



# A Comparative Study on the Cultivation of Cultural Awareness in Chinese and Foreign Primary School English Textbooks

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Received: 30 Nov 2025; Received in revised form: 26 Dec 2025; Accepted: 30 Dec 2025; Available online: 04 Jan 2026

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**Abstract**— The primary school stage marks the foundational phase of English language learning, during which the importance of immersive cultural education for students is self-evident. The cultivation of cultural awareness at this stage has a profound impact on learners' future effectiveness in English learning and communication. This study is grounded in theories of intercultural communication and textbook evaluation, conducting a comparative analysis of three sets of domestic and three sets of international primary school English textbooks. It examines their similarities and differences in the selection and presentation of cultural content, explores the existing issues and shortcomings in Chinese primary English textbooks regarding the cultivation of students' cultural awareness, and proposes recommendations for textbook development. The aim is to foster Chinese cultural consciousness and strengthen cultural confidence among students from an early age.

**Keywords**— cultural awareness; primary school; English textbooks; English teaching



## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Significance

Culture serves as the spiritual pillar of a nation or an ethnic group, exerting subtle influence over time. According to Encyclopedia of Soft Science, cultural awareness originates from human life and reflects the values and needs of contemporary society. In 2022, China's newly revised edition of "The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education" points out that cultural awareness refers to the understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures and the appreciation of outstanding cultures. It is manifested through students' cross-cultural cognition, attitudes, and

behavioral choices in the new era. It includes four aspects: cultural knowledge, cultural understanding, intercultural communication awareness, and intercultural communication ability. Cultivating cultural awareness fosters patriotism, global citizenship, character, and social responsibility. This standard scientifically tailors different requirements for the cultivation of cultural awareness in students at various stages of compulsory education, based on their psychological development characteristics.

Being the primary source for teaching and learning, textbooks play a vital role in guiding both teaching content and student learning direction. Thus, the selection and

arrangement of textbook content provide clear direction for teaching and learning, making textbooks an essential medium for cultivating cultural awareness. Since 2001, China's curriculum reform has adopted the policy of "one syllabus, multiple textbooks", leading to diversification in English textbooks, with some schools adopting foreign versions. High-quality textbooks can embody curriculum concepts, reflect appropriate teaching objectives, include a complete system of knowledge and skills, and demonstrate advanced pedagogical theories and methods, fostering students' comprehensive language abilities. However, several issues remain regarding cultural awareness in current Chinese primary English education and materials.

First, due to China's vast geography and regional disparities in economic development, educational resources are unevenly distributed. Compared with major cities like Beijing and Shanghai, many local schools lack emphasis on English education, have underqualified teachers, and focus heavily on grammar and vocabulary for exam preparation, while neglecting listening and speaking skills and, more critically, the cultivation of cultural awareness.

Second, influenced by their environment and native language habits, many primary school students find English difficult. They often only learn simple vocabulary and sentence structures without gaining a deep understanding of cross-cultural communication or developing cultural awareness.

Third, there is a lack of systematic English teaching materials aimed at cultivating cultural awareness. Textbooks from different regions and publishers often lack clear objectives, focus, and innovative design, and fail to form a coherent and progressive system.

Given these issues, developing textbooks tailored to cultivating cultural awareness among primary students is urgent. New textbooks should particularly emphasize helping students understand Chinese and foreign cultural connotations, compare cultural similarities and differences, and acquire knowledge of multiculturalism during language learning. The content should be more relatable to students' lives and times and be rich in cultural depth.

## **1.2 Research Objectives and Content**

English learning at the primary level is foundational—it marks the beginning of a student's English education journey. Infusing cultural education at this stage is crucial. The development of cultural awareness significantly impacts learners' future ability to engage in effective communication and language learning. This study, based on cross-cultural communication theory and textbook evaluation theory, conducts a comparative analysis of three Chinese and three foreign primary English textbook series. It aims to identify similarities and differences in how these textbooks foster cultural awareness in students, offer critical analysis, and propose recommendations for textbook development and evaluation. The study consists of four main parts.

**Analysis of Chinese Textbooks (A, B, C):** Based on the curriculum standards, the study will analyze how cultural content is organized and presented. Six dimensions will be used: local customs, traditions, lifestyles, behavioral norms, literary arts, and values. The goal is to evaluate whether the content aligns with the standards, its strengths, and its shortcomings.

**Analysis of Foreign Textbooks (D, E, F):** The study will examine the structure and cultural presentation of three foreign textbook sets, explore the expectations these materials set for students' cultural awareness, and investigate how textbook design fosters such awareness.

**Comparison of Chinese and Foreign Textbooks:** This study will compare the similarities and differences in how cultural content is structured and presented, exploring the causes of these differences and identifying gaps in the cultivation of cultural awareness in Chinese textbooks.

**Recommendations for Chinese Textbook Development:** This study emphasizes that cultural awareness is a core component of English language competency. It suggests that textbooks should integrate elements of traditional Chinese culture, revolutionary culture, advanced socialist culture, and global cultures. It will also explore how to seamlessly embed these elements in textbooks to cultivate students' cultural awareness in an implicit and consistent way, forming a well-structured and coherent educational system.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Research on Foreign Language Textbooks at Home and Abroad**

Research on foreign language textbooks originated abroad, mainly focusing on textbook analysis, evaluation, and usage. Cunningham (2002) emphasized that effective evaluation depends on asking the right questions and interpreting the answers. McDonough & Shaw (2003) proposed that textbook evaluation consists of external and internal evaluations, with evaluation criteria centered on the teacher, focusing on the actual input and output generated by the textbook. Sheldon (1988), adhering to a learner-centered language learning philosophy, argued that learners' interests and needs determine the content of textbooks. In China, scholars such as Liu Daoyi (2004), Zhuang Zhixiang (2006), Han Baocheng (2014), Liu Yanhong (2015), Wen Qiufang (2017), Zheng Xiaohong (2018), and Zhang Hong (2020, 2022) have carried out textbook analysis and evaluation studies from various perspectives.

Research on textbook use began in the 1990s. Hutchinson & Waters (1987) and Guerrettaz (2021) offered varying definitions of textbook use, reflecting its dynamic and contextual characteristics. Canniveng & Martinez (2003) believed that foreign language textbook use results from the interaction among second language acquisition theory, teacher cognition, and teaching experience. Brown (2009) summarized five types of teacher-textbook interactions. Shawer (2010), through empirical studies, identified three orientations in teachers' use of textbooks. Grammatos & Harwood (2014) adapted textbook usage analysis frameworks originally proposed by Remillard (1999) and Brown (2009) in the context of mathematics for use in foreign language textbook studies. These foreign studies have been highly enlightening for Chinese scholars. In China, researchers such as Luo Shaoxi & Xu Xin (2011), Guo Yan & Xu Jinfen (2015), Zhang Hong & Li Xiaonan (2022), and Xu Jinfen & Liu Wenbo (2023) have examined textbook use from different perspectives.

### **2.2 Research on Cultural Awareness at Home and Abroad**

There is no unified definition of cultural awareness among foreign scholars, but several representative

definitions exist. Hanvey (1979) defined cultural awareness as "the understanding of the cultural background knowledge of both parties in intercultural communication." Anderson (1983) viewed it as "awareness of surface-level cultural phenomena and of differences within one's own culture." Byram (1993) defined it as "critical insight into cultural phenomena, patterns, and features, as well as the relationships between different cultures." Chen & Stacosta (1996) described it as "the ability to understand foreign cultures based on knowledge of both one's own and others' cultures." Tomlinson (2004) explained cultural awareness as progressing from shallow understanding to rational analysis and deep experiential learning—learning to view cultural phenomena from the perspective of the target language's culture. Milton J. Bennett (2003) described it as "the ability to continuously adapt to and adjust in response to cultural differences." Despite differing perspectives, methods, and expressions, scholars agree that the essence of cultural awareness lies in understanding cultural knowledge, recognizing cultural phenomena of the target language, and being able to interpret them from the perspective of that culture.

Through systematic review and analysis of foreign literature, it is found that studies on cultivating cultural awareness in foreign language teaching often begin with cultural instruction. These studies explore definitions, current states, influencing factors, and enhancement strategies, providing theoretical support for the development of cultural awareness in Chinese students. In China, scholars have explored cultural awareness cultivation in foreign language teaching from various perspectives. Research on the definition of cultural awareness includes works by Zhao Tongqing (2007), Guan Lilian (2016), Han Xiao (2017), and Zhang Cewen (2019). Studies on the current situation include Guan Jing (2014) and Xie Ruimin (2020). Scholars like Pan Weiji (2019), Wu Yanling (2021) have examined strategies for cultivating cultural awareness. Others have analyzed the role of textbooks in this process, such as Ma Li (2018) and He Long (2019).

### **2.3 Research on Cultural Content in Foreign Language Textbooks at Home and Abroad**

Nostrand (1974) was one of the first scholars to systematically discuss cultural content in the field of linguistics. He categorized over thirty aspects of culture into four domains: culture, society, ecology and technology, and the individual. Byram (1993) proposed eight cultural content areas for intercultural foreign language textbooks. More recently, Risager (2006), using theoretical frameworks from national studies, civic education, cultural studies, postcolonialism, and transnational studies, investigated how cultural content is presented in textbooks of six languages and how textbooks shape learners' self-understanding and intercultural competence.

In China, studies on cultural content in English textbooks or on intercultural communication have mostly focused on the university level. Influential scholars include Wang Yan (2011), Zheng Xiaohong (2018), Zhang Hong & Yu Rui (2020), and Zhang Xuemei (2021). A keyword search on the CNKI database using "primary and secondary schools, English textbooks, cultural awareness" yielded 28 results, including 4 master's theses and the rest journal articles. A search for "English textbooks, Chinese culture" yielded 44 results, with only two published in CSSCI journals. These studies mostly revolve around English teaching, exploring how to integrate Chinese and Western cultural instruction into the classroom to develop students' cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills.

### **2.4 Evaluation of Existing Research**

Although both domestic and international scholars have conducted extensive research on cultural awareness and cultural content in English textbooks and instruction, several gaps remain. First, while there are numerous studies on college-level English textbooks, authoritative research on primary and secondary education materials is scarce. Second, most research focuses on the current situation, problems, influencing factors, and strategies for cultivating cultural awareness in English instruction, with fewer studies on specific teaching methods and the cultivation process itself. Third, research tends to focus on domestic textbooks, and comparative studies between Chinese and foreign

textbooks are rare. These gaps offer ample space for further exploration in this research project.

## **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Questions**

This study is grounded in intercultural communication theory and textbook evaluation theory, and it conducts a comparative analysis of three sets of Chinese primary school English textbooks (A, B, C) and three sets of foreign primary school English textbooks (D, E, F). The main research questions are as follows.

- (1) What are the overall and specific characteristics of the cultural content in Chinese textbooks?
- (2) What are the characteristics of the organization and presentation of cultural content in foreign textbooks?
- (3) Compared to foreign textbooks, what are the strengths and shortcomings of Chinese textbooks in cultivating students' cultural awareness?
- (4) What suggestions can be made for the development and compilation of new textbooks regarding the cultivation of cultural awareness?

### **3.2 Research Subjects and Research Thinking**

The research subject of this study is primary school English textbooks, both domestic and international. The research thinking includes the following steps. First, through literature review and analysis, the study seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of relevant concepts such as cultural classification, cultural content, definitions of cultural awareness, and textbook evaluation, thereby grasping the current state of research on cultural content in primary school English textbooks. Second, the study analyzes the curriculum standards' requirements for cultural awareness, and examines the design logic and presentation of cultural content in three sets of Chinese and three sets of foreign textbooks. This step aims to explore similarities and differences and uncover the underlying reasons. Third, interviews with teachers and surveys with students will be conducted to assess primary students' grasp of cultural knowledge and their attitudes toward cultural awareness. The study also investigates how English teachers perceive textbooks and what their expectations are. Finally, based on the analysis and findings, and in combination with relevant

theories, the study proposes recommendations for textbook development and compilation.

### 3.3 Research Methods

This study adopts a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, specifically utilizing the following approaches.

**Textual Analysis:** Textual analysis will be used to examine and count the frequency and distribution of cultural content in three sets of Chinese and three sets of foreign primary English textbooks. The data will be categorized and summarized. Based on the curriculum standards' requirements for cultivating intercultural awareness, the study will identify issues related to the selection and proportion of cultural content in the textbooks.

**Comparative Analysis:** A comparative analysis will be conducted to identify similarities and differences in how cultural content is organized and presented in Chinese and foreign textbooks, with the aim of exploring new pathways for cultivating cultural awareness.

**Interviews:** Teacher interviews will be used to investigate and analyze English teachers' understanding and interpretation of the cultivation of cultural awareness through textbooks. The interviews will also examine teachers' own cultural competence, the challenges they face in promoting students' cultural awareness, and the difficulties encountered in classroom practice. Based on these findings, the study will propose strategies to improve teachers' cultural literacy and teaching competence in cultural education.

## IV. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Comparison of Domestic Textbooks

#### 4.1.1 The Cultural Content of Domestic Textbooks

We reviewed several sets of domestic primary school English textbooks and selected three—Textbook A, Textbook B, and Textbook C—for a comparative study. The cultural content in each textbook is roughly analyzed as follows.

Textbook A consists of six units per volume. It places relatively greater emphasis on shaping values, with each unit in every volume featuring a "Story Time" section that

conveys values such as "pride leads to downfall", "no pain, no gain", and "unity and friendship". There is little explicit cultural content in the textbooks for Grade 1 and Grade 2, except for an introduction to Christmas in the second semester of Grade 2. For Grade 3, topics include dates of different Chinese and foreign festivals, climate comparisons across cities, daily meal habits in different cities, and Chinese New Year celebrations. For Grade 4, content covers popular sports among children in four countries, urban transportation methods, and brief introductions to the UK, USA, Canada, and Australia. For Grade 5, there appear introductions to various Chinese and Western festivals, historical and modern methods of communication, healthy lifestyles, and vacation practices. For Grade 6, content covers introductions to Chinese cities, historical and geographical overviews of the UK, USA, Australia, Canada, and France. There are also comparative introductions to Chinese festivals, like Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and Western festivals, like Christmas and Thanksgiving; and introductions to famous inventors, artists, and scientists from China and abroad.

We have systematically analyzed the texts (including dialogues, listening scripts, stories, and nursery rhymes) of each volume in every textbook series. These texts were categorized and statistically analyzed across six dimensions: local customs, traditions, lifestyles, behavioral norms, literary arts, and values. The data was compiled into Excel spreadsheets. The pie chart below illustrates the proportion of cultural content across these dimensions of Textbook A (See Figure 1).

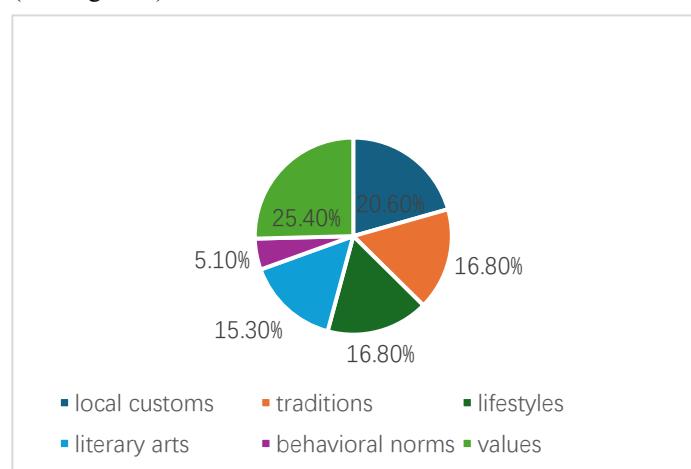


Fig.1 The percentage of cultural content in Textbook A

Textbook B contains eight units per volume. For Grades 1 to 4, there is almost no explicit cultural content, except for daily behavioral norms in Unit 8 of Grade 2 (Second Semester), New Year celebrations in Unit 8 of Grade 3 (First Semester), and library rules in Unit 2 of Grade 3 (Second Semester). Starting from Grade 5, each unit includes a “Culture Time” section, covering comparisons of Chinese and Western festivals, clothing, etiquette, food, traffic rules, and differences between British and American English vocabulary. Additionally, there are many fairy tales that promote values such as teamwork, mutual assistance, honesty, and trustworthiness. Just like Figure 1, the pie chart below illustrates the proportion of cultural content across the six dimensions of Textbook B (See Figure 2).

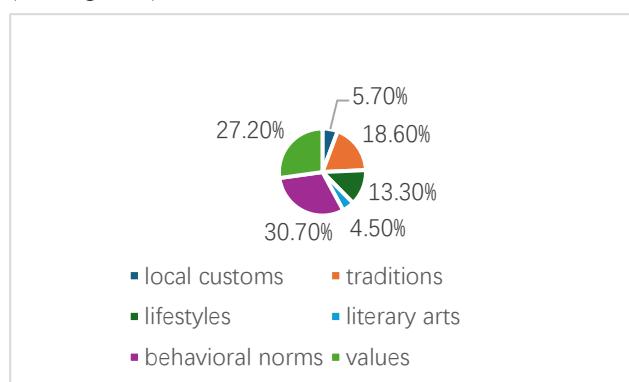


Fig.2 The percentage of cultural content in Textbook B

Textbook C is structured into four modules per volume, with three units in each module. The module titles remain the same across semesters (e.g., first and second semesters of the same grade). There is almost no culture-related content for lower grades, except for Mother’s Day in the second semester of Grade 2. The textbook for the second semester for Grade 3 introduces Children’s Day in different countries. Grade 4 covers Chinese traditional festivals, table manners, and cultural topics like Earth Hour while Grade 5 includes introductions to Western festivals and museums such as the Louvre in France. The pie chart below illustrates the proportion of cultural content across the six dimensions of Textbook C (See Figure 3).

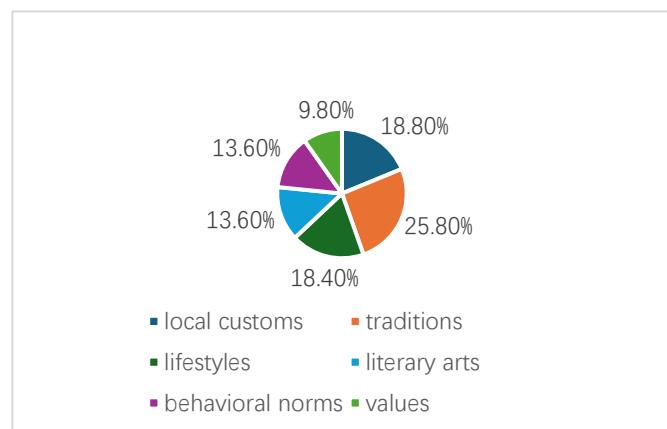


Fig.3 The percentage of cultural content in Textbook C

The following table is an overview of cultural content in the three domestic textbooks (See Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of Cultural Content in Domestic Textbooks

Item Textbook	Textbook A	Textbook B	Textbook C
Number of Volumes	12	10	12
Units per Volume	6	3 Units* 4 Modules	8
Start of Cultural Content	Volume 1, Grade 2 Unit 6 Christmas Gifts	Volume 2, Grade 2 Unit 2 Mother’s Day	Volume 1, Grade 3 Unit 8 Happy New Year
Dedicated Cultural Section	Story Time	None	Culture Time (from Grade 5)
Frequency Rank	Values>Local customs>Traditions> Lifestyles>others	Behavioral norms>values> Traditions>Lifestyles>Others	Traditions>Local customs>Behavioral norms>values> Others
Ways of Presentation	listen; read; story telling	look and read	read

#### 4.1.2 Comparison of Cultural Content and Ways of Presentation

Through analysis and comparison, we have identified the following common characteristics in the cultural content presentation of the three domestic textbook sets.

(1) In terms of cultural content selection, there is a strong emphasis on British and American culture, primarily covering lifestyles, traditional festivals, and similar topics.

(2) The main presentation formats are dialogues and short passages.

(3) Cultural-related content is scarce in lower-grade materials and mainly appears in higher-grade sections.

The distinctive features of the three domestic textbook sets in cultural content presentation are as follows.

(1) Textbook B includes a relatively richer variety of cultural-related content.

(2) Textbook A emphasizes the shaping of values.

(3) Textbook C demonstrates greater coherence and systematic organization.

The issues identified in the cultural content presentation of the three domestic textbook sets include the following points.

(1) A narrow selection of cultural content, limited to traditional Chinese culture and British/American culture, with insufficient inclusion of revolutionary culture, advanced socialist culture, and global progressive cultures.

(2) Lack of depth in content, as well as insufficient coherence and systematic structure.

(3) Monotonous presentation formats.

#### 4.2 Comparison of Foreign Textbook

We reviewed several sets of foreign primary school English textbooks and selected three—Textbook D, Textbook E, and Textbook F—for a comparative study. The cultural content in each textbook is roughly as follows.

Textbook D is an elementary English textbook published by National Geographic and exclusively distributed in Asia. It consists of six volumes, each containing eight units plus an Extra Culture section (referred to as Celebrations in Volumes 1–3). Volume 1 introduces Christmas. Volume 2 covers London, Thailand's floating markets, traditional clothing from Japan, Poland, Thailand, and Scotland, as well as New Year's and Mother's

Day. Starting from Volume 3, the cultural content becomes more diverse, including Australia's seasons, skiing in Scotland, Egypt's geographical location; foods favored by children in Italy, the US, the UK, and India; unique transportation in Japan, Egypt, Italy, and Thailand. Volume 4 explores the lifestyle of the Inuit, boarding schools in Indonesia and schools in central Australia, global cuisines from Spain, Italy, and other regions, and the lighthouse on Block Island in the US and Poland's Upside-Down House. Volume 5 presents professions in different countries, the weaving techniques in Bangladesh, Chinese martial arts, the Egyptian pyramids, the Grand Canyon, and the London Eye. Volume 6 offers an overview of Venice in Italy and Prague in Czech, and introduces India's Diwali, Mardi Gras in New Orleans and handmade cushions from Nepal.

As we have compared and analyzed domestic textbooks, we have also sorted out cultural content of the foreign textbooks from six dimensions, namely, local customs, traditions, lifestyles, behavioral norms, literary arts, and values. The bar chart below illustrates the frequency of occurrence of cultural content across these dimensions of Textbook D (See Figure 4).

Textbook E is published by a prestigious British publisher and consists of five volumes for the primary school stage. The first volume contains very little cultural-related content, only including introductions to breakfast in the United States and Vietnam. Volume 2 features an introduction to Cardiff in the UK, ancient Egypt, Mexico, Greece, Chinese astronomical knowledge, types of houses around the world, cafes with different characteristics, and the classification of fiction and non-fiction. Volume 3 covers the dragon dance during Chinese New Year, wedding ceremonies in different countries, and the art of painting. The cultural content in the fourth volume includes an introduction to Peru, the ancient Roman Colosseum, an overview of Australia, primary education in Kenya, the New Zealand Māori Haka dance, flamenco dance, and the world-famous painting of Mona Lisa's Smile. Volume 5 explores cultural topics such as the Egyptian pyramids, the Brazilian Carnival, as well as myths and legends. The following bar chart showcases the frequency of occurrence

of cultural content across the six dimensions of Textbook E

(See Figure 5).

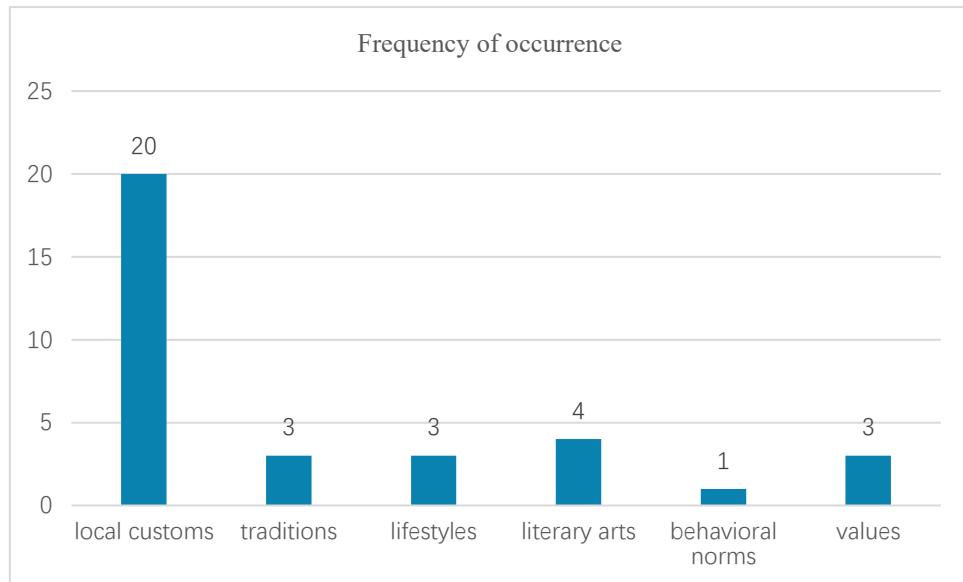


Fig.4 Frequency of occurrence of cultural content in Textbook D

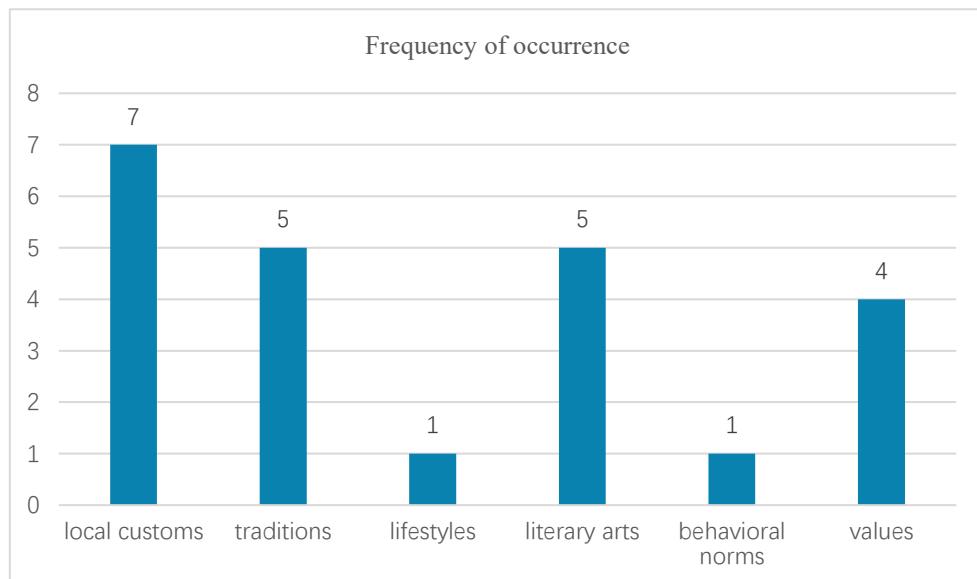


Fig.5 Frequency of occurrence of cultural content in Textbook E

Textbook F is published by a renowned American publishing company and consists of six volumes. Each unit in every volume focuses on introducing the history, geography, customs, or arts and culture of a specific country. The countries covered span across Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and the Americas, while the cultural

content is incredibly diverse—encompassing history, geography, local traditions, customs, lifestyles, and more. The material is exceptionally rich and comprehensive. The bar chart below indicates the frequency of occurrence of cultural content across the six dimensions of Textbook F (See Figure 6).

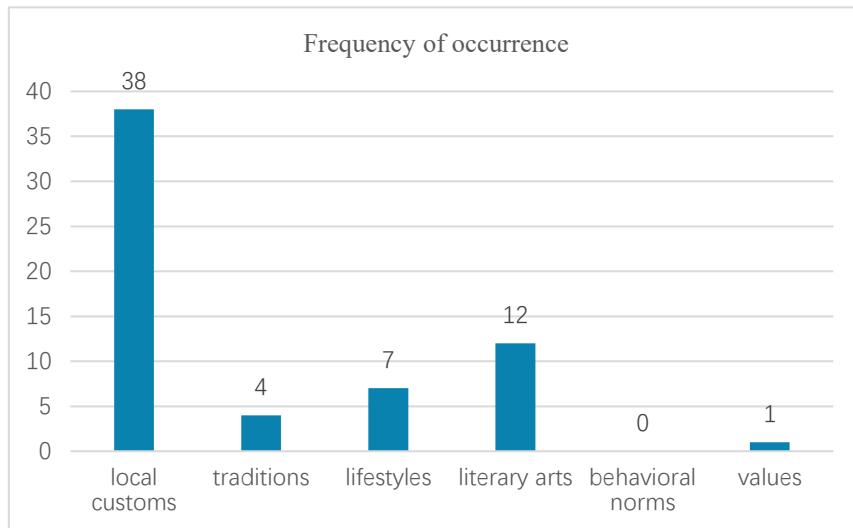


Fig.6 Frequency of occurrence of cultural content in Textbook F

Through analysis and comparison, we have provided an overview of these three foreign textbooks in the form of a table (See Table 2).

Table 2: Overview of Cultural Content in Foreign Textbooks

Item Textbook	Textbook D	Textbook E	Textbook F
Number of Volumes	6	5	6
Units per Volume	8	9	10
Start of Cultural Content	Volume 1 Unit 1 Christmas	Volume 1 Unit 2 Breakfast in America and Vietnam	Volume 1
Dedicated Cultural Section	Celebrations/Extra Culture	None	One Country per Unit
Frequency Rank	Local customs>Traditions>Literary arts >Lifestyles>others	Local customs>Traditions>Literary arts >Values >others	Local customs>Literary arts >Lifestyles > Traditions >others
Ways of Presentation	listen; read; story telling; project; exercise	listen; read; story telling; talk; exercises; activities	listen; read; talk; write; project; activities

#### 4.2.2 Comparison of Cultural Content and Ways of Presentation in Foreign Textbooks

Through analysis and comparison, we have identified the following common characteristics in the cultural content presentation of the three sets of foreign textbooks.

(1) In terms of cultural content selection, they demonstrate greater openness and breadth, emphasizing world cultures and adopting a more global perspective.

(2) The methods of presenting cultural content are also diverse, including not only dialogues and short passages, but also exercises, games, and displays.

The distinctive features of the three foreign textbook series in cultural content presentation are as follows.

(1) Textbook D includes an “Extra Culture” section in each volume, focusing on traditional customs and lifestyles.

(2) Textbook E emphasizes local customs, practices, and cultural arts.

(3) Textbook F dedicates each unit in every volume to introducing a country's history, geography, local customs, or cultural arts, providing very rich content.

From the perspective of Chinese students, there are some problems concerning the cultural content presentation in these three sets of textbooks.

(1) The language difficulty is high, with proper nouns (e.g., names of people and places) posing a significant challenge for both students and teachers.

(2) The coverage of Chinese culture is very limited, and there are even some instances of misrepresentation.

(3) The three textbook series largely lack presentations of behavioral norms and rarely directly address values.

#### 4.3 Results of Teacher Interviews

In parallel with textbook analysis, we interviewed eight frontline primary English teachers and English curriculum leaders from a district in Shanghai. The interviews explored their understanding of cultural awareness, its implementation in teaching and research, emphasis on Western culture, their interpretation of the new curriculum's cultural emphasis, how to promote cultural awareness through teaching practices, and personal development needs. The participating teachers freely shared their views and reflections on these questions. By organizing the interview records, we identified the current status and existing issues regarding the cultivation of cultural awareness in primary school English teaching.

First, over 60% of teachers focus more on fostering emotional attitudes and values during lessons, lacking clear awareness, plans, or methods for cultivating cultural awareness, which has not yet formed a systematic approach.

Second, about 30% of teachers have an insufficient understanding of the concept of cultural awareness, with some equating cultural content merely to introducing Western etiquette and festivals.

Third, approximately 20% of teachers delve deeper into the cultural aspects of the teaching materials, creating contextual settings and using resources such as images and videos to help students learn more about cultural content.

Fourth, regarding the cultural content in teaching materials, over 90% of teachers believe it is relatively limited, primarily introducing Western customs and

practices, especially Western festivals, while lacking content on excellent traditional Chinese culture or texts comparing Chinese and Western cultures.

Fifth, teachers unanimously acknowledged their theoretical shortcomings and expressed the need to strengthen their knowledge in relevant theoretical areas to better implement cultural awareness in teaching.

#### V. RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

Through a systematic review and comparison of domestic and international textbooks, we found that in terms of cultural awareness cultivation, domestic textbooks have incorporated it as an indispensable component in each unit. However, there are still shortcomings in both cultural content and presentation methods. Beyond the previously listed strengths and weaknesses in content and form, we summarize the gaps in cultural awareness cultivation in primary school English textbooks as follows.

First, there is an overemphasis on knowledge indoctrination rather than a deep understanding of cultural connotations. The approach tends to rely on rote memorization, neglecting the exploration of underlying values, ways of thinking, and other intrinsic qualities.

Second, superficial forms outweigh profound internalization. Although some units include content introducing China's excellent traditional culture, the overall design and implementation lack coherence and depth, often stopping at a shallow level. There is a tendency toward "activities without education", making it difficult for students to deeply grasp the core philosophies and humanistic spirit embedded in Chinese culture.

Third, passive imitation dominates over active innovation. In terms of cultural content presentation, the approaches across different textbooks are largely similar, with almost no particularly unique or novel methods. These issues provide room for improvement in future textbook development.

Additionally, through teacher interviews and other collaborative research, we've found that to effectively cultivate students' cultural awareness in English teaching, the first step is to enhance teachers' own cultural awareness and literacy. Due to differences in individual aptitude,

educational background, and working environments, improving teachers' cultural awareness should be a continuous process, progressing through three stages: cultural acceptance, cultural adaptation, and cultural internalization. Teachers need to adjust their roles, transitioning from mere language knowledge instructors to inheritors of their own culture and communicators of multiculturalism. On one hand, they should impart language knowledge to build a solid foundation; on the other, they should strengthen their understanding of their own culture while also learning about the cultures of English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries, fostering a multicultural perspective and striving to achieve the ideal of "mastering both Eastern and Western knowledge, knowing oneself and others".

## VI. REFLECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Currently, English textbooks in China have achieved a relatively comprehensive and mature presentation of linguistic knowledge such as grammar. However, the selection and organization of cultural content primarily focus on aspects like lifestyles and local customs, resulting in a narrow scope, superficial treatment, and lack of depth in cultural content. Additionally, the arrangement appears disorganized and lacks systematic coherence. Furthermore, the presentation of cultural content is mostly approached from the perspective of knowledge systems, necessitating further diversification in delivery methods. In light of these observations, we propose the following recommendations.

First, to strengthen teacher training. Teachers must first develop a clear understanding of the importance of cultivating students' cultural awareness. English classes serve as a vital channel for students to build correct cultural perspectives and provide the best opportunity to engage with foreign cultures. Therefore, English teachers must assume the responsibility of guiding students toward cultural awareness and helping them approach both Chinese and Western cultures with a rational mindset. In the context of globalization, the importance of English as a communication tool continues to grow. Relying solely on rote memorization and repetitive practice is insufficient. From the perspective of language development, it is clear

that language is closely intertwined with culture. The ultimate goal of English learning in the new era is not just to pass exams, but to lay a foundation for students' future lives and careers. In teaching, educators must adhere to the principle of integration—seamlessly combining the teaching of cultural knowledge with language practice. This helps avoid the disconnect between language instruction and cultural development, ensuring that cultural education and language ability are cultivated in tandem.

Second, to improve textbook writers' cultural literacy and vision. Textbook authors should possess strong cultural competence and a broad international perspective. They need to accurately grasp the characteristics and essence of foreign cultures, distill them into concrete components, and integrate them meaningfully into the textbooks. The goal is not only to help students understand foreign cultures through language learning but also to instill a sense of cultural confidence in their own heritage. Scientific integration of cultural content can activate students' thinking, broaden their horizons, and refresh their perspectives, enabling them to appreciate the richness of multicultural integration and develop a basic awareness of cultural comparison.

Third, to adopt a multidimensional cultural perspective. The cultural perspective in textbook design must break away from a Western-centric approach. Instead, content should be selected from multiple perspectives, including the intrinsic value of culture itself, the realities of students' cultural learning, and the mutual learning between Chinese and foreign cultures. The concept of "Chinese culture" must be clearly emphasized, which includes not only traditional culture but also revolutionary culture forged under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, as well as socialist culture guided by Marxism, which aims to cultivate citizens with ideals, moral character, culture, and discipline.

Fourth, to establish joint editorial teams of Chinese and foreign Experts. International cooperation is key in compiling textbooks that balance authenticity with local relevance. Original source materials should be appropriately combined with locally developed content. The selected language materials must align with the foreign

language curriculum guidelines and standards, match students' cognitive levels, and follow a logical and scientific sequencing of knowledge points, with reasonable distribution of key and difficult content.

Fifthly, to innovate language material presentation. Cultural content should not be confined to written text alone. Visual aids such as diagrams, layout design, and multimedia resources should also be considered for clarity and engagement. The integration of information technology and English teaching must be deepened. Textbooks should include audio materials and utilize modern technologies such as animations and sound effects to stimulate student interest. Additionally, digital learning resources should be provided to support textbook use. Students can choose content and methods that suit their individual needs, while also interacting with peers and teachers to share resources, exchange experiences, and showcase their learning outcomes.

Lastly, to develop supplementary exercises and reading materials. Given the cognitive, physiological, and psychological characteristics of primary school students, textbook content must remain appropriately concise, and cultural content should not occupy excessive space. Therefore, it is necessary to develop supplementary practice and reading materials that align with the textbooks. These materials can support students in using their free time to learn autonomously, gradually internalizing traditional Chinese culture. They should enable students to experience Chinese cultural values in real-life contexts and practice them through discovery and exploration.

It is our sacred mission as educators to guide students in comprehending the cultural essence of both Chinese and foreign traditions, comparing cultural differences, acquiring knowledge of diverse cultures, and actively disseminating Chinese culture. As engineers of the human soul in the new era, we have a long and challenging road ahead.

This study is the final outcome of the 2021 General Project "International Comparative Study of English Textbooks" (Project No. 20210301) conducted by the Shanghai Center for Research in English Language Education.

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