

REPRESENTATIONS OF VIETNAMESE ETHNIC MINORITIES IN NEW HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS

Trinh Thanh Binh^{1,*}, Pham Thi Hanh²

¹*Department of Linguistics and English Language, Lancaster University, Lancaster City, United Kingdom*

²*Faculty of Linguistics and Cultures of English-speaking Countries,*

VNU University of Languages and International Studies, Pham Van Dong, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam

Received 30 November 2023

Revised 20 December 2023; Accepted 29 December 2023

Abstract: In Vietnamese boarding schools for ethnic minority students, learners use national textbooks, primarily designed to serve the major group - Kinh students. Therefore, representations of Vietnamese people and culture in these textbooks may mainly focus on this group, and consequently lead to unfamiliarity and loss of interest among students (Cunningsworth, 1995). In international contexts, representations of ethnic groups in English textbooks have been found problematic (Bassani, 2015; Kim & Ma, 2018; Yamada, 2006, 2010). In Vietnam, this issue has not received sufficient interest except for only one study into this type of representations by Dinh (2014), who reveals that the Vietnamese culture in old high school English textbooks was mainly of Kinh people. To address this research gap, this study was conducted to investigate the representations in new high school English textbooks and the accompanying teachers' books. Employing qualitative approach and quantitative approach, with the underlying procedures adapted from the study by Weninger and Kiss (2013), the researchers identified certain problems. Some noteworthy findings are the underrepresentation compared to Vietnamese people and culture, the absence of some groups, and the limited range of contextual topics. From the results, it is recommended that teachers make modifications to classroom procedures and materials, and textbooks designers incorporate ethnic minorities with more diverse topics.

Keywords: representations, ethnic minorities, English textbooks, high school, Vietnam

1. Introduction

Vietnam is a multicultural country with 54 ethnicities officially recognized by the government (General Statistic Office, n.d), including the major Kinh group and 53 minor groups. To improve their living conditions, the government issued 136 specialized policies in multiple areas such as “sustainable economy”, “medicine” and “culture, sport and tourism” (Hoài, 2023). In terms of education, multiple boarding schools for ethnic students have been established (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). In 2018, there were 259 boarding high schools with 109,245 students managed by provinces and the ministry. These students used the same textbooks as Kinh students in the specialized programs delivered by their schools.

Multiple international authors have identified problems with representations of ethnic minorities in textbooks designed for students from major groups. These include stereotypical depictions (Chu, 2015; Liew, 2007), underrepresentation (Bassani, 2015) and marginalization (Chu, 2018; Yamada, 2006, 2010). Therefore, we conducted this study to investigate whether

* Corresponding author.

Email address: binhe2tp@gmail.com

these issues exist in the new high school English textbooks of Vietnam, with versions being published from 2014 to 2016 and are currently in use in Grade 12.

The aim of this study is to examine the representations of Vietnamese ethnic minorities in the textbooks. It employs the fundamental analytical procedure proposed by Weninger and Kiss (2013), in which texts, tasks, and images of a pedagogical activity are treated as a unit. Additional theoretical frameworks proposed by Cunningsworth (1995), Baldwin et al. (2014) and Dinh (2014) are also employed in different parts of data analysis. The research questions in this study are:

1. How are Vietnamese ethnic minorities represented in the textbooks?
 - 1a. How many activities featuring Vietnamese people and culture represent the ethnic minorities?
 - 1b. Who are the minorities represented in the textbooks?
 - 1c. In what topics do ethnic minorities appear and what purpose is served by their subject content?
 - 1d. How are the minorities represented culturally?
2. To what the extent does the representations help students to learn about ethnic culture?

With this study, we make academic and practical contributions to the related fields. First, it is a source of review for English textbook authors to make suitable modifications, which can raise ethnic students' interest in the subject, hence enhancing their academic performance. Second, textbook designers of other subjects can refer to the execution and findings of this study to discover whether there exist problems with representation of ethnic groups as well as other minor groups. Practically, teachers may consider the results of this study to adjust lesson procedures so that knowledge can be delivered more accurately and engagingly. Finally, this study contributes to thickening the literature in the field of textbook evaluation and partly narrowing the research gap of this issue in the context of Vietnam. Especially, this study included the teachers' books in the evaluation, which is absent in the majority of the literature in the field.

The article consists of four sections: Introduction, Literature review, Methodology, Results & discussion and Conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Representation

Representation is defined by multiple authors adopting multiple views (Hall, 1997). According to this author, there are three approaches to representation, namely "reflective" view, which sees representation as a mirror reflecting true meanings, "intentional approach", which attributes meaning to the intention of the message carrier, and "constructivism" (pp. 24-25), which believes meaning is constructed by people through a system of signs. From "constructivism", two academic approaches studying representation have been derived: the first one, discursive, views representation as produced by knowledge and through discourse rather than through language (Foucault, 1972). The second, constructionist, is semiotics, generally associated with Ferdinand de Saussure (Culler, 1976). In this approach, representation includes a "form" which "signifies" an "idea" (p. 96). Hence, this approach is primarily adopted in this study since the elements of textbooks, including texts, tasks and images, can be considered

carriers of message to the students.

2.2. *Ethnic Group and Ethnic Minority*

Ethnicity is defined as a group with shared ancestry, history and place of origin (Bell, 2014) and constructed by language (Mooney & Evans, 2015). In a community where multiple groups exist, a group may claim their status based on the discussed elements (Gould & Kolb, 1964).

In practical situations, as Mooney & Evans suggest, the terms “ethnic” or “ethnic groups” are usually employed to refer to ethnic minorities. While the major groups are “unmarked”, being the norm in a country, the minor groups are “marked”. According to Battistella (1990), these two concepts were originally proposed by Roman Jakobson and Nikolai Trubetzkoy, in the field of linguistics, as the situation where two terms are at two sides of a “pole of an opposition”, with one term being simpler: “singular - plural” (pp. 1-2). As for ethnicity, according to Mooney & Evans, it is the “unmarkedness”, not the population, that defines the major group. This definition is not necessarily based on numbers but rather depends on the political and social situations in each country. In Vietnam, the Government of Vietnam (2011) defines an ethnic group as a group having less than 50% of the total population, which makes the Kinh people with about 80% of the population the only major group.

On the relationship between “ethnicity” and “culture”, they have close relations (Miller, 2005). Culture, together with language and religion, identifies an ethnicity (Herbst, 1997) and is usually associated with it as part of one’s heritage (Bell, 2014). Therefore, in this study, it needs to be discussed in relation with ethnicity. In the field of intercultural communication, “culture” is assimilated with a group of people by Winkelman (1993). In the context of education, the US National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (1996) introduced the concepts of Big C, including Product and Practices, and small c culture, including Perspectives. In 2001, Moran added “Persons” – the actual people – to small c culture. When multiple cultural groups exist together, the major may define the mutual culture as their behavior and perspective (Moon, 2002) and may represent the minor groups inappropriately (Mooney & Evans, 2015). Hence, in Vietnam, where the English textbooks are designed by Kinh authors and are taught to ethnic students, they may focus on this ethnic group and ignore appropriate representations of minor groups. This is a research gap of ethnic representations in the genre of English language textbooks and needs to be addressed.

2.3. *Representation of Groups in English Textbook Evaluation*

Textbooks have essential roles in a language program: major language input, suggestion of in-class activities (Richards, 2001) and a source of motivation (Tsipkilades, 2011). In a material package of a language program, they are accompanied with teachers’ books, which provide guidelines on the stages of a lesson (Cunningsworth, 1995). According to Richards, because of this significance, textbook evaluation is vital in a language program. Cunningsworth suggests a set of textbook evaluation criteria which includes representation of culture and minor groups such as races, women and ethnic minorities in the categories of topic, subject content and cultural values (see Appendix A). As he points out, such representations may consist of problems such as stereotypes and underrepresentation.

Representation of groups is categorized into the elements of textbook content and cultural values by multiple authors. Presenting ideas around curriculum content in America, Sleeter and Grant (1991) explain this content is the effort to define the representation of the world and society through symbols. Proving a more specific explanation, Gray (2010), in his

analysis of publishers' guidelines for textbook writers, realizes two main areas covered in terms of content: "inclusivity" - the non-sexist approach towards representations of men and women and "inappropriacy" - the avoidance of potentially offensive language to buyers as cultural groups. In a survey with 20 language teachers in Barcelona, he reported concern with "stereotypical representations" of countries in textbook content (p. 18). He also proposes a descriptive framework of textbook language systems, which raises the question "Who are the characters? (real/fictional, sex, age, ethnicity, job, etc.)" in the "Skills content" aspect of textbooks (p. 51). Agreeing with Gray, Richards (2015) argues that the decision on content needs to focus on the presentation, especially equal presentation of sexes and avoidance of ethnocentrism.

In his thoroughly clarified analytical framework, Cunningsworth categorizes representations of groups into "Topic and Subject content" and "Social and cultural values". The former assesses the inclusion of authentic topics, which can lead to loss of interest if unfamiliar. If the topics are unfamiliar to students, loss of interest may occur. Meanwhile, the latter includes the question of whether social and cultural values in the textbooks are recognizable to students.

Among the methods to study representation of groups in textbook evaluation is semiotic approach, which considers representation as a form that signifies an idea (Hall, 1997). In textbook evaluation, as Weninger and Kiss (2013) suggest, the forms are the activities consisting of the task, text and images. Each activity can be qualitatively treated as a unit analysis of how culture is represented. There is no fixed procedure as analysis needs to be based on the specific relationship between these three elements. As previously discussed in section 2.2, representations of ethnic minorities can be analyzed with this approach.

2.4. Previous Studies of Representations of Ethnic Minorities in Textbooks

2.4.1. Representations in Textbooks of Other Subjects

In the past, multiple international authors have conducted research into this issue. Representation of ethnic minorities has been discovered to be problematic in both non- and English language textbooks. Subjects other than English language where the problems are identified are mostly social sciences and languages. Related to Chinese culture, the culture of Han people represents national culture in elementary textbooks (Chu, 2015, 2018) and Chinese history textbooks in Canada (Bing, 2006). Another problem is marginalization of ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka (Gaul, 2014) and normalization of the majority in Norwegian music textbooks (Ronningen, 2015). Among textbooks of non-English languages, Malay textbooks portray ethnic minorities stereotypically and inaccurate ethnic make-up (Liew, 2007) and Chinese and Korean textbooks for immigrant children describe culture as "monolingual" and "static" (Sun & Kwon, 2018). To sum up, ethnic minorities were marginalized, portrayed stereotypically and inaccurately, and they are absent in certain sets of textbooks.

2.4.2. Representations in English Textbooks and Research Gap

Although accurate portrayal of learners' local context can serve teaching English as a communication tool (Kirkpatrick, 2014), some English language textbooks have also been discovered to fail this role regarding ethnically minor students. In Japan, the minor Ainu group was absent from English textbooks from 1987 to 2002 and is portrayed to have no interaction with other groups (Yamada, 2006, 2010). In South Korean society, some minor communities were also not recognized in English textbooks despite their existence (Kim & Ma, 2018). As for the case of Indonesian textbooks, although respect for other cultures is a message presented

in, only four major ethnic groups are realized (Parlindungan et al., 2018). Previously, in Viet Nam, Kinh people's culture represents national culture in the old high school textbooks (Dinh, 2014), which is partly different from the agreement that Vietnamese national culture is agreed to include the culture of all ethnic groups (Hò, 2008). Inaccurate portrayal of local ethnic make-up is another problem identified by Bassani (2015) in Canada. From these findings, it can be concluded that the issue of misrepresentations of ethnic minorities does exist among English textbooks.

However, the reviewed studies cover textbooks in the teaching and learning contexts of other countries. Vietnamese textbooks were studied by Dinh but the textbook set has been out of use for a long time. This research gap leads to the necessity for the analysis of Vietnamese new high school English textbooks, which have been used recently and still partly in use.

3. Methodology

From this section onwards, data collection and representations in the form of textbook activities are explained and analyzed. To conveniently indicate the textbook, unit and section, the authors use a system of abbreviation (see Appendix B). In some parts of the article, this system can be used to indicate the grades and units of the textbooks.

3.1. Data Collection

The data were collected from new high school English textbooks, including the two volumes of students' books in each grade and the teachers' books in which representations of ethnic minorities appear. These include students' books of G10 (V. Hoàng, T.X.H. Hoàng, G. Đặng, et al., 2014a, b), G11 (V. Hoàng, H. Phan, et al., 2014a, b) and G12 (V. Hoàng, T.X.H. Hoàng, H. Phan, et al., 2014a, b). Each grade consists of ten units and two reviewing lessons. In each unit, there are activities to help students learn the linguistics aspects (pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar), practice four skills (reading, speaking, listening and writing) and familiarize themselves with the culture of ASEAN and English-speaking countries. Accompanying the textbooks and based on the content of the textbooks, the teachers' books provide the keys to the exercises and further information. The selected teachers' books are G10 volume 2 (V. Hoàng, T.X.H. Hoàng, G. Đặng, et al., 2016), G11 volume 1 and 2 (V. Hoàng, et al., 2015a, b) and G12 volume 1 (V. Hoàng, T.X.H. Hoàng, H. Phan, et al., 2016). In the instructions for teachers in this article, the abbreviation "Ss" indicates "students".

The data collection process started with identifying activities directly featuring Vietnamese ethnic minorities. As for activities featuring photos of groups and cultural artifacts without any direct specifications, those with ethnic minorities were recognized based on additional information provided in the teachers' books and the original sources retrieved by Google Image. These activities were then combined with teachers' instructions to comprise the research data.

3.2. Data Analysis


This study adopted the framework proposed by Weninger and Kiss (2013), which treats texts, tasks and images of an activity as a unit. As the authors suggest, because the relationship between these three elements is "highly contextual" (p. 704) there is no fixed procedure, rather, analysis needs to be based on this relationship. Since a teachers' book is an essential part of the material package of a language course (Cunningsworth, 1995), teachers' guidelines are also included in this analysis process. An example can be Task G10-U10-S-2 (see Figure 1). It was selected because it mentioned the ethnic minorities in the Northwest and Highlands regions of

Vietnam.


Figure 1

Task G10-U10-S-2

2 Below are three destinations for ecotourists. Work in pairs. Choose one destination and make a similar conversation as in **1**.



Where to go: Sa Pa (Lao Cai Province)
What to do and see: go hiking in the forest, visit Cat Cat village, enjoy the traditional life of the Black H' Mong, watch the waterfalls, go camping in the forest
What else to do: buy handicrafts at a village market
Where else to visit: Sa Pa love market held every weekend



Where to go: Central Highlands
What to do and see: go biking in the forests, watch wildlife, go kayaking, visit Don Village, enjoy cooking and staying overnight with local ethnic families
What else to do: attend Gong culture festival in Dak Lak Province
Where else to visit: coffee plantations to enjoy fresh coffee

2 Have Ss identify the main ideas in the dialogue. Ask them to complete the table with the information from the conversation.

Where Peter will go	Bach Ma National Park
What he will do and see	explore the forests, watch the birds, look at the plants, spend a night at an old villa
What else he will do if he has more time	visit Hue, enjoy the local food
Where else he may visit	Lang Co Beach

- Explain to Ss that when making their own conversations about the three tourist destinations, they should use the four questions in the table.

Notes

- Cát Cát Village is a village of the H' Mong people. It is famous for its beautiful terraced rice fields (*ruộng bậc thang*) and festivals featuring unique community cultures.
- Đồn Village in Dak Lak Province is home to the M'Nong, Ede and Thai ethnic minority groups. It is famous for its stilt houses, elephant rides for tourists and interesting festivals.
- The Gong Culture (or The Space of the Gong Culture, *Không gian Văn hoá Cổng chiêng*) in Central Highlands is home to cultures that value gongs. It is included in the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (*Di sản Văn hoá Phi vật thể của nhân loại*).

3.2.1 Quantitative Approach: Descriptive Analysis

The quantitative approach was used to demonstrate the number of different categories concerning qualitative data, a step implemented based on the quantifiability of this type of data as suggested by Baldwin et al. (2014). Primarily, this approach was aimed at answering sub-question 1a (previously presented in the Introduction section): “How many activities featuring Vietnamese people and culture represent ethnic minorities?”. The total number of these activities was recorded and compared with those featuring ethnic minorities. Although no direct reference to ethnic minorities can be assumed to mean reference to Kinh, the “unmarked” group, this categorization was not feasible as ethnic residents may live with Kinh people (Open Development Vietnam, 2019).

3.2.2 Qualitative Method: Semiotic Analysis of Pedagogical Activities

Qualitative approach was mainly employed to answer the remaining questions and sub-questions.

Cunningsworth’s evaluative checklists (presented in section 2) were mainly utilized in this method with modifications. First, sub-question 1b is aligned to the criterion “reference to ethnic origin” in the general checklist for the topic. For example, Task G10-U10-S-2 (see Figure 1) is an activity which mentions specific ethnic groups. As for sub-question 1c and 1d, we referred to the criteria in the checklists of “topic and content”, “social and cultural values” and the quick reference checklist (see Appendix A). An example is a group of activities in G12-U5. The activities contribute to the topic of the unit with the theme of “cultural identity”, depicting

the values of ethnic communities in a reading passage. Question 1d was answered by looking at cultural representations among the activities analyzed. The first step of the process involved comparison between the numbers of activities featuring cultural elements and those that do not. Following this, the types of culture represented were analyzed based on the framework of “big C and small c culture” previously employed by Dinh (2014). Deeper analysis of cultural elements was conducted based on Cunningsworth’s checklist on “Cultural and Social Values”. Another suggested analytical criterion related to culture, peculiar to assessment of teachers’ books, is how cultural information and explanation are delivered to the teachers so that they can interpret and exploit the content of the textbook properly. In this analysis, we also refer to the ideas of “denotation” and “connotation” in the systems of linguistic meaning, suggested by Baldwin et al. Analysis of Exercise G12-U5-V-2 (see section 4.1.4) can be an example of this procedure. Item 1 of the exercise describes ethnic “cultural practices” - a big C culture element. The word used in this description is “strange”, a “connotational” word which can create the feeling of otherness among students.

Question number 2 on the opportunity for students to learn about ethnic culture was answered by the examination of the criteria suggested by Weninger and Kiss (2013), which treats an activity with texts, tasks and images as a unit. First, we examined whether an activity focuses on denotation or connotation. “Denotational” activities are those focusing on the correct answers and “connotational” activities focus on students’ feelings and opinions. Then, the relationship among those elements was analyzed in addition with teachers’ guidelines to realize the degree to which students can learn about ethnic culture. In this stage, Cunningsworth’s (1995) questions of the ability to expand students’ cultural awareness and enrich their experience were also discussed. According to Weninger and Kiss, analysis in this stage is highly contextual and there is no fixed procedure. As for the previous example of exercise G12-U5-V-2, the focus of the activity is denotational as it only requires the correct answer. However, it can provide a chance of learning about ethnic culture if the teacher organizes discussion on whether ethnic “cultural practices” are “strange” or not.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Representation of Vietnamese Ethnic Minorities in New High School English Textbooks

4.1.1. The Number of Representations

In total, there are 21 activities that represent Vietnamese ethnic minorities (see Table 1). This accounts for 7% of total representation of Vietnamese people and culture. Across the three textbook sets, five out of 30 units and two out of six reviewing lessons feature these activities.

Table 1

Frequency of Representations of Vietnamese Ethnic Minorities in New High School English Textbooks

	Number of activities featuring Vietnamese people and culture (1)	Number of activities featuring ethnic minorities (2)	Percentage of (2) out of (1)
G10	90	3	3%
G11	119	8	7%
G12	88	10	11%

Total	297	21	7%
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As can be seen from Table 1, G10 has the smallest number with three representations out of 90 activities portraying Vietnamese people and culture. G12 has the most frequent representations with ten out of 88 activities featuring Vietnamese people and culture, accounting for 11%. G11 representations were the second most frequent. From the findings, we can see that the minorities are underrepresented compared to overall representations of Vietnamese people and culture. This is similar to Chu's (2018) and Bassani's (2015) findings that some minorities are underrepresented in China and British Columbia of Canada. This lack of representations may be a result of the fact that the ethnic minorities are not able to hold social power (Mooney & Evans, 2015). According to Bassani, in the specific context of textbook designing, this problem stems from the fact that the "stakeholders" of education are the "publishers, teachers and schools, parents and the public" (p. 63), the majority of whom in Vietnam are Kinh people, leading to the problem being overlooked. Those who experience inequality, however, have limited voice in the assessment of textbooks. Especially as for parents, generally, the contribution to this, even from Kinh people, was only recorded in Ho Chi Minh city (Nguyễn, 2021) and no other record of parents' participation in the designing process, including parents of minor communities, has been reported.

4.1.2. The Minorities Represented

Among the activities analyzed, specific minorities appear in nine activities and 14 activities mention the minorities in general. In these activities, ethnic groups are referred to as "ethnic groups" and "ethnic". The results are not mutually exclusive as an activity can have both direct and indirect references. Task G10-U10-S-2 is an activity that mentions a specific group (Black H'Mông) and minorities in general in two different sections (see Figure 1). In this task, "Black H'Mông village" is a destination and in the suggestions for Central Highlands, "staying with ethnic families" appears as a tourism activity. Beside representation of ethnic groups as a whole, the textbooks depict eight specific minorities.

As for the represented groups, only the origin of H'Mông is directly mentioned in the students' book. All direct mentions of other groups' origin are found in teachers' books. Dao, Nùng and Khmer are the groups whose names are not recognized directly and their origins can only be traced by Google Image. The frequency of minor groups' appearances is another analyzed aspect. Cham group has the biggest number of appearance (five), followed by Ê đê (four). Other groups, as seen from Table 2, make one to two appearances. It can be seen that minorities from all regions of Vietnam are represented according to information about their living regions (Open Development Vietnam, 2019).

Table 2

Ethnic Minorities Represented and Number of Direct and Indirect Specifications of Their Origins

Minority	Directly specified	Indirectly specified	Total number of representations
H'Mông	1	0	1
Thái	1	1	2
Chăm	3	2	5
Ê đê	3	1	4

M'Nông	2	0	2
Dao	0	1	1
Nùng	0	1	1
Khmer	0	1	1
Tày	1	0	1

4.1.3. Topics and Subject Contents in Which Ethnic Minorities Appear

Ethnic minorities are mostly featured in topics related to cultural artifacts and introduction of Vietnamese culture. These topics can be divided into sub-topics with some frequent ones being eco-tourism, Vietnamese heritage sites and definition of ethnic cultural identity (see Table 3).

Table 3

Topic and Sub-Topic Where Activities Representing Ethnic Minorities Appear

Unit and topic	Sub-topic	Number of activities
G10-U10: Eco-tourism	Eco-tourism destinations	2
G10- Rv4		1
G11-U5: Being Part of ASEAN	Dances of ASEAN countries	1
G11-Rv2	Culture of Vietnam	2
		1
G11-U8: Our World Heritage Sites	Vietnamese heritage sites	3
G11-Rv3	Tourism	1
G12-U5: Cultural Identity (CI)	Ethnic festivals	3
	Definition of ethnic CI	4
	Definition of Vietnamese/national CI	1
	Preservation of CI	2
Total number of activities		21

20 activities carry a specific content assisting students' learning and one activity only includes a prompt without any content. From these 20 activities, we recognized two purposes with informing being the major one, appearing 13 times. Exercise G11-U5-W-1 (see Figure 2) can be an example of an "informing" activity, including the information about the number of ethnic groups in Vietnam in item d. "Triggering curiosity" is the other purpose. Exercise G11-U8-Pr (see Appendix C) is an example. In this exercise, there are many photos of My Son sanctuary with the prompts guiding students to make a presentation about one of Vietnamese heritage sites. Students may choose to present about My Son sanctuary and do further research.

Figure 2

Exercise G11-U5-W-1

1 Read the following information about Viet Nam. Fill the gaps with the correct words or phrases in the box.

family values Heritage Sites **Vovinam**
land area income

The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

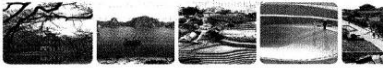
a. shape of elongated S, (1) _____ : 331,212 km²;
population: about 93,000,000, most speak Vietnamese;
capital: Ha Noi

b. economy: develops rapidly; leading agricultural
exporter; main export products _____, crude oil,
marine products, rice and coffee, lower-middle
(2) _____ country.

c. sports: football, _____, cycling, _____, swimming,
badminton, tennis, aerobics, (3) _____;
athletes compete regionally, internationally, hold
high ranks in many sports

d. one of the oldest cultures, known for ancestor
worship; appreciate (4) _____ and
education; home to 54 ethnic groups with their
own languages, lifestyles, customs

e. visitors from around the world; attractions: World
(5) _____ (Ha Long Bay, Hoi An); beautiful
sights: Sa Pa, Mui Ne, Ha Noi, contribute to country's
magic charm



1 The focus of this activity is to learn useful language for describing a country.

- Give Ss some time to do the gap-filling. Have Ss compare their answers with a partner first. Then ask some pairs to read different paragraphs out loud to check answers as a class.

Key 1. land area 2. income 3. **Vovinam**
4. family values 5. Heritage Sites

Notes
Vovinam (Việt Võ Đạo / Martial Arts of Viet Nam) is a Vietnamese martial art.


The content of these activities mostly manages to serve the designated purpose. Only two activities fail their purposes. Task G11-U5-S-3 (see Figure 3) requires students to talk about a traditional folk dance of an ASEAN country. There is one photo of Vietnamese Thai people's Bamboo dance (highlighted in the red square) with no further information, albeit "Trong com", a traditional dance of Kinh people, is thoroughly described. In this activity, students need to have further information to perform the task but the photo seems to play the only role of illustration. If the teacher follows this exact procedure, students may miss a chance to understand more about ethnic culture.

Figure 3

Task G11-U5-S-3

3 Talk with a partner about one of the popular folk dances of Viet Nam or any other ASEAN country. Use the following questions.

How popular is the dance? How do people practise the dance? What makes the dance special?



3 This is a post-reading activity. Have Ss work in groups of four or five, and talk about one popular folk dance. Invite representatives of different groups to show their dance to the class.

Suggested answers
Trong Com, which literally means **Rice Drum**, is a Vietnamese traditional dance. It is very popular in Viet Nam, especially in the north of the country. It symbolises people's wishes for a peaceful, enjoyable and comfortable life. **Trong Com** has a boisterous, joyful and lively rhythm. It is also a charming dance especially when accompanied by the folk song **Trong Com**. The beautiful lyrics and melody of the song greatly contribute to the popularity of the dance.

To summarize the issue of ethnicities represented, the topic & content in which they appear, new high school language textbooks include nine out of 53 Vietnamese ethnic minorities, which is similar to Yamada's (2006) finding that English textbooks in Japan left out certain minorities. The represented ones mostly appear in contexts related to culture and tourism, which reflects a tourist's perspective. The tourists can be interpreted as the majority of students, or, Kinh students. Treatment of ethnic culture as objects of tourism industry is a general problem within the society, which has been pointed out by Wood (1997). According to Bing (2006), who also identified this perspective with Chinese history textbooks in Canada, it can prevent students from fully learning about a community. In the learning context of ethnic students, the textbooks fail to fully portray their lives from their viewpoints. This can demotivate and make them become less interested in the subject (Cunningsworth, 1995; Tsipkilades, 2011). Meanwhile, general Vietnamese people, who can be assumed to be of Kinh ethnicity, appear in more various contexts such as "Further education" and "Music". Also, their culture is mainly not represented to be "explored" or "researched" by students but rather to be introduced as part of national culture to foreigners. In addition, Vietnamese minor ethnicities may experience "tokenism", another problem suggested by Cunningsworth. The evidence is that ethnic characters appear in photos portraying their communities and no ethnic characters interact with people from other groups. The author may attempt to include ethnic culture to show the cultural diversity of Vietnam but this is still limited, similar to Japan, where the ethnic Ainu group only appears in historical accounts and not in daily contexts (Yamada, 2010).

4.1.4. Cultural Representation of Ethnic Minorities

Of the 21 analyzed activities, 15 represent culture. Cultural representations include 13 representations of big C culture and seven of small c culture (see Table 4). Similar to the aspect of specific minorities discussed in section 4.1.2, these two types of culture are not mutually exclusive as an activity can feature both. Festivals are the most frequently described cultural artifact, followed by topics of architectural site and community. A task that includes a variety of ethnic festivals is G12-U5-Cu-1 (see Figure 4), which includes Elephant Racing, Forrest Worshipping and Boat Racing festivals.

Table 4

Types of Ethnic Culture Represented

Level of culture	Type of culture	Number	Total
Big C culture	Festival	7	13
	Dance	1	
	Architectural site	4	
	Musical instrument	1	
Small C culture	Community	5	7

Figure 4

G12-U5-Cu-1

Culture
Festivals

1 Read the text about celebrations of some ethnic groups in Viet Nam. Write the names of the festivals under the pictures.



a.



b.

Festivals are celebrated to highlight the cultural heritage of nations. At national level, festivals help to strengthen the spirit of solidarity and unity of the whole nation. Regional festivals or festivals of an ethnic group, on the other hand, help to maintain the cultural identity of a community. Taking part in different activities of the festival, group members get together, have fun, and promote their cultural image. Examples can be found in well-known festivals of some ethnic groups in Viet Nam.

In March, the Elephant Racing Festival is held at Don Village, in Dak Lak Province, to promote the martial spirit of the M'Nong and Ede people, who are famous for their bravery in wild elephant hunting. Every year, more and more participants in colourful costumes flock to the area to watch the race and take part in other fun activities such as eating traditional food, drinking rice wine, dancing, and watching elephants play soccer.

Forest Worshipping is an important festival of the Nung and Dao people in Ha Giang and Lao Cai Provinces, which takes place in the first lunar month. People worship the god of trees and villagers who sacrificed their lives to protect the village. They also pray for good health, fruitful trees and favourable climate. The ceremony is held under an old tree in the forest, with a lot of agricultural products used as offerings. After the ceremony, local people sign a statement to protect forests and plant more trees around their houses. Finally, they take part in folk games with strong ethnic identity, such as blind man's buff, swinging, shuttlecock throwing, and tug of war.

Cultural values of the activities can be analyzed by looking at how language of feelings is used, as suggested by Cunningsworth (1995). This kind of language appears in four activities and aims at informing students. Three activities convey positive feeling and one conveys negative feeling. For example, in activity G10-U10-S-2, students are suggested to “enjoy” the traditional life of Black H'Mông people. The only activity with negative language is G12-U5-V-2, which features the sentence “*Some ethnic groups have strange cultural practices such as walking on fire to prevent natural disaster*”. This description of their custom can bring a sense of otherization towards ethnic community students.

To conclude the cultural representations, big C culture accounts for the majority of ethnic representations. This result is similar to Dinh's (2014) findings with the subjects of Vietnamese old English textbooks of grade 10 and 11. The reason for this may also be attributed to the tourist's point of view as discussed above. With the main intention of informing students, the authors may only want to focus on the cultural products rather than values and beliefs. Beside the culture represented, the researchers also took the language of feeling into consideration. Language of feelings is used in a few activities and mainly conveys positive feeling, which is opposite to Chu (2015), Gaul (2014) and Liew (2007) that the minor groups often experience negative description in textbooks.

4.2. Opportunities for Students to Learn About Ethnic Culture Through the Analyzed Activities

To find the opportunity for cultural learning, first, the focus on denotation or connotation is analyzed. According to Weninger and Kiss (2013), “denotational” activities concentrate on the correct answers and “connotational” activities concentrate on students' thoughts and feelings. Cultural learning can happen if there is more room for connotation. Analysis on these two aspects is drawn from instructions for students and teachers. In the sets

of textbooks studied, the focus on denotation and connotation is rather even: twelve and nine, respectively.

To gather further insights into this aspect, we analyzed the activities into three aspects: without potential, with limited potential and with full potential. There are nine activities that are “without potential, all of which are “denotational”. In these activities, cultural elements act as illustrations and students are required to provide the correct answers. Teachers are instructed to check the answers and not to organize any further activities.

There are two “limited” activities which do not limit students’ tasks to producing the correct answers. Rather, they can trigger students’ thinking but it may only happen if the teacher organizes further procedures. Activity G12-U5-V-2, as previously discussed in section 4.1.4, can lead to negative thinking among students. This can be prevented if the teacher asks students about their view on ethnic culture. Further discussion of culture from viewpoints other than textbooks is also a classroom procedure proposed by Do and Dao (2020) to enhance the critical nature of cultural teaching in university lectures, which can be modified to suit the high school classroom. Another activity with limited opportunity is G12-U5-S-3 (Figure 5), which asks students to discuss the preservation of cultural identity in the modern era and feature a photo of Êê people’s Naming ceremony as illustration without further explanation. The teacher can incorporate the photo into the task by preparing further information and questions about the situation of Ede people as input for students to answer the questions.

Figure 5

Task G12-U5-S-3

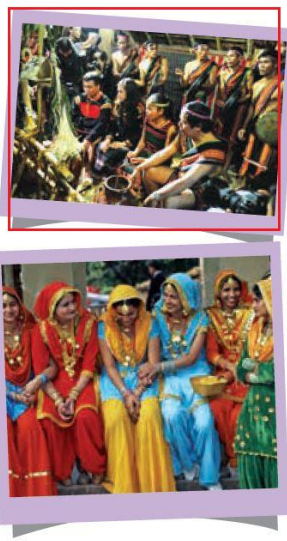
3 Have a similar conversation discussing what you should do to maintain cultural identity in the age of globalisation.

2 Use ideas in **1** to fill each of the numbered spaces in the following conversation. Then practise it in groups of three.

A: What do you think people should do to maintain cultural identity in the age of globalisation?
 B: I believe they should (1) _____.
 C: That’s true. Language is a vital part of culture and critical to a person’s (2) _____.
 A: Yes. It enables people to communicate, establish links with family and community members, and acquire and value their native culture.
 B: I can’t agree more. It is said that peoples’ first language helps them (3) _____ and (4) _____.
 C: That’s absolutely correct. Do you have anything else to add?

3 This activity is for Ss to practise exchanging their ideas and opinions about how to maintain cultural identity, using the format of the conversation in **2**.

- Have Ss work in groups of three asking and answering questions about what people should do to preserve their cultural identity and the reasons for doing those.
- Ask one or two groups to act out their conversation in front of the class.
- Take notes or encourage the rest of the class to take notes of Ss’ good ideas and any mistakes.
- Give feedback as a class.



Comparable to nine “no potential” activities, ten activities possess full potential for cultural learning. They are the ones that require and thoroughly instruct students to do research on a topic and provide answers on their own with step-by-step instructions for students and additional information in the teachers’ book, like Task G11-U8-Pr (see Appendix C).

Among the activities representing ethnic minorities, the focus on denotation and connotation is fairly equal (twelve to nine). The number of activities in which opportunity for

cultural learning is identified also constitutes a great part. Within these activities, these findings are contrary to the overconcentration on linguistics aspects in English textbooks found by Weninger and Kiss (2013). Students have plenty of room to learn about ethnic culture, although the contexts are limited to culture and tourism and they would learn from the point of view of a tourist as discussed in section 4.1. However, this can be considered an attempt of the authors to comply with the MOET's (2014) 6-level foreign language competences, which mentions cultural knowledge as a part of language proficiency.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Major Findings

Our study realized that Vietnamese ethnic minorities are underrepresented among representations of Vietnamese people and culture (7%). These representations are not distributed equally among all units but can only be found in five out of 30 units and three out of 12 reviewing lessons. Eight out of 53 minorities appear in contexts related to culture and tourism. The main purpose of these representations is “informing”.

15 out of 21 activities represent cultural artifacts, mainly big C culture. Cultural values are described with language of feeling in four activities, three of which carry positive feeling and one delivers negative feeling.

Cultural learning of ethnic minorities can take place in twelve out of 21 activities with proper guidance from the teacher. There is a nearly equal focus on denotational and connotational activities.

5.2. Suggestions for Educators

From this study, several suggestions can be put forward to educators. The ministry of education should conduct more thorough assessment of textbooks to detect problems with representations of ethnic minorities. Some changes can also take place with the actions of textbook authors. They may include ethnic minorities in more various contexts and address their actual lives and problems. The minorities represented may need to be more diverse and have more detailed specifications. In order for students to understand more about the values and beliefs of ethnic minorities, small c cultures should be featured more frequently.

While the changes from the policy makers and authors may take time, teachers can make immediate changes with regards to the in-class lessons. They can make adaptations to the materials to address the existing drawbacks so that the negative messages can be corrected and students can discover more about ethnic lives and culture. The teachers may also prepare further information to fill in the gap of cultural artifacts' origins.

5.3. Limitations

Despite the exhaustive efforts given, certain limitations still persist within this study. The scope is limited to new high school English textbooks used before 2022, which is a small part within the large range of textbooks in terms of subjects and level currently used in the Vietnamese education system. Since 2022, various new sets of English textbooks have been introduced to schools, starting from grade 10. The research problem in this study may exist in a larger range of English textbooks.

In some subjects, especially social sciences, problems with representations of ethnic minorities have been identified (Chu, 2018; Bing, 2006; Gaul, 2014). Also, the problem of under- and misrepresentation of ethnic minorities is a part of problems with representations of

groups (Cunningsworth, 1995). Examples of groups undergoing such problems can be women, the elderly and the disabled.

5.4. Suggestions for Future Studies

From those limitations, we would like to suggest ideas for prospect researchers. First, the scope should be extended to different sets of textbooks, different minor groups and different subjects. In the context of education in Vietnam, textbooks are widely used in both schools and private education centers, with the origin varying from nationally to internationally published ones, which can be a potential academic area for future researchers. Concerning the visual analysis, other aspects of visual images may be considered to gain further insights into visual representations.

The data should also be considered from students' and teachers' viewpoints. They can be invited to take part in surveys and interviews. Opinions from both major and minor ethnic groups should be gathered to present the textbook authors and policy makers with an overview of the situation.

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APPENDIX A

Extracts of Cunningsworth (1995)'s quick and detailed checklists on topic, subject content, social values and teachers for students' and teachers' books (pp. 4, 90, 92, 115). Only the points relevant to this study are presented.

Quick reference checklist for evaluation and selection (p. 4)

Topic

- Is there sufficient material of genuine interest to learners?
- Is there enough variety and range of topics?
- Will the topics help expand students' awareness and enrich their experience?
- Are topics sophisticated enough in content, yet within the learners' language level?
- Will your students be able to relate to the social and cultural contexts presented in the coursebook?
- Are other groups represented, with reference to ethnic origin, occupation, disability, etc?

Teachers' books

- Do they adequately cover teaching techniques, language items such as grammar rules and culture-specific information?

Checklist for topic and subject content (p. 90)

- Are real topics included in the coursebook? If so, how varied are they?
- Will the coursebook contribute to expanding learners' awareness and enriching their experience?
- Does it relate to and engage the learners' knowledge system, ie. the knowledge of the world that they bring with them?
- Are the topics sophisticated enough for the learners, but at the right level linguistically?

- Do they actually do what they set out to do? If informative, do they inform, if humorous, do they amuse, if controversial, do they challenge, etc?

- At school level, do they link in with other subjects (eg. history, geography, science)?

Checklist for social and cultural values (p. 92)

- Are the social and cultural contexts in the coursebook comprehensible to the learners?

- Can learners interpret the relationships, behaviour, intentions, etc of the characters portrayed in the book?

- What do we learn about the inner lives of the characters?

- To what extent is the language of feeling depicted

- Do the coursebook characters exist in some kind of social setting, within a social network

- Are social relationships portrayed realistically?

Checklist for teachers' books (p. 115)

- Is there enough cultural explanation to enable teachers unfamiliar with, for example, British lifestyles to interpret and exploit appropriately the situations portrayed in the coursebook?

- Are teachers encouraged to note down their own ideas in the teacher's book?

APPENDIX B

List of abbreviations

To encode the data, we used a system of abbreviation to signify the grade of the textbook and the unit, section and number of the activity. For example, writing task 1 of Unit 5, Grade 11 textbook is noted as G11-U5-W-1. The detailed abbreviations are presented as follows:

U: Unit

Rv: Review

G: Grade

V: Vocabulary

P: Pronunciation

Gr: Grammar

R: Reading

L: Listening

S: Speaking

W: Writing

Co: Communication

Cu: Culture

Pr: Project

LB: Looking back

APPENDIX C

Task G11-U8-Pr

Work in groups. Choose a heritage site in Viet Nam and find information about it. Then discuss and make a proposal for its preservation and protection. Present your ideas to the class.

Here are some guiding questions:

- What's the name of the heritage site?
- Where is it located?
- In what condition is it now? Is it well-preserved, damaged or in ruins?
- Who is responsible for its current condition?
- What do you think should be done to improve it?
- How can it be preserved for future generations?
- How can it be protected from damages, theft or irresponsible behaviour?



This activity provides further opportunities for Ss to use the language, skills and information they have learnt in the unit through collaborative work on a project and group presentations.

- Ask Ss to form groups.
- Have groups discuss the guiding questions and brainstorm their ideas. Encourage them to take notes and share their ideas with the teacher or the other groups.
- Encourage groups to prepare an outline for their presentation. This should include an introduction (briefly introducing their proposal and their reasons for choosing this site, and providing an overview of the talk), main body (several main points such as the current condition of the site, what should be done, who should be responsible, etc.) and conclusion (summary of the main points and how their proposal will contribute to the preservation of heritage and culture in Viet Nam in general).
- Have Ss practise their presentations in groups. Make sure each member has been assigned a part to present.
- Have Ss make a list of useful tips for effective delivery of their presentations:
 - talk naturally and avoid reading from your notes or outline
 - speak clearly and confidently
 - use appropriate intonation and vary the tone, pitch and volume of your voice
 - make eye contact with your audience and involve your listeners by asking and encouraging questions
 - make sure you finish in time.
- Have groups present their proposals to the class. Encourage the rest of the class to ask questions and give feedback about the content, clarity of expression and delivery.
- Have the class vote for the best proposal.

ĐẠI DIỆN CÁC DÂN TỘC THIỂU SỐ VIỆT NAM TRONG SÁCH GIÁO KHOA THÍ ĐIỂM MÔN TIẾNG ANH TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG

Trịnh Thanh Bình¹, Phạm Thị Hạnh²

¹*Khoa Ngôn ngữ học và Ngôn ngữ Anh, Đại học Lancaster, thành phố Lancaster, Vương Quốc Anh*

²*Khoa Ngôn ngữ và Văn hóa Các nước nói tiếng Anh,*

Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Tóm tắt: Tại các trường trung học phổ thông dân tộc nội trú, học sinh sử dụng các bộ sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh quốc gia. Các bộ sách này được thiết kế hướng tới đối tượng người học chủ yếu là học sinh dân tộc Kinh. Do đó, đại diện người và văn hóa Việt Nam tập trung ở nhóm học sinh này. Điều này có thể dẫn tới sự không thân thuộc và làm giảm sự hứng thú của học sinh (Cunningsworth, 1995). Ở nhiều nước trên thế giới, một số vấn đề với đại diện các nhóm dân tộc thiểu số trong sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh đã được phát hiện (Bassani, 2015; Kim & Ma, 2018; Yamada, 2006, 2010). Tại Việt Nam, vấn đề này chưa nhận được sự quan tâm đầy đủ. Phát hiện duy nhất liên quan tới đại diện các dân tộc thiểu số là của Dinh (2014). Tác giả này nhận thấy trong sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh trung học phổ thông cũ, văn hóa quốc gia của Việt Nam được thể hiện thông qua văn hóa của nhóm người Kinh. Để khắc phục khoảng trống nghiên cứu này, chúng tôi đã thực hiện nghiên cứu này để phân tích đại diện các dân tộc thiểu số trong sách giáo khoa thí điểm môn tiếng Anh trung học phổ thông và các bộ sách giáo viên đi kèm. Sử dụng cả phương pháp định lượng và định tính, cùng với quy trình phân tích được đề xuất bởi Weninger và Kiss (2013), chúng tôi đã phát hiện ra một số vấn đề đáng chú ý, bao gồm: sự thiếu vắng đại diện dân tộc thiểu số trong tổng hòa con người và văn hóa Việt Nam, và hạn chế về đề tài liên quan tới ngữ cảnh. Từ kết quả trên, nghiên cứu đề xuất giáo viên cần thực hiện thay đổi với quy trình lớp học và học liệu. Ngoài ra, các nhà thiết kế sách giáo khoa nên tạo điều kiện để các dân tộc thiểu số xuất hiện ở các chủ đề đa dạng hơn.

Từ khóa: đại diện, dân tộc thiểu số, sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh, trung học phổ thông, Việt Nam