A critical analysis of intercultural communicative competence development in 11th grade English textbook from the English as international language (EIL) perspective
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Background: Kachru’s three concentric model of the spread of English (1985)

Vietnam

Non-native speakers of English now outnumber native speakers by approximately 3 to 1
• the native speaker norms in both linguistic and cultural competence are no longer appropriate.

→ develop **intercultural communicative competence** that enables students to relativize their own cultural values, beliefs and behaviors, and investigate for themselves the **otherness** - what is different to their “norm”
• should not teach their students only Anglo-American culture

Comparison and contrast

Ss’ own culture

Other cultures

critical cultural awareness
Aims of the study

• critically analyzing to what extent the textbook “English Grade 11 can foster students’ intercultural competence and critical awareness in the context of teaching English as an international language in Vietnam

• Textbook analysis frameworks: content analysis + evaluation of teaching methods.
Content analysis

• The majority of topics for reading or listening passages in all units are the cultural issues in Britain and America

  past experiences of a Western girl called Christina (unit 2)

  volunteer work by high school and college students as volunteer in the US (unit 4)

  birthday party and wedding anniversaries in US (unit 3)

  London and Boston marathon (unit 6)…

• The number of topics related to Vietnam ranks second

• The most marginalized cultures are those of other countries in the same region with Vietnam such as Japan and China
Anglo-centric focus

- is also reflected in the content of reading passages or language expressions used in speaking activities

E.g.
- speaking task in unit 1.
- some language expressions given to students are more suitable for describing Western people: square face, a straight, crooked nose, very few expressions to describe typical Asian features: broad nose, double or single eyelid...
• the discourse conventions in conversations or writing tasks strictly follow those of English speaking countries

• WRITING

• Task 1. Read the letter and underline the sentences that express the following points:

• the opening of the letter
• the way(s) the money is used
• the gratitude to the donor
• the closing of the letter
• the donated amount
• the way the receipt is issued

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197 Hill Road, Los Angeles
20th December, 2005

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am very happy to have received a donation of $500 from your company some days ago. The money will help us to repair the old school building and build a new block of flats for the handicapped students. We will certainly issue a receipt as soon as possible.

I would like to express our thanks for the donation from your company and hope to get more assistance and cooperation from your company in the future.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

David James
Secretary of School Building Fund
• Ideal representation of English speaking countries like Britain and America: an urbanized, affluent culture of middle class

• Vietnamese cultures, particularly the cultures of ethnic minority students in rural areas in Vietnam are not adequately presented in the textbook: mostly portrays the images of urbanized and rich people
Analysis of teaching methods

• cultural issues are presented in isolation and leave few possibilities for comparison
• few activities to help students avoid stereotypes and become aware that there are many ways of doing things and their way is not the only possible one.
• Students are required to passively read a text and or listen to listening passages and then answer only factual questions
• speaking activities: Ss are expected to imitate a sample dialogue and use prescribed language expressions. → few chances for them to reflect and make a comparison and contrast between their home culture and other foreign culture
Implications

• include greater diversity of cultural issues, and portray both positive and negative aspects of target and source culture
• design more activities that leaves opportunities for students to critically reflect on the target culture and their home culture: cultural assimilators, role-play, discussion, etc.
References


