

Visualizing (Multi)Cultural Landscape in ELT Textbooks: Evidence from a Systematic Literature Review

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Article information	
Abstract	<p>As global communication has become increasingly multicultural, there is an urgent need to understand cultural values as they are represented in textbooks for English language learners (ELLs) as well as to acknowledge these textbooks as cultural artifacts. During the last ten years, a plethora of studies have been carried out to investigate the cultural portrayals found within ELT textbooks. However, comprehensive research review of this issue has received scanty attention. To fill this void, this current study systematically reviewed the academic published literature on cultural representation in ELT textbooks from 2014 to 2023. This systematic literature review intended to identify prevailing research trends and key findings of the reviewed studies during this time frame. For this purpose, after applying the inclusive and exclusive criteria and full-text analysis, a total of 49 published articles in Scopus-indexed journals were reviewed and analyzed. By following the PRISMA (Moher et al., 2009) guidelines and thematic content analysis (Patton, 2015), we captured the research trends of the study and discussed the key findings. The highest percentage of published articles (n=10 or 20.4%) was recorded in 2022, and the most frequently employed study design was content analysis (n=22 or 44.89%). We also found that there was a significant imbalance in cultural representation found in both locally developed and internally distributed textbooks. Limitations and various recommendations are made for future research on the basis of the review.</p>

Keywords	cultural landscape, ELT textbooks, systematic literature review, thematic content analysis
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1. Introduction

For many years, it has been widely acknowledged and established that language and culture are inextricably intertwined (Cahyono, 2018; Kramsch, 2013; Nindya et al., 2022; Widiati & Hayati, 2019). From the lens of English as an international language (EIL), it has been argued that understanding learners' own cultures is of paramount importance (McKay, 2000) to developing their intercultural communicative competence (ICC), a critical skill for engaging in intercultural encounters at various levels (e.g., personal, social, educational, or professional) (Batunan et al., 2023; Fitriyah et al., 2024). Moreover, the growing popularity of English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Baker, 2016; Fang, 2017) and World Englishes (Galloway, 2017; Galloway & Rose, 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2017) has caused a surge in individuals from non-Anglophone/non-English speaking countries (e.g., China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Russia, Thailand, Vietnam, etc.) using English for intercultural communication.

Consistent with the abovementioned situation, this phenomenon has had significant implications for foreign or second language education. There is a paradigm shift emphasizing that ESL/EFL learners have been pushed to not only achieve native-like linguistic codes (e.g., lexis, grammar, and phonology) and sociocultural competence (Choi, 2016; Liu & Fang, 2017) but also to be equipped with intercultural competence as a core competency (Byram, 1997; Newton, 2012) to prepare them to be intercultural speakers who fully comprehend the socio-cultural context of English in diverse intercultural contexts (Baker, 2012; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

As an effort to integrate cultural elements into the educational system, textbooks, as “cultural artifact[s]” (Gray, 2010, p. 37) and sociocultural and educational artifacts (Xiong, 2012), should be designed with an intercultural approach and authentic, context-appropriate materials to transmit and

disseminate cultural norms, ultimately contributing to their ICC development and intercultural understanding. With the heightened awareness and recognition of the importance of culture in English language teaching (ELT), a concomitant interest has also emerged in exploring how cultural elements are represented in ELT textbooks. In the past few years, there has been an increasing concern among prominent EFL scholars worldwide over the representation of cultures in English textbooks (Dinh & Sharifian, 2017; Li et al., 2023; Sadeghi & Sepahi, 2018; Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020; Tien, 2023; Zhang & Su, 2021), which is evident in the research findings focusing on cultural representation in ELT textbooks within several countries around the world such as China, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Vietnam. Moreover, attention has also been given to the analysis of cross-cultural content in both local and global textbooks (Abdul Rahim & Jalalian Daghigh, 2020; Hosseinzadeh et al., 2022; Moghaddam & Tirnaz, 2023; Su, 2016; Tirnaz & Moghaddam, 2023). They reached a clear consensus that culture holds significant importance in the process of teaching and acquiring language skills. A recently published scoping review article (Zhang et al., 2024) systematically explored cultural representation in foreign language textbooks, highlighting cultural misrepresentation and under-representation issues in these textbooks. This study also recommended the extension of temporal scope to capture long-term trends of this issue.

As previously mentioned, despite the growing interest in textbook analysis in ELT, to the best of our knowledge, the current amount of comprehensive analysis of review articles on cultural representation in ELT textbooks is insufficient. For this reason, a systematic review study is needed in this research domain since its results may offer valuable perspectives for future researchers and serve as a foundation for subsequent empirical investigations in the future. The continued absence of a research review in this area may result in a perpetual reliance on outdated or stereotyping ELT materials that might impede ELLs' ICC development, leading to ineffective intercultural pedagogical practices. Specifically, this systematic review study captures the research trends on cultural representation in ELT textbooks from the articles published in Scopus-indexed journals from 2014 to 2023. It also provides a comprehensive overview of the existing literature by synthesizing and analyzing the empirical findings to identify patterns and gaps in the literature concerning this issue. It is critical to reveal the research trends and synthesize the key findings on this issue to fully comprehend

what has been studied in the past decade, explore the geographical distributions of research contexts, highlight the popular methods, and visualize the landscape of key findings. By doing so, future researchers would have a clearer overview and scope of what could be explored in future studies.

To summarize, this systematic review endeavored to review the relevant studies and synthesize the existing empirical evidence on cultural representation in locally produced and international ELT textbooks. Thus, this study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the research trends of cultural representations in ELT textbooks?

RQ2: What are the key findings from the available literature investigating cultural representation in ELT textbooks?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Culture in Language Classroom

In the domain of language pedagogy, culture and language are deeply intertwined. To learn a language, one should also learn about its associated culture, as culture is unquestionably reflected through the language in which it is spoken (Yuen, 2011). Many scholars (Byram, 1997, 2008; Kramsch, 2013; Kramsch et al., 1996) have recognized the integration of culture in language classrooms since language is viewed as a medium of cultural transmission and it cannot be taught without teaching culture. Following this line of thought, it is no wonder that language learning materials extensively cover cultural topics (e.g., customs and beliefs) (Yuen, 2011). This implies that culture pedagogy has been prioritized in language education and viewed as a fundamental aspect of this field. Hopefully, this can promote the learners' cultural literacy, helping them to gain a deeper appreciation and respect for other cultures and avoid cultural misunderstanding.

2.2 Multicultural Values in ELT Textbooks

Viewed from a critical lens, textbooks can be seen as educational artifacts as well as “ideological message systems for transmitting dominant values and beliefs of society” (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2011, p. 293). They are made up of texts, exercises, and tasks that are either selected or produced by the authors, representing a combination of authors' ideologies, interests, and agendas, which are reflected in the contents the authors create (Setyono & Widodo, 2019). In

addition, textbooks are partly based on the ideology expressed in the curriculum, which can shape learners' identities (Awayed-Bishara, 2015; Setyono & Widodo, 2019). In light of these concerns, an instructional textbook is not only a vehicle of knowledge transmission, but a medium to convey the prevailing social attitudes, dominant values, and beliefs of society, ultimately shaping learners' identities. Hence, it is undeniably crucial to critically evaluate the content of the textbooks to ensure that they promote diversity, critical thinking, and inclusivity. This critical evaluation can help identify potential biases or inaccuracies in the materials, potentially leading to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

As the framework of data analysis in representing cultural aspects in ELT textbooks, researchers frequently use the following categories based on the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (Yuen, 2011), including *big "C"* (product), *small/little "c"* (practices), *subjective culture* (perspective), and persons. The first term, big "C", refers to the formal or highbrow (e.g., social, political, and economic) cultural elements of society, prominent historical figures, works of literature, arts, and sciences. Small "c" culture tends to be associated with the ways of life and practices of a particular group of people such as music, fashion, culinary tradition, social media trends, and others. Perspective/subjective culture encompasses the shared worldview (e.g., values, beliefs, attitudes) of a particular group or society. The last aspect pertains to the individuals or well-known icons who represent or symbolize the particular culture. Cristiano Ronaldo and Mohammed Salah, for instance, epitomize the distinct cultures of Portugal and Egypt, respectively.

2.3 Previous Studies on Cultural Representation in ELT Textbooks

Methodologically, research on cultural representation in textbooks can be classified into three categories: the semiotic-analytical approach, critical discourse analysis [CDA], and content analysis (Zhang et al., 2022). Several studies (Canale, 2016; Derakhshan, 2024; Isnaini et al., 2019; Stranger-Johannessen, 2015; Weninger & Kiss, 2013) have been theoretically inspired to employ the semiotic-analytical approach to create and (re)present cultural meanings of texts, tasks, and images in textbooks. Although this methodological approach offers valuable insights into cultural representation in textbooks, several potential weaknesses need to be taken into account. First, the semiotic analytical approach may be

limited by the individual researcher's interpretation and analysis of the cultural symbols or references in textbooks, leading to subjective interpretations and biases that potentially influence the research findings and conclusions. Second, since this approach primarily focuses on analyzing visual and textual elements in textbooks, it may not fully capture the effect of the cultural representations on readers or learners. Researchers should therefore consider other alternative approaches to complement and enrich the findings.

Taking a different approach, some scholars (Alzubi et al., 2023; Ariawan et al., 2022; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Sulistiyo et al., 2020; Xiong & Qian, 2012) employed the CDA as a methodological approach for textbook evaluation to examine cultural and moral values, ideologies, and national identity within textbooks. While the CDA approach has gained prominence as a useful methodological approach to textbook evaluation, researchers need to consider its limitations. For example, CDA mainly focuses on analyzing language patterns and discourse structures, which potentially overlook other important aspects of cultural representations in textbooks (e.g., images, design, and layout).

Meanwhile, the content analysis approach is employed to analyze cultural representation from the perspective of nationality/country, cultural themes, or cultural categories (Abid & Moalla, 2022; Davidson & Liu, 2020; Moghaddam & Tirnaz, 2023; Yamada, 2010). Since this approach simply relies on measuring the frequency of representation of various cultures quantitatively, it may fail to capture how these representations are portrayed and not provide the depth of analysis necessary to fully understand the cultural representation in the textbooks. Moreover, it may not adequately capture the subjective responses and interpretations of the readers or learners using the textbooks. Overall, scholars should remain aware of the potential constraints of any research approach and strive to employ complementary methods that offer a more comprehensive and nuanced view of cultural representation in textbooks.

Notably, there has been a significant increase in empirical research on cultural representation in textbooks over the past decade marked by the emergence of trends in themes, theoretical perspectives, and methodological approaches employed. However, comprehensive review studies on cultural representation in ELT textbooks remain rare from 2014 through 2023. This study

therefore systematically explored the research trends and geographical distributions, highlighted the methodological approaches employed, and dissected and synthesized the empirical findings on cultural representation in ELT textbooks. This review aimed to provide valuable analysis of the current status of cultural representation in ELT textbooks.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009), this systematic review study aimed to synthesize the relevant research studies on cultural values represented in ELT textbooks. PRISMA is an internationally accepted and validated set of guidelines for conducting systematic reviews on a broad range of topics and various disciplines (Bacca et al., 2014; Sønderlund et al., 2019) including language learning (Shadiev et al., 2020). As part of a larger-scale ongoing research project, this systematic literature study provided an overview of the existing literature on how culture is depicted in ELT textbooks, as well as identified the literature gaps on this issue to explore. The present literature review study started with the literature search and continued with data evaluation and analysis.

3.2 Literature Search and Protocol

In the initial stage, to locate high-quality scholarly articles, the first author performed an online search on the Scopus database for peer-reviewed articles published from 2014 to 2023. We intentionally selected this database as the primary source for finding relevant articles published in well-established international journals. Additionally, this database was chosen due to its well-earned reputation for a rigorous peer review process. To be included in this review, each study must meet the eligibility criteria as indicated in Table 1.

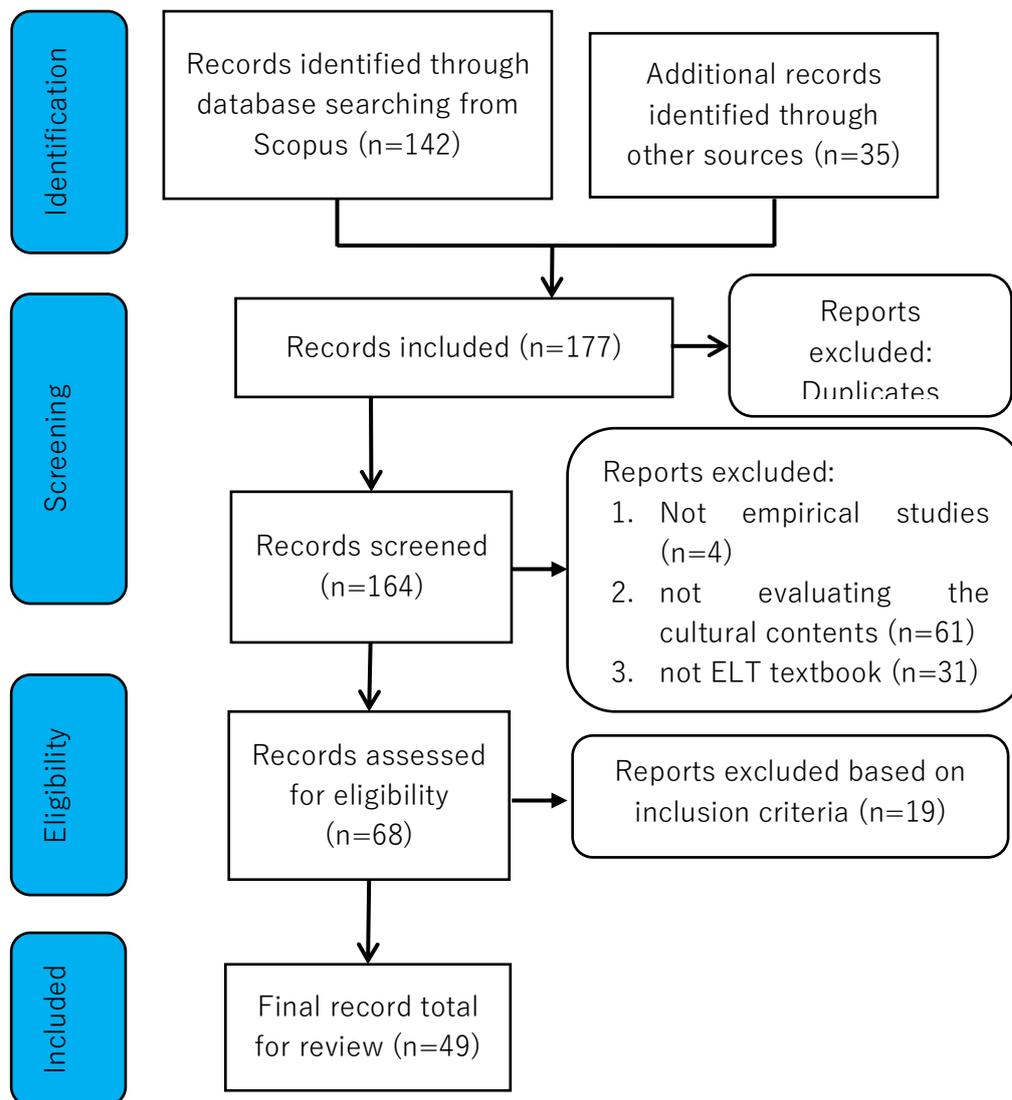
Table 1*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Must examine cultural values within ELT textbooks as a key research topic, b. Must be empirical studies, c. Must be published in Scopus-indexed reputable journals, and d. Must be published between January 2014 and December 2023. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Not empirical studies, b. Not evaluating the cultural contents, c. Not ELT textbooks, d. Non-Scopus indexed articles, and e. Published in conference proceedings.

To carry out the literature search, we performed the search strings using the Boolean terms “cultural representation” OR “multicultural representation” AND “cultural contents” OR “cultural norms” OR “cultural values” AND “English language teaching” OR “ELT” AND “textbook” OR “coursebook.” A total of 236 documents were identified through the initial literature search or the first screening phase. They were then assessed for eligibility to narrow down the article selection in accordance with the following criteria: 1) belonging to the social science area, 2) published in English, 3) published between 2014 and 2023, and 4) focused on evaluating cultural values in ELT textbooks. In our second attempt, a total number of 142 articles were included. Moreover, the first author carried out a systematic manual search of the relevant articles in several reputable international publishers (e.g., Springer Nature, Taylor and Francis Online, ScienceDirect, Sage, Wiley, Emerald, Oxford University Press, and Cambridge). Thirty-five more documents investigating culture in ELT textbooks were added. After removing 13 duplicate cases after the first screening, there were 164 articles on the second screening. By applying the inclusion criteria and scrutiny of the article’s abstract, 94 articles were discarded. In the next phase of eligibility, the remaining 68 articles were read thoroughly, one by one, ultimately leading to the exclusion of 19 more articles. Finally, a total of 49 articles were eligible for this systematic review. Figure 1 illustrates the study search and selection procedures in the study following the PRISMA four-phase flow diagram.

Figure 1

PRISMA Flow Diagram adapted from Moher et al. (2009) for the Selection Process



3.3 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was performed to analyze and synthesize the 49 included sources as it enables the identification of patterns and themes within the data (Naeem et al., 2023), facilitates data categorization, and makes comparisons across studies. To do so, the data were entered into a literature review matrix in a single spreadsheet of information extracted from articles. All documents were identified and information from them was organized into respective columns for the following categories: author(s)/title/year of publication, countries, objective(s), methods, and key findings. After the process of identifying and organizing all of the papers following those categories, the first author gave the result of coding and analysis to the other authors to undertake individual reviews

as well. Further, to enhance the validity of the review, the first author initiated an open discussion to reconcile any disagreement among the researchers as well as compile our findings following the research questions. By engaging in rounds of discussion, we were able to reach a consensus about the result of the review.

4. Results

4.1 Trends in Cultural Representation in ELT Textbooks

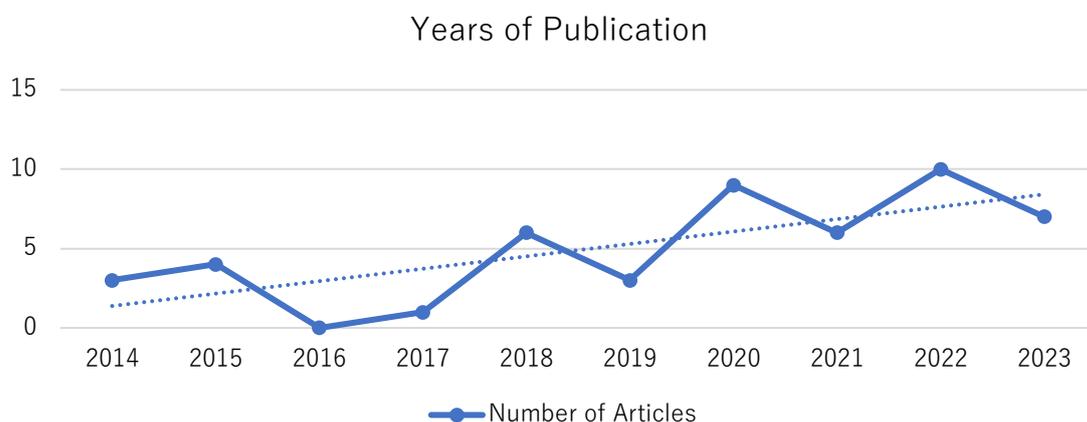
In response to RQ1, this section provides an overview of the study characteristics, which includes the distribution of the included articles by year, study design employed, and the distribution countries where the evaluated textbooks are used.

Distributions of the Studies by Publication Year

To begin, we will first describe the trends in cultural representation in ELT textbooks by providing an overview of the distribution of the studies according to publication year, which is displayed in Figure 2. The data in Figure 2 illustrate that most of the studies published in 2022 (ten articles), account for 20.4%, followed by the number of articles published in 2020 (n=9 or 18.4%). More specifically, we summarized the number of the included articles published from 2014 to 2023 as follows: three articles in 2014 (6.1%), four articles in 2015 (8.1%), no article in 2016 (0.0%), only one article 2017 (2.04%), six articles in 2018 (12.24%), three articles in 2019 (6.12%), nine articles in 2020 (18.36%), six articles in 2021 (12.24%), ten articles in 2022 (20.4%), and seven articles in 2023 (14.28%).

Figure 2

Overview of Articles' Publication Years from 2014 to 2023

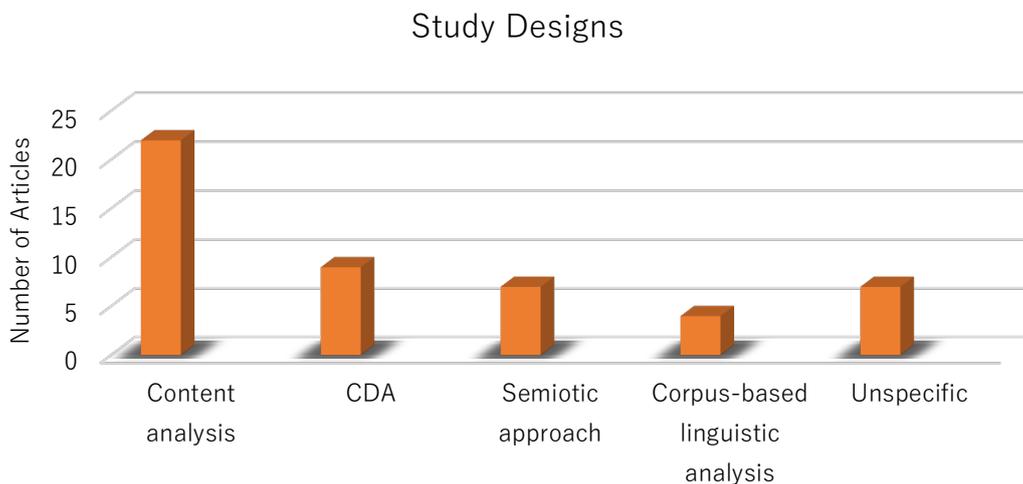


Study Designs Employed in the Reviewed Articles

As illustrated in Figure 3, the study design employed in the included articles was dominantly content analysis (n=22), followed in descending order by critical discourse analysis (CDA) (n=9), (visual) semiotic approach (n=7), and corpus-based linguistic approach (n=4). Others employed particular theories or frameworks adopted to analyze culture in ELT textbooks such as the cultural-linguistic approach, thematic analysis, Kachru's (1985) circle model, Moran's (2011) 4P framework, Yuen's (2011) 4P model, and Krippendorff's methods (2013) for analyzing verbal/visual text.

Figure 3

Overview of the Distribution of Reported Study Designs



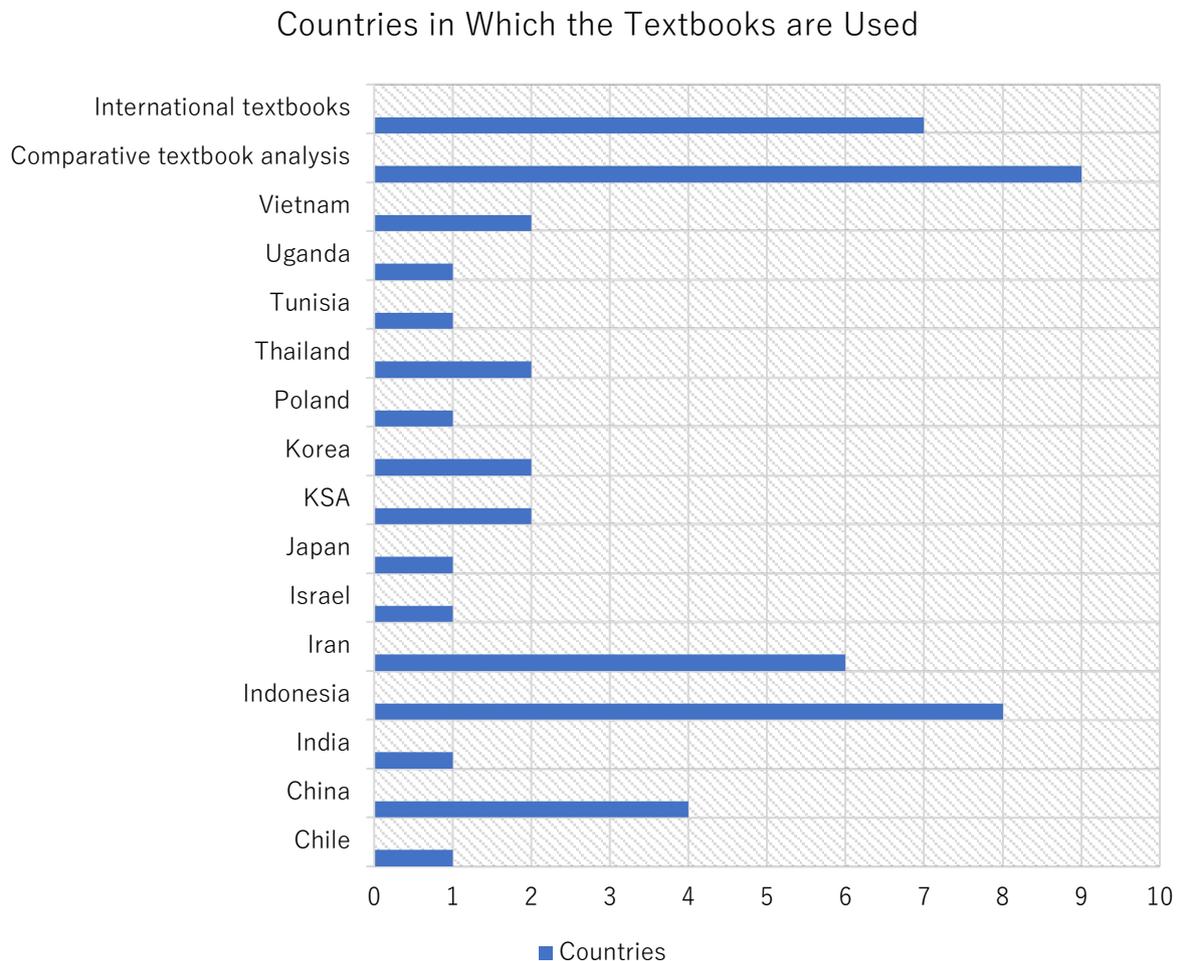
The Distribution of the Countries Where the Researched Textbooks are Used

Figure 4 displays data on the frequency distribution of the countries in which the analyzed textbooks were used. The data show that most studies examining cultural representation in ELT textbooks were on Indonesian textbooks (n=8 or 16.32%), followed by six studies (12.24%) on Iranian textbooks. China's ELT textbooks ranked third with four articles (8.16%), followed by KSA, Korea, Vietnam, and Thailand (n=2 each). There was one article each examining cultural representation from locally produced ELT textbooks in Chile, India, Israel, Japan, Poland, Tunisia, and Uganda. Besides, several research studies focused on conducting a cross-national cultural representation analysis in ELT textbooks in several countries including China-Germany (n=1), China-Mongolia (n=1), International textbooks-Iran (n=3), Iran-England (n=1), China-Hong Kong (n=1),

Malaysia-Global coursebook (n=1), and USA-Iran (n=1). Meanwhile, seven of the 49 (14.2%) studies investigated cultural content in several international textbooks.

Figure 4

Geographical Analysis of Cultural Representation in ELT Textbooks



4.2 The Key Findings from the Reviewed Articles

Here, we respond to RQ2 by examining cultural representations in both locally produced and international textbooks. Further, we present an overview of the comparative analysis of (multi)cultural contents in several countries worldwide.

Cultural Representation in Locally Produced ELT Textbooks

Various findings concerning cultural representation in locally produced ELT textbooks were reported in this review study. Table 2 presents the key findings of the cultural representation in locally produced ELT textbooks.

Table 2*Findings on Cultural Representation in Locally Produced ELT Textbooks*

No.	Findings	f	Sample article(s)
1.	Highlighting the imbalance of cultural representations in locally produced ELT textbooks	4	Abid and Moalla (2022), Alzubi et al., (2023), Bose and Gao (2022), Saemee and Nomnian (2021), Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2021)
2.	Dominantly representing the source/local cultures, not adequately representing international and target cultures	10	Almujaiwel (2018), Ariawan et al. (2022), Dahmardeh and Kim (2020), Fata (2020), Kim and Paek (2015), Kuraedah et al. (2022), Sihombing and Nguyen (2022), Stranger-Johannessen (2015), Tafazoli and Egan (2022), Toledo-Sandoval (2020)
3.	Unequally representing cultural diversity	1	Parlindungan et al. (2018)
4.	Highlighting four distinct categories of multicultural values: 1) respecting other people's traditions, 2) appreciating differing viewpoints, 3) valuing the cultural products of others, and 4) appreciating gender equality	1	Isnaini et al. (2019)
5.	Highlighting several multicultural values: 1) respect for cultures of different ethnic and religious groups; 2) respect for cultures of indigenous people; 3) conflict avoidance and peace with all forms of life and nature; and 4) appreciation of creative cultural products	1	Setyono and Widodo (2019)
6.	Focusing only on teaching linguistic competence or grammatical functions	2	Abid and Moalla (2022), Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2021)
7.	Insufficient coverage of cultural conceptualizations, few metacultural development tasks, incompatible cultural conceptualizations in the texts, tasks, and visuals	1	Dabbagh and Atai (2022)
8.	Failed to promote cultural awareness among its users sufficiently	1	Derakhshan 2021)
9.	Showcasing a neutral stance on the portrayal of social actors	1	Rashidi and Ghaedsharafi (2015)
10.	Dominantly representing American and British cultures, less representing local cultures	2	Y. Liu et al. (2022), H. Zhang et al. (2022)
11.	Depicting interculturalism and multiculturalism	1	Tien (2023)
12.	Reflecting cultural conceptualizations accurately	1	Dinh and Sharifian (2017)
13.	Cultural contents mismatched students' lived experiences	1	Jindapitak and Boonsuk (2018)
14.	Not including enough learning activities to promote reflective thinking among students, having minimal capacity to cultivate the students' CT skills.	1	Sobkowiak (2016)

No.	Findings	f	Sample article(s)
15.	Marginalizing the cultures and traditions of the Palestinian Arab minority	1	Awayed-Bishara (2015)
16.	Oversimplifying cultural representation in Japanese English textbooks	1	Davidson and Liu (2020)

Cultural Representation in International ELT Textbooks

As outlined in Table 3, many of the analyzed research studies highlighted the lack of neutrality in representing cultural contents from three circle countries. Of all the seven articles, four articles (Baleghizadeh & Amiri Shayesteh, 2020; Keles & Yazan, 2023; Pashmforoosh & Babaii, 2015; Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020) directly claimed that the inner-circle cultures occupied the larger space and were more dominantly represented in the analyzed international textbooks than the outer-circle and expanding circle cultures. Sadeghi and Sepahi (2018) found that the most frequent cultural themes in the *Top Notch* series were small “c” culture themes (e.g., daily life, food, customs/norms) and big “C” culture themes covering geography. Meanwhile, in *Summit* and *Passages*, the small “c” cultural themes of values and beliefs appeared as the most frequent themes in the textbook. In addition, an earlier study (Homayounzadeh & Sahragard, 2015) which investigated the representation of sociocultural identities and discourse structures in the *Top Notch* and *Summit* series reported that *Top Notch*, written for the range of students from the beginner to the intermediate level, was considered the more credible source for enhancing learners’ cultural sensitivity. Despite this, *Summit*, which is designed for upper-intermediate and advanced learners, has a distinct aim and orientation. However, it still presents a one-sided perspective regarding identity, as it predominantly portrays European and American nationalities. Another study (Amerian & Tajabadi, 2020) claimed that there were inadequacies and biases in representing intercultural content and the development of intercultural knowledge, attitude, and awareness.

Table 3*Findings on Cultural Representation in Global Textbooks*

No.	Findings	f	Sample article(s)
1.	Imbalance in representing intercultural contents, dominantly representing the inner-circle culture of native speakers.	4	Baleghizadeh and Amiri Shayesteh (2020); Keles and Yazan (2023); Pashmforoosh and Babaii (2015); Tajeddin and Pakzadian (2020).
2.	<i>Top Notch</i> series: small “c” culture themes and big “C” culture themes as the most frequent themes. <i>Summit</i> and <i>Passages</i> : the small “c” cultural themes were values and beliefs.	1	Sadeghi and Sepahi (2018)
3.	<i>Top Notch</i> : as the more credible source for enhancing learners’ cultural sensitivity. <i>Summit</i> : having a unilateral approach in representing identity depicting European and American nationalities.	1	Homayounzadeh and Sahragard (2015)
4.	Inadequacies and biases in representing intercultural contents and the development of intercultural knowledge, attitude, and awareness.	1	Amerian and Tajabadi (2020)

Comparative Analysis of Cultural Representation in International and Locally Developed ELT Textbooks

Table 4 reveals the comparative analysis of cultural representation in both locally developed and international textbooks. Out of 49 articles, eight articles conducted cross-national analyses concerning cultural representations in ELT textbooks from diverse countries worldwide. Tirnaz and Moghaddam (2023), for example, explored the multicultural content in the *Vision* and *Top Notch* series. They argued that the *Vision* series failed to promote the learners’ ICC development due to insufficient cultural elements in these Iranian-evaluated textbooks. In contrast, the *Top Notch* series was regarded as the better resource for promoting multicultural education and ICC. Similarly, Moghaddam and Tirnaz (2023), who conducted a textbook evaluation of the global and local textbooks, asserted that the authors of the *Vision* series had neglected to integrate diverse cultural elements in their textbook. In contrast, *the Top Notch* series showed a lack of representation of the source culture in the analyzed textbooks, resulting in issues for language learners who require adequate intercultural exposure.

Still in Iran, in Hosseinzadeh et al.'s (2022) study problematizing the representation of cultural contents and elements in the *Touchstone* and *Iran Language Institute (ILI)* series, the four types of cultural contents all appeared in *ILI*, while in the *Touchstone* series, the source cultures were largely ignored due to the considerable emphasis on the target and international cultures. Further, by adopting Kachru's three concentric circles of world Englishes model and Moran's 4P framework, the findings of the study (Lee & Li, 2020) indicated that both textbook series used in mainland China (*New Standard English [NSE]: Starting from Primary 1*) and Hong Kong (*Primary Longman Express [LE]*) included materials from the local culture as well as from foreign cultures. Also, the NSE textbook provided a clear focus on British culture in the inner circle, whereas other foreign cultures and the cultural aspects were not given central attention. Conversely, the representation of various cultural aspects and foreign cultures was more balanced in the *LE* textbooks.

Hodkinson et al. (2018) examined the cultural representation of disability in school textbooks in Iran and England and reported that there was a limited construct of disability within the analyzed textbooks. This implies the dominance of non-disabled individuals within those society's cultures manifested in the textbooks as cultural artifacts as well. More recently, Li et al.'s (2023) comparative analysis study exploring multimodal native cultural content in ELT textbooks used in China and Mongolia found a noticeable imbalance between big "C" and small "c" categories in each set. By using Byram's (1997) ICC framework, the study (Abdul Rahim & Jalalian Daghigh, 2020) found that, compared to the imported book (*Pulse 2*), the locally developed textbook (*English Form 1*) represented the spectrum of cultures (source, target, and other cultures) in a broader range and aligned better with the ICC objectives. Further, X. Zhang and Su (2021) compared four series of high school ELT textbooks distributed in China and Germany. Results showed that China's English textbooks included a varied representation of cultures, whereas Germany's English textbooks primarily focused on representing the target cultures and put a great emphasis on the development of learners' multicultural perspectives, intercultural skills, and communicative competence.

Table 4

Findings on Comparative Analysis of Cultural Representation in Global Textbooks and Locally Produced Textbooks

No.	Findings	f	Sample article(s)
1.	<i>Vision</i> series: diverse cultural elements' integration is insufficiently addressed. <i>Top Notch</i> series: the better resource for multicultural education and ICC.	1	Tirnaz and Moghaddam (2023)
2.	<i>Vision</i> series: lack of attention to instilling a variety of cultural elements. <i>Top Notch</i> series: the absence of the source culture.	1	Moghaddam and Tirnaz (2023)
3.	ILL: the four types of cultural content all appeared. <i>Touchstone</i> series: Source cultures were ignored due to the emphasis on the target and international cultures.	1	Hosseinzadeh et al. (2022)
4.	Both <i>NSE</i> and <i>LE</i> included materials from the local culture as well as from foreign cultures. <i>NSE</i> provided a clear focus on British culture in the inner circle, whereas other foreign cultures and the cultural aspects received less attention. <i>LE</i> : the presentation of cultural aspects and foreign cultures was more balanced.	1	Lee and Li (2020)
5.	A limited construct of disability. The dominance of non-disabled individuals within the societies' cultures.	1	Hodkinson et al. (2018)
6.	A noticeable imbalance between the big C and small c categories in each set.	1	Li et al. (2023)
7.	Compared to <i>Pulse 2</i> , <i>English Form 1</i> represented the spectrum of cultures in a broader range and aligned better with the ICC objectives.	1	Abdul Rahim and Jalalian Daghigh, 2020
8.	China's English textbook included a varied representation of cultures. Germany's English textbook prioritized representation of the target cultures, learners' multicultural development, intercultural skills, and communicative competence.	1	X. Zhang and Su (2021)

5. Discussion

The overarching research question in the current study sought to characterize the included studies concerning the research trends and the key findings in cultural representations in ELT textbooks. Upon analyzing the data, an interesting finding was found in the observation that the number of publications on this issue fluctuated over the years. Such fluctuations in the number of publications may indicate that the study of cultural elements in ELT textbooks is continuously evolving from year to year, characterized by an increase in the number of publications and changing research foci. Further, the increasing number of

publications clearly reflected that, though it is still emerging, this research area is growing in popularity. The increase in interest in this issue might be due to global trends, technological advancement, the availability of the data, and the expansion of ICC studies.

The identified trends of cultural representation in ELT textbooks suggest a need for increased awareness of and attention to the elements of cultural diversity in ELT textbooks. Considering the global status of ELF, ELT materials in textbooks should be designed to reflect both the international and target cultures accurately, not disproportionately representing British and American cultures (Lee & Li, 2020), in order to provide a more comprehensive approach to English language teaching and learning. The accurate representation of cultures in ELT textbooks can help to prepare students for real-world situations by creating a supportive learning environment that enables them to communicate effectively and appropriately with individuals from various lingua-cultural backgrounds. In this way, this can assist them in broadening their global perspectives (Weninger & Kiss, 2013), gaining a deeper understanding of different cultures, and avoiding stereotypes and incorrect cultural assumptions.

Further, many studies on cultural representation in ELT textbooks have predominantly been reported under the methodological umbrella of content analysis, followed by CDA and (visual) semiotics approach as the primary approaches to foreign language textbook analysis, as also reported by an earlier study (Weninger & Kiss, 2015). Content analysis had the greatest proportional representation among the included studies. In applying content analysis, these studies demonstrated careful documentation of procedures and “the explicit theorization of text, context, and inference” (Weninger & Kiss, 2015, p. 53). Specifically, the content analysis studies (e.g., Abid & Moalla, 2022; Keles & Yazan, 2023; Moghaddam & Tirnaz, 2023; Zhang et al., 2022) illustrated the cultural representation within ELT textbooks by coding text and images, making inferences, and identifying emerging themes about the cultural representation in those textbooks. Meanwhile, CDA studies (e.g., Alzubi et al., 2023; Awayed-Bishara, 2015; Setyono & Widodo, 2019) covered the analysis of text and interaction pertaining to cultural representation in ELT textbooks. Lastly, studies conducting semiotic analysis were concerned with visual images in selected ELT textbooks, describing what and who were depicted in the textbooks and exploring ideas or

values represented in those images (e.g., Dabbagh & Atai, 2022; Derakhshan, 2021; Isnaini et al., 2019).

Regarding the geographical use of EFL textbooks that were evaluated for cultural representation, another notable finding revealed that textbooks used in three countries (Indonesia, Iran, and China) were analyzed more frequently, while textbooks used in all other countries were relatively underrepresented. A geographical overview showed the distribution of the countries in which evaluated ELT textbooks were used. Indonesian and Iranian textbooks comprised the largest proportion of the materials which the studies analyzed. China's ELT textbooks ranked third, while several Asian countries (KSA, Korea, Vietnam, and Thailand) had only two studies each on cultural representation in their ELT textbooks. Further, there was only one study each on textbooks used in Chile, India, Israel, Japan, Poland, Tunisia, and Uganda evaluating cultural representation in their locally developed ELT textbooks. While findings indicated a significant number of studies on Indonesian and Iranian ELT textbooks, there is a significant research gap as a result of limited study of EFL publications in several regions, particularly in Latin America and Africa. With only a very limited amount of research on this issue in these contexts, it is evident that there must be more research on this topic in a wider variety of countries.

Next, key findings of the reviewed studies including cultural representation in locally produced ELT textbooks, cultural representation in global ELT textbooks, and comparative analysis of cultural representation in both international and locally developed ELT textbooks were reported. As previously mentioned, many of the examined studies (Abid & Moalla, 2022; Alzubi et al., 2023; Ariawan et al., 2022; Kim & Paek, 2015; Li et al., 2023; Saemee & Nomnian, 2021; Xiang & Yenika-Agbaw, 2021) claimed that there was an imbalance of cultural representation in locally developed ELT textbooks. This implies that the imbalance of cultural interpretations has become a common issue reported by previously published academic literature, possibly due to the book authors' specific cultural and linguistic backgrounds neglecting the cultural diversity in ELT textbooks in their writing. Another possible reason is the lack of understanding about or awareness of the importance of cultural diversity in ELT materials, leading to the underrepresentation of diverse cultures in the textbooks. To address this issue, curriculum developers should therefore engage in more research on cultural

representation in ELT textbooks to identify the root causes behind the imbalance in cultural representation. Identifying the underlying reasons behind these imbalances will help inform the development and implementation of more culturally diverse materials in ELT textbooks.

Furthermore, various issues were also reported in the reviewed studies analyzing cultural representation in international ELT textbooks. The findings revealed that, compared to the outer-circle and expanding-circle cultures, the inner cultures were more dominantly represented in the globally distributed textbooks. These findings suggested that since international textbooks are targeted and designed for a global audience, the cultures from inner-circle countries (e.g., the US, the UK, Canada, and Australia) are dominantly represented in the textbooks, resulting in a disregard for the importance of cultural diversity in both the outer-circle and expanding-circle cultures.

In terms of cross-national analyses in international and locally developed ELT textbooks, we highlighted several important points that resulted from the analyses. In general, some textbooks had insufficient cultural elements which could impede the learners' ICC development. As Hodkinson et al. (2018) have pointed out, ELT textbooks may not contain enough cultural diversity or balance between different cultures. Again, the reasons for this could be due to the authors' limited perspectives on the importance of cultural diversity in ELT textbooks. It is therefore suggested to incorporate more diverse cultural elements so that there would be balanced cultural representations of various cultures in ELT textbooks.

6. Conclusion, Limitations, and Recommendations

In this work, we have carried out a systematic literature review study to provide a comprehensive review of the existing literature on cultural representation in ELT textbooks using PRISMA (Moher et al., 2009) from 2014 to 2023. In addition, this current study aimed to identify the existing gaps in knowledge and highlight the emerging trends in cultural representation in ELT textbooks. Overall, this current systematic literature review study provides research directions during the last ten years and identifies trends in the field. The study found an increasing interest or trend in the number of studies published on this issue, with the highest number of published articles (ten articles or 20.4%) in 2022. This adequately illustrates that research on this issue has gained considerable momentum,

indicating a growing interest in this research topic among researchers worldwide during the last ten years. The positive and promising trends and momentum behind this issue provide fresh hope for knowledge development and the betterment of education systems worldwide. More research on this area would promote awareness and highlight the essentiality of cultural diversity in language education. This, in turn, can reduce racism and create a more tolerant society.

Further, a methodological review was carried out in the study. The results showed that the most frequently represented study design was content analysis, thus yielding recommendations for future research to employ other research designs (e.g., visual semiotic analysis, corpus-based linguistic analysis). In terms of the originating countries, Indonesian EFL textbooks were the most investigated textbooks, followed by Iranian and China's ELT textbooks. Additional empirical research in the contexts of Latin American and African countries is crucially needed to provide more empirical research findings, as evidenced by a significant lack of study of EFL textbooks used in these regions. Concerning the key findings of the examined study, our study reported a significant imbalance in cultural representation in both locally developed and internally distributed textbooks. This disproportionate cultural representation negatively impacts the EFL learners' ICC development.

As in all research, this systematic literature review study had some limitations that may provide helpful guidance for future research. First, this review study was limited only to articles published in Scopus-indexed journals. Many articles that explored the cultural representation in ELT textbooks and were published in non-Scopus-indexed journals (e.g., Web of Science [WoS], ERIC, EBSCO), conference proceedings, and book chapters were excluded from the present review study. To present more comprehensive and extensive data on this research topic, it is highly recommended for future studies to review studies from other sources. Second, this current research simply reviewed published articles on the aspect of cultural representation in ELT textbooks. Hence, other important aspects of intercultural education in ELT contexts need to be more closely examined in future review studies.

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