

## Development of Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence through English Language Textbooks: A Directed Qualitative Content Analysis

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### Abstract

In the contemporary world, intercultural competence is vital to fostering understanding among people from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the acquisition of intercultural awareness has become a fundamental component in all language learning programmes. Through directed qualitative content analysis, this study investigates to what extent the content of the Grade 11 English Language textbook in the Sri Lankan government school context contributes to develop 'intercultural communicative competence' (ICC) in learners. The contents were analyzed against Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence Model, types and categories of culture, and representation of ethnicities in the selected textbook. The findings revealed that the textbook represents different ethnicities through its characters (e.g. Vikum, Chamindu, Farah, Kamalesh, Nithya, Rikaz, etc.) although it does not reflect the actual religious/ethnic makeup

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(Received 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023; Revised 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024; Accepted 15<sup>th</sup> June 2024) © OUSL)



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of Sri Lanka. Moreover, the textbook most often refers to the big “C” (visible culture) while less attention is paid to the small “c” (invisible culture). Additionally, the contents predominantly represented universal cultural aspects and the source culture while briefly referring to target and international cultures. In addition, the cultural content was presented as factual knowledge with fewer opportunities for critical analysis and reflection. Consequently, students do not get the opportunity to reflect on stereotyping and counter pre-formed biases. Hence, it would be better to go beyond portraying the religious/ethnic groups through characters to enable a more analytical approach to learning about other cultures. Based on the findings, the learning material developing authority should make certain amendments to the ESL textbooks to increase their content value and quality. In conclusion, culture teaching should be integral in language programmes and material developers should represent different ethnicities.

**Keywords:** *Categories of culture, content analysis, ESL textbooks, intercultural communicative competence, invisible cultures, visible cultures*

## **Introduction**

The contemporary social turn in communication has created a need to shift English language learning from achieving merely linguistic competence to gaining cultural literacy to establish effective communication amongst diverse nationalities (Horibe, 2008). Moreover, a foreign language cannot be learned without addressing the cultural connotations of the context where it is learned. Thus, culture and language are intricately attached to each other (Kramsch, 1998). In addition, it is a means for dissolving prejudices and developing understanding and mutual respect. In Sri Lanka, too, intercultural education has been a vital component in the national curriculum for decades, especially during and aftermath of the 30-year civil war. The Sri Lankan educational authorities conferred the English language with the status of a link language to foster religious and ethnic harmony and understanding among local religious/ethnic groups, in their attempts to resolve the ethnic conflict as well as to produce skilled citizens for the labor market (Balasooriya, Perera & Wijetunge, 2004; Wickrema & Colenso, 2003). Thus, this study aims

to analyze the content of an English language textbook in Sri Lanka to identify to what extent it fosters intercultural communicative competence in learners.

The concept of culture is an essential component in language pedagogy and is central to the development of intercultural awareness among students (Kramsch, 1993). At the outset, culture can be defined as shared meanings of people (Hall, 1997). People give meanings to objects, people, and events through interpretation, and they are shared through language enabling them to make sense of the world (Hall, 1997; Xiao, 2010). People who recognize themselves as belonging to the same culture interpret the world in the same manner by creating a group identity and by distinguishing themselves from others (Block, 2006; Ilieva, 2000). Furthermore, these shared meanings influence the thought processes and cultural perceptions of people (Xiao, 2010). In this context, the sense of an utterance is influenced by both the speaker's and interlocutor's cultural backgrounds. Thus, language and culture are two closely knitted concepts (Dema & Moeller, 2012).

When it comes to learning languages, Brown (2007) describes second language acquisition as the gaining of a second culture. Said (2003) contends that it is nearly impossible to perceive other cultures in a non-judgmental way. Consequently, culture can be a ground for struggle amongst people with multiple and shifting identities (Ilieva, 2000). Integrating cultural elements in language programmes is a way to enhance intercultural citizenship, the capacity to co-exist and communicate in local, national, and international settings with people outside one's ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identity, paving a way toward mutual respect, and social engagement and reduction of prejudices (Byram, 2008). It is contended that language education should have a social transformative goal that could be achieved through critical cultural awareness (Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Weninger & Kiss, 2013).

## Theoretical Framework

### Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)



**Figure 1.** Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) Model

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) refers to the "ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their individuality" (Byram et al., 2002, p.10).

To achieve ICC, it is important to have certain knowledge about the existing differences between other cultures and one's own, apart from linguistic knowledge. Learners should identify and understand the differences as well as mediate with 'others' achieving complete understanding and effective communication (Arias, 2015).

Intercultural communication is seen as an in-between space, where meaning is produced, consumed, and exchanged (Bouchard, 2017; Lange, 2011). Similarly, intercultural consciousness involves uncovering and understanding one's own culturally conditioned behaviour and attitudes along with that of others. Byram (1997) posits that the intercultural dimension in language teaching intends to develop learners' capacity to engage with multiple identities and to avoid stereotyping which results from perceiving someone through a single identity. Furthermore, intercultural communication enables respect for individuals and equality of human rights as the democratic

basis for social interaction (Stranger-Johannessen, 2015; Weninger & Kiss, 2013).

Byram (1997) introduced a model to understand the development of ICC and this framework has been utilized in this study to analyze the cultural content in the selected textbook to determine how far it contributes towards the development of ICC in learners. The model has five *savoirs*, which include (i) knowledge, (ii) attitudes, (iii) skills of interpreting and relating, (iv) skills of discovery and interaction, and (v) critical cultural awareness. The first, 'knowledge' refers to the knowledge about one's own and the interlocutor's culture for interaction. The second is *savoir être* or attitudes, which refers to the capacity to be conscious about one's own culture and value others' in terms of attitudes and beliefs. Here, the students are expected to step back from their predisposed worldviews and shed ethnocentric attitudes. The third is *savoir comprendre* which refers to the ability to interpret a text or an event of another culture. The fourth one is *savoir apprendre* or skills of discovery and interaction, which refers to the ability to acquire new knowledge about a culture. The final is *savoir s'engager* or critical cultural awareness, which is the ability to critically evaluate perspectives (small "c"), practices (small "c"), and products (big "C") in one's own or other cultures. This model is significant in designing textbooks that could foster ICC in students as it reflects the progressive and comprehensive development of knowledge, attitudes, and skills to become a global citizen (Knudsen, 2016; Weninger & Kiss, 2013).

### **Culture in Textbooks**

In relation to the English as a Second Language (ESL) context, both curricular and learning materials can be considered cultural products (Homayounzadeh & Sahragard, 2015; Kanu, 2006). Hong (2009) contends that the school curriculum is not just about "us", but also about "others". They represent a specific set of beliefs, values, morals, ideas, and perceptions of the curriculum and material developers. They validate, legitimize and transfer society's mainstream ideological values to the next generation and act as a vehicle for constructing national identity (Canale, 2016; Gaul, 2017; Rodríguez, 2015; Tomlinson, 2012; Wang, 2016). Additionally, cultural studies enable the study of textbooks as cultural texts and culture bearers as they provide an authentic representation and compromise of the political,

economic, cultural, and historical values of diverse cultures (Feng & Byram, 2002; Ilieva, 2000).

Furthermore, textbooks are the principal pedagogical tools employed in language classrooms worldwide and are one of the significant sources of classroom knowledge (Hong, 2009; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Also, teachers rely heavily on textbooks as they lack knowledge of teaching culture (Byram, 2014). They are a source of cultural input and provide a route to acquire target culture learning. In this context, the readers tend to appropriate, reinforce, and contest the representations reproduced in the materials (Canale, 2016). Thus, it can be claimed that textbooks, as cultural texts full of cultural connotations, play a vital role in shaping the perceptions of ESL learners (Bahrami, 2015; Chao, 2011; Kim & Paek, 2015; Toprak & Aksoyalp, 2014).

### ***Context of Material Development in Sri Lanka***

All textbooks in Sri Lanka are produced by the Educational Publications Department (EPD), under the purview of the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka. The curricula are developed by the National Institute of Education (NIE). The central government sets out the curriculum and compiles the textbooks and the provincial educational authorities and schools implement them.

The EPD obtains the contribution of teachers, university lecturers, and other resource personnel from the NIE in compiling the textbooks (National Education Commission (NEC), 2003). Yet, it is important to point out that there is an imbalance in the representation of ethnic, religious, and gender groups among material developers. This context has its implications for Bourdieu's and Giroux's theories of reproduction which contend that textbooks reveal the interaction of numerous political, social, and cultural ideologies that cause various types of knowledge to be reproduced, challenged, and negotiated (Giroux, 1992).

The national goals of education, objectives, and basic competencies stated in the English curriculum act as a guideline in the development of textbooks. The content of the materials should be aligned with these goals, objectives, and competencies (NIE, 2014). The first national goal of education is the establishment of a Sri Lankan identity through the promotion of national cohesion in Sri Lanka's plural society. It

accentuates the need to create intercultural understanding among diverse ethnic and religious groups within the local culture.

### **Types of Culture**

Xiao (2010) divided culture into two types; the big 'C' and the small 'c'. The big 'C' represents formal or visible culture through nine themes (*i.e.*, politics, economy, history, geography, literature/art, social norms, education, architecture, and music) whereas the small 'c' refers to the implicit aspects namely food, holiday, lifestyles, customs, values, hobbies, and gesture/body language (Lee, 2009). He proposed 9 themes related to big 'C' culture and seven themes related to small 'c' culture. These implicit cultural aspects exert a great impact on how people think and behave (Arias, 2015; Lange, 2011; Lee, 2005). Any individual who comes across an unfamiliar culture and lacks knowledge of such invisible aspects may misinterpret his cultural experiences (Kramsch, 1993; Lopez-Rocha, 2016). These two types of cultural information are reflected in textbooks. Rodríguez (2015) and Xiao (2010) argue that teaching the big "C" is not sufficient and that the small "c" culture should accompany the learning materials to facilitate the development of ICC in learners.

### **Categories of Culture**

With regard to the discourse of culture in textbooks, scholars often discuss four categories of cultural content: target culture, source culture, international culture, and universality across cultures (Chao, 2011; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999).

Target culture includes the culture of a country where English is spoken as the first language such as the United States, Great Britain, and Australia. The inclusion of target culture helps learners enhance motivation, develop intercultural awareness, and develop their attitude toward language learning (Kim & Paek, 2015; Shin, Eslami & Chen, 2011). Secondly, source culture refers to the learner's own national culture. This trend is significantly seen in post-colonial countries (Stranger-Johannessen, 2015; Vanner et al., 2017; Xiong & Qian, 2012). Embedding source culture in textbooks benefits the students in learning a language in their social context (Dweik & Al-Sayyed, 2015). However, certain countries do not limit the inclusion of any one category of culture. Instead, the duality of target and source cultures is a frequent sight in contemporary English as a Foreign

Language (EFL) textbooks (Baker, 2009; Kim & Paek, 2015; Li, 2013; Siddique, 2011). This is due to the notion of "travelling cultures" and the need to become "local in the global" (Canagarajah, 2005, p. xvi).

Materials that reflect characteristics of international culture include references to the cultural aspects of various countries that use English as an international language. McKay (2010) contends that learning international cultures allows learners to develop cross-cultural sociolinguistic competence enabling them to acquire ways to communicate appropriately with native and non-native speakers of English. It is further justified as in the present context; the English language does not belong to any community and the plurality of Englishes is widely accepted. Finally, universal cultural aspects are prominent in present-day textbooks, and they open a discourse of common cultural values, issues, and debates across all cultures (Chao, 2011; Siddique, 2011). This type of cultural content contributes to the development of the learner's personality and general knowledge of the world while maintaining a sense of impartiality within the content of the textbooks.

In the case of this article, the source culture refers to the Sri Lankan culture. The materials in Sri Lanka mostly draw on Sri Lankan society and culture and learners receive comprehensible input. They could describe one's own culture to foreign counterparts and strengthen ties among different local religious/ethnic groups.

### ***Comparative Research on Representation of Culture in School Textbooks***

In relation to the representation of culture in EFL textbooks, Vanner et al. (2017) conducted a study to determine the role of primary textbooks in peacebuilding in post-war Sri Lanka, South Sudan, and Afghanistan. In this study, the researchers identified the complex ways in which textbook development is influenced by national and international political and social power structures. In the case of Sri Lanka, textbooks were revealed to occasionally provide a brief coverage of other minority groups. Moreover, it was found that the content is culturally exclusive, and material developers did not represent different ethnicities. It was also revealed that History textbooks had no reference to the ethnic war to open a dialogue about its causes and ways to resolve the tensions among the

religious/ethnic groups.

On the contrary, Gaul (2017) conducted a discourse analysis of the History textbooks from Grades 7 to 11 in Sri Lanka based on the curriculum revision in 2007. This study concluded that the textbooks reproduced the ethnocentric version of Sinhalese nationalism. However, a limitation of the study was that they had not considered the new textbooks compiled following the curriculum revision in 2014. Furthermore, in another study carried out by Cardozo (2008), teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of Sri Lankan textbooks in teaching culture were analyzed. It was revealed that teachers expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the cultural exclusiveness of the textbooks. On the contrary, a study conducted by Perera (2009) on the ESL textbooks used in grades 7 and 10 in Sri Lanka concluded that the materials have made positive progress as they have opted to talk about religious/ethnic minorities through great national personalities who contributed towards the development of the country. Hence, the findings from this study are in contradiction to the above-mentioned studies about the treatment of religious/ethnic minorities.

Studies conducted in India (Bose & Gao, 2022) and in Pakistan (Nair, 2010) showed how textbooks tend to create a sense of nationhood that was not shared equally by all groups in both countries. Similarly, in Bangladesh, being Muslim and Bengali are the key concepts referred to in the textbooks as the basis of national identity formation (Naseem & Stöber, 2014). This approach is like the context of Sri Lanka where the above studies by (Bose & Gao, 2022), Nair (2010), and Naseem & Stöber (2014) conclude that the textbooks shape a system where Sinhalese national goals are promoted (Gaul, 2017; Naseem & Stöber, 2014). All these countries promote nationalism in their textbooks as a way of countering linguistic hegemony imposed by the colonizers (Nair, 2010).

Chao (2011) conducted a study in Taiwan on the cultural content in internationally published EFL textbooks. The study showed that the textbook series focused mainly on the target cultural content, while little attention was paid to the source culture or other international cultures. Moreover, it was found that the content allowed no space for critical cultural engagement or reflection. Similarly, Shin et al. (2011) conducted a content analysis of 25 internationally distributed EFL

textbooks. The findings from this study were similar to Chao's (2011), which revealed how inner-circle countries dominated the internationally published textbooks. However, the authors contend that the inclusion of target, local, and international cultures is important for the development of ICC.

Likewise, Yamada (2015) in his study of analyzing locally published EFL textbooks in Japan found that the textbooks did represent diverse countries, although the USA was emphasized due to the relationship between the two countries. In short, it can be stated that all three studies emphasized the role of target culture in Taiwan and Japan as well as its implications for developing ICC in learners of different cultures across the world.

Kim & Paek (2015) conducted a study on five South Korean EFL textbooks in relation to their cultural content. The study revealed that opportunities for cultural interaction were low and there was an obvious imbalance between the big “**C**” and small “**c**” cultures. Lastly, in Bangladesh, Siddique (2011) conducted a content analysis of locally produced Grade 9 and 10 EFL textbooks in relation to the extent to which they exposed learners to interculturality. The study found that the textbooks oriented the students to local and international cultures allowing them to gain cultural literacy in terms of local and international contexts. However, the study disregarded the interaction between different ethnicities and instead investigated the representation of local and international cultures.

### **Significance of the Study**

In Sri Lanka, with its history of a long-standing ethnic conflict, the development of intercultural competence in students through education is critical to mold a future generation who can co-exist with different ethnicities and grow together as a nation. Furthermore, there is little or no research related to the development of intercultural competence in English language textbooks done in Sri Lanka. To bridge the research gap, the study will shed light on the matter. In addition, the comparative research conducted in the region does not include all aspects of culture that were considered in this study. Thus, the present study is of utmost value and importance to gain insight into the existing situation and to bring in suggestions for

improvement.

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following research questions were devised: 1. What cultural types are included in the textbook and in what proportions are they found? 2. What categories of culture does the textbook include and in what proportions are they found? 3. In what ways does the textbook represent various religious/ethnic groups in Sri Lanka? 4. To what extent do these cultural contents (types of culture and categories of culture) in the textbook allow students to develop intercultural communicative competence?

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

A qualitative content analysis approach was used to conduct this study. Content analysis is a method in which written content is systematically defined, summarized, and reported (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The theory-based content analysis approach (directed content analysis) was utilized in this study as the research is based on the theories of intercultural communicative competence, visible and invisible cultures, and categories of culture. Directed content analysis is a deductive approach to qualitative analysis where the study starts with an existing theory or framework and utilizes data to either support or build upon that framework.

### **Sample**

The grade 11 textbook was selected for the study as this level is crucial as it is the final stage where students learn English as a compulsory subject before selecting subject streams for higher education pathways. Therefore, this is the stage where students are provided with the opportunity to inculcate Intercultural Communicative Competence through learning English as a foreign language. The textbook is titled 'Grade 11 Pupil's Book'.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The textbook comprises ten units and the content is presented as activities based on reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in each unit. The content analysis of the textbook was conducted based on four aspects/dimensions, *i.e.* (i) categories of culture (target culture, source culture, international culture, and universality across

cultures), (ii) types of culture (big 'C' - visible culture and small 'c' - invisible culture), (iii) components of the Byram's (1997) model of ICC and (iv) the representation of religious/ethnic identity. Each of these criteria was analyzed in terms of the activities and pictures in the textbook. In relation to types of culture, 9 themes for the big "C" and 7 themes for the small "c" culture were identified as introduced by Xiao (Brown, 2000; Hinkel, 2001; Lee, 2005; Xiao, 2010). For the data analysis, this research study used Huberman, Miles, and Saldana's (2011) method of analysis which comprises four stages. These stages are (i) data collection, (ii) data reduction (iii) data display, and (iv) drawing conclusions from the data.

### **Data Representation**

Accordingly, a framework was designed to gather data which was then simplified by identifying recurring themes by coding. Next, the analysis was presented in visual form. Finally, conclusions of the study were drawn from the analyzed data.

### **Findings and Discussion**

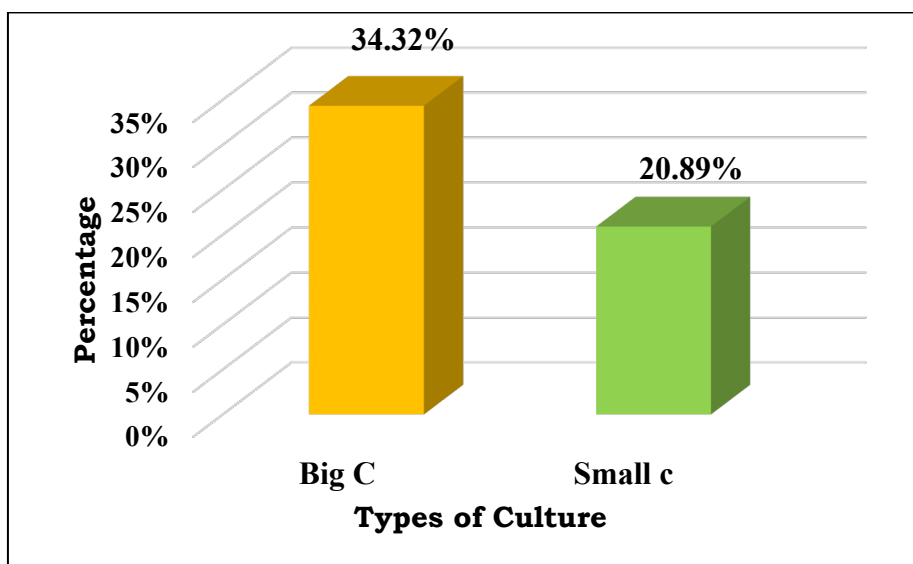
During the analysis, the 10 units of the English textbook were analyzed against the portrayal of types of culture (9 big 'C' themes and seven small 'c' themes presented by Xiao, 2010), categories of culture (target culture, source culture, international culture and universality across cultures), aspects of Byram's ICC Model and representation of religious/ethnic groups. The findings are discussed below.

#### ***Depiction of Types of Culture***

The proportion of types of culture in the activities is given in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Representation of Types of Culture in the Textbook*

Unit	No. of Activities		
	Total No. of Activities	Big “C” Culture	Small “c” Culture
Unit 01	13	00	08
Unit 02	14	07	04
Unit 03	13	09	00
Unit 04	15	04	05
Unit 05	13	04	03
Unit 06	15	04	02
Unit 07	18	06	05
Unit 08	10	05	00
Unit 09	11	04	00
Unit 10	12	03	01
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>46 (34.32%)</b>	<b>28 (20.89%)</b>



**Figure 2.** Distribution of Types of Culture across Activities

As evident from the data in Table 1 and Figure 2, both big “**C**” and small “**c**” cultures are found in most of the units. However, they are not present in equal proportions in the activities. The big “**C**” culture is present in 46 activities taking up 34.32% of the total number of activities. On the other hand, the small “**c**” is reflected in 28 activities and represents 20.89% of the total activities. Thus, the big “**C**” culture dominates the textbook, hindering students the opportunity to learn about deep or implicit aspects of culture. Consequently, misunderstandings, stereotyping, and cultural biases might occur when individuals come across unfamiliar aspects of the Sri Lankan culture or cultural practices of different religious/ethnic groups in the country (Giroux, 1978; Xiao, 2010). This study further investigated the distribution of the nine themes of the big “**C**” culture (politics, economy, history, geography, literature/art, social norms, education, architecture, and music) and the seven themes of the small “**c**” culture (food, holiday, lifestyles, customs, values, hobbies, and gesture/body language) in the activities of each unit. The majority of themes in the big “**C**” culture reflect different aspects of the Sri Lankan culture in general. However, they lack the representation of visible aspects of religious/ethnic communities in terms of celebrations, holidays, clothing, food, religion, history, and literature to enhance intercultural understanding.

Whereas the small “**c**” cultural representation in the textbook takes place in the form of universal values such as facing challenges, social responsibilities of a citizen, simplicity, discipline, and doing good deeds. Although these values contribute to developing the personality of the learners and promote important social values, a comparison of values among different religious/ethnic groups is lacking as the content on the small “**c**” culture does not refer to customs, traditions, beliefs, and values of different religious/ethnic groups. Without such critical engagement, learners are being offered what they might already know without much opportunity to develop an intercultural stance that would enrich learning.

Because implicit cultural aspects exercise a strong impact on how people think and act, they should be included in the learning materials to facilitate ICC in learners (Arias, 2015; Lange, 2011; Lee, 2005; Rodríguez, 2015). However, it should be noted that the textbook content under analysis does not make a notable shift towards

including invisible cultural aspects of different ethnicities to foster religious/ethnic cohesion as expected through the curricular goals and objectives (NIE, 2014).

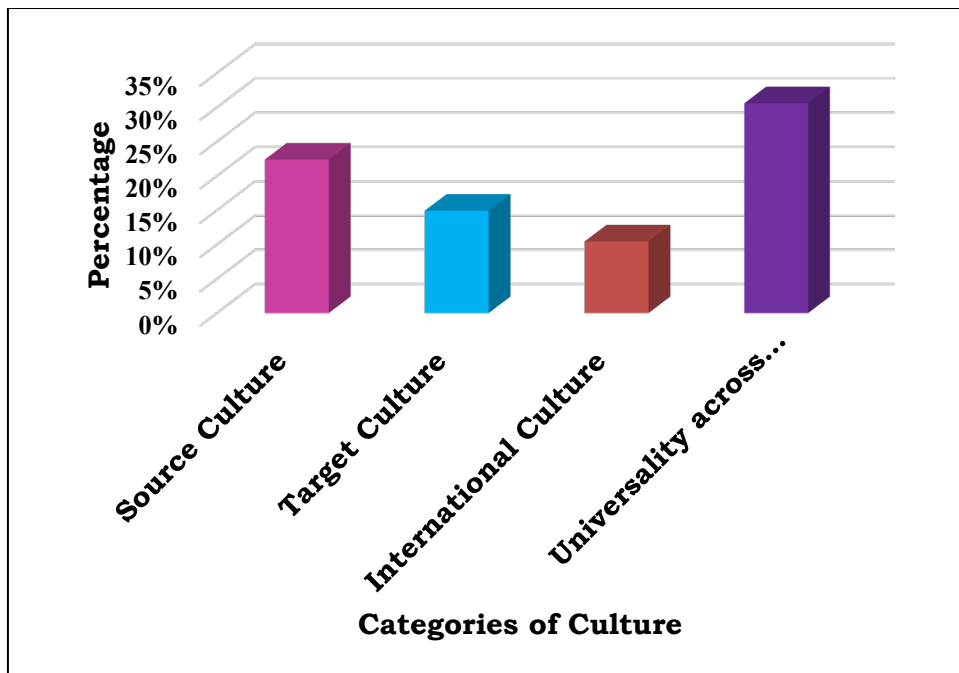
### **Depiction of Categories of Culture**

The findings related to the proportion of categories of culture present in the activities of the textbook in terms of source culture, target culture, international culture, and universality across cultures are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Representation of Categories of Culture in the Textbook*

<b>Unit</b>	<b>No. of Activities</b>				
	<b>No. of Activities</b>	<b>Source Culture</b>	<b>Target Culture</b>	<b>International Culture</b>	<b>Universality across Cultures</b>
Unit 01	13	02	00	01	08
Unit 02	14	06	03	04	09
Unit 03	13	09	02	01	00
Unit 04	15	02	01	02	06
Unit 05	13	02	02	01	04
Unit 06	15	02	02	02	03
Unit 07	18	04	02	02	04
Unit 08	10	01	03	01	00
Unit 09	11	00	04	00	00
Unit 10	12	02	01	00	07
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>41</b>
	<b>100%</b>	<b>22.38%</b>	<b>14.92%</b>	<b>10.44%</b>	<b>30.59%</b>



**Figure 3.** Representation of Categories of Culture in the Textbook

cultures is represented in 30.59% of the activities. The focus of these activities includes general knowledge that is not specific to any particular culture or country (Chao, 2011; Kim & Paek, 2015). This type of universal cultural knowledge aims to develop world knowledge and linguistic competence to improve the communicative skills and employability of the students as stated in the curriculum (Kim & Paek, 2015; NIE, 2014; Siddique, 2011). It could also be viewed as an attempt to be impartial across different religious/ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. However, it would stand in the way of the development of intercultural literacy.

Target and international cultures are briefly referred to in the textbook in terms of factual knowledge leaving little or no occasion for critical comparison or reflection on other foreign cultures. The inclusion of source culture to teach English could improve the self-esteem of students as they come across familiar contexts to learn a foreign language. However, it could also inhibit the capacity to form an empathetic and objective worldview towards other cultures while running the risk of being mono-cultural (Arias, 2015). As shown in Figure 2, the analysis revealed that universal cultural values take up the highest proportion of content, positioning the source culture in

second place. These universal cultural values do not have a considerable impact on developing intercultural awareness in students but merely tend to contribute to the development of linguistic competence (Wilhelmson, 2016). This inclination towards achieving linguistic competence could be a way to achieve the objective of producing skilled citizens for the international job market, as stated in the curriculum (NIE, 2014). Additionally, the inclusion of universal values aligns with the contention that topics relevant to contemporary international society such as human rights, interactive media, business practice, etc. should be incorporated into the learning materials (Bao, 2008; Siddique, 2011). In this regard, the textbook includes topics such as social responsibilities, saving energy, protecting the environment, time management, and the importance of leisure. This is a commendable characteristic of the textbook under analysis.

Regarding the source culture, the textbook includes content areas such as history, clothing, food, geography, and politics related to the Sri Lankan culture. It enables the learners to reflect on and critically analyze their own culture in relation to others to promote intercultural communication (Kramersch, 2013; McKay, 2002; Silvia, 2014). In addition, the findings in relation to the source culture correspond to many studies, which revealed that in most educational contexts, the teaching of English has become more localized by adding local flavours to the content to facilitate learning (Horibe, 2008; Kramersch, 2013; McKay, 2003; Smith, 1976).

Additionally, the incorporation of the Sri Lankan culture could foster the development of a Sri Lankan identity in students as mentioned in the curriculum (NIE, 2014). However, it lacks the space for critical comparison among religious/ethnic groups, which questions the ability to create cohesion in a plural society as anticipated in the curriculum. Besides that, brief references are made to target international cultures in the textbook in comparison to the comprehensive inclusion of the Sri Lankan culture. This lack of international outlook might hinder the curiosity and interest of the students (Bao, 2008). Also, Kramersch (1993) argues that culture teaching should adopt an intercultural approach, which reflects local and target cultures. This contention is further strengthened by the fact that English should be independent of its nationality-bound

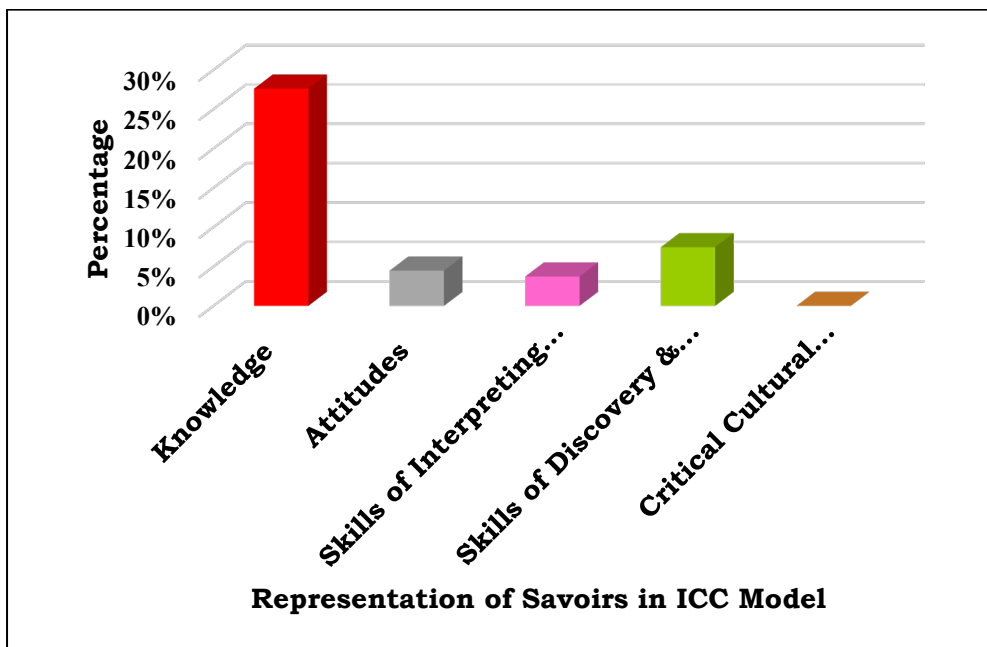
cultural context to create bilingual yet not essentially bicultural people (Stranger-Johannessen, 2015). Hence, the strategic incorporation of culture-specific and culture-general aspects could be advised for effective communication in cross-cultural situations and to challenge mono-cultural attitudes.

***Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence through Cultural Content***

With regard to what extent the cultural content in the textbook allows students to acquire ICC, the cultural content was analyzed against the components of the model of ICC introduced by Byram in 1997.

**Table 3**  
*Representation of Savoirs in ICC Model*

<b>Objectives of ICC</b>						
<b>Unit No.</b>	<b>No. of Activities</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Attitudes</b>	<b>Skills of Interpreting and Relating</b>	<b>Skills of Discovery &amp; Interaction</b>	<b>Critical Cultural Awareness</b>
01	13	04	00	00	02	00
02	14	07	00	00	01	00
03	13	06	02	02	03	00
04	15	05	00	00	00	00
05	13	02	00	00	00	00
06	15	01	00	00	00	00
07	18	07	04	03	04	00
08	10	02	00	00	00	00
09	11	02	00	00	00	00
10	12	01	00	00	00	00
	<b>134</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>00</b>
		<b>27.61%</b>	<b>4.48%</b>	<b>3.73%</b>	<b>7.46%</b>	<b>0%</b>



**Figure 4.** Representation of Savoirs in ICC Model

In relation to Table 3 and Figure 4, the majority of activities in the textbook focus on the acquisition of knowledge of the source, target, and international cultures. However, in comparison to the total number of activities, it is not possibly significant enough to make a strong impact on promoting intercultural awareness among the learners. Moreover, the percentage of activities that seek to develop 'attitudes' shows that students are given very few opportunities to develop or change their viewpoints on other local and international cultures. Instead, the content focuses more on changing attitudes towards adopting good practices such as being a responsible citizen, simplicity, doing good deeds, helping elders, facing challenges in life, etc. The activities in relation to the above are included effectively through writing about personal experiences, debating on current issues, finding solutions to problems, and engaging in critical thinking, peer interactions, and class projects. In addition, 'skills of interpreting and relating' add up to five activities, representing 3.73% of the total activities, while 'skills of discovery and interaction' were found in 10 activities making up 7.46% of the total number of activities. Finally, no activities were found that would contribute

towards the development of critical intercultural awareness. Thus, there is a notable absence of activities that provide students with opportunities to experience "otherness" and to develop ICC. The textbook makes little effort to enable learners to critically reflect on how their values and beliefs differ from those of others and to recreate intercultural standpoints (Deardorff, 2006). The provision of such ability would enable the learners to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with distinctive characteristics, values, and behaviours, which would be an enriching experience (Byram et al., 2002). This study further investigated the representation of 'savoirs' in the ICC model (Figure 5) in the activities of each unit, examples of each component are shown in Table 4.

Components in the Model of ICC	Meaning	Example
Knowledge	Factual knowledge of positive and negative aspects of each culture	- Behaviours, food, values, etc. - Diverse aspects of common Sri Lankan culture are given instead of aspects of ethnic groups separately
Attitudes	capacity to be conscious about one's own culture and value others'	- Universal values and good conducts - In Unit 03, the superiority of Buddhism is reiterated while including one religious symbol of Tamils. - A boy from source culture is doing household work in Unit 07.
Skills of Interpreting and Relating	ability to interpret a text or an event of another culture	- Reference to Buddhist and Hindu cultures through religious symbols in Unit 03. - All characters are derived from the source culture.
Skills of Discovery and Interaction	skills of discovery and interaction, which refers to the ability to acquire new knowledge about a culture	Describes different aspects of Sri Lankan culture in general such as food, clothing, geography, tourism, etc.
Critical Cultural Awareness	ability to critically evaluate perspectives	-

**Figure 5.** Types of Savoirs in ICC Model

In relation to the 'knowledge' component in the model, the textbook provides factual knowledge in relation to the Sri Lankan culture, target cultures (England, USA), and international cultures (India, Canada, Denmark, etc.). However, it does not add much to develop a critical stance in the learners towards developing intercultural literacy. As for 'attitudes,' ample opportunities are provided through the promotion of universal values to develop the personality of the

learners. This should be complimented as a positive feature of the textbook.

Nonetheless, no activities such as comparing values, contrasting cultural behaviour, explaining culture shock, or sharing personal experiences by giving examples are found in the content that contributes towards the development of critical cultural awareness in the learners. It is a substantial drawback of the textbook.

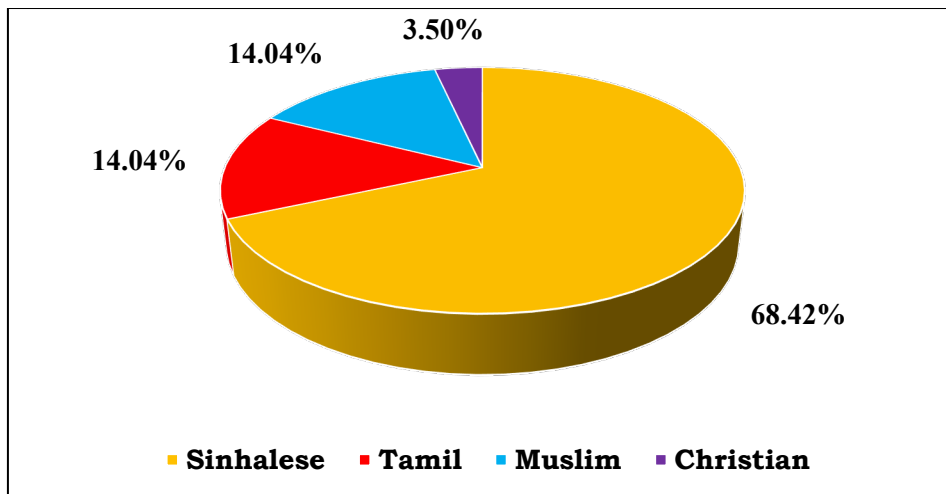
### **Representation of Religious/Ethnic Groups in Sri Lanka**

It was analyzed in what way the textbook represents the religious/ethnic backgrounds of the students.

**Table 4**

*Representation of Religious/Ethnic Backgrounds*

Unit	No. of Characters representing Religious/Ethnic Backgrounds			
	Sinhalese	Tamil	Muslim	Christian
Unit 01	07	01	01	00
Unit 02	03	02	00	00
Unit 03	04	01	02	00
Unit 04	03	00	00	00
Unit 05	06	01	01	00
Unit 06	03	01	01	01
Unit 07	05	00	01	00
Unit 08	01	00	00	00
Unit 09	00	00	00	00
Unit 10	07	02	02	01
<b>Total (57)</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>02</b>
	<b>68.42%</b>	<b>14.04%</b>	<b>14.04%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>



**Figure 6.** Representation of Religious/Ethnic Groups

As shown in Table 4 and Figure 6, religious/ethnic backgrounds in Sri Lanka (Buddhists, Tamils, Muslims, and Christians) are represented through the characters in the textbook. According to the findings, the majority of characters represent the ethnicity of Sinhalese taking up 68.42% of the total number of characters. Tamil and Muslim ethnicities are equally represented (14.4%) while Christians are marginally represented (3.5%). The distribution of characters according to ethnicity does not reflect the actual makeup of ethnicities in Sri Lanka. Consequently, it could place more value weighting on one group over the others and it may lead to limited capacity for negotiation (Janík, 2017; UNESCO, 2017). Hence, it undermines the curricular aim of establishing a Sri Lankan identity in a plural society (NIE, 2014). However, the representation of the main religious/ethnic backgrounds of students should be treated as a positive trend when compared with the prevalence of cultural exclusiveness in textbooks published decades ago.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions which can be drawn from the findings are given below. First, in relation to types of culture, the big “C” culture dominates the textbook, hindering the opportunity to learn about deep or implicit aspects of culture while the small “c” cultural representation in the textbook takes place in the form of universal values such as facing challenges, social responsibilities of a citizen,

simplicity, discipline and doing good deeds but it does not refer to customs, traditions, beliefs and values of different religious/ethnic groups. Secondly, when categories of culture are considered, universal cultural values dominate followed by source culture content target, and international cultures are briefly referred to in terms of factual knowledge in the textbook. The representation of *savoirs* in the ICC Model of Byram indicates that the textbook focuses more on acquiring factual knowledge of source, target, and international cultures. Moreover, in developing 'attitudes', it is visible that students are given very few opportunities to develop or change their viewpoints on other local and international cultures. In addition, 'skills of interpreting and relating' and 'skills of discovery and interaction' were found in a few activities with no activities related to critical cultural awareness. Finally, the representation of religious/ethnic backgrounds in Sri Lanka (Buddhists, Tamils, Muslims, and Christians) is represented through the characters in the textbook. However, the distribution of characters according to ethnicity does not reflect the actual makeup of ethnicities in Sri Lanka.

Based on the findings of the textbook analysis, recommendations for various stakeholders in the Sri Lankan government and schools are presented in this section to improve the quality of the textbook.

First, a national-level consensus among stakeholders in the government should be on the agenda, and culture education should be recognized as a top priority in the government policy initiatives for education (Aturupane & Wikramanayake, 2011). Meanwhile, authorities of curriculum and material development along with the evaluation body should create a parallel framework to teach and evaluate cultural learning (López-Rocha, 2016). During the material development process, material developers should consist of representatives of all ethnicities to produce textbooks and oversee sensitive issues related to culture. Furthermore, textbooks should further conform to the government-mandated curriculum that emphasizes the development of an intercultural speaker and the ability to engage in global communication through the inclusion of rich cross-cultural material in the textbook. In academic material writing, cultural topics should be presented in clear, concrete, and understandable terms in the curriculum. In addition, when preparing instructional manuals for teachers, they should consist of

instructions, model lessons, and evaluation strategies in relation to culture teaching.

During the teacher training programs, a component of culture teaching should be mandatory. Furthermore, school administrators should be open-minded to intercultural communication and should understand the importance of cultural teaching in language education programs. They must not allow high-stakes testing to have a negative washback effect on culture education.

In textbook writing, they should include more visible culture and invisible cultures related to religious/ethnic groups to enhance the understanding of the students. It is also recommended that the duality of target and source culture be included in the textbooks to improve the relevance of the content and to expose students to different international cultures. The content should go beyond factual knowledge and students should be given ample opportunities to engage in debates, storytelling from personal experiences, interpret cultures from different perspectives, discover new knowledge about other cultures, and apply the skills in real-time communication and interaction. In addition, It is advised to represent religious/ethnic groups in similar proportions to the actual make-up of the ethnicities in the Sri Lankan society. Finally, in the teaching and learning process, teachers should create opportunities for learners to discuss cultural differences through language learning in order to liberate them from their limited views and celebrate diversity.

### **Implications of the Study**

Since this study analyses the contribution the grade 11 textbook makes towards developing ICC in students, the overall findings have implications for the policy-making bodies in the central government of Sri Lanka, authorities in the Educational Publications Department (EPD) and textbook writers, National Institute of Education as the curriculum development body, Department of Examinations, English teachers, teacher training organizations, and finally for me as an administrative officer attached to the EPD.

At the outset, education policy-making bodies of the government should acknowledge the existence of manifold understandings, the plurality of languages, religions, histories, and identities as increasingly diverse groups coexisting in close proximity in Sri Lanka.

Effective policy measures should be taken to create a learning environment where concepts, perceptions, and actions can be successfully negotiated to achieve religious and ethnic harmony. In this regard, it is essential to employ a multicultural and cosmopolitan standpoint on language curriculum planning and material development marked by an approach where the global and the local blend (Xiong & Qian, 2012). The curriculum needs to be adaptive to the changing circumstances of intercultural communication by including discourses that reflect the perceptions and values of the users of English from numerous cultural backgrounds. In addition, culture teaching should shift from the descriptive to the interactionist, fostering self-awareness, openness, and transformation (López-Rocha, 2016).

The current curriculum, which mandates the national educational goals in relation to fostering intercultural literacy, favours the adoption of these suggested measures and it could be taken as a point of departure to make required amendments in the EFL materials. Many stakeholders continue to provide insights and assistance in increasing the cultural value and quality of the textbooks. Therefore, given the necessary policy endorsement, the content of the materials could be revised by applying suitable recommendations.

## **Conclusions**

In 21<sup>st</sup> century language classrooms marked by multilingual and multicultural traits, languages can open or close doors for communication among different groups (Porto, 2013). Contemporary EFL textbooks unquestionably act as an effective means of eliminating sectarian ideologies firmly established through the cultural habitus. Hence, the cultural content in materials should espouse cosmopolitan citizenship which is the result of giving up the attachment to one's national identity, to adopt a global outlook. When achieved, the dream of living in harmony in a society where everyone's dignity, freedom, justice, social equity, and sense of humanity are upheld and secured while acknowledging, valuing, and celebrating the differences of others would become a reality.

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