

Harmonizing Global English: Fostering Cultural Acumen in English Language Teaching Textbooks from Teachers' Perspectives in Nepal

Pitambar Paudel

Tribhuvan University, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara, Nepal

Couse Number: pitambarp@pncampus.edu.np

Received: 14 July 2024; Revised: 21 Augst 2024; Accepted: 24 Sept 2024

Abstract

The escalating prevalence of English on a global scale has precipitated a surge in its non-native speakers. This phenomenon, deeply intertwined with the forces of globalization, has engendered multifaceted transformations across domains such as science, technology, commerce, communication, and educational policies. The dissemination of English as a lingua franca evinces both advantageous and detrimental ramifications within non-native contexts, particularly in relation to the advocacy, preservation, and manifestation of indigenous languages. It is imperative that English language teaching (ELT) textbooks in non-native settings adopt a conscientious approach towards foregrounding local languages and cultures, recognizing culture as the matrix of beliefs and customs that underpin societal life and are articulated through language. Given the pivotal role of textbooks as primary conduits of knowledge and information across diverse cultural cohorts, the present inquiry endeavors to scrutinize the attitudes of English educators towards the treatment of English and cultural awareness within ELT materials. Employing an exploratory sequential research design, a cohort of 50 English instructors, uniformly utilizing a prescribed course book albeit hailing from disparate geographic locales, was purposefully selected through non-random sampling methodologies. Methodologically, a combination of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires served as instruments for data acquisition, which was subsequently subjected to both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Findings unveil a conspicuous inclusion of English varieties within the textbook corpus, yet discernible lacunae persist in the nuanced exploration of cultural awareness facets. The discerned lacunae in the nuanced exploration of cultural awareness facets within ELT textbooks underscore the imperative for curricular revisions and pedagogical enhancements aimed at fostering a more culturally sensitive and inclusive approach to English language education in non-native contexts.

Keywords: Cultural Awareness, ELT Textbook, Diversity, Inclusivity, Multiculturalism

Introduction

The phenomenon of Global English, also known as the spread of English, encapsulates the rapid proliferation and deepening influence of the English language across transnational domains encompassing politics, law, economics, and culture (Morrison, 2002, as cited in Doms, 2003).

With approximately 350 million native speakers and 1.9 billion proficient speakers worldwide, English has assumed multifaceted roles, serving as a lifeline for countless individuals while also facilitating intercultural communication on a global scale (Kachru, 1994; Crystal, 2003). Kachru's classification of countries into three concentric circles based on their relationship with English inner circle (e.g., USA, UK), outer circle (e.g., India, Nigeria), and expanding circle (e.g., Nepal, Brazil) underscores the diverse contexts in which English is acquired and utilized (Kachru, 1994). Despite its diverse forms, English functions as a global lingua franca, exerting considerable influence over other languages and cultures.

According to the National Population Census (NPC) of 2021 in Nepal, the country exhibits remarkable ethnic and linguistic diversity. The census identifies 142 distinct castes/ethnicities and 124 mother tongues among the population. The largest ethnic group, known as "*Kshetri*" or "*Chhetree*", accounts for approximately 16.45% to 16.60% of the total population, followed by "Brahman-Hill" and "Magar" ethnic groups, each comprising around 11.29% to 12.18% and 6.9% to 7.12% of the population, respectively. Other significant ethnic groups include "*Tharu*", "*Tamang*", "*Bishwokarma*", "*Musalman*", "*Newa*" (Newar), "*Yadav*", "*Rai*", "*Pariyar*", "*Gurung*", "*Thakuri*", "*Mijar*", "*Teli*", "*Yakthung/Limbu*", and "*Chamar/Harijan/Ram*", each representing varying proportions ranging from approximately 4.6% to 1.22%.

Regarding languages, the NPC (2021) reports that Nepali, as the official language, dominates the linguistic landscape, constituting approximately 44.86% and 44.64% of the population in the respective census years. Maithili and Bhojpuri follow, representing around 11.05% to 11.67% and 5.98% to 6.24% of the population, respectively. Additionally, Tharu, Tamang, and Bajjika languages are spoken by approximately 5.77% to 5.88%, 5.11% to 4.88%, and 2.99% to 3.89% of the population, respectively. The census also identifies 25 languages used as second languages by more than 10 thousand people each. English, although a minority language, maintains a presence, with around 0.31% to 0.35% of the population identifying it as a spoken language. This linguistic diversity underscores the multitude of cultural identities and heritage present across Nepal.

In countries like Nepal, situated within the expanding circle, English assumes multifaceted significance as a language of knowledge, modernization, education, and opportunity (Kachru, 1994). However, the imposition of foreign cultural norms through English education can pose challenges to cultural authenticity and social cohesion (Holmes, 2020). Culture, encompassing both tangible artifacts and intangible norms and beliefs, shapes individuals' worldviews and behaviors within society (Moran, 2001). While English serves as a vital tool for knowledge dissemination and socio-economic advancement in countries like Nepal, careful consideration must be given to mitigate the potential erosion of cultural authenticity and social harmony, ensuring a balanced approach to language education and cultural preservation.

Cultural awareness, crucial for effective communication, encompasses sensitivity to the cultural underpinnings of language use and behavior (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993, as cited in Vrbova, 2006). Achieving cultural competence requires not only awareness but also knowledge and skills in navigating diverse cultural contexts (Byram, 2009). Fostering cultural awareness and competence is essential for fostering meaningful and effective cross-cultural communication, necessitating a holistic approach that encompasses not only awareness but also knowledge and skills in navigating diverse cultural contexts. Despite the acknowledged significance of culture in foreign/second language classrooms (Moirano, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2016), many educators still primarily equate teaching culture with imparting factual information about target cultures (Nguyen et al., 2016; Salcedo & Sacchi, 2014). Furthermore, instructional materials often either neglect culture entirely or present it inadequately (Nguyen et al., 2016; Salcedo & Sacchi, 2014). Culture

instruction within foreign language teaching serves a broader purpose beyond language proficiency, aiming to foster understanding among individuals from diverse backgrounds (Byram, 2008; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, as cited in Nguyen, 2016). This objective aligns with the promotion of coexistence within multicultural societies. Over recent decades, there has been an increased emphasis on teaching culture in language education (Nguyen et al., 2016; Sercu, 2006), leading many national curricula worldwide to incorporate intercultural competence as an essential component (Feryok & Oranje, 2015; Salcedo & Sacchi, 2014). Similar to this, one research reveals that in educational settings like schools and colleges, textbooks play a pivotal role in shaping students' cultural perceptions and understanding (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). However, in the Nepalese context, textbooks often fail to adequately reflect the cultural diversity and sensitivities of learners, being predominantly designed at the national level without sufficient consideration for local contexts (Vrbova, 2006). Addressing the shortcomings in Nepalese textbooks to better reflect the cultural diversity and sensitivities of learners is imperative for fostering inclusive and culturally responsive education in the country's schools and colleges. In this diverse and complex situation, this research seeks to examine the level of cultural awareness present in the textbooks prescribed for the first year B.Ed. program under Tribhuvan University. By critically analyzing the cultural representations and sensitivities embedded within these textbooks, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the integration of cultural awareness in English language education in Nepal.

Literature Review

The concept of global English, coined by David Graddol's report on the global status of English, underscores its pervasive role in international communication (Crystal, 2003). Ke (2015) highlights the expanding use of English among speakers who share common languages other than English, reflecting its growing influence as a lingua franca. This widespread acceptance has led English to become a world lingua franca, shaping various aspects of human life and culture (Ke, 2015). As Joseph (2004) suggests, identity, a fundamental aspect of human existence, is intricately linked to language and culture within the discourse of global English.

The relationship between language and culture is deeply intertwined, with language serving as a key conduit for the transmission of cultural knowledge and norms (Salzman & Halloran, 2004). Saville's description underscores the proposition that cultural understanding involves not only propositional knowledge but also procedural knowledge, integral to performing tasks within a given cultural context (as cited in Salzman & Halloran, 2004). Jiang (2000) metaphorically likens language to an iceberg, where the visible language represents only a fraction of the underlying cultural nuances. This perspective emphasizes that language and culture are inseparable entities, each influencing and shaping the other (Jiang, 2000). Sapir's assertion highlights the symbiotic relationship between language and culture, suggesting that language not only reflects but also shapes cultural patterns and thinking processes (as cited in Salzman & Halloran, 2004). Similarly, Brown (2000) posits that while language may influence cognitive processes, there exist universal properties inherent to language itself. Paige et al. (2002) underscores the importance of cultural awareness in language learning, emphasizing the need for both teachers and learners to understand the cultural nuances embedded in language use. Menard-Warwick (2009) further elaborates on the dynamic nature of culture, emphasizing its fluidity and subjectivity, which are expressed through language. Yadav (2014) contextualizes these concepts within Nepal's diverse cultural landscape, highlighting the central role of language in self-expression, communication, and identity formation. The interplay between language and culture is complex and multifaceted, with each influencing and shaping the other in dynamic ways. Understanding this symbiotic relationship is

essential for navigating cross-cultural communication and fostering cultural competence in an increasingly interconnected world.

Significant of teaching culture in EFL Context

Teaching culture has emerged as a pivotal aspect in multilingual and multicultural contexts, gaining prominence in language education over the past century, as noted by Kitao (1991). McKay (2018) emphasizes the dual influence of culture on language teaching, impacting both linguistic aspects such as semantics and pragmatics, as well as pedagogical choices in materials and methodologies. Moreover, teaching culture fosters not only an understanding of other cultures but also encourages students to explore and appreciate their own cultural backgrounds, as highlighted by Sowden (2007). This holistic approach, as advocated by Kramsch and echoed by Sowden (2007), integrates cultural awareness into language learning, enhancing students' motivation and comprehension. Ultimately, recognizing language as a social construct underscores the fundamental role of culture in language education.

Language and culture are intricately interwoven, forming a symbiotic relationship (Brown, 2000; Krasner, 1999). Wang (2008) extends this notion, asserting that foreign language teaching inherently involves teaching culture. Tomalin (2008) introduces culture as a fifth language skill, crucial for effective communication. Hymes (1966) communicative competence model, underscores the importance of sociolinguistic knowledge alongside linguistic competence, elaborated by Wolfson (1989). Understanding and appreciating the target culture can foster positive attitudes among language learners, which emphasizes that teaching culture is essential for language learners' success, requiring teachers to play versatile roles (Brown, 2000; Moran, 2001). In the same vein, Ali et al. (2015) states that a number of language programs focus on the development of skills, i.e. (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) but the teaching of cultural context has not been introduced in any of the language learning programs. As a result, students do not have sufficient cultural demand to understand English texts thoroughly as well as become effective communicators in English. She implied the importance of teaching culture in language classroom.

English for New Millennium: Bridging Language and Culture in Education

Textbook plays a significant and dominant role among materials used in the lesson. It contains different kinds of texts, activities, visuals, topics and helps to achieve the goals of syllabus. It is an essential tool for making language teaching and learning activities effective, purposeful and successful. The materials often used in the EFL classroom need to be referred to as many teachers claim to use them as their main guidelines when planning their classes (Nguyen et al., 2016). Participants in research about EFL teachers in Vietnam reported “to teach from textbooks, with assigned workloads normally in terms of units in the textbooks to be covered in the semester” (Nguyen et al., 2016, p. 171). However, in many cases, teachers themselves admit that textbooks need revising for more intercultural tasks (Sercu, 2006). Lack of cultural content and narrow focus on target cultures/languages were some of the pitfalls of textbooks as mentioned by the participants in this research. In terms of the use of materials and models to the teaching of English in general and of culture in particular, much of the materials used in the university EFL classes of Nepal are largely produced abroad and written by native English writers.

In the realm of English language education for first-year B.Ed. students at Tribhuvan University, the textbook 'English for the New Millennium' stands as a cornerstone. This meticulously crafted resource, compiled and edited by a team of experts, is designed with a singular aim: to nurture students' language skills, with a particular emphasis on reading, writing, and vocabulary

development (Awasthi et al., 2015). Within its pages, 'English for the New Millennium' offers a rich tapestry of texts spanning diverse genres, fields of knowledge, and cultural landscapes. Recognizing the imperative for students within the Faculty of Education to engage with a wide array of reading materials and genres, the book's contents are thoughtfully curated from sources worldwide (Awasthi et al., 2015). Native and non-native authors alike contribute their voices, enriching the learning experience with varied perspectives and linguistic styles. By embracing texts from different corners of the globe, the textbook not only broadens students' linguistic horizons but also fosters an appreciation for the rich tapestry of human expression and experience. Its inclusion of writings from diverse cultures serves to cultivate cultural awareness and sensitivity, preparing students to navigate the interconnected world with empathy and understanding. In essence, English for the New Millennium serves as a beacon of comprehensive language education, seamlessly integrating linguistic proficiency with cultural enrichment. As students delve into its pages, they embark on a transformative journey towards linguistic fluency and global citizenship.

Despite the comprehensive nature of 'English for the New Millennium' in integrating linguistic proficiency with cultural enrichment, there exist notable research gaps warranting further exploration. Firstly, while the textbook endeavors to expose students to diverse cultural landscapes through its curated selection of texts from around the world, the extent to which these cultural representations are effectively integrated and explored remains uncertain. A critical analysis of the textbook's treatment of cultural themes, including the depth of cultural insights provided and the manner in which cultural nuances are addressed, would shed light on the efficacy of its cultural pedagogy. Secondly, while the textbook incorporates writings from both native and non-native authors, the specific criteria and considerations guiding the selection process merit examination. Understanding the rationale behind the inclusion of certain texts and the perspectives they represent would offer insights into the textbook's cultural inclusivity and sensitivity. Furthermore, an investigation into the reception and perception of cultural representations within 'English for the New Millennium' among students and educators would provide valuable feedback on its effectiveness in fostering cultural awareness and competence. Assessing stakeholders' perspectives on the cultural relevance and impact of the textbook could inform potential revisions or enhancements to better align with the cultural needs and sensitivities of the Nepalese context. Moreover, while the literature acknowledges the importance of teaching culture in language education, particularly in multilingual and multicultural contexts like Nepal, there is limited empirical research specifically examining the cultural awareness and sensitivity embedded within English language textbooks prescribed for B.Ed. programs. Thus, a focused study on the cultural acumen present in 'English for the New Millennium' would contribute to filling this gap in the existing literature and provide actionable insights for enhancing cultural pedagogy in English language education in Nepal.

Methodology

The main aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions of English teachers regarding the portrayal of English language status and cultural awareness within the ELT textbook "English for the New Millennium," which is the prescribed English book for first-year B.Ed. students at Tribhuvan University. This research adopted a sequential exploratory mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The utilization of mixed-methods research is aimed at obtaining a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the issue by incorporating qualitative insights and quantitative data within a single study (Creswell, 2014; Creswell, 2018). The study followed an exploratory sequential design comprising two distinct

phases: a qualitative phase and a subsequent quantitative phase (Terrell, 2012). In this design, initial qualitative data were gathered through unstructured interviews, with the intention of informing the subsequent collection of quantitative data based on the qualitative findings (Leavy, 2017). The process involved planning for the collection of quantitative data after analyzing the qualitative results, emphasizing a sequential rather than concurrent approach. According to Creswell (2014), this study strategy entails conducting qualitative research first, analyzing the outcomes, and then conducting quantitative research to further elucidate and validate the generalizability of the qualitative findings. Through the quantitative exploration, this study aims to clarify, validate, and extend the insights gained during the qualitative phase.

For this research, a sample of 50 English teachers who teach at B.Ed. programs across various campuses under Tribhuvan University nationwide was purposefully selected. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both interviews and questionnaires as research instruments. In the initial phase, 10 teachers participated in semi-structured interviews, guided by interview schedule guidelines. Subsequently, in the second phase, 40 teachers were contacted via email and provided with questionnaires, which were completed and returned electronically. The qualitative data gathered from the interviews were subjected to qualitative analysis techniques, allowing for a detailed exploration of themes, attitudes, and perspectives expressed by the participants. Meanwhile, the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires underwent statistical analysis, enabling the researchers to identify patterns, trends, and frequencies in the responses. In the final stage of analysis, the findings from both qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the attitudes and perceptions of English teachers regarding the status of English and cultural awareness within the ELT textbook "English for the New Millennium." By integrating insights from both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study aimed to enrich the interpretation of findings and provide a nuanced understanding of the research objectives.

In adherence to ethical considerations, informed consent was obtained from all participating English teachers, ensuring their voluntary participation and confidentiality throughout the study. Additionally, steps were taken to maintain the anonymity of respondents during data collection and analysis, fostering a sense of trust and confidentiality. Furthermore, the research procedures and methodologies were reviewed ensured compliance with ethical standards and safeguarding the rights and well-being of the participants.

Results and Discussion

This study investigated the perceptions of English teachers regarding the status of English and cultural awareness within the ELT textbook "English for the New Millennium," prescribed for first-year students of the four-year B.Ed. program at Tribhuvan University, Nepal. Data collection involved both interviews and questionnaires. Qualitative analysis was conducted to identify themes in the interview data, while quantitative analysis was performed on the questionnaire responses. The findings from both qualitative and quantitative analyses were triangulated and interpreted in discussion to derive adequate conclusions.

Unlocking Cultural Richness: Perspectives on Diversity in English Textbooks

The respondents unanimously agreed that English for the New Millennium' showcases a diverse range of cultures through its varied content. Santu noted, "The textbook presents a rich tapestry of English varieties across eleven themes, incorporating elements of Nepalese culture and context, such as terms like kanchhi, bhustigre, and khukuri." Similarly, Minu pointed out "Texts like 'Start of Kali Yug' and 'The Three Dancing Goats' reflect Indian culture", while Sita highlighted "The

Mirror of Matsuyama' for its portrayal of Japanese culture". Prajita observed, "The Joy of Motherhood' offers insight into African culture", while Prajwal mentioned "Do not Say' as representative of Malaysian culture." Anish, who has taught the course for two years, shared his perspective: 'The course content provides an engaging exploration of various cultures, beyond just British and American. It's particularly rewarding to introduce Nepali culture within English language teaching.' The participants emphasized the significance of textbooks in shaping students' knowledge and perception. Prajita remarked, 'Students heavily rely on textbooks as their primary source of learning, viewing them as authoritative.' Thus, participants emphasized the importance of textbooks portraying a multicultural reality to enhance students' learning experience. To assess the cultural content knowledge within the textbook 'English for New Millennium,' four specific questions were formulated, aimed at eliciting information regarding the representation of cultural varieties. Table 1 displays the findings regarding the reflection of cultural varieties in the textbook content.

Table 1. Reflection of Varieties in the Content

Q.N.	Not obvious	To some extent	To large extent	Large
Reflection of the cultural character of foreign society?	19%	36%	20%	25%
Historical perspective presentation to explain certain features of national identity of the target culture?	39%	30%	20%	11%
Insight into a variety of cultures (for example: British, American, Nepalese)?	0	0	0	100%
Insight into the students' own culture?	20%	35%	25%	20%

Table 1 depicts the responses to four key questions regarding the cultural content in the textbook "English for New Millennium." In response to the query about the reflection of cultural characters from foreign language societies, 19% of respondents noted the absence of such characters in the text, while 36% indicated a partial representation and 20% cited a substantial inclusion. Only 25% of respondents felt that the book deeply reflected cultural characters from foreign language societies. Specific texts like "Start of Kaliyuga," "The Mirror of Matsuyama," "The Joy of Motherhood," and "Gate Man's Gift" were mentioned as examples lacking English cultural characters, while texts such as "Alchemist," "The Horseman in the Sky," "The Open Window," and "The Necklace" were highlighted for their portrayal of English cultural societies.

Regarding the historical presentation to explain certain features of national identity, 39% of respondents indicated a complete absence of historical perspective, with 30% noting only partial presentation of historical facts. Additionally, 20% mentioned that most national identities presented in the textbook were explained historically, while only 11% felt that all national identities were thoroughly explored from a historical viewpoint. In response to the question about providing insight into a variety of cultures, all respondents unanimously agreed that the textbook indeed reflects a diverse range of cultures, including Japanese, Chinese, Russian, American, British, Nepalese, African, and Australian cultures.

Lastly, in regard to offering insight into students' own culture, 20% of teachers felt there were no obvious texts providing such insight, while 35% believed the textbook offered some insight to students' own culture. Specific texts like "Letter from Foreign Grave," "Start of Kaliyuga," "Inclusive Education," "Martyrs," and "Smile" were identified as providing learners with insights

into their own culture. Moreover, 25% and 20% of respondents respectively felt that the textbook significantly or profoundly revealed insight into learners' own culture.

Navigating Cultural Currents: Perspectives on Balancing Diversity in English Textbooks

The whole world is shifting towards inter-culturalism and multiculturalism. So balancing culture in a textbook is an issue as it may not make all the practitioners feel equal. The same contrastive view is found in the responses of the teachers. Some of them experienced that the texts in the book were not sufficient to preserve and promote Nepalese culture. Just presenting two or three texts by Nepalese writers were not sufficient to reflect the awareness of Nepalese culture. Recalling her experience, Sofiya shared:

In the book, most of the texts were from American and British cultural contexts. They were encouraging teachers and learners to learn them. The book is slow poison in the multilingual situation of Nepalese classes to replace local tongues and cultures. No Nepalese ethnic cultures were revealed in the book. Just presenting two/three text of Nepali smell was to lure Nepalese towards western cultures.

This account illustrates that Nepalese English teachers are not getting the reflection of particular Nepalese ethnic cultures. They are worried about the slow replacing Nepalese culture, content, and imposing western culture and content. Minu echoes this sentiment, noting that while the textbook contains diverse content, there's insufficient representation of Nepalese culture, a concern shared by Prajwal. However, some other respondents in the same issue seem positive towards the reflection of Nepalese culture in the textbook. They felt that the book is encouraging Nepalese culture and context to some extent introducing some texts from Nepalese flavor. Sharing his experience, Bharat said:

The book had introduced four or five Nepalese cultural texts which has encouraged Nepalese writers to write and teachers and learners feel proud to get Nepalese cultures in English textbook. It has opened the door of developing and introducing Nepalese texts, contexts in the days to come.

This expression reveals something is better than nothing. It has started the momentum of introducing Nepalese cultures but it is not the end itself. The investigation into the portrayal of content attitude in the textbook 'English for New Millennium' involved administering four questions to the chosen teachers. Table 2 displays the teachers' perspectives on the presentation of local cultures and languages for balancing diversities.

Table 2. Presentation of Local Cultures and Tongues for Balancing Diversities

Q.N.	Not Obvious	To Some Extent	To Large Extent	To Profound Manner
Develop a feeling of the national identity?	18%	56%	13%	13%
Encourage curiosity about other cultures?	12%	10%	65%	13%
Challenge students' existing stereotypes?	74%	19%	5%	2%
Prepare students to behave properly when in contact with the members of other culture(s)?	2%	6%	20%	72%

Table 2 indicates that regarding the development of a sense of national identity, 18% of respondents noted the absence of any treatment of target language attitudes in the textbook. In contrast, 56% felt that the textbook includes some examples of national identity to a certain extent, facilitating students' awareness of their national identity. Similarly, 13% believed that the textbook fosters a sense of national identity to a significant degree, while an equal percentage felt it does so profoundly. In response to the query about whether the textbook encourages curiosity about other cultures, 12% of respondents expressed that it fails to do so, with 10% suggesting it does to some extent. However, a majority (65%) noted that besides addressing the identity of the target culture, the textbook also explores students' own national identity, fostering understanding of differences and similarities, possibly offering ready-made answers to a large extent. Additionally, 13% felt that it significantly encourages curiosity about other cultures like Nepalese, Indian, African, etc., and does so profoundly. Regarding the challenge to students' existing stereotypes, a considerable 74% of respondents reported the inclusion of examples of stereotyped attitudes in the textbook, which fail to challenge students' preconceptions. Conversely, 19% felt the textbook does challenge students' existing stereotypes, while 5% and 2% indicated it does so to a large extent and profoundly, respectively. In response to the fourth question, a majority (72%) believed that the textbook profoundly prepares students to behave appropriately when interacting with members of other cultures. Furthermore, 20% and 6% responded that it does so to a large extent and to some extent, respectively, while only 2% indicated it does not.

Cultural Kaleidoscope: Weaving Diversity into English Textbooks for Global Learners

Incorporating cultural awareness into educational materials fosters cultural harmony, tolerance, understanding, and a sense of equality among learners. According to the respondents, English textbooks within outer and expanding circles play a crucial role in fostering national and cultural identity by incorporating more contextual and cultural content. Sofiya articulated this sentiment, stating, "A good English textbook should address local language and cultures, making learners proud of their culture and tongue rather than feeling humiliated or frustrated." She emphasized the importance of an intercultural approach in multilingual contexts like Nepal, enabling learners to compare their culture with foreign cultures and adapt their own culture accordingly.

Prajita echoed this perspective, noting, "English textbooks should not only teach language but also promote cultural understanding. By including diverse cultural elements, textbooks can enrich students' learning experiences." Prajwal further emphasized the significance of cultural representation in textbooks, stating, "Cultural diversity should be celebrated in educational materials. It helps students appreciate different perspectives and fosters a sense of global citizenship." Sita highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity in educational resources, stating, "Textbooks should be sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of learners. By incorporating local content, they can create a more inclusive learning environment." Similarly, Santu emphasized the need for textbooks to reflect the cultural realities of learners, stating, "Students should see themselves represented in the materials they study. This promotes a sense of belonging and validates their cultural identities." This perspective highlights the necessity for textbooks to provide ample opportunities for learners to engage with foreign cultures and languages without undermining their appreciation for their own cultural heritage. Thus, to meet the challenges of globalization, an effective English textbook should facilitate the comparison of cultures and encourage the adoption of positive aspects from foreign cultures to cultivate globally competent individuals.

To validate the insights gathered through interviews with a small group of respondents, a broader dataset was obtained using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised three categories designed to collect comprehensive data, which were then analyzed to inform the results and subsequent discussions. To determine if the textbook fosters intercultural awareness among learners, four questions were employed to gather relevant information.

Table 3. Weaving Diversity into English Textbooks for Global Learners

Q.N.	Not obvious	To some extent	To large extent	To profound manner
Encourage the students to compare the foreign culture with their own?	22%	30%	18%	30%
Offer mutual representations, images, stereotypes of students' own and the foreign cultures?	39%	40%	12%	9%
Aware the students about cultural harmony and tolerance?	9%	12%	10%	59%
Develop respect to otherness?	9%	12%	40%	39%

Table 3 illustrates the responses to the first question, which focuses on whether the textbook encourages students to compare foreign language culture with their own. Out of the respondents, 22% indicated that there was no encouragement for such comparisons, while 30% noted limited access to cultural comparisons in the textbook. Similarly, 18% stated that the encouragement was to a large extent, and 30% reported profound encouragement for comparing target culture to their own. Regarding the second question about mutual representations of students' own and foreign cultures, 39% stated the absence of such representations, while 40% indicated partial inclusion. Additionally, 12% and 9% respectively noted substantial and profound inclusion of mutual representations, images, and stereotypes of both cultures. Analyzing the third question concerning whether the textbook fosters awareness about cultural harmony and tolerance, 59% of respondents reported profound awareness creation, with 20%, 12%, and 9% respectively noting large, some, and no obvious impact. In response to the fourth question regarding whether the textbook develops respect for otherness among learners, 39% and 40% of participants respectively indicated profound and large extent development of respect for otherness. Similarly, 12% and 9% noted some extent and no obvious impact on respect for otherness.

Cultural Influence in Writing: Native Dominance and Pedagogical Considerations

Writing is influenced due to the cultural background of the authors. They reflect their culture more than others even they claim their writing is culture free. All the informants felt that the texts in the book revealed more native oriented content knowledge, culture, and characters than nonnative. Teachers had another romantic experience about the reflection of nativeness in the texts of the book as Santu noted:

All together there are sixty teaching texts in the book, among them more than fifty texts were written by native writers. They are more aware and conscious of their own culture and accent than others. Their language, tone, accent, manner resembled more nativeness than non-nativeness in the texts

This statement illustrates each individual is guided by his/her culture which is reflected in each of their expressions. So, writing cannot be an exception to it. The teachers' responses reveal that

there is not a particular text to give insight into students' culture so that they can show national identity by which learners are led to realize and become aware of their national identity.

Out of the sixty teaching texts in the book, more than fifty (over 83%) were authored by native writers. Among the respondents, all of them expressed the sentiment that the texts in the book primarily showcased native-oriented content knowledge, culture, and characters.

Discussion

The exploration of English teachers' perceptions regarding the incorporation of cultural awareness within the ELT textbook "English for the New Millennium" reveals a nuanced landscape of viewpoints and considerations. At the forefront of these discussions is the acknowledgment of the textbook's diverse cultural representation, which is generally viewed positively by respondents. This sentiment resonates with the understanding that language and culture are intricately intertwined, as suggested by Menard-Warwick (2009). Through various activities and linguistic expressions, individuals manifest the diversities inherent in their cultural backgrounds, emphasizing the need for multicultural content in language teaching materials. Joseph's assertion (2004) that "identity is a linguistic phenomenon" adds another layer to this discourse, underscoring the significance of addressing identity issues within the realm of global English. Teachers recognize that learners' identities are shaped not only by their linguistic competencies but also by their cultural affiliations. Therefore, the inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives in ELT materials becomes paramount in fostering a sense of belonging and representation among learners.

However, amidst the celebration of cultural diversity, concerns emerge regarding the potential dominance of Western cultural content within the textbook. This apprehension echoes Holmes' (2020) caution against the imposition of foreign cultures, which may inadvertently marginalize local cultures and languages. Sofiya's expression of this sentiment highlights the delicate balance required in navigating cultural diversity in educational materials, especially in contexts characterized by multiculturalism. Despite these concerns, there is recognition of efforts to incorporate local cultures, such as Nepalese culture, within the textbook. This reflects an understanding of the importance of promoting and preserving cultural diversity within the realm of ELT. Awasthi et al.'s (2015) observation that students benefit from exposure to a variety of cultural materials underscores the significance of inclusivity in educational resources. The satisfaction expressed by respondents regarding the textbook's inclusivity of diverse cultures, varieties, and religions signifies a step in the right direction towards fostering cultural understanding and appreciation among learners.

Moreover, the study sheds light on the pivotal role of ELT textbooks as foundational resources in language classrooms. Nguyen et al. (2016) note that teachers often rely on these materials as primary guides when planning their classes. Therefore, the inclusivity and cultural responsiveness of textbooks hold immense significance in shaping the learning experiences of students from diverse backgrounds.

In addition to language proficiency, the development of cultural competence emerges as a critical objective in language education. Brown (2000) and Moran (2001) argue that understanding and appreciating the target culture can foster positive attitudes among language learners. This necessitates teachers to adopt versatile roles, not only as language instructors but also as cultural guides and facilitators of intercultural understanding. The findings of the study underscore the complex interplay between language, culture, and education in the ELT context. While there is recognition of the benefits of multicultural content in fostering cultural awareness and understanding, there is also a need for vigilance in ensuring the inclusivity and authenticity of

cultural representations within educational materials. Moving forward, educators and curriculum developers must prioritize the creation of inclusive and culturally responsive textbooks that reflect the diversity of learners' backgrounds and experiences, thereby fostering a more equitable and enriching learning environment for all.

Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the perceptions of English teachers regarding the incorporation of cultural awareness within the ELT textbook "English for the New Millennium. Culture and language are inherently intertwined, with language serving as a mirror of cultural patterns, customs, and worldviews. To foster international understanding and promote global peace, it is essential to cultivate cultural awareness and intercultural learning at all levels of education, from foundational to policy levels. Understanding culture is crucial for comprehending both the target language and one's own culture, facilitating the development of citizens capable of navigating the multicultural global village. Thus, every English language teaching (ELT) textbook should integrate local language and cultural awareness. This study offers valuable insights into English teachers' perspectives on cultural awareness within the ELT textbook English for the New Millennium. While the textbook was commended for its diverse cultural representation, concerns were raised about the prevalence of Western cultural content and the neglect of local cultures. Nonetheless, participants expressed optimism about the potential of the textbook to inspire the creation of more culturally inclusive educational materials in the future. English language textbooks play a pivotal role in shaping students' perceptions and attitudes toward cultural diversity. By incorporating diverse cultural content, promoting cultural awareness, and empowering local stakeholders, educators can establish more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments, equipping learners to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world.

Despite its limitations on scope, context, methodology and design, the findings of this study underscore the importance of promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity in English language teaching materials, particularly in multicultural contexts like Nepal. Pedagogically, educators and curriculum developers should prioritize the inclusion of diverse cultural content in English language textbooks to foster cultural awareness, understanding, and tolerance among learners. This entails striking a balance between global and local cultural representation, ensuring that learners are exposed to a wide range of cultural perspectives while also preserving and promoting their own cultural heritage. Moreover, efforts should be made to empower local authors and educators to contribute culturally relevant content to English language textbooks through collaborative curriculum development initiatives. By enhancing intercultural competence and providing opportunities for critical reflection and revision, educators can create more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments that prepare learners to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world.

References

- Ali, S., Kazemian, B., & Mahar, I.H. (2015). The importance of culture in second and foreign language learning. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 15 (1),1-10. <https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v15i1.99>
- Ali, S., Li, D., Congbin, F., & Khan, F. (2015). Twenty first century climatic and hydrological changes over Upper Indus Basin of Himalayan region of Pakistan. *Environmental Research Letters*, 10(1), 014007. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/10/1/014007>
- Awasthi, J. R., Bhattarai, G. R., & Rai, V. S. (Eds.) (2015). *English for the new millennium*. Ekta Books.

- Brown, R. (2000). Social identity theory: Past achievements, current problems and future challenges. *European journal of social psychology*, 30(6), 745-778. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1099-0992\(200011/12\)30:6%3C745::AID-EJSP24%3E3.0.CO;2-O](https://doi.org/10.1002/1099-0992(200011/12)30:6%3C745::AID-EJSP24%3E3.0.CO;2-O)
- Byram, M. (2009). The intercultural speaker and the pedagogy of foreign language education. *The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence*, 321-332.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approach* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language*. Cambridge university press.
- Doms, D. (2003). Roles and impact of English as a global language. Retrieved December, 23, 2005.
- Feryok, A., & Oranje, J. (2015). Adopting a cultural portfolio project in teaching German as a foreign language: Language teacher cognition as a dynamic system. *The Modern Language Journal*, 99(3), 546–564. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12243>
- Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher Positionality--A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research--A New Researcher Guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.34293/>
- Hymes, D. (1966). On "anthropological linguistics" and congeners. *American Anthropologist*, 68(1), 143-153.
- Jiang, W. (2000). The relationship between culture and language. *ELT journal*, 54(4), 328-334. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/54.4.328>
- Joseph, J. (2004). *Language and identity: National, ethnic, religious*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230503427>
- Kachru, B. B. (1994). Englishization and contact linguistics. *World Englishes*, 13(2), 135-154. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971X.1994.tb00303.x>
- Ke, I. C. (2015). A global language without a Global Culture: From basic English to global English. *English as a Global Language Education (EaGLE) Journal*, 1(1), 65-87. <https://doi.org/10.6294/EaGLE.2015.0101.04>
- Kitao, K. (1991). Teaching Culture in Foreign Language Instruction in the United States. *Doshisha Studies in English*, 52(53), 285-306.
- Kramsch, C. (1995). The cultural component of language teaching. *Language, culture and curriculum*, 8(2), 83-92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908319509525192>
- Leavy, P. (2022). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. Guilford Publications.
- Liddicoat, A. J., & Scarino, A. (2013). *Intercultural language teaching and learning*. John Wiley & Sons.
- McKay, S. L. (2018). English as an international language: What it is and what it means for pedagogy. *RELC Journal*, 49(1), 9-23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217738817>
- Menard-warwick, J. (2009). Co-constructing representations of culture in ESL and EFL classrooms: Discursive faultlines in Chile and California. *The Modern Language Journal*, 93(1), 30-45. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00826.x>
- Moirano, M. C. (2012). Teaching the students and not the book: Addressing the problem of culture teaching in EFL in Argentina. *Gist: Education and Learning Research Journal*, (6), 71-96.
- Moran, P. R. (2001). *Teaching culture; perspective in practice*. Council of Europe.

- Morrison, E. W. (2002). Newcomers' relationships: The role of social network ties during socialization. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45(6), 1149-1160. <https://doi.org/10.5465/3069430>
- National Population Census (2021). *Nepal Census [Nepal Janagadana] 2021 result*. Nepal Government, Department of Statistics.
- Nguyen, L., Harvey, S., & Grant, L. (2016). What teachers say about addressing culture in their EFL teaching practices: The Vietnamese context. *Intercultural Education*, 27(2), 165–178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2016.1144921>
- Paige, R. M., Cohen, A. D., Kappler, B., Chi, J. C., & Lassegard, J. P. (2002). *Maximizing Study Abroad: A Program Professionals' Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use*. Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota, 619 Heller Hall, 271-19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455.
- Salcedo, N., Sacchi, F. (2014). *The role of culture in the EFL classroom: A study of teachers' beliefs and practices* [Paper presentation]. XXXIX FAAPI conference proceedings. Santiago del Estero, Argentina.
- Salzman, M. B., & Halloran, M. J. (2004). Cultural Trauma and Recovery: Cultural Meaning, Self-Esteem, and the Reconstruction of the Cultural Anxiety Buffer. In J. Greenberg, S. L. Koole, & T. Pyszczynski (Eds.), *Handbook of Experimental Existential Psychology* (pp. 231–246). The Guilford Press.
- Salzman, Z. (1997). *Culture in anthropology*. Academia.
- Sercu, L. (2006). The foreign language and intercultural competence teacher: The acquisition of a new professional identity. *Intercultural Education*, 17(1), 55–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980500502321>
- Sowden, C. (2007). Culture and the 'good teacher' in the English language classroom. *ELT journal*, 61(4), 304-310. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccm049>
- Terrell, S. R. (2012). Mixed-methods research methodologies. *Qualitative report*, 17(1), 254-280.
- Tomalin, B., & Stempleski, S. (2013). *Cultural awareness*. Oxford University Press.
- Vrbova, L. (2006). *Developing cultural awareness in ELT* [An unpublished thesis]. University of Pardubice.
- Wolfson, N. (1989). The social dynamics of native and nonnative variation in complimenting behavior. In *The dynamic interlanguage: Empirical studies in second language variation* (pp. 219-236). Boston, MA: Springer US. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-0900-8_14
- Yadava, Y. P. (2014). Language use in Nepal. *Population monograph of Nepal*, 2, 51-72.