This can be achieved by applying the SWOT technique, which offers insightful information on curriculum topics. Sciences (2021), contrast World Englishes and cultures in Finnish and Chinese ELT textbooks with Arab contexts. The significance of intercultural awareness in these curricula and the function of varied cultural viewpoints in language teaching

are highlighted by this study, which shows how English and world cultures are represented in Finnish and Chinese textbooks with Arabic contexts. In order to help students traverse and appreciate both cultural representations, it is imperative that Tunisia's curriculum strike a balance between target and local cultures. By combining global viewpoints, this balance also enables kids to develop a more comprehensive understanding and a well-rounded cultural awareness. By critically evaluating the concept of stereotypes in Egyptian textbooks, one may make sure that students are exposed to correct and culturally relevant ideas by looking at images, activities, and other information.

### **Cultural Representation Development of ELT Curriculum in Non-Arab Contexts**

Culturalization of ELT curriculum is also relevant outside Arab nations. Banaruee et al. (2023a), evaluate foreign language students' English textbooks in cultural content. This assessment looks at how non-native English speakers' textbooks portray various cultures and how these books affect their cultural knowledge and comprehension, influencing how they view both their own and other cultures. The information will remain relevant and relatable to the students' own cultural context if elements that may distort or deviate from local culture are avoided. Meng (2021), analyzes teacher-student rapport's effect on motivation in ELT classrooms. A healthy and joyful learning environment is fostered by a solid relationship between teachers and students. Cultural representation in the classroom allows teachers and students to connect with the content more intimately, which enriches and gives meaning to the learning experience for all. Wan (2023), discusses Malaysian English language instructors' encounters with linguistically and culturally diverse learners. In intercultural classrooms, Malaysian instructors encounter difficulties, but they successfully overcome these barriers and improve language acquisition by utilizing professional teaching techniques. By using these techniques, they enhance students' general language proficiency while assisting them in navigating cultural differences. Ulum (2022), examines the application of Bloom's Taxonomy in EFL/ESL readers, aligning cognitive learning objectives with ELT curriculum design. The structured framework that Bloom's Taxonomy offers can greatly enhance curriculum by encouraging intercultural thinking in a variety of ways. Its levels promote understanding, application, and critical thinking all of which are necessary for pupils to successfully interact with diverse cultural viewpoints. Eşkan and Bacanak (2022), examine cultural representation in Turkish secondary EFL coursebooks. The significance of cultural representation in textbooks and its profound influence on students' cultural knowledge—which shapes their perceptions of both their own and other cultures—are underscored by this test.

### **2.6 Cultural Dimensions of the Global English Language Teaching Curriculum**

ELT curricula development in Oman highlighted international trends of language education training merged with local cultural identity. Student involvement can be greatly increased by examining how Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is applied in Omani curricula and by incorporating enjoyable and interactive activities. Students can connect more intimately with the language and the cultural contexts it reflects when cultural representation is incorporated into these activities, which enhances the learning process and promotes intercultural understanding. Bulaila and Sdiri (2021) discuss the role of English in Bahrain, contrasting it with Oman's multilingual environment. In order to comprehend how these systems influence students' academic and professional chances, it is imperative, in my opinion, to examine the intercultural language exchange between Oman and Bahrain as well as to analyze their educational systems. Through analyzing how language and culture function in the educational systems of both nations, we may learn more about how intercultural communication helps students succeed academically and advance their careers in a globalized society. Faruk (2023), examines Saudi English textbooks and determines inconsistencies between the curriculum objectives and cultural representation that can be employed to inform

Omani textbook design. Understanding the cultural representation of Saudi textbooks can provide important insights on the integration of cultural elements into language learning. Select subjects from these textbooks might be tested and applied to the Omani curriculum to provide a useful comparison that would improve Omani students' cultural awareness and give them a more comprehensive view of intercultural education. Yousef (2024), examines pedagogical implications of social media use in Saudi curricula, discussing digital interaction strategies that could be transferred to Oman's ELT context. Assessing the technical approaches for incorporating social media into curriculum and examining the pedagogical consequences of social media use in education are essential. Through the proper use of social media, teachers may foster collaborative learning, increase student engagement, and give students real-world examples to apply what they have learned.

Enhancing language proficiency and intercultural awareness requires teaching English through cultural representations in curriculum. Integrating local, target, and international cultures into English courses and textbooks promotes language competency and global awareness in both Arab (including Oman) and non-Arab nations. In addition to enhancing language acquisition, this method, when combined with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), equips students to speak successfully in a variety of cultural contexts, guaranteeing that the curriculum is in line with the communication demands of everyday life.

### **Methodology**

Understanding how culture is portrayed in educational materials is essential for fostering intercultural awareness and forming students' identities. The study uses a quantitative approach and thematic content analysis to investigate how culture is portrayed in English language textbooks used in Grades 5 through 12 in Omani schools. The research approach is interested in how textbooks use words and images to convey meaning, drawing on Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation and Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) cultural content model. The study is sensitive to ethical research practices and objective interpretation, taking into account the balance between source, target, and global cultures.

### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

This study adheres to a quantitative content analysis design, more specifically the thematic analysis of cultural representations in English language textbooks in Omani schools. The investigation is exploratory in nature, with the aim to look for patterns and themes on how culture is presented in the textbooks.

The theoretical framework is informed by Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation, which places meaning as being created through language and cultural practices. To Hall S. (1997), representation is not an issue of merely reflecting reality but of actively constructing how people make sense of the world. In this view, textbooks are cultural tools that are utilized in the construction of learners' cultural knowledge and attitudes.

In addition, the study is guided by Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) model of cultural content, which categorizes culture in language learning into three types: source culture (students' own culture), target culture (the target language culture), and international culture (a variety of world cultures). The model provides a basis for examining the balance and types of cultural content presented in the textbooks.

Taken cumulatively, these theoretical models inform the investigation of the choice, portrayal, and prioritization of culture in language learning materials and the influence such representations may bear on learners' intercultural awareness.

### 3.2 Research Design

This research takes a quantitative route, utilizing content analysis to compare the portrayal of culture in Omani English language textbooks from Grade 5 to Grade 12. The utilization of a quantitative model is appropriate in quantifying how much the cultural aspects are incorporated into the learning curriculum based specifically on how Omani culture (source culture), English-speaking countries' cultures (target culture), and world outlook (international culture) are represented. This method enables a general examining of the cultural components in Omani textbooks, assessing the balance and range of cultural depictions in the education materials.

### 3.3 Data Collection

The officially sanctioned English language textbooks used for instructional purposes in Omani schools serve as the primary source of data for this study, whereby thematic content analysis is used to identify cultural representations in the different elements of reading texts, dialogues, images, and activities. The study discusses the degree of Omani cultural portrayal versus international and target cultures, the degree of intercultural sensitivity and cultural diversity, and the possible impact on the students' cultural identity and intercultural awareness. Based on the model developed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999), the analysis categorizes cultural items into three clear categories: Source Culture, which reflects Omani values and traditions; Target Culture, which includes English-speaking countries; and International Culture, which represents worldwide cultures that are not Omani or English-speaking. This approach provides insightful views on the cultural balance in the textbooks and how they affect the students' understanding of cultural diversity.

### 4.1 Data Analysis

This study uses thematic content analysis to look into how culture is represented in the Omani English-language curriculum for grades 5–12. The study uses this strategy to methodically identify repeating themes, patterns, and underlying meanings in curriculum materials. The examination focuses on the depiction of Source, Target, and International Cultures, looking at how local and global cultural aspects are harmonized and how this balance affects students' intercultural understanding. The emergent thematic patterns reflect the underlying cultural narratives incorporated in the textbooks, emphasizing their importance in shaping students' cultural awareness. Subsections are grouped to present major conclusions of cultural representation uncovered during the investigation.

#### Themes and Cultural Patterns

##### Dominance of Source Culture Illustration

The textbooks provide a strong emphasis on Source Culture, with graphics and prose depicting traditional Omani garb, national rituals such as handshakes, and significant historical landmarks. This continuous depiction instills a strong sense of cultural identification and pride in students, sustaining their connection to their local heritage while studying English. Such content reinforces national identification by incorporating cultural values into daily language learning exercises.



Figure 1: Unite One – Team Together Oman 5A

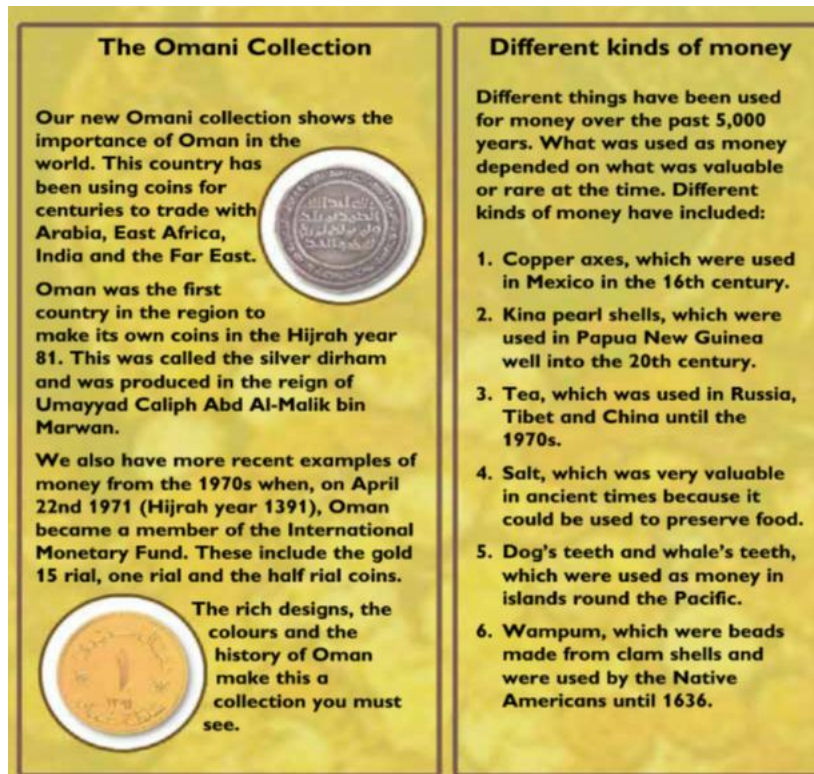
**The utilization of the target and international cultures**

There is a concerted effort to expose pupils to elements of both target cultures (e.g., UK, US) and international cultures (e.g., Brazil, China, Canada). Table tennis, examining UK geography, and learning about Brazilian festivities all help pupils extend their cultural horizons. This exposure promotes intercultural competency by training students to engage with global societies outside their immediate context.



**Figure 2: Unite Five- Engage with English 11A  
Balance of Local Traditions and Global Awareness**

Many events connect local and global ideas by combining Omani culture with international features. For example, depictions of ancient civilizations such as Oman and Greece help pupils to consider their culture within the larger context of global history. The textbooks strike a balance by encouraging both a deep sense of national identity and an appreciation of common global contributions.



**Figure 3: Unit Two- English for Me 9A**

### Encouraging intercultural sensitivity and understanding

Students learn to appreciate behavioral differences and acquire cultural sensitivity by contrasting cultural behaviors such as dining manners in China with those in the UK/US. These contrasts not only expose cultural diversity, but also foster critical thinking about social norms and behaviors, increasing students' readiness for intercultural communication.



**Figure 1: Unit One -Team Together Oman 5A Modeling Cultural Evolution in a Modern Setting**

Textbooks also represent how traditions change in modern times, such as depicting a smartphone app that promotes local food alongside traditional garb. This demonstrates an understanding of cultural dynamism, informing pupils that cultural practices do not remain static but fluctuate in response to technology and societal changes. Such depiction helps students manage the junction between tradition and innovation in a worldwide society.



**Figure 5: Unit Four – English for Me 10B**

Finally, the thematic content analysis of Omani English textbooks reveals five major cultural patterns: a strong emphasis on Source Culture, integration of Target and International Cultures, a balance of local traditions and global perspectives, promotion of intercultural sensitivity, and recognition of cultural evolution in modern contexts. These trends are consistent with Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) cultural content model, highlighting the necessity of reinforcing local identity while also developing students' intercultural competency and global awareness.

## Findings

The findings of this research indicate that English language textbooks in Oman from Grades 5 to 12 are strongly inclined towards the national identity, heritage, and culture of the country, with a tendency to highlight local traditions and renowned historical personalities. Conversely, target (English-speaking) culture presentations are minimal, with very little representation across the textbooks. International cultures are also not well represented, thereby restricting students' exposure to broader global perspectives. While visual content largely reflects local cultural contexts, written text occasionally combines elements of both target and global cultures. This inconsistency frustrates students' capacity to develop intercultural competence and consider diverse viewpoints. Teachers play a crucial role in supplementing textbook material to compensate for cultural shortcomings, thus fostering a sense of identity and enhancing student engagement. The findings reveal that the curriculum must be more balanced in terms of cultural representation to promote intercultural understanding, and professional development of teachers needs to be carried out in order to effectively integrate local and global perspectives within the classrooms.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Omani English language textbooks place a high value on the representation of local culture, supporting the national identity. While this concentration increases students' cultural awareness, it provides limited exposure to target and international cultures, impeding the development of intercultural competence. In a worldwide environment, such constraints may impede students' capacity to engage effectively across cultures. As a result, the study suggests a more balanced curriculum that incorporates many cultural perspectives in order to improve students' global communication abilities and intercultural awareness.

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